



Part III: Interview Questions and Skills: Practice!

Tips:

1. Anticipate likely questions
2. Develop excellent answers
3. Practice!

Be enthusiastic and confident when responding to questions. Don't rush your answers, but don't ramble on and on, either. Try to, um, avoid, like, using unnecessary words, right? And um, repeating yourself or, like, annoying phrases, you know? A good technique is to write out your answers to the questions you anticipate and edit them. Then practice your polished answers out loud, over and over. If you can have someone help you do a "mock interview," that would be the best way to do this.

1. "Tell me a little about yourself."

When responding to this request, you should focus on both your personal and professional values. Always be honest, but talk about your best traits only, especially those that relate to the position for which you are applying. Highlight experiences and accomplishments you are most proud of.

Remember to tailor your response to the specific job. By studying the job announcement, you'll get a good idea of the skills and experience being sought. Work those into your response. Consider this your own personal commercial. If the interview consisted of only this ONE chance to sell yourself, what would you say?

2. "What do you feel has been your greatest work-related accomplishment?"

Choose one example from your past that was important to you and helped the company you worked for. Give specific details about what you did, how you did it, and what the results were. Try to pick an accomplishment that relates to the position for which you are applying. Employers like to hear about accomplishments that reduced expenses, raised revenues, solved problems or enhanced a company's reputation.

3. "What is your greatest strength?"

This is a great chance to highlight your best skills. Don't pick just one, focus on your top three or four. Some examples are: leadership skills, team-building skills, and organizational skills. Determine which strengths would fit best with the position for which you are applying. For example, if the job announcement stresses the ability to handle multiple tasks, you could say: "I'm good at organizational skills, prioritization and time management. But my greatest strength is my ability to effectively handle multiple projects and deadlines."

4. "What is a weakness of yours?"

Be careful with this one. Most interview guides will tell you to answer it with a positive trait disguised as a weakness. For example, "I tend to expect others to work as hard as I do," or "I'm a bit of a perfectionist." Interviewers have heard these "canned" answers over and over again. To stand out, be more original and state a true weakness, but then emphasize what you've done to overcome it. For example: "I've had trouble delegating duties to others because I felt I could do things better myself. This has sometimes backfired because I'd end up with more than I could handle and the quality of my work would suffer. But I've taken courses in time management and learned effective delegation techniques, and I feel I've overcome this weakness."

IMPORTANT: Be sure the weakness you talk about is NOT a key element of the position!

5. "How do you handle stressful situations?"

Give some examples of stressful situations you've dealt with in the past. Tell how you use time management, problem-solving or decision-making skills to reduce stress. For example, tell them that making a "to-do" list helps. Provide any stress-reducing techniques, such as stretching and taking a break.

6. "What is the toughest problem you've had to face, and how did you overcome it?"

Try to make this about a problem that faced your company and not just you or your particular work group. The bigger the problem you share, the better. Give specific examples of the skills and techniques you used to resolve this problem. Emphasize the successful results.

7. "Why do you want this position?"

Here's where your research about the company will help you stand out among the other candidates. Explain how you've always wanted the opportunity to work with a company that... provides a vital public service, leads the industry in innovative products, whatever... find something specific about that company that you can tie in with your answer.

8. "Why are you the best person for this job?"

As with all other questions, be confident and enthusiastic when you answer this. Emphasize several reasons why you should be hired. For example: "I've got experience in [name the appropriate field] and have the specific skills you are looking for. I'm a fast learner who adapts quickly to change.. I'm a hard worker who takes pride in a job well done. You won't have any regrets when you hire me."

THINK ABOUT AND WRITE OUT YOUR ANSWERS

1. "Tell me a little about yourself."

2. "What do you feel has been your greatest work-related accomplishment?"

3. "What is your greatest strength?"

4. "What is a weakness of yours?"

5. "How do you handle stressful situations?"

6. "What is the toughest problem you've had to face, and how did you overcome it?"

7. "Why do you want this position?"

8. "Why are you the best person for this job?"

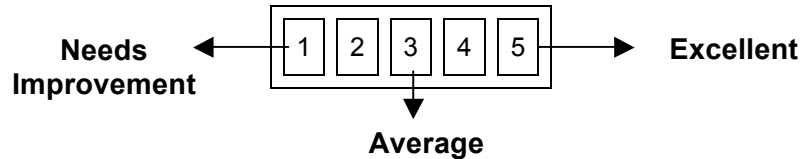
QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

1. What do you enjoy most about working here?
2. Is there anything I've mentioned that makes you think I'm not the best candidate for this job?
3. What would I need to do to be considered an outstanding employee in the first 3 months of working here?

Interview Skills: Peer Assessment Form

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Please rate each of the following criteria on a scale of 1 to 5:



1. The interviewee spoke clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The interviewee spoke at a good volume.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The interviewee spoke at a good pace.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The interviewee sustained eye contact with interviewer.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The interviewee appeared relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The interviewee sat up straight and conveyed interest.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The interviewee used effective hand gestures.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The interviewee demonstrated sincere energy and enthusiasm about the company and the position.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The interviewee gained my attention and interest.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The interviewee provided some good examples in answers to questions.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The interviewee closed with suitable questions and comments.	1	2	3	4	5
12. The interviewees' credentials and qualifications seemed like a good fit for the position.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments/Specific Notes on Strengths:

Comments/Specific Notes on Areas for Improvement:

Interviewing for Internships

The Groundwork

Interviewing for an internship or co-op assignment does *not* have to be a scary process! Think of it as conversation between you and an internship representative to see if there is a fit between your goals and the internship position. You are interviewing him/her, just as he/she is interviewing you. You want to know if this internship will allow you to meet your learning goals. The interviewer is trying to find out if you have what it takes to help the organization meet its needs. Doing your homework prior to your interview is the key to a successful interview 'conversation.' Taking time to lay the groundwork increases the odds that your meeting will be productive and successful.

Research the organization. Check out its web site. Request brochures, annual reports, and other company literature, from potential employers. Search news articles referring to the organization. Talk to other interns who worked there previously. Your knowledge of the organization will be impressive and can offset a lack of experience.

Dress like the serious professional you will soon be. For professional positions, If you do not have a suit, wear a collared shirt, tie, and dress slacks (if you're male) or a pantsuit or blazer, blouse, and matching skirt or pants (if you're female). Choose dark colors — they convey an air of authority. Practice your smile, good posture, and firm handshake. Leave flashy jewelry and strong scents at home.

Rehearse/role play answers to typical questions you may be asked. Practice, but don't memorize your responses word-for-word. You don't want to sound like you are reading from a script! It is usually better to give up-front, honest responses rather than 'canned' answers you think the interviewer wants to hear.

Here are typical questions for internship or co-op position interviews

- Why do you want an internship or co-op with this organization?
- Why should we hire you for our internship program?
- Do your grades reflect your true ability? Why or why not?
- How many hours each week would you be able to devote to this internship?
- Would you be able to work beyond one semester?
- How would you handle conflicts between your school schedule and a job here?
- What type of supervisor do you prefer to work under?
- How will this internship help you meet your career goals?
- Who is your least favorite professor? Why?
- What are your greatest strengths and biggest weaknesses?
- Give me an example from your past that shows how you dealt with difficult people; overcame an obstacle or solved a problem.
- Which of your courses, jobs, or school activities has prepared you for this internship?

Prepare questions to ask. This is your chance to make sure that a particular internship will meet your needs and goals. Answers to your questions will help you discover which internship or co-op is right for you. Here are some suggested questions:

- Could you list some tasks and projects I would be involved with?

- Should I expect training or an orientation prior to beginning my internship?
- Would I receive a wage, stipend, or reimbursement for my expenses?
- Is there a dress code I would be expected to follow?
- Would I have regular meetings with my supervisor?
- I will need to take time off during my exam periods; is this acceptable?

Bring along samples of your work. Show the interviewer articles you have written, programs from events you have planned, photographs of activities you have organized, and newsletters you have edited. These aids will convey information about your skills and abilities that your resume cannot.

After the Interview

You might get an offer on the spot, if your interview goes well. Hiring decisions for interns and co-ops are generally made much more quickly and unilaterally than hiring decisions for jobs. If this is the internship you want, by all means accept the position. But don't let pressure force you into a decision you aren't ready for. It's okay to ask for two or three days to make up your mind. This delay gives you time to weigh the pros and cons.

Follow up. Make sure you leave your interview with the name of your interviewer (and its correct spelling) and the address where she can be contacted. Write a brief thank-you note on a note card, or type a brief letter. (In this day and age, e-mail thanks are gaining acceptance, as well, but the 'hard copy' approach is still preferred.) Use this opportunity to thank your interviewer for her time and remind her of your strengths; you may wish to include additional information that you forgot to mention in the interview.

If you received an offer at the interview, use your thank-you note to thank the interviewer for the offer, and, if you've already accepted the position, confirm your start date and schedule.

Interviewee Checklist: Self-assessment

Before the Interview:

- Review your resume and cover letter.
- Consider your strongest skills or personal qualities for this job
- Reflect on why you are interested in this position
- Research the organization and job opening through one or more sources
- Review a list of common interview questions and anticipate others
- Practice a mock job interview and ask your 'interviewer' for feedback
- Develop a list of 4-5 questions for the interviewer
- Bring an extra copy or two of the interviewee's resume, and pen and notepad
- Arrange reliable transportation, so you can arrive a 5 to 10 minutes early

During the Interview:

- Introduce yourself to interviewer
- Greet interviewer with firm handshake, smile, and eye contact
- Provide interviewer with a copy of your resume, if they do not have one
- Answer questions clearly and confidently, with your best English
- Sustain eye contact, convey interest and energy, while maintaining good posture
- Ask questions demonstrating your sincere interest in the position

After the Interview:

- Ask about the next phases in the interview process
- Thank interviewer for his or her time and reiterate your interest in the position
- Obtain the interviewer's contact information for follow-up
- Send a thank you note or card to the interviewer, immediately following the interview (i.e., the same day), reiterating your interest

Comments/Specific Notes on Strengths:

Comments/Specific Notes on Areas for Improvement: