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JOB INTERVIEW TIPS

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
CAREER RESOURCE CENTER
Engineering Career Resource Center

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This presentation is created by the Wayne State University College of Engineering Career Resource Center to provide insight and tips for job interviews.
It is important to always keep the *purpose* of a job interview in mind.

- A job interview allows an employer to meet the candidate and ask them questions related to job experience, education, and performance.
- A job interview also gives the employer a chance to see the candidates communication skills firsthand.
- Interviews give candidates a chance to see the employer’s facility/location and sometimes to meet other staff besides just the hiring manager.
- *Remember,* an interview also gives the candidate a chance to interview the employer – make sure you are asking questions, taking notes, and observing your surroundings to gauge if the company is a right fit for *you.*
Types of Interviews

There are various types of job interviews, and you may find that you have to go through various types of interviews at one company while you go through their hiring process.

Always be prepared for all the types of interviews and you will be ready for anything!
Phone interviews are typically pre-screening interviews. These are set to gauge your communication skills, how you present yourself, and gather more general information on you and your background.

- Usually 15-30 mins
- May have 1 or more managers speaking to you via phone.
- Do NOT take a phone interview while driving, smoking, eating, walking, etc.
- Be prepared with your resume, cover letter, notepad, etc.
- Make sure your phone is active and the connection is clear.
- Take the call somewhere quiet that will not have disruptions.
- Make sure your phone is fully charged prior to the phone interview.
- Make sure your ringtone/ring-back tone is professional (ex: do not have a ring-back tone that will offend the caller – ring-back tones in general are a bad idea for career seekers).
- Speak loud and clear, but not so loud that you are yelling. Try not to interrupt the employer, and make sure to answer questions fully just like you would in a face-to-face interview.
- Taking notes is extremely important during phone interviews.
In-Person Interviews

In person interviews are the most common type of job interview. These usually involve the candidate going to the company’s location (or other professional setting) to discuss the candidate/job.

- Typically 1-2 hours in length.
- May include some assessments or questionnaires.
- Shake hands when entering the room w/ all individuals.
- Usually have 1 or more hiring managers, supervisors present.
- Requires professional dress and presentation.
- Bring along several copies of resume, reference list, and portfolio.
- Questions include technical and soft skill-related topics.
- Be prepared with examples from past and current work, school, volunteer, etc. situation to use when answering questions.
- Bring a notepad and pen to take notes.
Group interviews come in a variety of shapes, but typically include several candidates interviewing for the same (or similar) job at once. They could also include a panel of managers interviewing one candidate.

- Typically there is a panel of managers overseeing the group interview.
- Dress professionally and bring several copies of resume and reference lists.
- Stay confident, speak loudly & clearly, and make eye contact with everyone in front of you.
- Try to show how you stand out from the other candidates, without dominating the conversation.
- Stay clear to your message, do not change your answers to fit w/ the other candidates interviewing.
- Prepare for a group interview just like a face-to-face, traditional interview.
There are several other types of interviews, all of which require equal preparation time.

- **Videoconference Interview (Ex: Skype)**
  - Dress professionally, be in a quiet/private space, check your connection before the interview day.

- **Dining/Lunch Interviews**
  - Treat this like a traditional interview.
  - Use proper etiquette for a dinner table, order modestly.
Preparation

• Preparing for the job interview is just as important as the interview itself.

• There are many aspects to think about when preparing for a big interview.
Several days before the interview:

• Research the company (Use websites like Glassdoor, Indeed, Wikipedia, news articles, and the company’s own website to gather information.) Focus on their strengths, values, and company culture.

• If possible, drive to the location of the interview – find out where to park, where to enter the building, and how long traffic will take.

• Prepare an interview outfit- and TRY IT ON. Make sure you don’t need it tailored or cleaned before your interview.

• Print several copies of your resume and references. Create a binder portfolio of sample words, accomplishments, certificates, etc.

• Practice your elevator speech, go over mock-interview questions, review your work history, education, and other professional experiences. Be able to speak to these using names, dates, places, etc.

• *TIP: Some studies show that light exercise/physical activity (walking, biking, running) a few times in the weeks prior to an interview can gradually lower your stress levels and make you feel more confident when the interview day comes!
Day of the Interview:

- Get a good nights sleep, eat a healthy breakfast, give yourself plenty of time to get ready.

- Review your resume and say your elevator speech out loud.

- Speak positively to yourself and think confidently – you’ve got this!

- Give yourself plenty of time to get to your interview, park, etc. You should plan to be about 15 minutes early to your interview.

*TIP: Check out Amy Cuddy’s TEDTalk on how your body language can make you more confident prior to an interview. [Amy Cuddy TEDTalk Video](#)
After the Interview

What you do after the interview can play a big role in setting you above the competition.

• **Shake hands** – before leaving the interview thank everyone and shake their hands. If possible, get business cards from the individual(s) on your interview committee.

• **Reward yourself a little!** After all, it wasn’t easy to get that interview and you got through the most stressful part! Take yourself out to dinner or a movie! Even if you don’t get the job, you want your body to associate job interviews w/ positive reward – over time this will make your body/mind feel less stressed about future job interviews.

• Write a thank you letter made out to anyone on your interview committee. (See next slide for more information on thank you cards)
Thank You Letter

Thank you letters/notes can be the perfect final touch after an interview. While not mandatory, in today’s tough job market they play an important role.

• Thank you notes need to be sent within **24 hours** of your interview.

• Thank you letters can be hand written on a blank, professional greeting card and mailed or they can be a quick e-mail message e-mailed to the hiring manager/team.

• It is your choice, but you should consider how you have communicated w/ the hiring managers up to this point. *Ex: If your communication has been all via e-mail, it is probably best to e-mail a thank you note.*

• Try to include the names of all individuals on your committee if possible. If you don’t remember all of their names, thank the interview committee in general.

• Thank you notes should be short (2-3 sentences). You are simply thanking them for taking the time to interview. Let them know you enjoyed speaking with them, and you hope to hear from them soon.
How to Dress

Being dressed professionally is extremely important in an interview. There is a balance between being “dressed-up” and being too “dressed-up”.

- Suit jackets are appropriate for job interviews.
  - You can wear suits with dress pants, a skirt (knee length), or nice slacks. Remember to match (or at least coordinate) the suit jacket to the pants. Make sure the jacket is not ill-fitting (too long, too short, bunchy, etc.)
  - A tie is the important final touch of a nice pants suit.
  - Remove distracting piercings, no tattoos visible, etc.
  - Matching belt
- Dress shoes should be worn – with matching/coordinating socks.
  - Make sure shoes are polished and well kept.
  - Modest heels if necessary.
- Things like perfume/cologne, make-up, nail polish, and jewelry should be worn modestly.
- Hair should be styled, tamed, and modest. Long hair should be worn down and brushed.
- *Remember – you want to look professional, but be comfortable enough to feel confident. Always try on your outfit ahead of time so you can make necessary adjustments!
Dress for Success
There are various types of interview questions that you may be asked during your interview.

These may include questions on past performance, education, experience, interests and research topics, projects you have worked on, career goals, soft skills, and more.

Typically interview questions are grouped into two categories, traditional interview questions and behavioral interview questions.
Typically, traditional interview questions are pretty straightforward. They require you to relay factual information the employer. These should be answered truthfully, and with a professional career focus.

*Always remember what the employer is looking for when answering questions.*

- EX: if the job posting you applied to mentioned “team player, with an interest in robotics, long term goals related to engineering, and experience with Excel” then mention your robotics interest and your interest in engineering research, your ability to work well with others, etc.

Examples:
- “Why did you choose to study ________?”
- “What do you see yourself doing five years from now?”
- “Describe the best teacher you have ever had.”
- “What are your research interests?”
- “What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?”
Behavioral Interview Questions are designed for the employer to gain insight into your past performance, education, etc. to get an idea if you are right for the job.

These questions warrant examples or “interview stories” so that the employer has a real-life example of how you operate.
Behavioral Interview Questions

- The key w/ behavioral interview questions is to **be prepared**. Prior to your interview you need to make sure you have several examples (or *stories*) that you can use to answer behavioral questions.

- The more details in your examples the better!

- *Remember, the employer doesn’t know you. The more details and insight you give them during your interview, the more accurate picture they have of you. If you say very little about yourself/experience, they may assume things that are not necessarily true. It is up to YOU to describe yourself and experience and win the job!*
The “STAR” technique was developed to help job seekers when answering behavioral interview questions. When giving an example during an interview, remember to use the STAR technique to be sure you cover all the important points!

**Situation**
Describe the situation that was occurring in your example.

**Task**
Describe what your specific task was during that situation.

**Action**
Describe the action you took during the situation.

**Result**
Describe the results of the situation based on your action.
• “Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.”
• “Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along?”
• “Give me an example of a time when you managed numerous responsibilities at once. How did you handle that?”
• “Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way.”
• “Tell me about a time when you were able to be creative with your work. What was exciting or difficult about that?”
• “Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you eventually overcome that?”
• “Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did you handle that, did it impact you?”
• *TIP: Check out this video to see a great example of behavioral interview responses.*
Questions to Ask During an Interview

It is important to ask questions during an interview. One of the worst ways to end an interview is when an employer asks you for questions, and you have no questions to ask. **Come prepared w/ questions to ask!**

Remember that you are interviewing the company too, seeing if they are a good fit for **you**, so be sure to ask questions that help you understand the job and the work culture better.

*Avoid questions about salary, benefits, etc.*

**Example Questions to Ask:**

- “What are your goals for someone in this position? What do you expect this person to learn?”
- “How has this position evolved over time?”
- “What have past employees done to succeed in this role?”
- “What do you enjoy most about working here? Could you describe your company’s work culture?”
- “What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next three months?”
- “How does this company foster innovation within its employees?”
Final Notes

Remember to always be prepared, stay confident, trust your abilities/knowledge, and remain focused on your goals.

If you need additional assistance visit the Engineering Career Resource Center for more help! EDC1524

*Please, if you get a new job, internship, or co-op related to your program of study please remember to notify the Eng Career Resource Center in person for via e-mail erin.rook@wayne.edu

BEST OF LUCK!
Additional Interview Resources

- **Wayne State Career Services**
- **Interviewing Resources**
- **Career Magazine Connection**
- **Engineering Interview Questions - Monster.com**