

FIRST STEPS

- ✓ Congratulate yourself: Your résumé showed you have the skills necessary to do the job, and you have landed an interview!
- ✓ Think about your strengths, interests, values, abilities, and skills and how they fit with the job you are interviewing for.
- ✓ The interview is not just about impressing the interviewer. It also helps you determine if the job and company culture are a good fit for you.

Preparation

Self-Reflection.

- Know your values, interests, and abilities and how they do (or don't) align with the company or employer.
- Be familiar with your résumé, able to talk about any and all experiences listed, and ready to share the relevant skills you gained from those experiences.
- If you need some direction, take a self-assessment at the MU Career Center.

Research the employer or company.

- Take some time to browse the company's website, social media pages, and/or blogs.
- Gain an understanding of the mission, vision, and culture of the company or employer.
- Fully understand the position that you are applying for and what will be expected of you if you attain this position.
- Choosing an employer is an important decision. Effective research can help you find the right jobs, choose a compatible employer, and perform well in the interview.

Practice answering questions.

- Prepare and practice responses for typical interview questions (*see "The Interview" section below for examples and resources for finding questions typical of your industry*).
- Know your top skills and weaknesses, and be able to give examples related to them.
- Schedule a Mock Interview at the MU Career Center to practice and receive helpful feedback. We can even tailor the interview for your specific industry, position, etc.!


The Interview


First Impressions:

- Be confident!
- Dress and behave professionally
- Use a firm handshake
- Speak clearly and articulately
- Be aware of your body language
- Be on time (15 minutes early)
- Maintain good eye contact and be a good listener
- Be yourself and smile!

MU CAREER CENTER

Lower Level,
Student Success Center

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What the Employer IS Looking for: **May vary based on the employer, company culture, job requirements, etc.**

- Creativity and intelligence
- Analytical skills
- Leadership
- Initiative, ambition, and motivation
- A strong work ethic
- Maturity and dependability
- Enthusiasm and positivity
- Teamwork and interpersonal skills
- Communication skills
- Adaptability and flexibility

What the Employer IS NOT Looking for:

- Condemnation of past employers
- Inability to communicate clearly
- Evasive behavior or responses
- Lack of confidence and poise
- Incomplete answers
- Excuses
- Poor research prior to the interview
- Overemphasis on salary or wages
- Lack of tact or courtesy
- Poor personal appearance

Types of Interview Questions:

Direct Questions	These questions allow the employer to get definite, usually one-word answers.	<i>Example: Are you willing to commute thirty miles to work each day?</i>
Open-ended Questions	These questions provide the interviewee an opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and what they hope to offer a perspective employer.	<i>Example: Tell me a little bit about yourself.</i>
Behavioral Questions	These are the most common type of questions asked by companies. These types of questions help indicate to the employer how you may perform in the future based on your past performance in similar situations.	<i>Example: Describe a time when you encountered conflict within a team and how you used communication to solve that problem.</i>
Situational Questions	These questions seek to find how you would respond in certain hypothetical situations that you might not have personally experienced before.	<i>Example: A co-worker tells you in confidence that she plans to call in sick while actually taking a week's vacation. What would you do and why?</i>
Outlandish Questions	These questions are designed to test your creativity and ability to think on your feet. Employers are hoping to understand your thought process and why you answered the way you did.	<i>Example: If you were a horse running through a pasture, what color would the sky be?</i>
Discriminatory Questions	These questions are protected by federal, state and/or local laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin or ethnicity, sexual orientation, ancestry, medical condition, physical handicap, marital status, arrest record, group affiliations, and age. Any questions that may address these categories are unlawful. If you feel that you have been asked a discriminatory question, you can learn more about your options on http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/index.cfm	<i>Example: Do you plan to have any children?</i> <i>Concern behind the question: What priority are you placing on the job/how dedicated will you be?</i> <i>If you are asked this type of question, you can either politely decline to answer the question or respond to the concern that's being raised.</i>

For more sample interview questions, conduct a Google search to find questions related to the position or industry or visit <http://www.glassdoor.com/Interview/index.htm>.

Questions to Ask the Employer:

- ALWAYS have questions prepared; it shows you are curious and interested in the job!
- Never ask questions that you should already know the answer to or could find out through some basic research into the company.
- The questions you ask the employer should show your interest in the position and your knowledge of the organization.
- An interview is also an opportunity for you to learn more about your future company or employer, so ask about things you are genuinely interested in! Some go-to topics include: company culture, the interviewer's favorite part of the job, anticipated future directions, and projects and/or initiatives recently introduced by the company.

Answer Like a STAR

The STAR Method can help you:

- Confidently answer behavioral questions and think of examples for open-ended ones
- Show the employer how your experiences will be an asset to their company
- Present competencies in specific areas related to the position
- Express yourself and your skills in a clear and articulate manner
- Keep your response organized and concise

Include the following details in your response:

- **Situation** describes the situation or circumstances that you encountered.
- **Task** indicates the task, target, or goal you set out to achieve.
- **Action** refers to the steps that you personally took to solve the problem, improve the situation, or complete the task.
- **Result** shows how your role resulted in a positive outcome. This can be a concrete outcome or describe the personal learning that took place.

Here's an example:

- Identify a skill you want to present: Leadership & Motivating Others
- Choose a past experience on which to base your response: While I was studying in Spain for the summer, I worked on a project team with a diverse group of students.
- Use the STAR Method to fully and effectively answer the question

Situation	Task	Action	Result
I quickly learned that some of the students in my group tended to wait until the last day to complete their part of the assignment. This had resulted in a previous grade that I found to be unsatisfactory.	When we were assigned a third project, my goal was to have all our group members complete their portion of the project at least two days before the due date so we would have time to collaborate on the finished product.	I decided to arrange a couple of short coffee breaks for us to get to know each other better. During these breaks, we discovered some of our different experiences and I realized that each of us looked at things in a unique way. Sharing these differences really helped us to understand our role as a team.	After that, it was amazing how things changed. The week after the first two coffee breaks, everyone finished their work three or four days before the due date! The other students felt respected because I took an interest in them as people and showed them how we could combine our diverse perspectives to create an A+ project.

Types of Interviews

Telephone Interviews:

- Know if you are calling the employer or if she or he is calling you. Verify the employer's time zone if calling another U.S. city.
- Record yourself practicing for the interview so you know how you sound over the phone.
- Find a quiet, comfortable spot to have your interview that is free from distractions.
- Keep your resume in front of you for easy access. Don't speak directly from your resume, but use it to highlight your experiences. Also, have a notepad/pen to take notes.
- Prepare a cheat sheet with talking points that highlight your strengths. Include your competencies and innovative ideas you have for the new job.

Online Interviews:

- Look at the camera, not the screen.
- Conduct a mock interview using Skype with a friend or family member to make sure you are comfortable with the technology
- Have your resume and a cheat sheet of talking points handy; however, avoid reading directly from it, as you want to maintain good eye contact at the same time.
- Be mindful of your background and think about what it would convey to employers.
- Test out the video and audio capabilities on your computer and make sure the camera and microphone quality is up to par.

Group Interviews:

- Be friendly to the other candidates and make conversation. Address candidates by name during the conversation and involve them in the conversation. How you interact with the other candidates will say a lot to employers.
- Stay engaged in the conversation. Use body language to show the interviewers you are paying attention.
- Be mindful about speaking over others or discounting their opinions. You want to be passionate, but not disrespectful.
- Since the other candidates in the interview will all be sending thank you letters to follow up as well, make sure yours stands out. One way you can do this is by referring to a specific topic of conversation from the interview.

Follow-up

- Be sure to **send a thank you note** to everyone who interviewed you as soon as possible regardless of your performance in the interview. It is good to send an email, as well, but a handwritten letter will always make more of a positive impression. *For more information, check out our [Guide to Thank You Letters](#).* After your thank you notes have been sent, wait to follow up until after the earliest date by which you were told the company would make their decision. Bombarding an employer with questions and or pushing them to make decisions on your timeline can hurt your chances of becoming hired. Being assertive, not aggressive, will help you.

NEXT STEPS

- ✓ Schedule a mock interview at the MU Career Center
- ✓ Visit Truman's Closet to rent interview attire <http://msa.missouri.edu/trumans-closet/>
- ✓ Find even more information about interviewing and job search on our website under the eResources tab and at <http://career.missouri.edu/interviews>