Successful Interviewing
Successfully managing the interview is a critical step in getting any job. The interview provides the employer with an opportunity to get to know you and more importantly the skills you have to contribute to the organization. Although interviews are naturally anxiety-producing, there are many strategies that will help you manage the situation effectively. There is no set formula for predicting the format of an interview since the organization’s priorities and interviewer styles vary. The best preparation is to know yourself well enough that you are able to concretely describe yourself in the interview context.

Before the Interview: Know Yourself
The best preparation is to know yourself: your skills and abilities, your talents and your values. Begin by taking the time to assess yourself.

- Think of 5-7 skills or qualities that you possess that you would use to describe yourself. You may be asked, “What three words would you use to describe yourself.” If you are, you have a set of five from which to choose.
- Look at the job description and the requirements of the job. What skills do you have that directly match the position? If they are looking for someone with teamwork or leadership skills and you have developed those skills, then you will want to emphasize that in the interview.
- Take some time to think about your past. How did you develop the skills you have. What did you do in high school or in college that made you who you are today? Did you learn teamwork from sports? Did you learn the value of practice from mastering a musical instrument? Did you learn problem solving through jobs you held.
- Finally, look over your resume and see if your resume adequately includes words and descriptions that will convey your skills to an employer. Write outlines for your answers to anticipated questions, then rehearse them out loud for practice. This can increase your confidence.

Before the Interview: Know the Company
Before each interview, take time to research the company.

- Know the company’s website well.
- Take time to look how the company’s stock has preformed.
- Know what service or product the company provides.
- Know the values of the company, their mission statement, and their guiding principles.
- Research the company and be prepared to explain how the company fits your criteria for employer. If you are extremely interested in the company, take time to also do research on the industry.
- What are the key issues in the industry? If you are interviewing with a pharmaceutical company, know what is happening in the health care industry.
- How are current events impacting the industry?
- How is the industry addressing environmental issues? Is this company embracing the changes taking place? How?

In summary, you should know the answers to the following questions for each company with which you interview:

- What is the company’s culture, values and history?
• What does the company do?
• What type of business are they in?
• Who are their key competitors?
• What size is the company?
• Where are they located?
• What are the different divisions?
• Does the company perform a service?
• Is it expanding or downsizing?
• What kind of training programs does it use?
• What new things are happening?
• What is the recent (5 Year) history of the company?
• What are the current events on the company’s homepage?

Mason Hall Library has excellent resources in addition to numerous web resources. Never underestimate the value of knowing the company’s website very very well.

**Before the Interview: Know How to Interview**

Know the basics of interviewing.

• Dress in conservative business attire.
• Know the precise time and place of the interview and how long it will take you to get to the interview so you will be early and have a few minutes to compose yourself before the interview.
• Spend some time thinking and preparing about questions you would like to ask based on the research you did.
• Prepare yourself for surprise or awkward questions, and strategize ways to deal with them.
• Have a strong introduction that begins to highlight your skills and how you developed them.
• Be able to “walk the interviewer through your resume”
• Take a pad and pen along with you for any notes you wish to make after the interview.
• Practice answering typical questions with a friend or other “mock interviewer,”
• Review frequently asked questions from library resources or google “behavioral based interview questions” – be able to use the STAR approach to answering questions.
• Convert opinion into fact by preparing specific examples of your accomplishments as illustrations of your skills/abilities/traits.
• Participate in a Career Services QUIC interview process for access to Fisher On Campus Interviewing and for constructive feedback regarding your interviewing strengths/weaknesses.

**During the Interview**

If you have done your research on yourself, the company, the industry, and how to interview, now you need to focus on the delivery of the information during the interview.

• Stress the positive points about yourself in a confident, factual and honest manner.
• Be concise and specific when representing yourself.
• Sixty percent of communication is nonverbal:
be sensitive to your nonverbal behaviors: eye contact, posture, tone, nervous habits.

- be sensitive to the interviewer’s nonverbal behavior and respond to it.

- Be aware of the tone of the interview (the interviewer may be trying to see how you react to stress).
- Convey enthusiasm about the position.
- Take time to reflect in a quiet manner, if necessary, before answering (process your thoughts).
- Avoid speaking negatively about yourself or others.
- Politely ask for clarification of a question which you do not fully understand.
- Know and use the interviewer’s name.
- Raise questions at the appropriate time; this shows interest in the position.
- Before you leave, know the next step after the interview.
- Thank interviewer for their time/consideration.
- If you enjoyed the interview and are still enthusiastic, make sure to let them know it!

After the Interview
The interview is not really over until you.

- Write thank you letters to interviewers.
- Reflect on and write down points of the interview that you felt good about/need improvement.
- Assess outcomes realistically.
- Be persistent in preparing for/participating in future interviews.

Frequently Asked Interviewing Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your career objectives? What factors did you consider in making those objectives?
- Why did you choose to go into this field?
- What are your most significant work/nonwork achievements?
- What do you feel are your strengths and how will they relate to this position?
- What would be your biggest contribution to our operations?
- Why are you a good candidate for this position?
- Give me an example of a time you utilized your leadership skills.
- What weaknesses would you want to improve? How?
- Are your grades a good indicator of your academic ability?
- Why should I hire you?
- What separates you from other candidates?
- What impact have you made at the FCOB or at Ohio State?

Questions to Ask Interviewers
You can’t expect to ask all of these questions in a first interview—but seeking the answers throughout the recruiting process will help you decide if the company/position is a good fit:

- What is the management structure of the company?
- How would you describe the growth potential of the company?
- What do you like/dislike about the company?
- Is there a defined career path?
Who would I work for and what level are they?
What hours/travel/locations are required?
How much supervision would I receive?
How structured is the job?
Does this position lead to more responsibilities?
What is the time frame?
Is there a training program and, if so, how long does it last?
What are the actual job requirements?
Who else would I be working with? Individual? Team? Rotation?
Is there a required continuing education program?
Do promotions require relocation?
What are the company’s/department’s future plans?
What are the common characteristics of your successful employees?
What would a typical day be like?
What are some of the challenges I might encounter on this job?
How many people have held this job in the past five years? Why did the previous person leave?
What are the biggest challenges facing your company? Your department or division?
Is there a formal performance review? How often?
*Avoid negative questions in the 1st interview: To prepare for these questions know 8 to 10 personal examples that are indicative of your leadership, time management, independence, analytical skills, communication skills, organizational skills, communication and teamwork.

Types of Interviews
1. **Traditional** This is what most people think of as an “interview.”
   - Directed by the interviewer.
   - Interviewer speaks about 25% of the time; the interviewee, 75% of the time.
   - Includes a “question-and-answer” session, with the typical questions asked.
   - Structured, with an introduction, question and answer period, and a close.

2. **Non-directive** This is a very unstructured interview style. It is more like a conversation than an interview. The interviewer may do all of the talking or very little. The best way to handle this type is to make opportunities to talk about your skills and how they fit the position and to ask questions. Prepare for this type of interview by having three points you want to make about your skills and how you can contribute to the company.

3. **Behavioral Interview** Since research has indicated that the interview is not always the most effective means of selection, more and more companies are using this method. Behavioral interviews assume that past performance is a predictor of future behavior. Therefore, questions are targeted to measure your potential in several critical areas, such as leadership, problem solving and decision-making, by asking you to cite specific examples of your past performance in each of the designated areas. This has also been referred to as the STAR method:
   - **Situation:** describe a problem, decision, project, etc.
   - **Task:** what were the major tasks involved?
   - **Action:** what did you do?
   - **Result:** what were the outcomes of your actions?

Responses to these types of questions must be prepared ahead of time; think about various situations from work, classes or activities. Be extremely careful about using examples from your personal life (i.e. roommates, girlfriends, drinking buddies, etc.)
Give me an example of a time when you faced a conflict and how you resolved it.
Tell me about a project you started/finished on your own. Tell me about a problem you uncovered.
Tell me about the toughest decision you ever made.
Tell me how you get others to accept your ideas.
Tell me about a time when you failed and what you learned from it.

4. **Case Interview**
Recently, many consulting firms have raised the ante for those who want to work in their industry by utilizing case studies as part of the interview process. By presenting an actual business problem and expecting a well-formulated and concise response to possible solutions, consulting recruiters are testing candidates’ abilities to listen, analyze, and solve problems on their feet. There are many Internet sites devoted to preparing for case interviews. Among these, [www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com) will link you to some good advice. To learn more about case interviewing, see a Career Services job search consultant.

5. **Stress Interview**
*How to Stay Graceful in a Stress Interview*
Stress interviews test how well you react to pressure. Most commonly used in investment banking, stress interviewing is the deliberate creation of an uncomfortable situation in order to test how the candidate reacts to pressure. The ethics of this kind of interviewing are questionable, and it is far from certain that the stress created is similar to what would occur on the job.

However, it’s also true that one person’s stress situation is another person’s fair, if tough, question.

**Some of common examples of stress-creating techniques are:**
- The interviewer doesn’t say anything for the first five or ten minutes of the interview.
- The interviewer is reading the paper when the candidate comes into the room.
- The interviewer asks a tough question right off the bat, without even introducing himself.
- The interviewer challenges your answer by disagreeing with you.
- The interviewer pauses for a long time after listening to your response.
- The interviewer ridicules your background.
- The interviewer takes you into a department meeting with no introduction.
- The interviewer is deliberately very late, then keeps looking at his or her watch.
- The interviewer pretends to fall asleep.

**How might you handle such a situation, if you still want the job?**
If the interviewer ignores you when you walk in the room, just dive in with something like, “I’d like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and tell you why I think I’m the right person for this job.” After a long pause, you might say, “Perhaps I didn’t make myself clear.” Then explain your previous response. If the manager ridicules your background, you could say, “Perhaps you expected different qualifications, but these have served me well so far and I intend to continue to build on them.” If the manager thrusts you into a department meeting without an introduction, just introduce yourself and ask the other people for their names, then explain that you are happy to meet them and learn more about the department. If the interviewer pretends to fall asleep, write a note saying, “I enjoyed meeting you,” put it in front of the interviewer, and rise to leave. Chances are, you’ll get the interviewer’s full attention.
The important thing, if you’re unfortunate enough to encounter this form of interviewing, is to keep your cool, maintain your dignity, and find a way to use the situation to your advantage.

* “How to Stay Graceful in a Stress Interview” reprinted with permission of wetfeet.com.

Effectively Managing Touchy Interview Questions
There you are in an interview and the interviewer asks you a question about your age, marital status, plans for a family or any of a number of potentially discriminatory questions. You know these questions are illegal; an interviewer would have to show a consistent policy of asking the same questions of all applicants, and further, would have to show that the questions related to qualifications for the job. What are your options when faced with such questions?

You could:
- answer the question
- challenge the employer as to why he/she is asking the question
- suggest you would be happy to answer the question, but ask the employer to explain how this question relates to your qualifications for the position

or you could acknowledge that you realize that there are many sides to every individual including a personal side that often includes family, children, marriage, religion just to name a few. However, you then can emphasize how important your career is to you and that you are sure that you will be able to give your full commitment to your career and find a balance between your professional life and your personal life.

If you should get such a question especially during an interview conducted through the Career Services office, please contact a staff member to talk about the situation in detail.