

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### NJCU Center for Career & Professional Development

#### AN INTERVIEW IS A BIG STEP IN ACHIEVING YOUR CAREER GOALS!

---

Preparing for an interview requires good knowledge of yourself: your strengths and weaknesses, goals. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

1. **Research the company:** This may be the most impactful job interview tip—it demonstrates your interest and preparation. Thoroughly research the company, its values, mission, products/services, recent news, and any other relevant information. Use this knowledge to tailor your answers and show your alignment with the company's goals. In your research, if you develop any questions about their policies, procedures, locations, etc. jot these down in a notepad so you can ask your interviewer about them towards the end of your interview.
2. **Review the Job Description:** Identify the key pieces of the description that make you an ideal candidate and come up with ways to explain your expertise through examples. Make sure to explore where you lack the skills needed and think of ways to explain the deficit and show that you're improving in that area.
3. **Practice common interview questions:** Practicing common interview questions allows you to articulate your experiences and skills effectively. Prepare concise and impactful responses to questions about your strengths, weaknesses, previous experiences, and how you handle challenges. Remember to keep your answers professional and relevant. Use the STAR Method where appropriate (Situation, Task, Action, Result). Do your research and be aware of inappropriate questions/those you legally do not have to respond to (such as, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, ethnic background, political affiliate, disability status, veteran status, etc.)

#### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

---

- Tell me about yourself.
  - This should be similar to your elevator pitch; this is not the time to talk about your cat or favorite book unless it can be relevant!
- What are your strengths/weaknesses when handling...?
- How would you handle...?
- Can you name a time you had to handle a conflict or crisis and how you managed to remediate the situation or keep it under control?
- What makes you the best fit for our team?
- Tell me something about yourself that I didn't find on your resume?

#### STAR METHOD

---

When responding to behavioral or result-oriented questions, utilize the **STAR Method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result). This framework for answering questions gives you a step-by-step guideline for coming up with answers to questions in a way that addresses all the key elements.

**SITUATION** – What is the specific event/issue/scenario you want to tell them about?

**TASK** – What were you charged with, what needed to be done?

**ACTION** – What did you do, and how did you do it? Why did you choose to take that action?

**RESULT** – What happened when you acted? Did things end well?

## EXAMPLE:

**(S)** Last semester in my Introduction to Marketing class, our teacher assigned us to work on building a fictional coffee shop from the ground up. **(T)** After carefully looking at each person's skills and abilities, I was charged with developing a product marketing plan which included developing a budget, developing marketing materials and executing a social media strategy **(A)** I evaluated the money I had at my disposal and allocated the most funds to print materials, and opted to do all of the social media posts myself to save money. **(R)** In the end, we drove many unique visitors to our fictional site and had money in the budget to spare to be spent on product. We received positive feedback from class and had the most lucrative coffee shop this semester.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

---

### PHONE

Often employers will schedule phone interviews to screen candidates. These are often shorter than an in-person interview and can many times be with Human Resources rather than the hiring manager themselves

- Take advantage of what the employer can't see – keep notes and necessary information handy
- Don't read from scripts – employers can tell
- Prepare! This is often your first chance to make a good impression
- Speak clearly and manage all distractions (you shouldn't be outside on the street)
- Make sure you have a solid connection

### VIRTUAL

Many companies rely heavily on virtual interviews to screen and interview candidates, and there are two types. The first, has you log into a system and record your answers to the same questions being asked of all of all candidates – usually there is no one to interact with. The second type is a video interview in which you're speaking with someone else in real time while using Zoom or something similar. Both pose challenges – here are some tips:

- Be sure to find a quiet space to chat
- Check your internet connectivity
- Practice your responses to common interview questions
- Be mindful of the distractions the interviewer may have – since you're not in the room with them you need to hold their attention (try not to ramble on!)
- Keep the things in the background simple (don't make video calls from bed!)
- Look at the camera, not the interviewer

### IN-PERSON

Interviews can occur in offices, on-campus or anywhere in between so be mindful of all where you need to be and who you'll be interviewing with. Most of the time, you can speak with Human Resources to learn more about the interview process, but don't be afraid to ask questions along the way, better to ask up front than to be surprised at the interview!

- Practice getting to the office – transportation can be unreliable so leave plenty of time
- Prepare for interview questions (see additional handouts!)
- Bring multiple copies of your resume
- Dress appropriately. Most companies expect interviewees in a neutral-colored suit – but check with your career counselor for industry-specific advice
- Don't eat or drink at the interview
- Remove your headphones and put your phone away and on silent BEFORE going into the office

## INTERVIEW BEST PRACTICES

---

1. **Prepare and Practice:** Interview skills may come more naturally to some, but everyone benefits from preparation and practice. Make sure you schedule to meet with your Career Advisor to set up a mock interview. If you are running short on time, ask a friend or family member to help you practice.
2. **Dress professionally and maintain good body language:** First impressions matter, so dressing professionally and maintaining good body language is essential. Dress appropriately for the job and company culture. During the interview, make eye contact, sit upright, and exhibit confident and attentive body language. This can positively influence how you are perceived by the interviewer. If you are uncertain of attire: Review Slides
3. **Ask thoughtful questions:** Asking thoughtful questions during or at the end of the interview demonstrates your interest and engagement. If you prepared a list of questions, use them now. Assure your questions are relevant and that they showcase your curiosity about the role, the company, and its culture. Avoid asking questions whose answers can easily be found through basic research and might indicate you didn't do your homework or questions such as salary expectations and anything that would put your interviewer in an uncomfortable position pertaining to their employment.
4. **Highlight your achievements and skills:** It's crucial to highlight your relevant achievements and skills during the interview. Provide specific examples of how you have contributed to previous projects or organizations. Emphasize your strengths and demonstrate how they align with the requirements of the job. Showcasing your accomplishments helps you stand out and leaves a lasting impression. These can include projects, research, publications, volunteer experiences, and awards.
5. **After Your Interview:** Thank your interviewer(s) with a smile and handshake. Once home, send a thank you e-mail or letter. This adds a personal touch and shows your genuineness. It also keeps you fresh in the interviewer's mind. Note: that it is customary to wait 2-4 weeks before hearing back. If you do not hear back from an employer after this time and you have not received notice that you were not the selected candidate, it is okay to reach out and follow-up!

## THANK YOU EMAIL TEMPLATE

---

**Subject line:** Your First and Last Name – Job Title Interview

Dear *[Interviewer's Name]*,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my gratitude for the opportunity to interview for the *[Job Title]* position at *[Company Name]* on *[Interview Date]*. It was a pleasure speaking with you and learning more about the exciting work your team is doing.

I was particularly impressed by *[specific aspect of the company or job that stood out to you]*. Our discussion further solidified my enthusiasm for the role and my desire to contribute to *[Company Name]*. I am confident that my background in *[relevant experience or skill]*, combined with my passion for *[related field or industry]*, would enable me to make a valuable contribution to your team.

Thank you once again for considering my application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information or if there are any additional steps I should take.

Looking forward to the possibility of working together.

Best regards,  
[Your Name]