



Interviewing for a job, internship, fellowship, or any professional opportunity can be stressful. The best way to relieve stress is to be as prepared as possible. This means taking the time to research the nuts and bolts of an organization, its vision and mission, and learning about the culture. Begin preparing for interviews shortly after submitting application materials. That way you have plenty of time to practice and improve before scheduled interviews. Preparation is critical for your performance during the interview and for you to feel comfortable with the opportunity. Remember that the interview process is as much for you as it is for the organization.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

### Know Yourself

Make sure you know why you are interested in this position and this employer. How does this position fit into your career goals, and your personal values? What concerns do you have about the position, the company, etc.? Employers want to hire people who know who they are and why they want the position.

### Dress Professionally

Appearing professional is extremely important for interviews. Always dress more professionally than the company culture. If you aren't sure what to wear, always default professional attire. Below are suggestions for what to wear and what not to wear:

- Dark, solid colored suit (black, navy, charcoal) with ties with subtle patterns; knee-length skirt or pants suit
- Comfortable, professional, and polished black or brown shoes
- This is the time to shower, shave, and deodorant; brush your teeth; and all hair must be neatly groomed
- Avoid cologne/perfume and clunky, loud jewelry
- Do not wear jeans, flip-flops, sneakers, miniskirts, exercise wear, T-shirts, or anything you would wear to bed, the beach, or the gym

### Research the Company, the Position, and the Type of Interview

It is essential that you take some time to research the employer and the position long before your interview. You want to make sure you are familiar with the field, the employer, and the expectations of the position to be prepared for their questions and to identify questions you have. You can download an industry guide from Vault.com (access through Handshake) and review the company's website. Some of the suggested items to study and ways to get information include:

- Current press releases
- Mission and vision statement
- Strategic plans
- Clients, products, and main competitors
- Aspects of the organization that interest you
- Follow their social media to stay current on the most important items to that company
- Contact JHU alumni, who may be working with the organization
- Ask them what kind of interview to expect



### Type of Interview

There are several types of interview formats, which is why it is important to know what to expect before you arrive.

- Individual Interview – Candidate meets one-on-one with members of the company
- Panel Interview – Candidate meets with several members of the company at once
- Presentation – Candidate gives a short presentation on a topic chosen by the company
- Group Interview – Several candidates are expected to work together to solve a problem
- Case Interview – Style of interview used mostly by consulting firms that is problem-oriented
- Technical Interview – Candidate asked to solve problems related to specific technical knowledge

## WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE INTERVIEW

### What to Bring

Bring a few copies of your resume and a list of references. Put them in a portfolio or folder and carry them in a professional bag (not a backpack). Bring your portfolio of work, if your field requires it (e.g., art, design, fashion, etc.). Bring a list of questions you want to ask, a nice note pad, and pen.

### Sample Questions to Ask Them

- How did you come to work for Company X? What keeps you here?
- Is there any job training for this position? If yes, what kind and who does the training?
- Can you give me an idea of what a typical day in this position looks like?
- What opportunities for professional development exist?
- Is there a formal mentoring program for new employees or recent graduates here?
- What is the hiring timeline after this interview? Can you tell me when I might expect to hear from you again?

### The Beginning of the Interview

- Arrive 10-15 minutes early to your interview (know your route well in advance and allot extra time for traffic and finding the location)
- Be aware that the interview begins when you enter the building. Therefore, be polite and professional to everyone you meet including security guards and receptionists; their input matters
- Greet everyone with a smile. Look them in the eye and smile as you give them a firm handshake.

### Types of Questions You May Be Asked

Practice is the best way to prepare for all the questions you will be asked. In almost all cases, your answers should be no longer than 1 or 1.5 minutes long. Examples of each type of question below are on the last page.



**Open-Ended or Personal Questions:** This is the most common type of interview question that are asked to learn more about you as a person and a candidate. Have a clear point or theme that you focus on throughout your interview, emphasize your strengths as a candidate. If you can, refer your answers back to the job description, your resume, or the research you did prior to the interview.

**Behavioral Based Questions:** This is a special kind of interview question that asks about your past behavior to predict your future performance. Employers ask these questions to gauge your strengths as a candidate. Using the STAR technique to tell a good story is the best way to answer these questions.

### STAR Technique

**S** = Situation/Skill: briefly describe the situation

**T** = Task: identify the key objective and issue you have addressed

**A** = Action: describe the specific actions that you took to address the situation

**R** = Results (most important part): outcomes or results of your actions

**Behavioral Based Questions often begin with phrases such as:**

Tell me about a time...

Describe a situation in which...

Give me an example of...

Prepare for these questions by telling STAR stories based on 5 to 10 experiences on your resume. Do not use the same example for more than one question.

For information on other types of questions or interview formats (e.g., case, technical) visit the Resources section of Handshake, contact your Career Coach, or stop by the Career Center's drop-in hours.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### Reflection

Take time after the interview to review your notes and take stock of your impressions of the position, 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

This is a critical part of the interview process because it shows that you are a professional who appreciates the time others devoted to the position. Send thank you notes to everyone you met during the after the interview. **(REMEMBER: get business cards of those you meet.)** Emails are appropriate as long as they are tailored to each person or group of people you meet. You can send a handwritten note or business format letter to emphasize your interest and appreciation, and if you believe it appropriate for the situation.

### 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.



### Open-ended Questions

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

### Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about a time you had a personality conflict or a disagreement with a supervisor. How did you resolve it?
- Give me an example of a time in the last year when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Describe a situation in which you were the leader. How did you promote the effectiveness of your team? What were the results?
- 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.
- Describe a time when you had to communicate complex technical information to an audience with minimal subject knowledge.
- Give me an example of a time when you demonstrated initiative.
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual you have ever worked with, and how you managed to deal with that person.
- Tell me about a situation when you experienced failure.
- Tell me about a time when you were very busy and had to set priorities for yourself.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

### Riddles or “Back of the Envelop” Questions

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