

# Interview Preparation

## Checklist for Success

Congratulations! You've been invited to an interview!

You may be nervous, excited, or both. Now you need to prepare. We hope this advice will help.

### First Things First: Remember the Purpose of the Interview

- The **interviewer's** goal is to find someone who:
  - Possesses the experience, skills and knowledge required for the experiential learning experience/ job.
  - Would fit within the team and organization.
  - Has the motivation to contribute productively.
- The **interviewee's** goal is to:
  - Articulate why they are a good candidate in terms of skills, knowledge, and motivation.
  - Understand whether the organization and role connect to their values and interests.
  - Learn more about their potential future co-workers / team / supervisor.
  - Determine whether this would be a good move in relation to current and longer-term goals.
- Both **interviewer and interviewee** are there to:
  - Gather information to help determine whether this could be a good match for both.

Keep this in mind. It will help you maintain your perspective and approach the interview with confidence.

**Tip:** Make a list of the pros and cons of this experiential learning experience or job **now**. It will help you go into the interview with a clear sense of how you feel about the opportunity and it will help you later if you get an offer.

### Checklist: Steps to Success

It's always good to prepare as thoroughly as you can. No matter how much time you have, use it well. Ideally, you will come out of the interview feeling that you did the best possible job representing yourself as a potential contributor to the organization, which is important whether or not you get an offer.

### Before the Interview – Logistical and Technical Aspects

- What is the **interview format**? How long will it last? How many interviewers will there be? Who are they? Will it include additional components such as a task and/or case study questions? Ask the person who invited you to the interview if it is possible/appropriate for them to tell you how much time the interview will take, how many interviewers there will be, and whether they are able to share any other information about the format. It doesn't hurt to ask.

- ❑ **In-person interview?** Make sure you know how to get to the interview location and how long the journey will take. It's wise to try to arrive at least ten minutes early.
- ❑ **Online or phone interview?** We've all spent plenty of time in online meetings and classes over the last couple of years, but this is not a good reason to skimp on advance preparation. Make sure you will have a quiet space for the conversation, ideally sitting somewhere comfortable. Think about the way you will appear in the interview (clothing, background, framing). Connect briefly with someone you trust on the day of or day before the interview to avoid running into unexpected tech hurdles. Plan to shut all tabs during the interview so you're not tempted to roam away from the call when one of the interviewers is speaking.
- ❑ Set up an appointment for an **interview prep session** with your CEU career advisor.
- ❑ This may seem superficial, but **plan your outfit**. Experts recommend dressing for an interview even if it's conducted online or by phone. Dressing the part helps you keep the tone professional.

## Before the Interview – Preparing

- ❑ Thoroughly review the experiential learning or job posting and the materials you submitted when applying. Expect questions about anything on your CV/resume or in your cover letter.
- ❑ Review the organization's mission, strategy and impact.
- ❑ Make a list of 5 key points you want to convey about yourself – skills, knowledge, motivation.
- ❑ Prepare a list of possible questions including:
  - “Fit” or “match” questions, which are aimed at determining whether you and the organization would work well together.
  - Behavioral or competency questions, which provide the opportunity to tell stories that demonstrate relevant work-related strategies and competencies.
  - Technical / subject matter questions about the actual substance of the work you will do, which may include things you covered during your academic coursework.

**Tip:** Wondering how to identify questions? Use resources like [Glassdoor](#), [The Muse](#) Ask members of your network who work in the organization or a similar organization. Ask your career advisor. In addition, we have included a few common questions at the end of this guide!

- ❑ Brainstorm possible answers to your anticipated questions.
- ❑ Brainstorm relevant stories for every experience on your CV, ideally in the [CAR](#) or [STAR](#) format.
- ❑ Prepare well for the **first question** in the interview. This is almost always an invitation to tell them about your experience and how you connect to the role. This question comes in many forms: Tell me about yourself! / Walk me through your resume! / Why are you interested in this job? No matter how it's phrased, your answer should be relevant and brief (max 2-3 minutes).
- ❑ Are there questions you are worried about or hope they do not ask? Include them on your list and think about possible answers, because there's a good chance these questions will come up!
- ❑ Make a list of your questions for the interviewer/s. See examples [here](#) for inspiration.
- ❑ If the interview will include a case study component, invest time in preparing for this special type of interview question.
- ❑ Read the news. It can be very embarrassing to be unable to answer a question about current events that are relevant to the organization, your role or to your situation.
- ❑ Film yourself as you practice your answers and watch to check if you seem comfortable and confident. But avoid memorization of answers, it's not good to sound like a robot.

## Just Before and During the Interview – Keeping Your Cool

- Be polite and maintain a professional demeanor with **everyone you meet** inside the organization.
- If your interview is in-person, shake hands and make eye contact with people as you greet them.
- Don't let your nerves defeat you! Remember to breathe! Speak slowly and clearly!
- It's OK to:
  - Take time to gather your thoughts before you answer. A silence of 5 seconds may seem very long to you, but it is normal for there to be pauses in conversation.
  - Ask for clarification if you're not sure you understood a question.
  - Ask about next steps and the decision-making timeframe if it hasn't been mentioned.
- Keep your cool.** Sometimes you get an interviewer who acts hostile or impatient or refuses to show any reaction at all. Usually, it happens for a reason. They may be trying to test how you do under pressure. Or, maybe, your interviewer is just having a bad day. Stay calm and professional.

## After the Interview – Logistical and Technical Aspects

- Send a brief and polite thank you note within 24 hours of the interview. (Email is fine.)
- Debrief with your CEU career advisor via email or a career advising session.

## Sample Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself
- Why did you apply for this position?
- Tell me how you approached a situation where...
- Share with me an instance in which you demonstrated...
- What's your greatest professional strength?
- What's your biggest weakness?
- What is your greatest professional achievement?
- What are your professional goals and how does this role fit with those goals?
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- What are your salary requirements?