

resource library

five: interview prep



**CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

interview prep

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interview tips

here are a few
tips to get you
started

Preparing for an interview can be nerve wrecking but it doesn't need to be. With the proper preparation and approach— think of it as a conversation—you can ace your interview.

You want to make sure that you:

1. **Research.** Visit Vault.com or Glassdoor to read about the interview process (what is the format—one-on-one or committee—and the types of questions that might be asked). Visit the company website and search for articles on the company to learn more about them so that you can learn what they value. This way, you can speak to why you are passionate about working for them; what you find most appealing about the company's vision.
2. **Dress to impress.** You want to make a good first impression and, even before you open your mouth to speak, the interviewer will notice your appearance. Do you fit the culture at their company (e.g. are you dressed for a startup or are you dressed for a corporate position)? Make sure to conduct your research beforehand so you know the appropriate way to dress for the interview/industry.
3. **Be yourself.** As an interviewer, I can always tell when someone is trying to tell me what I want to hear. The purpose of the interview is for the two of you to get to know each other. Will this be a good fit? Answer questions honestly without giving away more information than necessary.
4. **Present confidence.** You want to make sure that you highlight your best characteristics and knowledge. Confidence comes in the way that you feel as you approach the interview and the way that you answer their questions. This is why it is important to practice, practice, practice. Visit your Career Center on campus or reach out to internships@mhc.cuny.edu to schedule a mock interview. It helps to have constructive criticism on your interview skills. Even better, have them record it. This will help you see if you're fidgeting, saying "um" too much, or doing any other behavior that you want to minimize during an interview.
5. **And, smile.** You're already half way there. Being chosen for the interview means that they believe you are qualified for the position. Now, they want to confirm your qualifications and, most importantly, they want to see if you're the right fit. Will they want to work alongside of you for the next 3-6 months or 3-6 years (depending on the position you're applying for)? So, don't forget to smile and ask good questions at the end of the interview.
6. **Questions.** Always have questions that you want to ask your interviewer. Prepare at least two beforehand and one question that you formulate during the interview (that demonstrates that you were listening).
 - a. Don't ask about salary/compensation.
 - b. Do ask questions that you would value the answer to (e.g. Are there any concerns that I can address? What is your management style? What do you think are the most important qualities that would make someone be successful at this position?—Then show them how you're a good fit). You can always search the Internet to find a range of questions to ask.
7. **Comings and goings.** When you walk into an interview, you should smile and firmly shake hands. When you end the interview, ask for business cards, exchange pleasantries, and shake hands as you leave again. Express what a pleasure it was to meet them and that you hope to hear back from them soon. Within 24-48 hours, you should send them a thank you note.

- Take notes. But not lengthy notes where you bury your head and never look up during the interview. Taking quick short-handed notes helps to remember the questions that are being asked or important comments that the interviewer made that you might include in your thank you note.
- Sweaty palms. Keep a napkin in your pocket that you can squeeze quickly before shaking hands.
- Dry mouth. You can ask for a glass of water before interview. Take quick short sips during the interview to wet your palate before you speak.
- Questions you weren't expecting. If you don't know how to answer a question immediately, it's ok to ask them for a few seconds to think about it, and then give them a thoughtful answer. But, only take a few seconds. No one likes awkward long pauses.
- Forgot to mention something? Use the thank you note to address any concerns that were expressed by the interviewee—assure them that you're the right candidate—or information that you feel is important for them to know.

interview questions

Once you've done your research, it's good to practice common interview questions. If you're ever asked any of these questions during a real interview, you'll be sure to nail the answer!

about yourself

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your greatest strengths?
3. Where could you use some improvement?
4. Why should we hire you (over another candidate)?
5. Where do you see yourself five years from now? Ten years?
6. What are your goals?
7. Describe your ideal company, location, and job.
8. I'm concerned that you don't have as much experience as we'd like in....
9. How do you define success and how do you measure up to your own definition?
10. Why did you choose your major? Your college?
11. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
12. Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
13. What motivates you the most in a job?
14. What job-related skills have you developed?
15. Do you prefer to work under supervision, or on your own? What kind of boss do you prefer?
16. What do you worry about?
17. Can you work under pressure?
18. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?

about the company

19. Why do you want to work at our organization/company?
20. What do you know about our organization/company?
21. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
22. What changes would you make if you came on board?
23. What do you see as the role/responsibilities of this position/a good leader/etc?
24. What do you see as the most difficult part of this position?
25. What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization/company like ours?
26. If you were hiring someone for this position, what would you look for?

about a situation

27. Tell me about something you did—or failed to do—that you regret.
28. Tell me about a situation where your work was criticized.
29. What was the toughest decision you ever had to make?
30. What was the toughest challenge you ever had to face?
31. What would you say to your boss if he's crazy about an idea but you think it stinks?
32. Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a former professor/supervisor/co-worker? How did you handle it?
33. Give me an example of your creativity/analytical skill/managing ability/etc.
34. How would you handle (hypothetical situation)?
35. Describe your leadership skills. Give an example of a time in which you held a leadership position.
36. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution to your employer.
37. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
38. Would you be successful working with a team? Can you give an example of a time in which you worked with a team?

about other jobs

- 39. Could you have done better in your last job?
- 40. What was the toughest part of your last job?
- 41. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

random

- 42. What good books have you read lately?
- 43. What are your hobbies/outside interests?
- 44. Who has inspired you in your life, and why?
- 45. Who are your role models, and why?

You should also be prepared to ask the interviewer questions. Pick questions that will demonstrate your interest in the job and the company. This might include commenting on the news you learned from the company website, and then asking a question related to it. Don't ask about salary/compensation.

ask questions

- 1. What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- 2. How will my responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom?
- 3. Could you explain your organizational structure?
- 4. What computer equipment and software do you use?
- 5. What is the organization's plan for the next five years?
- 6. Are there any concerns that I can address?
- 7. What is your management style?
- 8. What do you think are the most important qualities that would make someone be successful at this position?
- 9. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
- 10. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
- 11. What are the next steps from here? (This question is used at the end of an interview if the interviewer has not indicated what will happen next).

resources at your campus

See below what your campus offers to help you succeed!

City College

- Contact a [Career Counselor](#) to schedule a practice interview

Hunter College

- Contact a [Career Counselor](#) to schedule a practice interview

John Jay College

- Attend an [interview workshop](#)
- Borrow a suit through the [Suitcessful Professional Attire Closet](#)

Baruch College

- Attend an [interview workshop](#) (dates are listed on the Calendar in [STARR Search](#))
- Contact the [Starr Career Development Center](#) to schedule a videotaped mock interview
- Watch [videos](#) from the Starr Career Development Center on how to prepare for an interview (including how to borrow a suit)

Lehman College

- [Sign-up](#) for various interview workshops
- Contact the [Career Services Center](#) or log into [Symplicity](#) to schedule a videotaped mock interview

College of Staten Island

- Contact the [Career Services Center](#) schedule a practice mock interview

Queens College

- Attend an [Interview Workshop](#) (dates are listed on the [QC Calendar](#))

Brooklyn College

- Review the [Interview Preparation Checklist](#) from the Magner Career Center
- Contact the [Magner Career Center](#) to schedule a practice interview