

Career and Professional Development

at Virginia Tech

Mock Interview Guide

Launch

What is a Mock Interview?

- A simulation interview conducted by Career Advisors.
- The role of a mock interviewer is to advise about interviewing and appropriate questions to ask as well as to guide you to resources about interviewing.

Purpose:

- Through practice, increase comfort and confidence during the interview process and enhance interviewing skills.
- Provide feedback to aid in assessing current strengths and weaknesses with your interviewing skills.

Scheduling/ Preparing:

- Call the front desk at 540-231-6241 to schedule your mock interview.
- After scheduling, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with information to help you prepare, including information about interview attire.
- At least 24 business hours before your interview reply to your confirmation e-mail with your updated resume, personal statement, job description, or other helpful documents for your mock interviewer to review.
- Review the interviewing section in the career planning guide as well as tips provided throughout this document.
- Business/ professional dress is required for your mock interview.
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early for your mock interview and check in at the front desk.

Develop

Experience

Explore

No-Show Policy:

Missed mock interviews take time away from other students seeking mock interviews or appointments. Cancellations must be made **24 business hours** before the interview appointment. **If you fail to cancel at least one day before the interview or simply do not show up, you must wait at least one week to schedule another mock interview.**

Optional Recording of Mock Interview:

If you choose to have your interview recorded, it will be shared with you via google drive. Watching back your interview can help you better present your skills, abilities, and professionalism in the future.

What to Expect: From Start to Finish

- Your mock interview experience begins the moment that your interviewer greets you in the waiting area.
- Start with a firm handshake and professional greeting.
- The mock interview will last about 30 minutes, and the interview will be critiqued for 15-30 minutes.
- At the end of your interview you will have the opportunity to discuss any particular questions or concerns about interviewing with your interviewer.

Questions about the mock interview program? Contact:

Career and Professional Development
540-231-6241



Preparing for your Mock Interview

Preparation and practice are key ingredients to a successful interview. Use this packet and the career planning guide to prepare for both your mock interview as well as future interviews.

As you prepare:

- Understand and be able to express your attributes/ personality in relation to the position/ graduate or professional school program.
- Research the company/ organization/ school, your field, the position, the graduate program.
- Know your goals (professional, education) and be able to express them to the interviewer.
- Think of stories and examples you would like to highlight during the interview.
- Practice telling your stories to smooth out the details.

How You Will Be Evaluated

Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attire should be interview/ business professional dress • Dress neatly and appropriately (conservative, not trendy)
Greeting/ Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand to greet interviewer with a firm handshake/ professional greeting • Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer and smile • Be ready to easily pick up your belongings and go to your interview
Body Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain good eye contact and good posture; avoid fidgeting • Use subtle but effective gestures when speaking • Pay attention to your non-verbals (voice projection, nervous habits)
Attitude About Work/ Working with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate enthusiasm and sincerity in your answers • Be genuine; don't say what you think the interviewer wants to hear • Stay positive; when talking about challenges don't blame/ judge
Responses to Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate research conducted before the interview • Speak with confidence
Oral Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak clearly and concisely; be polite and tactful • Include enough detail to give a clear picture of your experiences, but not too much that your answer is unfocused • Try to think through your response before answering a question
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare questions for your interviewer based on research • Practice answering interview questions ahead of time

Launch

Develop

Experience

Explore

Prepare Yourself

1. Personality traits or skills I have related to this job/ graduate program include:
2. My experiences that demonstrate the above traits and skills are:
3. 3-5 accomplishments of interest to the person interviewing me are:
4. What are the 3 most important things I want the interviewer to know about me?
5. What concerns might an employer have about me and what will alleviate them?
6. What are my short-term and long-term goals? How does this opportunity relate?
7. What about this job/ employer/ school excites me most?
8. Why am I the best candidate for this opportunity? What makes me unique?

Launch

Develop

Experience

Explore

Do Your Research

General Research

1. How long has the organization/ school been in operation?
2. Where is the organization/ school located? What are those locations like?
3. Has the school or organization been in the news lately? For what reason(s)?
4. What are the organization/ school's short-term goals? Long-term goals?
5. What are the strengths of the company/ school?
6. What difficulties does this organization/ school/ program face? How can I help solve them?
7. Who are the organization/ school's competitors? How does it compare to its competitors?

Employer Specific Research

1. What services/ products/ programs this organization provides?
2. What else is this organization known for (ex. Community involvement, supportive of families, relaxed atmosphere, etc.)?

Graduate or Professional School Specific Research

1. What is this school known for? What about the program I'm applying to?
2. What are this program's alumni doing after graduation?

Launch

Develop

Experience

Explore

Behavioral Based Interviewing

What is behavioral based interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers in which the questions asked assist the employer in making predictions about a potential employee's future success based on past behaviors. In behavior-based interviews, candidates are asked to give specific examples of when they demonstrated particular behaviors or skills.

Sample behavioral based interview questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to successfully work with a wide variety of people, situations, or environments.
- Describe a time you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time in which you had make a decision quickly.
- Tell me about a time in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation which you have had to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person when the individual may not have personally like you (or vice versa).

Tips for behavioral based interviewing:

- Be specific and detailed in your responses using a particular, specific situation. Use the STAR method (see next page) to form your answers.
- Interviewers may probe further into your stories by asking, "Tell me more about your meeting with that person," or "Lead me through your decision process."
- Listen carefully to the question and ask for it to be repeated or for clarification if needed. Make sure to answer all parts of the question.
- A good answer is focused and directly related to the question but also tells the employer many other positive qualities about you.
- Before the interview, prepare success stories from a variety of experiences that highlight your skills, qualities, strengths, and characteristics. Use the job description to anticipate some questions the interviewer may ask.

Practice Your Stories

S– Situation (Describe the situation.)

T– Task (What needed to be done?)

A– Actions (What did you do?)

R– Results (What happened?)

Using STAR:

- Keep the situation and task brief. Give enough information to paint the picture and move on.
- The majority of your answer should address *specific actions* you took. Keep actions related to the question, but a good story can also demonstrate additional skills.
- For results, think about what skills you gained from the experience and their future impact.

Launch

Develop

Experience

Explore

Practice Your STAR Stories		
Teamwork	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Decision Making	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Persuasion	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Communication Skills	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Time Management	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Multitasking	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Leadership	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Problem Solving	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Adaptability	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:
Creativity	Situation: Task:	Actions: Results:

Other Possible Sample Interview Questions

Questions Interviewers May Ask:

Education

- Why did you choose your major?
- How does your education and work experience relate to this opportunity?

Experience

- How do you define leadership? In what capacity have you served as a leader?
- How would your supervisor describe your work?

Personal

- What is your greatest strength?
- When was a time you failed? What did you learn from that failure?
- Of which accomplishment are you most proud?

In the Workplace

- Do you prefer to work on teams or alone?
- What do you look for in a supervisor?

Graduate or Professional Schools

- What do you believe your greatest challenge will be if you are accepted into this program?
- What are current trends in your field of study?
- What are you hoping to gain from this program?

Sample Questions to Ask an Interviewer:

General Advice

- Ask genuine, thoughtful questions to show you are knowledgeable, interested, and evaluating the employer.
- Listen during the interview and clarify things you may need more information about.
- Ask questions based on your research before the interview.

Questions for Employers

- What are some of the qualifications you seek in an ideal candidate?
- What characteristics do successful individuals in this position possess?
- Could you describe the normal daily routine for this position?
- Is there a training period? What does it involve?
- How would my performance be evaluated? How often? By whom?

Questions for Graduate/ Professional Schools

- What makes this program different than others in the same field?
- What are some research projects current students are pursuing?
- What have recent alumni done after graduation?

Questions I Could Ask My Interviewer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Launch

Develop

Experience

Explore

Final Tips and Suggestions

Before the Interview:

- Confirm the date, time, and location for your interview.
- Review your resume and think of key talking points you hope to highlight during your interview.
- Research the company/ school/ organization/ agency. Prepare questions to ask your interviewer.
- Bring a portfolio to store notes, resumes/ reference sheets, and questions for your interviewer.
- Make sure your clothes are ironed, your hair is neat, and your shoes are polished.
- If you must cancel your interview, contact the employer promptly. Don't be a "no-show."
- Do not be late unless there is an emergency. Always contact the company as soon as possible if an emergency arises; don't leave them to assume why you were late or missed the interview.

During the Interview:

- The first few minutes of the interview are the most important. Sell yourself and spark interest.
- For dynamic answers, add examples, even when not directly prompted (i.e. greatest strength)
- Know what type of person they seek and what the position requires. Relate your answers to the position or how it can benefit the company/ organization/ agency/ school.
- It's okay to pause to collect your thoughts before answering. The pause will feel longer to you.
- End the interview positively, by reiterating your interest in the position or telling the recruiter you look forward to hearing from him/her soon. Don't forget to thank the employer for his/her time.
- Grades may be a topic. If your grades are low, be prepared to have an explanation.
- Don't say negative things about past experiences/ people (i.e. insult a former supervisor).

After the Interview:

- At the end of your interview, ask for a business card. It will help you spell your interviewer's name right and provide an e-mail address for your thank you note.
- Send a thank you note within 48 hours of your interview. Mention something specific you and the interviewer talked about and remind them of your key qualifications and interest.

3 New Ideas to Implement in my Interviews:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.