



CENTER FOR
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

VOL GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING



INTERVIEW IN STYLE

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL

Wear a blouse or camisole in a light color.



Skirts should be knee-length.



Don't forget stockings!

SUIT
professional neutral colors avoid trendy styles



Suit should be a solid color or subtle pinstripes.



Wear a white or light-colored long-sleeved shirt.



BAG
Professional bag or small purse.



JEWELRY
Stay simple: one pair of earrings and one ring per hand.

SHOES
Avoid open-toe shoes. Basic pumps with a low heel are best.

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL
dress is the appropriate attire for interviews and job fairs.

ACCESSORIES
Be conservative with watch and jewelry.



SHOES
Polished leather should be worn with socks that match the shoe color.

BELT
Match belt to shoes.



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“One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.”

–Arthur Ashe

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

The first step you need to take in preparation for the interview process is to know yourself. Just as successful salespeople must know everything about the product they are selling, you must know your qualifications and be able to “sell” them to an interviewer. It is important to know what you have to offer. What are your skills, accomplishments, and goals?

Interviews are not the time to simply tell what you’ve done, but to sell your skills and give examples of your accomplishments.

Question: Tell me about a recent accomplishment that has given you the most satisfaction.

Simple answer: I coordinated an event that raised over \$5,000 dollars for XYZ Charity.

Selling your accomplishments: As the volunteer coordinator of my student organization, I set a goal to raise the most money to date for XYZ Charity. I decided we should host a benefit concert and contacted several local bands; secured a venue; and coordinated marketing, promotion, and ticket sales. I supervised a group of 20 volunteers and delegated various duties to each person. The concert went smoothly and I am happy to say that we raised over \$5,000, which was double the amount raised a year ago.

This answer not only shows that you met your goal but also provides an excellent demonstration of skills, selling your accomplishments by providing detail about the steps that made the event a success.

The self-assessment in the following section can help you identify your personal qualities and positive job performance traits. In completing the assessment, you will create a list of your skills and accomplishments that you can refer back to before interviews.

QUICK TIP

Usually one of the first questions you will encounter in a job interview is “Tell me about yourself.” Making a list of your accomplishments and skills that match the job requirements will help you answer this question with ease and start the interview off on the right note. The better your skills and traits match the job description, the better your chance of landing the job.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

An important part of knowing yourself is having an accurate assessment of your personal qualities and skills. Identifying these before your interview prepares you to use some of these traits to sell yourself in the interview.

Using the scale below, rate your perception of your competence in each personal quality and skill.

Personal Qualities

Enthusiasm/Energy	4	3	2	1	0
Resourcefulness	4	3	2	1	0
Goal Orientation	4	3	2	1	0
Competitiveness	4	3	2	1	0
Responsibility/Reliability	4	3	2	1	0
Demonstrated Initiative	4	3	2	1	0
Effectiveness as a Team Member	4	3	2	1	0
Proven Work Ethic	4	3	2	1	0
Perseverance	4	3	2	1	0
Quality Orientation	4	3	2	1	0

Excellent=4
Good=3
Average=2
Weak=1
Poor=0

Skills

Analyze	4	3	2	1	0
Create/Develop	4	3	2	1	0
Teach/Train	4	3	2	1	0
Motivate	4	3	2	1	0
Implement	4	3	2	1	0
Administer/Manage	4	3	2	1	0
Communicate	4	3	2	1	0
Sell/Promote	4	3	2	1	0

Think of examples for each rating of 3 or 4. You can use these examples during your interview.

Score Evaluation

58-72 You have acquired most of the traits that employers desire. If you can demonstrate good evidence of these abilities, you have the potential to do very well in job interviews.

45-57 You are a strong candidate. You have many of the necessary skills to succeed in job interviews. You need to build on these strengths and work on the weaker categories.

32-44 There are two ways to look at this score: Either you are average at many things or you are good at some and weak at others. If you are average at many things, you need to identify ways to improve in some of these areas. If you are good at some and weak at others, you need to build on the good points and work on some of the weaker ones.

21-31 There is definite need for improvement. You have ranked yourself as weak on many of the traits that employers value the most. You may want to discuss your results with a Center for Career Development staff member.

20 or lower You should make an appointment with a career advisor.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

We are often asked how students can separate themselves from the rest of the crowd when trying to impress an on-campus interviewer. Should they wear crisp new business suits? Should they spend top dollar on a fresh hairstyle or cut? Maybe do a video practice interview to help cut down on being nervous?

Simply put, all these things will help in impressing employers. But the best way to stand out is to conduct serious research on the company you are interviewing with.

Here at UT's Center for Career Development, we have a long-standing tradition of surveying on-campus recruiters to gauge how well students do while being interviewed for position openings. Each year, employers rate UT students low in two areas: knowledge of how to sell themselves to an employer, and research into the organization.

To offer more information to students on what employers are looking for, we teamed with Clemson University to survey employer expectations concerning first interview preparation research. The survey asked employers to rate 17 points of knowledge a student could learn about their company in preparation for a first interview. The same item was ranked first at both UT and Clemson, and the top five, although ordered slightly differently, were also the same:

Point	UT rank	Clemson rank
Our primary product or service and its history	1	1
Our relative standing in the marketplace	2	5
Who are our typical clients and/or customers	3	2
Where our headquarters is located	4	3
Specific details of the job being interviewed for	5	4

While not in the top five, the item "Who are our competitors?" also ranked highly.

You can gain an advantage during on-campus interviewing by researching these items for each company you plan to interview with. Our website provides links to sites that can help you conduct employer research. You should also use personal contacts, news publications, and other sources of information:

- Company websites
- Glassdoor **glassdoor.com** and Vault **vault.com**
- Chambers of Commerce
- Library business and trade magazines
- Local newspapers (especially the finance and business sections)
- UT Libraries **lib.utk.edu** (especially the D&B Million Dollar Database)
- UT Center for Career Development **career.utk.edu**

PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

Asking questions is an important part of the interview process. Before the interview, compile a list of questions you plan to ask the employer. At the end of your interview, expect the interviewer to ask, “Do you have any questions for me?” Now it is your turn to “interview” the interviewer. It is your opportunity to show off your research and evaluate whether the position and organization have something to offer you.

The questions you ask are just as critical as the responses you give. Although you may have impressed the interviewer with your answers to the questions posed, you can leave him or her doubting your interest in and knowledge of the position and organization by not asking questions or not asking the right questions. Asking thoughtful, intelligent questions requires advance preparation on your part.

Know What Good Questions Do

- Demonstrate interest, preparedness, critical thinking, and desire to achieve.
- Reveal your knowledge about the job, show you pay attention, and establish a personal connection with the interviewer.
- Allow you to learn more about the position and the organization and help you determine if they are right for you.
- Give you the opportunity to further “sell” your qualifications. By listening to the interviewer’s responses, you may learn more about the organization’s needs. Then you can follow up with points showing how you can help them meet those needs.

Know How to Ask

- Ask questions that are of genuine interest to you and will help you make an informed decision.
- Ask questions that show the depth of your research and preparation. Do not ask questions that could easily be answered on the organization’s website or by reviewing the job description.
- Do not ask about salary or benefits until you are offered a job. These types of questions will make the interviewer wonder about your priorities.
- Tailor your questions to the interviewer. A human resources representative may not be able to answer specific questions about day-to-day functions of the position, whereas a manager or supervisor can discuss the more detailed technical aspects of the job.
- Ask questions throughout the interview. You do not have to wait until the end of the interview to ask for clarification of something the interviewer shares. Additionally, if the discussion sparks a question, ask it then—you might forget it by the end of the interview. However, try not to monopolize the conversation with questions and your own agenda. Let the interviewer lead and follow his or her cues.

Know What to Ask

- Make a list of the information you need to learn about the position and the organization. Prepare at least five good questions. Prioritize your questions and write them down to take with you to the interview.
- Consider questions that concentrate on a broad view of the organization and the specific details of the position.
- Review the list of questions that follows. Use them to help you develop your own list or adapt them to your own interests and concerns.

GENERAL SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The Position

- What are the main objectives and responsibilities of the position?
- How does the organization expect these objectives to be met?
- Can you tell me about the primary people with whom I would be dealing?
- Can you describe a typical day?
- Is this a newly created position? If not, how long did the previous person hold it? Was the previous person promoted? What is the potential for promotion?
- How many and whom would I supervise? To whom would I report?
- How and when would my performance be evaluated?
- Where does this position fit into the company's organizational structure?
- What results would you expect from my efforts and on what timetable?
- What improvements need to be made on how the job has been done?

Example: After reading the brochure about your Global Sourcing Internship Program, I was excited about the possibility to develop and implement my own project. What are the chances that this would be a part of my experience and what kinds of projects have interns completed in the past?

The Company

- What are the organization's strengths, and what major problems or challenges does it face?
- What significant changes do you foresee in the near future for the organization?
- What do you see ahead for the company in the next five years?
- What do you see in the future for this industry?
- How does the organization stand in comparison with its main competitors?
- Can you describe the company's culture?
- How does the company recognize diversity, both in its workplace and with its customers?

Example: I saw that your company is a part of USA Freedom Corps. How do you encourage involvement at the local level?

Example: I recently read in Business Week that a major competitor of yours is increasing its market share in your main market. What plan does your firm have to regain its lost market share?

Education and Training

- Are training and development programs required or offered within the organization? Is training done in a classroom or group session, or individually?
- Does the organization support further education for its employees?
- Does advancement to upper management usually require an advanced degree?

Example: I read in your literature that your training program is composed of three six-month rotations. Would I have any input into where I would go at the end of the rotation? How do you evaluate employee performance during the training period?

Example: I understand that the company provides opportunities for formal learning through classroom and computer-based learning. As part of this process, do you have a mentor program?

The Interviewer

- Can you please tell me how your career has developed at the organization? Would someone entering the organization today have similar opportunities?
- How would you describe your management style and philosophy?
- What do you enjoy most about working for this organization?
- If you could change one thing about your position or the organization, what would it be?
- What qualities are you looking for in a new hire?

The Closing

- Are there any further questions about my qualifications I can answer?
- What is the next step in the process?
- When do you expect to make a hiring decision for this position?

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

When preparing for an interview, take some time to practice your interviewing skills and gain feedback and coaching about your performance from a professional.

Practice Interview

One of the best ways to practice and prepare is to sign up for a practice interview.

A practice interview is a video recorded interview that you conduct with a member of the Center for Career Development staff. The interview is designed to replicate the type of interview that you might experience with an employer. The staff member who conducted the interview reviews the video with you and provides feedback on things that you did well and areas that need improvement. The whole process usually takes about 45 minutes.

To make an appointment for a practice interview, call 865-974-5435 at least 24 hours in advance. If you are scheduling the interview to meet a class assignment, remember that spaces fill up quickly and make your appointment early in the semester.

On the day of your practice interview, please arrive on time. If you wish to wear formal interview attire you may do so, but it is not required. You must bring a copy of your resume. If you need to cancel your interview, please do so as soon as possible so another student can take your spot.

InterviewStream

InterviewStream is an innovative tool that allows you to practice your interview skills online with a webcam. InterviewStream creates a realistic interview experience in which you are asked challenging questions and must respond. You can use InterviewStream whenever and as often as you want to prepare for an employment opportunity. Just log in to your Hire-A-VOL account and click on the InterviewStream logo. If you don't have a webcam, you can schedule a time to use the program at the Center for Career Development by calling 865-974-5435.

Other Options

You may also practice your interview skills with friends or family members, or by yourself in front of a mirror. Whatever you do, remember that with every skill you have ever learned, you had to first learn the technique and then practice. Interviewing well is a skill that takes practice!

QUICK TIP

Working with someone on your interview skills and getting feedback on your performance in a practice interview is somewhat like working with a sports coach to improve your game—the time you spend practicing will help you improve. In today's competitive job market, you must always be prepared and in top shape!

DURING THE INTERVIEW

BE PROMPT AND PREPARED

On the day of your interview you should plan to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your scheduled interview time. Be sure to ask for accurate directions and take into consideration the distance you must travel to reach your destination, traffic you might encounter, parking, and even time zone changes if it's a long trip.

Bring with you (organized in a folio)

- Academic transcripts
- Extra copies of your resume
- List of at least three professional references
- Pen and paper

Do not bring

- Backpack or book bag
- Large handbag
- Laptop computer

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously. Even if employees of an organization dress casually on the job, you should dress up for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer.

Your clothing should be conservative and well fitted; it should not take center stage. If you are primarily remembered for your attire, you have probably made an error in judg-

ment. All clothes should be neatly ironed. Suit jackets usually have tacking stitches to hold vents in place before purchase; make sure these are removed. You should also carefully inspect for dangling threads, lint, and missing buttons.

Avoid carrying a backpack or large purse to the interview, but bring a portfolio with copies of your resume, transcript, a note pad, pen, and a list of questions for the employer.

A warning: If you smoke, avoid doing so in your interview outfit. Cigarette odors cling to your clothes, and smoking is an undesirable habit to most employers.

If you still have questions or need more ideas, observe well-dressed individuals in your industry on the job or at career fairs and information sessions.

Dressing conservatively is always your best bet. You want to be remembered for your skills, not your clothing!

See the inside front and back covers for examples of business professional and business casual dress.

Interview Attire

- A neutral dark or gray suit, solid or with subtle pinstripes. If you wear a skirt, it should be knee-length.
- Avoid high slits.
- A white or muted light-colored shirt or blouse is best under the suit jacket. Do not show cleavage.
- There is more flexibility with ties, but conservative colors and patterns are most appropriate.
- Neutral hosiery or dark matching socks with polished leather lace-up shoes or basic low-heel pumps. Avoid open-toe shoes or sandals.
- Watches and jewelry should be simple and conservative, with no dangly or flashy earrings.
- Piercings should be limited to one per ear.
- Avoid wearing cologne, aftershave, or perfume on the day of your interview.
- Only light makeup is recommended, with minimal eye makeup and clear or light nail polish.
- If you have facial hair, make sure it is neatly groomed.
- If you carry a purse, keep it simple and small.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

When meeting someone for the first time, people often form an opinion in the first 30 seconds or less! Your image and appearance are important factors that contribute to that first impression.

When meeting the person you are interviewing with for the first time, smile and look alert. Nothing leaves a better first impression and communicates more enthusiasm. Give a firm handshake and introduce yourself with confidence: "Hello, Mr. Jones, I'm Sue Smith. It's very nice to meet you."

You should always be aware of cultural differences in etiquette and sensitive to other customs, especially if you are interviewing with an international firm or for a position involving work in another country. Research the customs and culture ahead of time.

INTERVIEW STYLES AND STRATEGIES

The interview is an opportunity for an employer to gain more information about you through a question-and-answer exchange. Interviews may include behavioral questions, open-ended questions, problem and puzzle questions, or a case interview process. This section includes information on each of those elements.

Behavioral Interview

During a behavioral interview, the interviewer asks questions that are aimed at getting you to provide specific examples of how you have developed the required skill set for the job. Interviewers rely on this method to evaluate experiences and behaviors as indicators of the applicant's potential for success.

Employers are looking for work-specific skills such as computer programming or CAD; functional or transferable skills that remain the same from one job to another, such as good communication or math skills; and adaptive or self-management skills (are you dependable, a team player, a self-directed worker, a problem solver, a decision maker?).

QUICK TIP

In a behavioral interview, make sure to provide specific examples. Focus on providing proof-by-example descriptions of your capabilities.

To provide the most helpful information, apply the STAR technique:

Situation or Task. Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish. Your description should reflect a specific event or situation, not a generalized sense of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Action you took. Describe the action you took. Be sure to keep the focus on you—even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

Result you achieved. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Wherever you can, quantify your results.

Example

Situation: Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, the Beacon, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

Action: I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits and circulation of the Beacon to other ad media in the area. I also set up a special training session for the account executives with a business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

Result: We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period the year before.

Here are some commonly asked behavioral interview questions:

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give an example of using good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give an example of setting a goal and being able to meet or achieve it.
5. Tell about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
8. Tell about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
9. Tell about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
10. Give an example of having to make a split-second decision.
11. How do you typically deal with conflict? Give an example.
12. Tell about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
13. Tell about a difficult decision you've made in the past year.
14. Give an example of trying to accomplish something and failing.
15. Give an example of showing initiative and taking the lead.
16. Tell about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer, co-worker, or group member.
17. Give an example of a time when you motivated others.
18. Tell about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
19. Give an example of missing an obvious solution to a problem.
20. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
21. Tell about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
22. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

Career Readiness Competencies and Interview Questions

Examples of behavioral interview questions to practice the STAR method

Competency	Definition	Examples of Behavioral Interview Questions
<p>Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving</p>	<p><i>Practice sound reasoning and analytical skills to make decisions and overcome problems</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give an example of a time you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem. • Tell me about a situation where you had to deal with an upset customer, co-worker, or group member. • Tell me about a difficult decision you have had to make and the reasoning you used to make the decision. • Tell me about a time when you worked in a situation where rules or guidelines were not explicit. How did you accomplish the task and what guided your decision making process?
<p>Oral and Written Communication</p>	<p><i>Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly to a variety of audiences and employ effective public speaking skills</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a time in which you were able to influence someone's opinion. • Tell me about a time when you successfully delivered a presentation. What made it successful? • Discuss an effective written document or report you completed. What made it effective and why are you particularly proud of it? • Tell me about a time when you did not communicate well. What did you learn from it?
<p>Teamwork/ Collaboration</p>	<p><i>Build collaborative relationships with co-workers and be able to work well in a team environment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you successfully built and maintained a relationship with a co-worker or client. What were your strategies? • Describe how you have contributed to an organization's or employer's mission. • Tell me about a time when you worked on a team. What was your role and impact on the team?
<p>Digital Technology</p>	<p><i>Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to complete tasks; demonstrate effective adaptability to new technologies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a challenge you have had in solving a technical or software-related problem. What were your steps and what was the outcome? • Tell me about a time when you sought to develop technical skills with software or a tool. What was your learning process? • Provide an example of a time when you had to change how you work to adapt to a new technology. • Have you ever had to introduce a new process or technology to a group of people? If so, please explain your method.

<p>Leadership</p>	<p><i>Utilize the strengths of others to achieve common goals; use interpersonal skills to develop and motivate others</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give an example of a time you showed initiative and took the lead on a project. • Give an example of a time when you motivated others. • Tell me about a time when you delegated tasks to others. How did you decide what to delegate to different individuals?
<p>Professionalism/ Work Ethic</p>	<p><i>Exhibit effective work habits such as punctuality, working productively, personal accountability, integrity, and ethical behavior</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give an example of a time you set a goal and the steps you took to achieve it. • Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond to get the job done. • Tell me about a time when you had several obligations and had to prioritize your time. How did you decide what to prioritize? Were you successful? • Give an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. How did you handle the situation?
<p>Career Management</p>	<p><i>Identify skills, strengths, knowledge, experiences, and areas of growth related to career goals; navigate job options and pursue opportunities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you have received feedback from others. What did you learn and how have you utilized it? • Give an example of a time when you acted with integrity in a job or organization. • What have you done during your time in college to become better prepared for your career? • Tell me about a professional accomplishment you are proud of.
<p>Global/Intercultural Fluency</p>	<p><i>Demonstrate openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people; understand individuals' differences</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when you recognized and overcame your own biases. • Give an example of a time when you worked with people who had different beliefs and values than you. • Give an example of a time when you showed inclusivity of others.

Adapted from the *NACE Career Readiness Competencies*

Open-Ended Questions

A typical first interview question might be an open-ended question such as “Tell me about yourself.” You should be prepared to tell an interviewer about yourself on a professional or career-oriented level.

Before your interview, think about what you have done that has prepared you for the job. Prepare and rehearse a brief description of your education and previous experiences that will highlight how you would be a good match for the job. Keep your response concise and accentuate the positive. Do not discuss personal issues such as age, children, family, or religious affiliation.

Here are some commonly asked open-ended questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your long- and short-range goals and objectives? When and why did you establish these goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
3. Why did you choose this major? This career?
4. How would you describe your ideal job?
5. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
6. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career? In a company like ours?
7. Tell about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
8. Are you a team player?
9. What motivates you?
10. Why should I hire you?
11. How would you describe yourself?
12. How would a friend or professor who knows you well describe you?
13. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
14. Where do you want to be 10 years from now?
15. Do you handle conflict well?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
18. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
19. Do you handle pressure well?
20. How much training do you think you'll need to become a productive employee?
21. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
22. Describe your most rewarding college experience.
23. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?
24. What is your greatest strength?
25. What is a weakness you have?
26. What led you to choose your field or major?
27. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
28. Why did you choose to attend your college?
29. How has your education prepared you for your career?
30. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?

31. Are your grades a good indication of your academic achievement?
32. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
33. What were your favorite classes? Why?
34. Why is your GPA not higher?
35. How familiar are you with the community where we are located?
36. Are you willing to travel? How much?
37. Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
38. What do you know about our company?
39. Is money important to you?
40. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
41. What criteria are you using to evaluate potential employers?
42. Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
43. Will you relocate? Does relocation bother you?
44. What kind of salary are you looking for?
45. What have you learned from your mistakes?

QUICK TIP

Don't forget to ask the interviewer for a business card before you leave the interview.
You will need this information when you follow up after the interview.

Problem or Puzzle Questions

A handful of employers make a practice of asking problem or puzzle questions during an interview. These are usually done to test logical thinking skills, intelligence, and your ability to think on your feet and solve problems under stress. The effectiveness of this type of interview is in doubt, however, and it is rarely used.

Problem or puzzle questions usually fall into three categories:

1. Those with a correct answer. *Example: There are three ants at the three corners of a regular triangle. Each ant starts moving on a straight line toward another, randomly chosen corner. What is the probability that none of the ants collide?* (The correct answer, by the way, is one in four. Can you figure out why?)
2. Those with no correct answer but with a recommended approach. *Examples: How many gas stations are there in the United States? Design a spice rack for a person who is blind.* The interviewer is looking at how you approach the question. Does your approach provide a reasonable way to view the problem and lead to an approximate solution? On the gas station problem, you might start with the population of the United States, estimate the number of vehicles, estimate the number of vehicles served by the average gas station, and come up with an answer.
3. Those with no correct answer that test the imagination. *Examples: If you could be a breakfast cereal, what would you be? What would you like to be the epitaph on your gravestone?* Responses to these questions would be difficult for a psychologist to interpret. The best advice in handling them is to try to show some imagination or positive attributes: "My breakfast choice would be Special K because it's part of a good nutrition team."

These types of questions are not common but can be very important. Don't start talking right away. Think the question through and organize your thoughts. Ask clarifying questions and make sure you get as much information as you can. Finally, don't be frivolous or make wisecracks about the question.

Case Interview

The case interview process is typically used by management consulting firms, law firms, counseling and social work organizations, and police departments. Employers use the case interview to help them understand your thought process and evaluate how you might handle certain situations under pressure. In a case interview, you will likely be presented with a dilemma and asked to analyze the situation, identify the main issues, and discuss how you would solve the problem. Interviewers ask case questions to see how well you listen, think and use logic behind your thoughts, and articulate your thoughts under pressure.

Your job during the case interview is to become the professional in the situation presented to you by the interviewer. You must ask questions to clarify the facts, explore the bigger picture, think about all the issues, and then come to a conclusion. There is really no right or wrong answer; you are being evaluated on the process you use to structure a competent approach and come up with an appropriate solution.

Make Your Case

1. Listen to the question. While the interviewer is presenting the question, listen carefully. This may be one of the most important skills you can demonstrate.
2. Establish that you understand the question. Summarize the highlights of the problem aloud.
3. Determine the objectives. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the objectives. Verify these aloud.
4. Ask questions. You will want to ask questions to obtain additional information and demonstrate to the interviewer that you are capable of asking inquiring questions under pressure.
5. Lay out the framework. Make sure you explore the bigger picture and formulate actions that will help you implement a strategy.
6. Manage your time. You may only have about 15 minutes to state your answer, so don't get bogged down in the details.
7. Show your enthusiasm. Interviewers want employees who are excited about problem solving.
8. Summarize and bring closure to the case. At this point you will want to review your findings and make recommendations.

Make the effort to practice extensively before participating in a case interview. For more information about case interviews, visit quintcareers.com and casequestions.com.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

FOLLOW-UP

Send a thank-you note as soon as possible after your interview. Either mail a handwritten letter on appropriate stationary within 48 hours or send an email within 24 hours. A sample thank-you letter is included on the following page.

EVALUATION

After the interview, take some time to evaluate. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is this the job for me?
- Is this a good fit for both parties involved?
- Was I prepared for this interview?
- Would I do anything differently next time?

If your answers show that you prepared and presented yourself well, pat yourself on the back for having done everything possible to ace your interview.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

Michael Smith
2521 Kingston Pike
Knoxville, TN 37919
865-555-5555

June 22, 20xx

Ms. Sara Jordan, Director
Campus Recruiting
Acme Corporation
1000 Peachtree Road
Atlanta, GA 30340

Dear Ms. Jordan:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to interview with Acme Corporation for the District Sales Representative position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about the position.

I would like to stress my interest in the position and my enthusiasm for working with Acme Corporation. I believe my education and internship experience in the marketing and sales industry fits ideally with the job requirements outlined.

I feel that I could make a significant contribution to your company. Thank you again for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 865-555-5555 or msmith@utk.edu. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Michael Smith

REMOTE INTERVIEWS

Some employers use telephone or video interviews to conduct initial screenings or full interviews. Remote interviews can present a challenge if you are not ready. Being organized and well prepared is the key to success.

There are several things you will want to have handy for remote interviews:

- A copy of your resume and list of references
- Paper and pens or pencils for taking notes
- A copy of your transcript
- Any correspondence you have had with the employer, including company literature and information
- Notes you have on the organization
- Your personal calendar and class schedule for the semester in case you need to schedule a company visit or another interview

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Because we often use the telephone for chatting with friends, it is important to restructure your attitude and adopt a professional manner when answering or using the phone during the job search process. Answer the phone in a pleasant and professional manner and not with jokes or slang. If you share a land line with roommates or if others may answer your phone, talk with them about this concern as their behavior reflects on you.

Take the call in the privacy of a room, if possible. Consider using a land line, as it will typically give you a better connection. If the telephone is in a noisy location, ask the interviewer to wait a moment, then quickly move to a quieter location, turn off music, ask roommates to be quiet, etc. You want to be able to totally focus on the telephone interview and not be distracted. If you receive another call during the interview, do not stop to take the other call. If the beeping continues, apologize to the interviewer and ask them to continue.

Your posture while you are on the telephone can affect your voice. Slouching in a chair or lying on the bed or floor can cause your voice to be more casual and hard to understand. Sit as you would in an actual interview or at a desk with your notes in front of you.

Avoid chewing gum, eating, drinking, or smoking while on the telephone interview. These actions are rude during an interview, and the sounds are actually amplified on the telephone.

Energy and enthusiasm need to come across in your voice. Occasionally smile as you talk, as this will also come through in your voice. Talk slowly and clearly during the telephone interview. Avoid using a speaker.

Consider doing a practice telephone interview with a friend and taping the session to identify areas where you can improve.

VIDEO INTERVIEW

While telephone interviews are still more common, video interviews are gaining popularity. Like phone interviews, video interviews are a simple cost- and time-effective way of interviewing over long distances. In addition to the considerations for a phone interview, there are a few extra things to keep in mind:

Well before the Interview

- Download and register on the program you will be using. (Very often this will be Skype or one of a few others.)
- Use an appropriate user name. Like your email address, it should be something professional.
- Test and check the hardware you will be using. Do your webcam and microphone work?
- Consider your background. This means no inappropriate or distracting items in view of the camera. Ask roommates or others to stay out of the room on interview day. Secure pets in another room.
- Check room lighting to make sure you're easily visible in the camera. Look for dark shadows or excessive brightness.
- Practice using the program (with an appropriate background etc.) with a friend to make sure everything is ready.
- If you're interviewing on a program like HireVue, you may not actually be talking to a person. HireVue uses text questions which you read and then are given an allotted time to respond. Know the time limit (usually three minutes) and practice keeping your answers to that length.
- Practice using InterviewStream at the Center for Career Development or through Hire-A-VOL.

On Interview Day

- Choose professional attire that will show up well on camera. Dark, subdued colors do better than light and bright ones.
- Take just as much care for your appearance as you would for an in-person interview. New technology allows for lifelike video quality, so attention to detail is important.
- Close all nonessential programs and processes to make the most of your computer's speed.
- Keep a note pad handy so you can easily write notes during the interview.

During the Interview

- Use your notes when need be, but do not rely on them more than you would in a live interview.
- Talk and look into the camera (instead of the computer screen), especially while answering questions. Do not look around your room or away from the camera.
- Do not do anything else on the computer while interviewing. Any other activity will be obvious to the employer.
- Make sure to use the picture-in-picture so you can see how you will look to the interviewer.

Ending on a Positive Note

At the end of the call or video session, the interviewer will usually explain what you can expect to happen next. Before the interview is ended, be sure you have the interviewer's name, title, company, and telephone number. After a remote interview it is appropriate to send a brief thank-you note. Refer to the interview and to one or two items that were discussed and reiterate your interest in the position.

THE COMPANY VISIT

Most companies that recruit on college campuses include a company visit (sometimes called a plant trip, second interview, site visit, or office visit) as a major part of the hiring process. The company visit is generally a full day of interviewing and related activities at the company site. After the company visit is completed and an evaluation conducted, an offer may be made.

There is no way to describe every aspect of what you can expect in a company visit, because employers vary greatly in how they arrange them. The length of the trip, number of people involved, levels of people interviewed, types of tests conducted, and degree of formality can differ from one company to the next.

This section focuses on information that is fairly consistent for most companies to help you understand the nature of the company visit, how to prepare for it, and how to conduct yourself most effectively during the visit.

A visit gives the company an in-depth assessment of a candidate before making a job offer. The company visit is time-consuming and expensive for employers, so they screen a large number of applicants down to a few who are invited to visit. The company visit is generally the last step in the selection process before an offer is made. The company is confident that the candidate who is invited to visit has the technical skills and intelligence to do the job. The visit gives them an opportunity to confirm that there is a good match between the candidate's goals and the career opportunity. They also attempt to see that there is good chemistry between the candidate and the company's culture.

A company visit also allows the candidate an opportunity to see the company and some of its people firsthand in order to make a wiser decision if an offer is made. The company visit provides the candidate with an opportunity to learn more about the position, the long-term career opportunities, the company's employees, the company itself, and the local community. The company will usually be doing as much selling as evaluating, because this is the information the candidate will use in deciding whether to accept or decline an offer. The candidate, like the company, is trying to determine whether or not there is a good fit between the two.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

Since a visit is the final step for most companies in deciding whether to make a job offer, it should not be taken lightly. Attempt to learn as much about the company as possible. Preparation should draw on the following sources:

- Notes taken after the initial interview
- Company website
- Annual report

- Promotional material
- Industry and business publications
- Former students who are now employed by the company
- Current employees in the line of work for which you are interviewing
- People who have had direct dealings with the company or its products

You should prepare to present yourself as being knowledgeable about the company, its products or services, and the career opportunity being discussed. The better prepared you are, the more probable it is that the company will see you as enthusiastic, driven, motivated, mature, and thorough.

Use the information you have obtained to develop insightful questions that show interest in the company and the position. Your questions should demonstrate your thorough preparation for the visit but should also provide the type of information that will support an informed decision to accept or decline an offer. To prepare these questions, you should investigate the company's mission, long-range goals, business philosophy, and management style. You should also research the community in which the company is located.

Position your questions carefully during the interview process. For example, you might ask recent hires about training, promotion, performance evaluation, and community life. More experienced interviewers can be asked about corporate culture, long-term plans, company history, and other topics where experience enhances the value of a response. Good questions will cover a wide range of topics:

- Corporate goals and direction
- Career enhancement
- Market growth opportunities
- Competitive environment
- Research and development
- Evaluation system
- Career paths of recent hires
- Commitment to training
- Community lifestyle

Questions such as "So what do you all do?" or "What are the benefits?" do not sit well with most interviewers. These questions show shallowness and a lack of concern for the key criteria that are being judged during the visit. The first type of questions begs information that should have already been discovered, and the second reflects an overemphasis on matters that will be explained in good time.

While knowledge, good insightful questions, and a sharp business outlook will go a long way toward a successful company visit, a lack of personal preparation can detract from your positive image. What factors constitute good personal preparation? They include leaving personal problems at home, taking appropriate business dress for the type of company you are visiting, and having a well-groomed appearance (hair, face, skin, nails, etc.).

Candidates often put themselves at a disadvantage by packing carelessly, neglecting to take grooming aids, or leaving for the visit with pressures from school deadlines. These factors can contribute to a poor company visit.

ARRANGING THE TRIP

An invitation to a company visit will usually come from a contact person at the company. This person will become your source of information about all aspects of the trip, and any questions before the trip can be addressed to him or her.

The majority of company visits are one full day in length. This generally necessitates an overnight stay in the city where the company is located. Travel will be either by flying or driving, depending upon distance and your preference. Usually trips of more than 200 miles will justify flight.

If you are flying in, it is a good idea to use a travel agent for flight arrangements. Give the agent your desired travel dates and times. The agent will search for the best times, report back to you, and then book the flight at no extra cost.

Some companies are prepared to schedule all the arrangements for the company visit. They will reserve and prepay the hotel room and schedule and prepay the flights. Some offer these conveniences only when requested by the candidate.

If the company is not prepaying the flight, you should have a method of payment for the travel agent. Confirm your hotel reservations with your contact at the company and make sure they know up front how payment will be handled. If you are flying, you should also discuss arrangements for ground transportation in advance with your contact.

After receiving confirmation of your travel arrangements, call or send a note to your contact in the company confirming your reservations and travel plans. This step is important to avoid any last-minute mix-ups or confusion.

Candidates who are married sometimes request that their spouse accompany them on the visit. Some employers may offer to include your spouse on the visit, and others will offer a later visit that includes him or her, after an offer has been made. If your spouse is accompanying you on the visit, discuss arrangements for him or her—including transportation, activities during the day, and hotel reservations—with your company contact person.

Get all directions ahead of time. If anything at all is unclear about dates, times, or locations, call your company contact person to clear things up before departure. You should leave knowing how you will get from the airport to the hotel to the interview site and your first meeting of the day.

ARRIVAL

It is usually a good idea to arrive in the city the night before your company visit. If possible, try to avoid very late flights or the last flight into the city. This will help avoid the problems that can arise from airline delays and cancellations.

Once in town, go to the hotel and check in. Many hotels have courtesy vans from the airport. In other cases, you may need to take a taxi. Keep any ground transportation receipts for later reimbursement.

When checking into the hotel, ask whether you have any messages (the company may have left information for you) and verify any prepayment agreement. Most

hotels will ask to imprint a credit card for any charges not covered by the company. Other notes on the hotel stay:

- Schedule a morning wake-up call with the front desk, allowing plenty of time to get cleaned and dressed, pack, and check out, in addition to setting the alarm on your cell phone.
- If your room is unsatisfactory for any reason—particularly if it's in a noisy location—don't hesitate to ask the hotel to change it.
- Local calls often are not free. They often cost anywhere from 50 cents to over a dollar each.
- Do not bill any long-distance calls to the room. Call collect, use a credit card, or call from your cell phone.
- Review the bill upon checkout to ensure its accuracy.

THE EVENING BEFORE

Many companies will arrange for you to meet an employee for dinner on the evening of your arrival. This dinner is designed to give you an opportunity to relax and meet an employee while getting a casual sense of the next day's schedule, the company, the city, and any other pertinent topics.

Your dinner companion might be a line manager, your key contact, a recent hire at the company, or an alum of your school. The degree of informality and nature of conversation at dinner can vary, but they are usually quite relaxed.

To a degree, the dinner is an interview. Any dinner companion can serve as an evaluator, so your behavior should always reflect maturity and professionalism. The dinner host may be evaluating your social graces, manner of speech, conversational skills, ability to mix business and pleasure, and maturity.

If a dinner is included in your company visit, you should dress appropriately; eat moderately; avoid alcoholic beverages beyond a glass of wine, a beer, or a single drink; ask good, penetrating questions revolving around the topic of discussion; and relax. The dinner is generally social in nature and you should be yourself, although it should be your professional self that comes through.

When you return to the hotel, remember to leave a wake-up call for morning, use a travel alarm clock or the alarm in your phone, and have a parent or friend call in the morning to make sure you wake up with plenty of time to prepare. No mistake is worse than tardiness.

Be prepared to check out of the hotel when you leave for the company site in the morning. Failing to do so can result in an extra night being charged to the company. Take any baggage with you, as it may be out of the way to return to the hotel at the end of the day.

INTERVIEW DAY

The day of the interview is generally a very busy one. Different companies set up different types of schedules. Many will schedule three to five hour-long interviews with various levels of management in a one-on-one setting—but interviews may be shorter or longer, fewer or more numerous.

Some employers schedule group interviews with four to 12 candidates visiting at one time. The candidates engage in both group sessions and one-on-one interviews. The group visit is more difficult for to arrange, but it gives the company a chance to see each candidate among peers, and candidates a chance to see some of those who might be a part of their training group.

Most employers are well prepared for candidate visits. Many conduct formal interview training for their managers, and these companies usually provide very good interview sessions. Interviewers will probably have scanned your resume and be familiar with your background. They will attempt to assess your motivation and drive—to see what makes you strive for success. Each interviewer will be attuned to particular strengths and weaknesses.

You may hear the same question from three or four different people, yet must give as good an answer to the fourth as to the first. This can be tiring, but it may also indicate an area of particular concern to the company. If the employer is not well prepared, you will have to carry the interview with your questions and observations.

You can probably expect to meet one-on-one with department managers and first-line supervisors of the hiring area. You may also meet with a second- or third-level manager who has had experience in many different areas of the company. Finally, you may meet with a vice president of human resources or a director-level manager to round out your exposure to the company.

If you are interviewing at a plant location, an employment manager or plant manager will probably conduct a tour of the plant at some point. While this is usually a relaxed tour, be aware that you are still being interviewed, even in this setting.

Companies usually try to structure the itineraries to meet your schedule, and many design the day to provide a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It is important to the company that you feel as comfortable as possible about the visit so you can accurately assess your feelings about the job, company, location, etc. These opportunities are usually provided through a host-guest relationship. Remember that just as you are selling yourself to the company, the company is also selling itself to you.

Anyone you meet—for even a few minutes—is a potential evaluator, so you must remain sharp and confident at all times. At no time can you reflect a lack of professionalism and expect a positive response.

DEPARTURE

The last meeting of the day will often be with your contact person or personnel manager. This session is to answer any final questions, explain follow-up procedures, discuss reimbursement, and take care of any additional details. After the visit, you will be directed back to the airport for the flight home. Most companies structure the day to allow you to depart the facility between 3 and 5 p.m.

Before you leave, make sure that all your questions have been answered and that you understand both your and the company's areas of responsibility for follow-up. These should be discussed during the last session of the day.

INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

As mentioned earlier, most daylong company visits are packed with interviews. Under the pressure of numerous back-to-back interviews, it is easy to grow weary and ignore some points that are important to your success.

During a company visit, you will be speaking with a variety of managers at differing levels of the corporate hierarchy. It is important that you be yourself, maintain a positive attitude, and relax as much as possible. Take the opportunity to ask a lot of questions, get a feel for the company's operating environment, and speak with as many people as possible. This gives you a better understanding of the people and environment in which you might eventually be employed. You may discover valuable information in unexpected settings: waiting for an interviewer in a reception area, lunching in the company cafeteria, or speaking with a secretary in a manager's office.

Most interview questions are geared toward assessing your communication skills, teamwork, leadership capabilities, interpersonal skills, and desires as they relate to both the current position and your long-range career goals. It is very important to understand that you are being probed during the company visit and to take a long-range view when preparing your responses.

Some companies assign each interviewer a specific quality or skill to focus on during the interview. One interviewer will look at leadership ability, one at analytical ability, another at communication skills, and so on. In other companies, each interviewer determines his or her questions independently—an approach that may appear less coordinated to the candidate. In either case, following the visit all the interviewers will meet to discuss the candidate and make a decision.

SALARY

Salary is a touchy topic that often catches students off guard. If questioned about salary expectations, you can respond in one of two ways:

- Give a broad range. "I would hope with my background and qualifications to be making between \$36,000 and \$42,000." The range given should be realistic and based upon research of starting salaries in the industry and for the position being discussed.
- Sidestep the question: "I'm sure that if you make me an offer it will be commensurate with my qualifications and the current industry salary structure."

Avoid giving an exact figure in response to a question about salary whenever possible. If pressed by an interviewer, it is best to give a range.

Candidates are often tempted to bring up the salary issue themselves. As a general rule, it is best not to mention salary until the company brings it up. Salary will usually not be a topic of conversation until an offer is made.

TESTING

Many companies test candidates before extending an offer to visit the company or during the visit itself. This testing may consist of standard mathematical and verbal tests—similar to the SAT or ACT, but much briefer. Be aware that this type of testing may be conducted and that no real preparation is possible—although you should get plenty of rest the evening before a test to aid clear thinking.

Some companies administer personality tests that involve numerous questions for which there are no right or wrong answers. There is no benefit to trying to “psych out” a personality test. Answer honestly with your initial reaction to each question.

Many companies also test candidates for use of illegal drugs. This encompasses testing for all controlled substances and usually takes the form of a urine sample. Be aware that this test may occur and that failure to submit to a drug test may end further employment consideration.

COMMUNITY

Make an effort to learn about the surrounding community if you may be relocating there. Look at the website of the local chamber of commerce and other information on the area. An apartment guide or home guide is probably available through the chamber or the realty association for use in selecting a residence. During the visit, question people—particularly those closest to your age—about housing, entertainment, cost of living, and other personal concerns.

EXPENSES AND FOLLOW-UP

Expense handling and reimbursement vary from company to company, but nearly all will handle this part of the process with a sensitive eye toward candidates' needs. Generally, most major travel and lodging expenses will either be prepaid by the company or put on a credit card by the student and then reimbursed by the company.

If possible, it is a good idea to secure a major credit card for interviewing and later business travel. This will provide the ability to pay expenses when the need arises and will help to avoid any potentially embarrassing situations.

If a credit card is not an option and you are short on cash, many companies are willing to prepay expenses. Never turn down a company visit because of low funds! By talking to the contact person in the company, you may find that they can help. Companies are often willing to assist students by prepaying airline tickets and hotel rooms, and they may even provide cash up front for use in travel.

Many incidental expenses are also usually reimbursable, including parking, cab fares, business phone calls, meals, and tips. You are fully responsible for personal incidental

expenses: room service snacks, newspapers and magazines, personal phone calls, gifts, in-room movies, and other personal items.

Always collect receipts for expenses. Even if the hotel is prepaid, you should have the resources to cover the bill in case of an error or misunderstanding.

While expense reimbursement is not an overriding issue, it is important to use common sense and good judgment. An expense report that includes unnecessary or unusually high expenditures is generally frowned upon. Meals need not be at a fast-food restaurant, but they should be reasonable, and you should avoid expensive wine and other high-priced menu items. The hotel's restaurant prices are usually a good measure of how much to spend.

AFTER THE VISIT

Following your visit, send a personal letter of thanks to all the people you met and talked with. Email is appropriate if you have access to addresses. While this may not affect the probability of getting an offer, it is a common courtesy and will definitely be remembered if you end up working there.

A letter of thanks to your main contact person is mandatory. This letter or email should reaffirm your interest in the position and highlight your qualifications one last time—or, if applicable, indicate that you have no further interest in the position. This short note should reflect your responsiveness, highlight your understanding of etiquette, and show your continued interest. It provides you with one last opportunity to stand out above the competition and position yourself for a potential hire.

Many companies get back to candidates within two weeks of the actual visit with an offer or rejection. This is an average; some companies offer jobs on the spot, while others take up to a month to respond. It is a good idea to find out how long you can expect to wait to hear from the company regarding an employment decision. Feel free to contact the company to check on delays if the estimated decision date passes with no response.

SEARCH ETHICS AND ACCEPTING OR REJECTING AN OFFER

After accepting a job offer (internship or full time after graduation), you should **not** continue to interview. Notify the Center for Career Development of your acceptance and cease further activity. Unprofessional behavior by students and recent graduates hurts the university's reputation with employers and may ultimately lead to fewer opportunities for other students.

Finally, never be afraid to turn down a job offer if, after careful consideration, you consider it not to be right for your future. After all, the goal of the whole process is not an immediate job but long-term career satisfaction.

BUSINESS CASUAL

Blouse or sweater set.

Dress pants or skirt is acceptable.

BUSINESS CASUAL
Crisp, neat, professional

Khakis or other solid-color slacks.

Dress shirt, with or without a tie.

BAG
Professional bag or small purse.

SHOES
Heels or flats.

BUSINESS CASUAL
is less formal but still professional. It is appropriate attire for information sessions, some career fairs, and other less formal employer events.

SHOES
Oxfords or loafers.

Student Union, Level 2

Monday-Friday

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

865-974-5435

career.utk.edu



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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CAREER DEVELOPMENT