



Interviewing

Internship and job interviews include personality interviews, case interviews, technical interviews, and more. View basic interviewing guidelines below.

➤ S.T.A.R Method

Use the S.T.A.R method to answer an interview question.

Situation/problem: your role

Tasks: your responsibilities

Action/behavior: what you did

Result/outcome: what you learned or achieved

➤ LDL-TV

LDL-TV is a great resource for industry-specific interviews.

Hear from Life Design Educators on how to prepare for both virtual and in-person interviews.

➤ Online resources

CaseCoach: Consulting students in particular need to practice case interviews, which use role-playing to test how you would handle potential job situations. You'll need to access CaseCoach through Handshake to get the password.

Be sure to spend an adequate amount of time preparing for an interview. If you are conducting a job or internship search, begin preparing for interviews shortly after submitting application materials. That way you have plenty of time to practice and improve before scheduled interviews.

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BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

Know Yourself

- Give some thought to what you want from a job or employer. What kind of position do you want? What are your interests, abilities and values? How has your education prepared you for different kinds of positions?

PROFESSIONAL DRESS

When you have an interview, it is important to dress the part. The most conservative thing to wear on an interview is a dark suit. Ties should be conservative with subtle patterns. Skirt suits should be no shorter than knee-length. Be sure to wear comfortable but professional shoes. Hair, including facial hair should be neatly groomed. This is the time to shower, shave, wear deodorant, and brush your teeth; however, do not wear cologne or perfume, many people are allergic. You can certainly let your personality show through in your appearance, and be yourself, we simply suggest that you be your most professional self. Some companies are very conservative and others are much more relaxed when it comes to professional dress on the job. Unless advised by the employer, please do not ever wear jeans, flip-flops, sneakers, clunky jewelry, miniskirts, exercise wear, T-shirts, or anything else that you would wear to bed, the beach, or the gym.

It is essential that you take some time to research the employer and the industry for an upcoming job interview. You want to make sure you are familiar with the employer's website, current press releases, their mission and vision statement, five year plan, clients or products, and how their stock is performing if it is a publicly traded company. All of these things can help you stand out amongst other candidates. In addition, you can follow the company's social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Twitter to stay current on up to date information.

Tips for Interview Research

- View the employer's website. Pay attention to current press releases, new projects/initiatives, mission and vision statement, etc.
- If it is your first time interviewing in a specific industry, you may want to read an industry guide that you can download through Vault. To access these guides, log into your Handshake account and find Vault within the resource library. You will need to set up a profile using your JHU email address with Vault if it is your first time logging in. Once inside, click on "Download Guides." You will find a variety of industries represented.
- Network with JHU Alumni, who may be working with the organization. Ask them specific questions you have, discuss new initiatives, career growth in that position, etc. If you are not sure how to network with alumni, go to office hours or read our networking handout.

What to Bring

- Bring a few copies of your resume and a list of references; carry them in a portfolio or folder. If you have a portfolio (depending on your major); you can bring it too. Also, bring a list of questions to ask. It is best to have these written down in advance. You will appear more organized this way.



DURING THE INTERVIEW:

Typical Format

- Be sure to arrive 10-15 minutes early to your interview. Know how to get there or where to park. Make sure you allot time for traffic and finding the location. Be polite and professional to everyone you meet including security guards and receptionists. They may know the person who is interviewing you. Usually you will wait in a reception area and the person who is interviewing you will come out to greet you. Look them in the eye and smile as you give them a firm handshake.
- Interviews often begin with the interviewer telling you about the job, department, or company. Then they begin to ask you questions. You will also be given the chance to ask questions.

Questions to Reflect on After the Meeting

- Be sure to ask questions when you are on an interview. Interviewers will usually ask you what questions you have toward the end of the conversation. You can ask anything you want to know about the company, department, or positions. Do not ask about salary and benefits at this time. (If the first thing you want to know is how much are you going to pay me, and when is my vacation, then you don't seem that interested in the position.) Have about 5-10 questions prepared to ask during your interview. If you will be interviewing with different people, you can ask them different questions.
- Sample Questions to Ask:
 1. How did you come to work for Company X? What keeps you here?
 2. Is there any job training for this position? If yes, what kind and who does the training?
 3. Can you give me an idea of what a typical day in this position looks like?
 4. What kind of positions do people move into in the company from this one?
 5. What opportunities for professional development exist?
 6. Is there a formal mentoring program for new employees or recent graduates here?
 7. What is the hiring timeline after this interview? Can you tell me when I might expect to hear from you again?

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Open-Ended Questions

- This is the most common type of interview question. You control the direction that the interview goes when you answer these kinds of questions.
- As you answer questions, have a clear point or theme that you focus on throughout your interview, emphasize your strengths as a candidate.
- If you can, try to refer your answers back to the job description, department, or company.

Preparing your Elevator Speech

One of the most common interview questions you will get is, "Tell me about yourself." Many students struggle with how to answer this question. It is important to prepare your answer to this



question in advance. Include things like your degrees, relevant examples from your experience such as internships, research, volunteer activities, and extracurricular involvement. It is not necessary to include information that would be considered answers to illegal questions such as age, place of birth, marital status, religion, politics, ethnicity, sexual orientation, children, and disabilities. The reason these are illegal questions are because an employer cannot discriminate during the hiring process based on any of these characteristics. Try completing the following information, writing it out in paragraph format, and practicing out loud, to come up with a suitable answer to this question.

1. Hi, my name is _____ I am a junior at Johns Hopkins University majoring in _____.
2. What are the three most important things I want this employer to know about me?
3. Relevant examples to support the most important things I want this employer to know about me.
4. Why should this employer be interested in me and what separates me from my competition?
5. Why are you interested in this opportunity with this employer?

Sample Elevator Speech:

"I came to Hopkins as an English major four years ago - my passion in high school was writing, and I have pursued as many opportunities to write in college as I possibly could. I have had three outstanding internships and they were all very different from one another - one as a news reporter for a regional paper, one as a journalist for a non-profit arts group, and one with a public relations firm. I have also written for the school paper for three years, and this year I am Editor-in-Chief.

If I had to sum up what I am all about, I had say two things: first, my greatest passion is writing; and second, I am a results-oriented person - you can see from my resume that when I take something on, I like to work hard and excel. I am proud of the awards I have received in college, and I am anxious to get out there and start working and contributing.

What attracted me to this position was, of course, the fact that the job in public relations and promotion, and I hope I can not only use my writing talents, but also learn a lot more about the public relations field. I am also attracted by the growth of your company over the last few years, and the entrepreneurial style you project. From what I have read, your organization seems like a place for people who like to achieve in a fast paced work environment and I really like that."

Behavioral Based Questions

- This is a special kind of interview question. Behavioral based questions focus on your past behavior, which is usually a good predictor of your future behavior. Employers ask these questions to gauge your strengths as a candidate.
- A good way to answer these questions is with the SAR technique.
 1. S= Situation, briefly describe the situation.
 2. A= Action, describe the specific actions that you took to address the situation.
 3. R= Results, discuss the outcomes or results of your actions. Many students forget about the results, yet this is often the most important piece of information to the employer.
- Behavioral Based Questions often begin with phrases such as:
 - Tell me about a time...



- Describe a situation in which...
- Give me an example of...
- The best way to practice for this kind of question is to come up with 5 to 10 stories about your experiences. These can include examples from classes, internships, activities, and jobs. Most likely, you will be able to use one of your stories for many behavioral based questions that you are asked during an interview.

Sample Question: Tell me about a time that you have been working in a group, and one (or more) of the group members was not doing his/her share of the work.

Answer: (S) We had to do a group project for my international politics course. One of the group members was not coming to meetings and not emailing his portion of the project. **(A)** I asked him about this and found out he was not doing well in his organic chemistry class. I helped him find a tutor and then he was able to work on our international politics project. **(R)** The presentation went very well because we were all prepared. Our professor was impressed and we earned an A.

Stressful Questions

- These interview questions are infrequent. They are often asked to determine how you handle stress, test your creativity, or get you past your standard (memorized) answers to more typical interview questions. If you can solve problems under stress, then you might make a great employee.
- Sometimes these questions are impossible, meaning there is no right answer, or there is no way for you to give the right answer during your interview. This is a way to test your problem-solving and “think-outside-the-box” ability. Your best bet is to think aloud and discuss the steps you would take to begin to tackle or solve the problem.

It is difficult to prepare in advance for stressful questions. Expect the unexpected. There is no correct answer to this kind of question (nor is there an incorrect answer). The best advice is to pause to compose yourself and your answer before you begin speaking.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PRACTICE

Open Ended Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
4. How did you choose (JHU, your major, your internship, etc.)?
5. Discuss your (research, internship, background, technical training, etc.).
6. How does this position fit with your long term career goals?
7. How do you keep up with your (company, industry, profession, etc.)?
8. How do you like to be supervised?
9. What do you know about our organization, why did you apply for this position?
10. What questions do you have?



Behavioral Questions:

1. Tell me about a time that you had a personality conflict or a disagreement with a supervisor. How did you resolve it?
2. Give me an example of a time in the last year when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
3. Describe a situation in which you were the leader. How did you promote the effectiveness of your team? What were the results?
4. Tell me about a time when you were working on a team project and one or more of the members were not doing their share of the work.
5. Describe a time when you had to communicate complex technical information to an audience with minimal subject knowledge.
6. Give me an example of a time when you demonstrated initiative.
7. Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual you have ever worked with, and how you managed to deal with that person.
8. Tell me about a situation when you experienced failure.
9. Tell me about a time when you were very busy and had to set priorities for yourself.
10. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
11. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
12. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

Stressful Questions:

1. If you had 6 months with no obligations or financial restraints, what would you do with the time?
2. How many blades of grass are there on a football field?
3. How long would it take to move Mt. Fuji?
4. Why should I hire you?

SPECIAL INTERVIEW SITUATIONS

- Phone
- Case
- Video Conference
- Group
- Technical

Phone Interviews

Employers may use phone interviews to screen candidates in the first round of interviews or to hire interns. There are some special things to keep in mind when interviewing on the phone.



If the interview is scheduled in advance:

1. What time zone and date will the employer call you, or do you need to initiate the call?
2. Give a telephone number where you will have some privacy for the call.
3. Collect your materials in advance of the telephone appointment. Be sure to have access to your resume, transcript, job description, any research notes about the job or employer, and a list of questions you would like to have answered about the job.
4. If your interviewers are introduced to you, write down their names so that you can address specific questions to each person if necessary.
5. Speak slowly in a confident, positive tone. On the telephone, your tone and enthusiasm are important because the interviewer does not have any visual cues to follow.
6. Ask what the next step in the search process will be if the employer does not mention it.
7. Get contact information so that you are able to send a thank you note.

Some telephone interviews are not scheduled in advance:

1. This may be because the employer wants to know how you will react without advance notice to prepare.
2. If you are in the job search and have applied to specific openings, keep your job search research notes and job descriptions together so that you can access them easily in case of an unscheduled call.
3. Be sure to answer the telephone in a professional manner. Make sure your voice message is appropriate and professional.
4. If you are caught off-guard and need some time to think; for example, if you answer a mobile phone in public, where background noise could be an issue, ask the employer if you can call them back in a few minutes or, ask to reschedule on another day.
5. Keep a positive approach and attitude: If you find yourself getting nervous or talking too softly, stand up while you are talking.
6. Smile while you are speaking, so that you sound positive and upbeat.

CASE INTERVIEWS

Certain industries, especially consulting firms, utilize a “case interview” to gauge your knowledge, problem solving/analytical skills, and your ability to work well under pressure. Employers using a case interview format are interested in observing the process you use to solve problems. They also want to see how well you listen, summarize and articulate your conclusions, and think on your feet. Consequently, your approach to a case is more important than the specific content of your answers. Thinking aloud as you attempt to “crack” a case is advisable because it allows the interviewer to evaluate your thought process.

In a case interview, you are introduced to a business dilemma facing a particular company (often drawn from the interviewer’s professional experience). You are asked to analyze the situation, identify key business issues, and discuss how you would address the problems involved. The interviewer begins by giving you some basic facts and then asks you an open-ended or specific question. The interview proceeds as an open dialogue between you and the interviewer, with the interviewer guiding the discussion as you ask probing questions to uncover key information and move toward resolution.



Tips to Remember:

1. Practice, practice, practice. Visit office hours with a life design educator. Case interviewing is a learned skill.
2. Listen carefully to the interviewer.
3. Have a notepad to take notes and try to write down numbers and key facts.
4. Designate where the initial question is written in your notes.
5. Ask clarifying questions and take a moment to plan your response.
6. Have a logical structure for how you will answer the case question and inform your interviewer about how you will proceed.
7. Work through the different elements of the case question.
8. Carefully explain your process as you go along.
9. Budget your time so you can focus on all elements of the case. Keep the original question in mind at all times.
10. Pay attention your interviewer's body language cues as you work through different elements of your approach.
11. At the conclusion, summarize your findings and state your recommendation.
12. Brush up on your basic math skills – you are not allowed to use a calculator but your case will include math.

Resources to help you prepare further:

1. Vault Downloadable Guide to the Case Interview—Access through Handshake resources.
2. *Case In Point: Complete Interview Preparation*—Book is available in the Life Design Lab office library. You can photocopy sections of this book to help you prepare. Online interviewing guide available at http://www.casequestions.com/cases_sample.cfm.
3. Review the consulting firm's website for example cases. Many companies, such as Deloitte, McKinsey & Company, Bain, Boston Consulting Group, etc. provide sample cases you can work through online.

Video Conference Interview

Handle a video conference interview like any other interview except you need to make sure the technology you will be utilizing. Practice the technology in advance. Arrive early and set up the technology to make sure everything is working properly. Make sure you are dressed professionally and that anything behind you, in view of the camera, is appropriate. Make sure the interviewer has a phone number to reach you at, in case you run into any technical problems. Make an effort to look directly into the camera as well as at your computer screen. As much as possible, try to make eye contact with everyone in the room.



Group Interview

A group interview features several candidates interviewed at one time. This style is used to determine how the candidate interacts in a team, or for organizations that hire in large numbers. It is important in this setting that you do not dominate the conversation, but also make sure that you contribute to the discussion.

Technical Interview

Technical Interviews can vary in structure and types of questions depending on the specific company and the technical skills required. Make sure you review the job description and brush up on any technical skills that you have, but have not used in awhile. Make sure you try to find alumni working in technical roles in the company and ask them for help preparing for your technical interview. It can also be helpful to team up with other students in your program who are also applying to technical positions to practice with. Be prepared to define terms or demonstrate your knowledge in front of the interviewer.

For additional resources regarding applying for technical interviews check out the following links.

<https://career.berkeley.edu/article/040116a.stm>

<http://www.hitequest.com>

<http://www.techinterview.org>

<http://www.indiabix.com/technical/interview-questions-and-answers>

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Reflection

- Take time after the interview to note your impressions of the company, potential supervisors and colleagues. Write down any concerns you have about the opportunity and any follow up questions you need to ask.
- Thank you notes
- Be sure to send a thank you note after the interview. This can be an email if time is important, a business format letter, or a handwritten note. Many people do not send thank you notes and this can help you stand out from your competition. If you interviewed with more than one person send different notes to each of them.

Follow up

- The last thing you should know before you leave the interview is when you can expect to hear from them about the position. If you have not heard by the time they said you would, then call them to ask about the status of the position and if they need more information from you.



SAMPLE Interview Thank You Note

123 Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 555-1111
jhustudent@gmail.com

December 3, 2015

Ima Recruiter
Personnel Manager
Under Armour Inc.
1 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Ms. Recruiter:

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you and see your facilities yesterday. Both the interview and the tour made for an exciting and complete day.

I was very impressed with your warehousing procedures. Mr. Allen was so thorough in explaining your process to me, and I will be corresponding directly with him to express my appreciation. Incidentally, the process you use is quite similar to one I have been researching through an independent study this term at Johns Hopkins. Perhaps I can share my final report with you and Mr. Allen.

Again, thank you for your hospitality during my time at Under Armour and for all your efforts to arrange my visit. Having seen your operation, I am even more interested in the career opportunity in the Operations Department. I look forward to participating in the next step of the interview process.

Sincerely,

JHU Student

Next Steps:

- Schedule Interviewing Preparation and Mock Interview sessions with a Life Design Educator. It is best if you visit office hours at least a week ahead of your actual interview date so you can practice what you learn in the mock interview. Also, remember to email the Life Design Educator you are meeting with a copy of your resume and the position you would like to mock interview for at least 24 hours in advance of your interview so they can prepare specific questions for you.
- Begin conducting industry and company research.
- Revisit your resume and practice talking about everything on your resume aloud. This will help you prepare for your interview prep and mock interview.