

A GUIDE TO
Interviewing



*"Bridging your liberal arts education
with your career journey"*

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01



Learn

Learn how to answer the most common interview questions, best practices, and how to handle anxiety

02

Practice



Practice by industry, competency, admissions interviews, or general questions

03

Get Feedback

Share your responses with peers, mentors, counselors, or instructors to help you improve your skills

04



Nail It!



Land the job of your dreams and ride off into the sunset.

05



Skills Employers Look for In Recent College Graduates

Employers place the greatest value on **demonstrated proficiency** in skills that cut across all majors.

Intellectual and Practical Skills:

- Oral communication
- Teamwork skills with diverse groups
- Written communication
- Critical thinking and analytic reasoning
- Complex problem solving
- Information literacy
- Innovation and creativity
- Technological skills
- Quantitative reasoning

Personal and Social Responsibility:

- Ethical judgment and decision making
- Work independently – set priorities, manage time/deadlines
- Self-motivated – ability to take initiative and be proactive

Employers are more likely to hire graduates with these experiences:

- Internship/apprenticeship with a company/organization
- Project in community with people from diverse backgrounds
- Multiple courses requiring significant writing assignments
- Research project done collaboratively with peers
- Advanced, comprehensive senior project/thesis
- Service learning project with community organization
- Study abroad program

Source: Hart Research Associates, Fulfilling the American Dream: Liberal Education and the Future of Work (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2018)

Types of Interviews (adapted from PathwayU.com)

Do you know what kind of interview you'll be doing? Interviews can take many forms, and it's important to know what to expect. If you don't know what your interview is going to look like, contact the recruiter, interviewer, or the Human Resources department.

Screening Interview

These interviews are the first in a series of interviews, usually up to 3. They're shorter and the questions are less in depth. They might ask you basic information like when you can start, your availability, and basic questions about your background.

Classic One-on-One Interview

You meet with one or two interviewers, who chat with you and ask questions about your background. Generally, they're trying to get a sense of you as a person and whether you're the best fit for the company. position, and to get more details on your skills, experiences, and career goals. Think of it as a conversation, not an interrogation.

Phone/Video interviews (e.g. Skype, Zoom, Bluejeans, Webex, etc).

Can be like the "Classic One-on-One Interview" but completed over the phone or via video conferencing system.

Tips: Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Don't engage in other activities while interviewing (using your computer, shuffling papers, chewing gum, etc). Listen closely to your interviewers – you can't rely on their nonverbals. Pay special attention to your tone of voice and smile often. Dress nicely and sit up straight.

Group

Group interviews are common particularly in the early stages of phased interviewing or for positions that require teamwork or leadership. You'll be grouped with other candidates and asked questions or required to do some group activity. Be respectful and interested in the other candidates. Smile and make eye contact. If you're trying to show leadership, facilitate, delegate, and encourage; avoid bossing people around. Speak up but don't speak over others.

Panel

Panel interviews are used most often in government, academia, and for high-level positions. Panel interviews have just one interviewee (that's you) and multiple interviewers, often individuals you'd work with or individuals with different positions in an organization or department. Respond to the person posing the question, making primary eye contact with them while briefly glancing at the others during your response to make them feel included.

Case or Situational

Case interviews are often used for consulting jobs and present you with hypothetical business scenarios and ask you to come up with a solution. There is usually no one "right" answer. The process is as important as the outcome. Listen closely to the description of the case. Feel free to take notes and for a bit of time before responding. Present your overarching idea for an action-oriented solution up front. Show what resources you'll use in the process. Share your reasoning out loud – the employer wants to see your logic and problem-solving ability.

Technical

Technical interviews are often used in some fields to gauge a candidate's aptitude, knowledge, and/or skill base. While technical knowledge/ability is the key to acing these interviews, they also may be looking for personal qualities like communication and interpersonal skills – don't forget that person across the table from you!

"AI" Algorithm-based Interview

If you are invited to a pre-recorded, video interview through a platform, such as [HireVue](#), it is likely a robot interview. AI are used by many large, high volume, employers in order to screen potential candidates more efficiently.

Tips: Be direct as the computer cannot infer implications. Incorporate keywords and phrases that explain what you can contribute, echoing the language of the job posting. Smile, nod and use keywords - hiring software will listen for things like vocal tone and keywords that match the company's job description.

How Do I Prepare for The Interview?

Preparation is critical in conveying a positive and polished image and having a productive and successful interview. Before going on your first interview, there are three steps to take in order to prepare yourself.

1. Know Yourself

- Identify and articulate your skills, interests, and values.
- Consider your strengths and examples demonstrating when you utilized those strengths. Areas for improvement and how you are showing improvements.
- Articulate why you are interested in the position, organization, and/or the field.
- Be able to discuss decisions you have made and the thought behind them.
- Identify accomplishments you are proud of and things you might have done differently.
- Provide examples to demonstrate how you have developed your skills.
- Define your long-term goals.

2. Know the Employer and the Field

- Research the employer, the position, and the industry or field.
- Know what salary range is usual for this type of position.
- Read current media and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field.
- Review mission statements, annual reports, and company literature.
- Think about the organizations competitors, its clients or customers.
- Be familiar with the employer's organizational structure.
- Research organization and industry through Vault, Glassdoor, etc.

3. Practice for the Interview

- Meet with a career advisor to review your strategy and have a practice interview.
- Utilize Big Interview found on the Career Planning website to practice anytime.
- Review interview questions with a friend and/or record yourself and critique your answers.
- Prepare questions you want to ask the employer.

Additional Tips

- Be your "best" self; let them get to know you and what you can bring to the organization.
- Think about what an employer is seeking in an employee and prepare examples to demonstrate your skills.
- Prepare a strategy for every interview; make sure you share the information that you feel is most appropriate and relevant.
- Keep to the point. Don't bring up extraneous matters.
- Be as specific as possible.
- Don't try to dominate the interview. Let the interviewer guide the questions.
- Ask appropriate and well thought out questions - **ALWAYS** have questions for them!
- Don't expect an offer on the spot.

How Do I Discuss My Independent Study At Interviews

Students who complete the Independent Study uniquely gain skills that not only are valued by employers but throughout life.

Common Skills Gained Through Independent Study

- Time Management Strategies
- Decision Making Capabilities
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Organizational Experience
- Research Techniques
- Presentation Skills
- Writing Skills
- Creativity
- Stress Management

Utilizing Independent Study as an Example of Your Work

- Cover Letters/Resume: Mention Independent Study in your application for employment as a project that has prepared you to perform the responsibilities of a specific position.
- Formal and Informal Interviews: In conversations with employers and professionals working at the organization of interest, discuss your Independent Study project and the extent of involvement required of Wooster students to complete this requirement.

Tips for Explaining Your Independent Study to Others

- For people who are not familiar with Independent Study, they might be surprised at the scope of this academic requirement.
- Explain your project in a logical fashion: start at the beginning and explain your activities sequentially. Emphasize specific skills gained and results found during the process.

Example:

Independent Study is a yearlong, self-designed, faculty mentor research project that all College of Wooster students complete before graduation. I chose _____ as my topic of study and prepared a detailed outline planning my project that included targeted completion dates for each phase of the project. Realizing that I would need monetary support to travel to New Mexico to interview members of the Indigenous population I connected to my topic, I contacted various professional organizations and submitted grant proposals to secure \$_____ of funding toward my efforts. I then conducted research _____ databases to identify sources for additional information relevant to the topic. I prepared a draft of interview questions to be used and discussed my strategies for interviews with participants. Upon my return, I transcribed the qualitative portion of the interviews and entered the quantitative data into _____ statistical program to complete an analysis. Once the findings had been determined, I wrote an 80-page thesis describing my study and used Microsoft Excel to create a variety of graphs for presenting the numerical results. I then defended my Independent Study to members of my academic department.

What Are Some Questions Asked by Employers?

1. Open-ended questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you unique?
- What questions you have for me?

2. Questions about your characteristics

- What do you consider to be your major strengths and weaknesses?
- How would a friend or a professor who knows you well describe you?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
- What major challenge have you encountered and how did you deal with it?

3. Questions about your work experience

- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- What job have you enjoyed the most?
- What kind of work environment do you prefer?

4. Questions about the position/employer

- Why did you decide to seek a position with this firm/organization?
- What factors are important to you in a job?
- What are you looking for in a supervisor?
- How do you handle pressure?
- How do you evaluate success?
- What are your long-term goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years/ten years?
- Do you have a geographic preference?
- Are you willing to travel?
- What are your salary expectations?

5. Questions about your college experience

- Why did you choose The College of Wooster?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic ability?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- What have you learned from participating in co-curricular activities/leadership roles?
- What do you like to do in your free time?

Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers to learn about your past behavior in various situations. Why? Past behavior is a better predictor of future behavior than is speculation (on your part) about how you would act in a hypothetical future situation. Reflect, identify high quality examples that demonstrate various skill sets and PRACTICE!

S.T.A.R. Method for Answering Behavioral/Interview Questions:

<u>S</u> ituation	Give context to the problem or task you accomplished
<u>T</u> ask associated with the situation	Describe the specific task or event associated with the situation. Do not give a generalized background of what you've done in the past. The situation and/or task can come from a previous job, class project, student organization, volunteer group, etc.
<u>A</u> ction YOU took	Describe the action <i>you</i> took to accomplish the task or solve the problem. Be sure to focus on YOUR role within the task. What did YOU do? Do not tell what you <i>would</i> do (whenever possible) discuss what you have actually done in the past.
<u>R</u> esult of your action	What happened? What did you learn? What was the impact of your actions?

Be sure not to simply memorize answers. Rather, think through examples so you can tell a more concise, compelling story when asked to recall behaviors.

Example Behavioral-based Interview Questions:

- Describe a time when you successfully used persuasion to convince someone to see things differently.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to set a goal and were able to meet it. (when you did not)
- Give an example of a time when you had to follow a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go 'above and beyond' in order to get the job done.
- When was a time you had too many tasks and you had to prioritize your actions?
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision in the past year.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something, but failed.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- When was a time you had to make an unpopular decision?
- Describe a time you set your sights too high (or too low).

What Are Some Questions Appropriate to Ask During an Interview?

1. What are you looking for in an ideal candidate? What opportunities are there for professional development and growth?
2. How would you describe the office environment culture?
3. What does success look like in this position? How do you measure it?
4. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of this job?
5. What are the goals for this department/organization/firm for the upcoming year?
6. What are your supervisory style?
7. Is there anything about my resume or background that make you question whether I am a good fit for this role?
8. How is conflict managed in this department?
9. What is the nature of your search process?
10. How is work celebrated?
11. What is your favorite part of working for this company?

The End of the Interview

At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you. Make a short, concise summary of your qualifications and stress your interest in the position:

"This interview has convinced me that my abilities match your needs. I am very interested in the position. Could I call you in a few days to check on the status of my application?"

After the Interview

Immediately after the interview, send a thank you note via email to those who interviewed you. Within a few days after your interview, send a short thank you note to refresh the employer's memory of you. This is your opportunity to mention any experience or skills that were not discussed in your interview. Try to offer new information, if possible.

A "post-interview assessment" can help improve your technique and continue to build your confidence and skills. Analyzing the interview, and talking about how you were feeling during and after it, can be very helpful in preparing for the next interview.

Consider discussing the interview with someone who listens well and cares about your success. Comparing notes with others who have gone through the interviewing process. Asking yourself:

What were my strengths in the interview?

What did not go as planned?

What can I do differently next time?

Keep in mind that the art of effective interviewing takes practice

Handling Illegal Questions

By Rochelle Kaplan - Used with Permission

Various federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask you, the job candidate. An employer's questions – whether on the job application, in the interview, or during the testing process – must be related to the job you're seeking. For the employer, the focus must be, "What do I need to know to decide whether this person can perform the functions of this job?"

If asked an illegal question, you have three options:

- You can answer the question – you're free to do so, if you wish. However, if you chose to answer an illegal question, remember that you are giving information that isn't related to the job; in fact, you might be giving the "wrong" answer, which could harm your chances of getting the job.
- You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights. Unfortunately, depending on how you phrase your refusal, you run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational – hardly words an employer would use to describe the "ideal" candidate.
- You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job. For example, the interviewer asks, 'Are you a U.S. citizen?' or "What country are you from?" You've been asked an illegal question. You could respond, however, with "I am authorized to work in the United States." Similarly, let's say the interviewer asks, "Who is going to take care of your children when you have to travel for the job?" You might answer, "I can meet the travel and work schedule that this job requires."

Examples of Illegal Questions and their Legal Counterparts:

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
National Origin/Citizenship	Are you a U.S. citizen? Where were you/your parents born? What is your "native tongue"?	Are you authorized to work in the United States? What languages do you read, speak, or write fluently? (This OK, as long as this ability is relevant to performing the job)
Age	How old are you? When did you graduate? What's your birth date?	Are you over the age of 18?
Marital/Family Status	What's your marital status? Who do you live with? Do you plan to have a family? When? How many kids do you have? What are your childcare arrangements?	Would you be willing to relocate, if necessary? Travel is an important part of the job. Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This OK, as long as it is asked of ALL applicants) This job requires overtime occasionally. Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (This OK, as long as it is asked of ALL applicants)
Affiliations	What clubs or social organizations do you belong to?	List any professional or trade or other organizations that you belong to that you consider reflect your ability to perform this job.
Personal	How tall are you? How much do you weigh?	Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job? (Questions about height and weight are not

		acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to the safely performing the job)
Arrest Record	Have you ever been arrested?	Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should reasonably relate to the performance of the job in question)
Military	If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?	In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve? What type of training or education did you receive in the military?

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Pre-Employment Inquiries –Disabilities

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
Job Performance	Do you have any physical or mental impairment that would keep you from performing the job you seek? What physical or mental impairments do you have that would affect your job performance?	Are you able to perform the essential function of the job you are seeking, with or without accommodations? (OK as long as interviewer has thoroughly described the job)
Attendance Requirements	How many days were you sick in your last job?	Can you meet our attendance requirements? How many days were you absent in your last job? How many Mondays or Fridays were you absent last year on leave other than approved vacation leave?
History of Injury	Do you break bones easily? Do you expect the leg to heal normally?	How did you break your leg?
Drug Use	What medications are you currently taking? How often did you use illegal drugs in the past? Have you ever been addicted to drugs? Have you ever been treated for drug addiction? Have you ever been treated for drug abuse?	Are you currently using illegal drugs? Have you ever used illegal drugs?
Alcohol Use	How much alcohol do you drink? Have you ever participated in an alcohol rehabilitation program?	Do you drink alcohol? Have you ever been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol?
Vision	What is your corrected vision? When did you lose your eyesight? How did you lose your eyesight? Are you color blind?	Do you have 20/20 vision? (If a job requirement.) Can you distinguish between color bands? (If this is an essential function)
Mental State	Do you see a psychiatrist for stress?	How well can you handle stress?
Physical Ability	Are you able to sit? Can you carry objects?	Can you sit for four hours at a time? Can you carry 3lbs boxes to the

		copier? (If essential functions of the job.)
General	<p>Tell me all of your disabilities?</p> <p>Please complete the following medical history:</p> <p>Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list and give dates.</p> <p>What was the date of your last physical exam?</p> <p>How's your family's health?</p> <p>When did you lose your eyesight? How?</p>	<p>What are your job skills, educational background and prior work experience?</p> <p>Are you able to perform the job functions with or without reasonable accommodations? (OK if interviewer has thoroughly described the job)</p> <p>As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on results)</p> <p>Can you demonstrate how you would perform this job-related function?</p>
Wheelchair Use	Why do you use a wheelchair, and will we have to make any accommodations for the wheelchair?	Will you need any accommodation to participate in the recruiting process?

From the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy