



UNDERGRADUATE INTERVIEWING GUIDE

INTERVIEWING

Interviews provide the opportunity for both you and the employer to learn about each other in order to make informed hiring and career decisions. Interviewing formats and styles will vary from employer to employer and from interviewer to interviewer. For this reason, it is valuable for you to recognize these styles as you prepare for an interview.

Whatever the interview situation or style, you will need to be able to communicate your strengths clearly, relating them to the position offered by the employer. The following information will assist you as you begin to prepare for your interviews.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW:

- Begin preparing for interviews as soon as you start the job search.
- Career Services offers **Mock Interviews** to assist you with this process.
- There are examples of Traditional and Behavioral Interview questions provided for practice on the following pages.
- Meet with a Career Counselor if you have any questions about interviewing.

WHAT TO BRING TO AN INTERVIEW:

- You can carry a brief case or solid-colored portfolio folder containing your resume and list of references.
- Do not carry a water bottle, coffee, etc. with you.
- Women can carry a purse that looks professional.
- Please put away your cell phone and remember to turn it OFF. Also remember not to use your cell phone while you are waiting for your interviewer. Cell phone conversations in waiting areas can be distracting and rude to others around you. Instead, use your wait time as another chance to glance at your resume or your questions for the employer.

GENERAL ETIQUETTE:

- When attending interviews whether it be on-campus or a site interview, please remember to be courteous and kind to all individuals that you meet. Everyone you encounter will form an impression of you and may be asked to volunteer that information to the hiring manager.
- Be punctual meet your interviewer with a smile and a firm hand shake and good eye contact. Do not sit until invited to do so by the interviewer.
- Maintain good eye contact and be sure to sit with good posture.

WHAT TO WEAR:

When going on an interview or to an information session, keep in mind that first impressions are lasting impressions, and that impression consists of how you physically present yourself. Therefore, it is very important to put your best-dressed foot forward and wear occasion-appropriate attire.

For interviews, the rule of thumb is to wear a suit. But what about your hair, jewelry, should you shave? Below are some tips about how to best present yourself.

WOMEN:

- Business suit—more conservative to wear a skirt, but pant suits are fine.
- Dark colors—navy, black, brown, grey,
- Knee length skirts—do not wear short, tight, clingy or with a high slit
- White, off-white or neutral colored blouse with a conservative neckline
- Hosiery is required with skirts at all times - skin color or darker
- Polished, closed toe shoes—heels no higher than two inches
- Neatly styled hair
- Simple jewelry and accessories
- Conservative make-up and nail polish—avoid unusual colors, e.g. blue, green
- No cologne or perfume—small interview rooms, some people may have fragrance allergies
- One set of simple earrings, no other visible body piercing or tattoos

MEN:

- General rule: solid color suit and shirt and a patterned tie.
- Business suit—navy to dark grey
- Trousers—long enough to cover your socks, have a slight break over shoes
- Well-pressed long sleeved oxford cloth shirt
- Ties—conservative pattern (solids, stripes, small patterns and should reach your belt line)
- Polished shoes in black, cordovan, brown.
- Socks should match your suit and not allow any skin to show when you cross your legs. No white socks!
- Leather belt that matches your shoes
- Refrain from buttoning the bottom button of your jacket
- Well-groomed hair and facial hair
- No cologne or perfume—small interview rooms, allergies
- No visible body piercing or tattoos
- Pens go inside your jacket pocket, not in your shirt pocket

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Reflect on the questions asked, the answers given, the pertinent information learned from the organization and the positions available.
- Make a list of positive and negative points from this experience and determine what you need to do to create your effectiveness in future interviews.
- Most importantly, send a thank you note within 24 to 48 hours of the interview. Even if you decided you wouldn't want the position if offered, it is always best to maintain professionalism and follow through on this small, but meaningful task.

10 Best Interviewing Tips

1. PRACTICE-

Practice your answers. Not just in your head but out loud. Review the attached information on Traditional and Behavioral interview questions.

2. MOCK INTERVIEWS ARE GREAT-

Don't wait until the day before your interview. As soon as you start your job search is the best time to sign up for a mock interview. Call our office at 610-758-3710 to schedule a mock interview with one of the counselors.

3. TAKE PAUSES BEFORE YOU START YOUR ANSWER-

- a) They give you time to think
- b) They slow you down/calm you down
- c) They get rid of the ums and ahs

4. WORDS TO AVOID!

Like /you know/kinda/sort of/maybe/stuff/things

5. WORDS TO USE-

“I” is better than saying “you” or “we”. For example, read the sentences below:

“When you are the leader of a group, it's important for you to listen to your team so that you can be a better leader.” Compared with: “When I am the leader of a group, it's important for me to listen to my team so that I can be a better leader”

6. BE POSITIVE, CONFIDENT, AND ENTHUSIASTIC -

Don't say what you didn't like say why you liked it. Show enthusiasm for your past experiences and for future opportunities. The interview is about you being the best candidate for the job – show confidence in your abilities.

7. USE EXAMPLES –

Prove it to the interviewer – give examples, situations, events that prove you are a good leader, a good researcher, an excellent communicator. Companies want to know about your past experiences to understand the knowledge, skills and abilities you can bring to their company. Take time to reflect on your past experience in order to form good examples for your interview. Also, review the job posting/description in preparing examples, this will help you to determine the specific skills the employer is looking for.

8. RESEARCH THE COMPANY AND STAY UP TO DATE ON CURRENT EVENTS-

Doing research shows your interest, motivation, and desire to work for the company. Be aware of what is currently happening for the company and industry news. **ASK GOOD QUESTIONS** -Create questions that show you did company research. See the attached list of Questions for employers.

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10. DON'T FORGET TO THANK YOUR INTERVIEWER –

After your interview remember to send a thank you note to your interviewer. You may email them.

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR

Employers look for a variety of skill sets and characteristics in their candidates. They also look for people who are interested in their company and the position. Here are dimensions in which employers rate their candidates:

Impact – Creates a good first impression, commands attention and respect. Able to meet people easily and put others at ease.

Oral Communication - Demonstrates effective expression in individual or group situations (including nonverbal communication).

Written Communication - Expresses ideas clearly in writing; good grammatical form.

Leadership - Utilizes appropriate interpersonal styles and methods in guiding individuals or groups toward task accomplishment.

Analysis - Relates and compares data from different sources, identifies issues, secures relevant information, and identifies relationships.

Behavioral Flexibility - Modifies behavior to reach a goal.

Job Motivation - The extent to which activities and/or responsibilities available in school/job overlap with activities that are personally satisfying.

Sensitivity - Actions that indicate consideration for the feelings and needs of others.

Planning/Organizing - Decides on a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal. Plans appropriate use of resources (people, time, supplies).

Ability to Learn - Ability to learn has been demonstrated by performance in school subjects, special projects for previous jobs.

Judgment/Decisiveness - Makes decisions based on relevant information or data. Determines alternatives as necessary. Allows time for evaluating information and making a decision.

Sales Ability/Persuasiveness - Utilizes appropriate interpersonal styles and methods of communication to gain agreement or acceptance of an idea, plan, activity, or product from classmates, peers, or supervisors.

Work Standards - Sets high but realistic goals. Work output is of consistent high quality, correct and on time.

Traditional Interviewing Questions

Many Interviewers may use a traditional approach in which they ask you to elaborate on your resume content and evaluate your own capabilities. They may use open-ended questions like “Tell me about yourself” or closed questions like “Are you willing to travel?” Often the questions ask you to offer perceptions of yourself and your goals. You will have the most effective impact if you respond with examples, the motivation behind your goals and decisions, connections between your background/qualifications, and ways to meet the employer’s needs.

The following are examples of Traditional Interviewing Questions:

Energy

- Tell me how you organize your day?
- When do you do your best/worst work?
- How many tasks do you like to tackle at one time?
- How many hours a day do you put into your work?
- What are good reasons to postpone things?

Oral Communication

- What is the worst communication problem you have experienced?
- Tell me about the preparation for and results of meetings you have been responsible for conducting.

Written Communication Skills

- What kind of writing have you done?
- Give me an example. How do you approach it?
- How do you feel about the writing of reports as contrasted with collection or analyzing the data?
- What report that you are currently preparing (or have recently prepared) is the most challenging? Why?

Creativity

- Can you think of a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn’t work?
- How did you solve the problem?
- What is the most imaginative or innovative thing you have done?
- Under what conditions do you display imagination and innovation in your work?
- What kinds of problems have people recently called on you to solve?
- Tell me about what you devised.

Motivation for Work

- What personal factors do you consider most important in evaluating yourself or your success?
- Why did you choose this career?
- Can you give me examples of work-related experiences that you felt were satisfying/dissatisfying?
- What about your career choice most satisfies you?
- What do you like best about your current/past job?
- What do you like least about your current/past job?
- Describe when you worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.
- What are some recent responsibilities you have taken on? Why did you assume these responsibilities?

Work Standards

- How do you define doing a good job? What are your standards of success? (in your job/class work?)
- What do you consider the most important contribution you have made at Lehigh?
- How many times have you missed a deadline? What were the causes of each?

Career Ambition

- What have you accomplished in the line of self-development during the past year?

Traditional Cont.

- What are your career goals for the next five years?
- How do you expect to accomplish your goals?

Leadership

- Tell me about a new idea which was considerably different from the standard procedure that you recently implemented. What approach did you take to get others to go along with the idea?

Planning/Organizing

- How do you schedule your time? Set priorities?
- What do you do when your time schedule is upset by unforeseen circumstances?
- What is the procedure in keeping track of matters requiring your attention?
- Describe how you determine what constitutes top priorities.
- What were your objectives for the last year? Were they achieved?
- Describe a typical day/week.

Use of Delegation

- Describe the type of decision making that you delegate to others.
- When did you have a major problem requiring help? What action did you take?
- Why did you ask particular people to assist you?

Problem Analysis

- Describe the biggest problem that you have faced within the last six months. How did you handle it?

Judgment

- Can you give me two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months? What were the alternatives?
- Why were they good decisions?
- What is the toughest decision you have had to make. Tell me about it.

- What alternative did you consider?
- What decision did you have to think the longest on before you decided what to do? Tell me about it.
- Why was it difficult?

Decisiveness

- What was the last major problem that you were confronted with? What action did you take on it?
- What was the last decision you faced? How long did it take for you to decide what to do?
- What kinds of decisions do you tend to make rapidly, and which ones do you take more time on? Give me some examples.

Resilience

- What was your biggest disappointment? How did you cope with it?
- How do you pick yourself up after a disappointment?

Adaptability

- How long does it take you to feel comfortable in a new job? How do you go about orienting yourself to a new job?

Technical Translation

- What kinds of writing did you do at Lehigh? Who was the audience?
- What kinds of reports did you do at Lehigh? How frequently?
- What is the most difficult report you have ever written? Why?
- Do you have any rules that you follow in writing reports? What are they?

Organization/Sensitivity

- Have you ever made a decision that affected others as well as yourself? What was the outcome?
- Have you ever experienced a problem at Lehigh caused by a decision made unilaterally by someone else?
- How did you feel? Did you do anything about it?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral Interviews go beyond the basic content requirements of the job to identify certain competencies/qualities that you may have demonstrated in previous experiences. Some of these could include teamwork, flexibility, initiative, leadership, organizing, problem-solving, persuasiveness, and work ethic. The interviewer will look at how you handled situations in the past to assess whether you have the skills and abilities to perform well in the job.

You will hear questions that focus on how you coped with stressful activities and projects or failure. Instead of asking “Do you work well under pressure?” they will ask “Describe the most high-pressure situation you have dealt with recently and how you handled it.” Your response will help the interviewer see a more realistic picture of how you handled the difficulties and what you learned from the experience. Be prepared for the interviewer to follow up with probing questions that will reveal more details of the situation, how you took action, and the results. The following are tips for answering these questions and some examples of behavioral interviewing questions.

TIPS FOR ANSWERING BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE S.T.A.R. Model Behavioral interviewing is a technique employed by interviewers to evaluate your past behavior in order to predict your future behavior in a particular situation. Answering behavioral questions is not an easy task, but proper preparation will assist you in answering them successfully. Utilizing the S.T.A.R. Model will help you construct an organized, specific, thoughtful, and concise answer.

Situation	Task	Action	Results
Think of a situation in which you were involved that had a positive outcome.	Describe the tasks involved in the situation.	Specify what actions you took in the situation to complete the tasks and achieve your results.	What results followed due to your actions?

Use the following guidelines to enable this effective strategy:

- Analyze the position for which you are being interviewed and determine what skills are required.
- Evaluate and reflect upon your background to identify your skills and experiences related to the position. Think about your experiences and skills gained in class, internships, leadership positions, and activities and relate them to the skill sets required by the position for which you are interviewing.
- Identify three to five top selling points—attributes that set you apart from other candidates—and be sure to take the opportunity to point them out during the interview using “STAR Stories.”
- Create brief “STAR Stories” prior to the interview that demonstrates your teamwork abilities, initiative, planning, leadership, commitment, and problem-solving skills. Try to be as relevant as possible to the position. Be prepared to provide examples of occasions when results were different than expected.
- Practice your stories, but be careful not to memorize as you may forget nuances of your story when in a pressure situation. Reviewing them before your interview will give you confidence in knowing you are prepared and will eliminate fumbling for words and awkward silences in the interview.
- Be specific in your stories. Giving generalizations will not help the employer understand and evaluate your behavior and skills. Employers want to know what you did rather than what you would do in a given situation.

- Quantify wherever possible. It is evidence of your achievements, accomplishments, and efforts.
- Be honest! Omitting or embellishing parts of your story could lead to disaster if the interviewer discovers that the foundation of your story is weak. In using this strategy, you will be able to showcase your accomplishments, skills, and knowledge and show the employer what a STAR you are!

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO USE S.T.A.R. MODEL

Interviewer Question:

You indicated on your resume that leadership is one of your strengths. Please describe an experience in which you used your leadership abilities to manage a recent challenge.

Situation:

During my third year of college, I was elected Vice President for Professional Programs for my student association. The duties of the position included securing speakers for our meetings, advertising the programs to the campus community, introducing speakers, and evaluating each program.

Task:

Previous attendance at meetings had decreased substantially due to a decrease in the overall student population. The goal was to implement programs to address the professional development of our association and increase attendance by 25% compared to the prior year's figures.

Action:

I assembled a team to help with the program design and speaker selection. I developed a survey to determine the members' professional interests and ideas for possible speakers and topics. My team and I had each member complete the survey. Then we randomly selected members for a focus group interview. I had learned about this research technique in my marketing class and thought it would help us identify why attendance had dropped.

Result:

Because of the information we gathered from the surveys and interviews, we selected speakers for the entire year and produced a brochure describing each program and the featured speaker. Under my leadership, attendance increased 150% over the previous year.

Behavioral Interviewing Questions

Communication

1. Tell me about a time when the ability to communicate effectively was critical to the success of a task or project. How did you handle it?
2. Describe a situation you observed or were a part of where you felt communication was handled particularly well by someone else. What did they do? Why do you think it was effective?

• Interviewer will evaluate your bias for written or oral communication and match this to the needs of the position. Recruiter will observe the role of listening and your description of effective communication. Interviewer will assess your ability to communicate in a clear, concise, understandable way.

Initiative

1. Describe a situation where initiative on the part of you or someone else was critical. Why was it important? How was it handled?
2. Tell me about a situation where your own initiative made a difference in the outcome.

• Interviewer will determine how you value pro-activity over reactivity. Interviewer will assess judgment in the selection of the situation calling for initiative, and the activities used to respond to it. Recruiter will determine your willingness to go beyond a given parameter if that is what is required to do on the job.

Behavioral Flexibility

1. Describe an example of a time when you had to approach several people for support or cooperation whom you considered quite different from one another. What did you have to do differently with each person? How did you know what to do differently?
2. Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea failed. How did you react to this? What other approaches did you try?

Leadership/Influence

1. Tell me about one of the toughest groups you have had to get cooperation from. Did you have formal authority? What did you do?
2. Of the people you have encountered or know about in public positions of leadership, who do you look to as a model and why?

• Interviewer will assess your ability and willingness to influence and be influenced by others. Recruiter will determine your willingness to confront issues honestly. Interviewer will determine to what degree you model the behaviors expected from others.

Planning/Organizing

1. Describe a task or project you were in charge of, and tell me how you set it up and followed it through. Tell me about a situation you observed or were part of where there were time and/or resource constraints. What happened? Why?
2. Describe a situation that required things to be done at the same time. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?

• Interviewer will assess your recognition of the need to plan. Recruiter will determine your effectiveness in gathering and organizing information. Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to prioritize. Recruiter will assess your identification of potential obstacles and ways of dealing with them. Interviewer will assess the candidate's effective use of time and resources.

Behavioral Cont.

Problem Solving/Decision Making

1. Describe a situation where a prompt and accurate decision on your part was critical. What did you consider in reaching your decision?
2. Describe two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months. What were the alternatives? Why were they good decisions?
3. Tell me about a decision you made in the past that later proved to be a wrong decision. Why was it wrong? What would you do differently now, if anything, in making that decision?

• Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to gather and analyze information. Recruiter will determine your anticipation and consideration of potential problems/opportunities. Interviewer will assess your judgment and logical assumptions in light of what was known prior to the decision. Recruiter will assess your readiness to make a decision and act on it.

Sales Ability/Persuasiveness

1. What are some of the best ideas you have sold to others? What was your approach? Describe a selling experience you have had.
2. Give me a specific example of a successful or unsuccessful sale. Why was it successful or unsuccessful?

• Interviewer will assess the candidate's ability to select the appropriate style for the situation. Recruiter will assess your ability to gain agreement or acceptance of his/her idea or plan.

Sensitivity/Team Effectiveness

1. When dealing with individuals or groups, how do you determine when you are pushing too hard? Tell me about a team where you were the leader. How did you promote the effectiveness of your team? What were the results?
2. Describe some situations where you wished you had acted differently with someone at work/school. What did you do? What happened?

• Interviewer will assess your consideration of decisions on other team members. Recruiter will consider your objectivity in looking at different points of view and a willingness to confront difference of opinion from other team members.

Work Standards

1. Is there a particular experience that stands out as one you never want to repeat because you did not meet your normal standards of performance? What, and why?
2. What is the best job you have ever done on an assignment, the standard of your own performance that you used as a benchmark? (The candidate should be specific about the task; the interviewer will not settle for a general discussion of what is good.)

• Interviewer will determine the degree to which poor performance is unacceptable and will determine your motivation to do a good job consistently. Recruiter will assess work habits and methods to achieve results. Interviewer will assess the effectiveness of the candidate's critique of his/her own performance as the means of self-improvement.

Questions to Ask Employers

It is very important to ask your interviewer questions during and at the end of the interview. Create at least 15-20 questions prior to your interview and take the list with you. You won't get a chance to ask them all, but it is always best to be prepared! Below are some examples of questions you can ask an interviewer; however you should tailor questions to best fit your interview and your work values.

- What kinds of assignments might I expect during the first six months?
- What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
- What are the strengths of the organization or department? In what areas of the company do you expect growth?
- Is your company environmentally conscious? In what ways?
- In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
- What is the largest single problem facing your staff right now?
- What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does the department fit in?
- What is the reporting structure in this department? What are the acceptable channels of communication?
- What is your management style and the type of employee who works well with you?
- Describe the team/project assignments and the mix of people involved.
- What is the management philosophy of this organization?
- What is the company's view on continued education?
- What is the company's policy on providing seminars, workshops, or training so employees can keep up on skills or acquire new skills?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- How is the economic climate affecting your organization?

What you should know about companies:

- History of development
- Products/Services/Markets
- Market share/competitors
- Company size
- Recent changes within organization
- Strategic plans
- Financial status of company
- Principal site of the company
- Overall reputation
- Contributions to the industry or field
- Career paths offered

Where to find this information:

- ✓ Go to the **company website**.
- ✓ For Public Companies go to their **annual report**. You can call their PR or Treasure's office to ask for one.
- ✓ See what industry and the news groups say about them: go to your campus portal at www.lehigh.edu. Choose My Library tab. Scroll down and click on Database Finder. **Look at: ABI, EDGAR, LEXIS/NEXIS, STANDARD & POORS NETADVANTAGE, NATL NEWSPAPER ABSTRACTS**, and other newspapers listed there. Other good general websites are: www.learnwebskills.com, www.rileyguide.com, and HOOVERS on LUCIE.

Visit the **Career Services Library** to review the Company Research shelves. Find out what Lehigh Alumni employees say about the company. Create a **LUnet** account to review lists of alumni who have volunteered to be information resources about their companies and their jobs.