

# Interviewing Guidebook



JOHNSON & WALES  
UNIVERSITY

## Experiential Education & Career Services

Interviewing Checklist, Sample Interview Questions,  
Preparation Tips & Interview Follow-Up

Visit EE&CS at [link.jwu.edu](http://link.jwu.edu) > Career



## JWU Interview Preparation Checklist

1. Dress appropriately starting from the hair to the feet. Be professional, confident, and look your best. First impressions are lasting impressions.
2. Get adequate rest the night before! The evening prior to an interview is not the time to go out and celebrate an event!
3. Fine-tune the handshake-firm not fishy-but no broken knuckles either.
4. If you buy new clothes for your interview try them out not try them on! Can you sit comfortably? Do your shoes hurt? You don't want minor discomforts distracting you or the interviewer during the interview.
5. Bring pen and notebook and several copies of your resume.
6. **Research the company; make full use of its website.**
7. Never say anything negative about anyone you have worked with or for in the past.
8. Display interest, enthusiasm, passion, and confidence without appearing overly eager or desperate for the job.
9. **Watch your body language. Maintain good posture, leaning slightly forward indicates interest. Maintain eye contact.**
10. Don't focus so much on what you want to say that you lose track of what the other person is saying.
11. Don't jump in to fill in the words when someone pauses in the middle of their sentence. This is where you need outstanding listening skills.
12. Avoid poor communication skills paying special attention to diction and grammar (such as using slang words or inappropriate language).
13. **Do not discuss salary on the first interview however, if salary is important; research online what the company pays. Consider taking the job for the experience and not the money.**
14. Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can send a written personal thank you note or email or both.
15. Practice interviewing with some friends not so much for content but for overall context. Have your friends comment on your mannerisms such as nervous habits like head scratching, playing with a ring or failure to maintain eye contact, speech patterns (uh's, um's and you-knows) and avoid the same word choice such as always using the word great.
16. **Do not forget to clean up your digital dirt! The Vegas rule of "What happens here stays here" does not apply!**



# Professional Dress & Grooming

Professional appearance is a critical part of your professional image. How you look tells an employer much about your personal pride in your profession. We recommend you dress for your interviews in corporate conservative attire as noted below.

## MALE:

- Shoes that hold a shine (black or brown)
- Socks must match the suit
- Suit: Two or three piece (navy, brown, dark grey, olive green)
- Belt should match shoes
- Undershirt should be worn
- White long sleeve or off-white shirt (French cuff is acceptable)
- Conservative tie that compliments the suit
- Clean-shaven
- Hair should be neat and trim
- No body piercings or visible tattoos
- Jewelry should be restricted to a watch and/or a ring
- No earrings

## FEMALE:

- Heels should be no higher than 2"
- Slip-on or tie with heel; no open toe
- Black, navy, dark brown, dark gray
- Hosiery is a must (neutral shades)
- Suit: Two piece skirt or pant suit
- Skirt length should be one inch above the knee or longer
- Colors should be solid tones; stay away from bright colors
- A conservative style blouse should contrast with the suit
- Hair should be neat and trim pulled away from the face
- No body piercings or visible tattoos
- Make-up should be kept simple
- Jewelry should be simple (no dangling earrings or long necklaces)
- Nails: neat and clean with neutral polish

# Interviewing Tips

## What Interviewers Look For

- Positive attitude
- Appearance: physical appearance, neatness, posture, & dress
- Maturity: social behavior and emotional stability
- Sociability: ability to work and get along with others
- Self-Expression: ability to express thoughts clearly, concisely & effectively
- Motivation: initiative, drive, enthusiasm, energy, & desire to succeed

## Phone Interview Tips

- When scheduling your phone interview; ensure that you are in a quiet environment
- Answer the phone with a smile and speak clearly
- Be prepared to answer the same in-depth questions that would also be asked in an in-person interview
- Have your resume handy as a reference
- Listen carefully
- Take a moment when answering a question to provide a thoughtful answer

## Tips for Conveying Confidence

- An interview is centered on the subject you know best—YOU!
- Know your strengths and own your weaknesses
- Don't over verbalize; be brief, to the point
- Be positive
- Keep your doubts to yourself
- Don't worry about failure
- Trust yourself to react properly
- Preparation is the key to overcoming nervousness
- Combat nervousness by relaxing your muscles and getting enough sleep the night before the interview

## What Not to Do

- Don't be overconfident and boastful
- Don't act desperate to get the job
- Don't show a lack of enthusiasm/interest
- Don't chew gum; smell like smoke
- Don't emphasize salary or location over interest in the job
- Don't glorify your past experience
- Don't speak negatively  
Don't expect too much too soon; be prepared to take an entry-level position
- Avoid discussing politics and religion

Get more tips and information on the different types of interviews at [link.jwu.edu](http://link.jwu.edu) > Career

# Behavioral Questions

## What are they looking for?



### Adaptability

- Is responsive, resourceful and versatile to changing demands and challenges
- Works cooperatively with others when implementing initiatives
- Learns from both experience and others; committed to continuous learning & growth

#### Question Examples

1. Tell me about the most challenging change you've faced at work.
2. Describe a time you had to be flexible in order to solve a difficult problem. What specific steps did you take to maintain your flexibility?

### Customer Focus

- Talks and acts with customers' best interest
- Establishes and maintains effective relationships with customers and gains their trust and respect

#### Question Examples

1. Tell me about a time that you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem? Describe the steps you took to defuse the situation. What was the outcome?
2. Describe a time when you had to educate your customer about a new product. Give me details on how you made this happen.

### Drive for Results

- Able to accomplish personal goals in cooperation with team/department goals
- Sets high standards for self and others; maintains positive outlook and "can do" attitude

#### Question Examples

1. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done. What did you do & what was the outcome?
2. What's an example of an important goal that you set in the past; tell me about your success in reaching it?

# Behavioral Questions

## What are they looking for?



### Action Oriented

- Completes assignments and key responsibilities on a timely basis
- Assumes responsibility for actions and contributions to the business

### Question Examples

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to meet a challenging/aggressive timeline on a project. What actions did you take to meet the deadline? What happened?
2. It's often very difficult to prioritize projects, activities and responsibilities. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake in prioritizing your responsibilities. What happened?

### People/Team Development

- Able to transfer skills and personal knowledge to others
- Develops relationships with peers, direct reports, and superiors based on mutual trust and respect

### Question Examples

1. Tell me about your methods for keeping your manager/team members advised of your progress?
2. Give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal or objective? What was your role in achieving this objective?

### Handling Complexity/Using Good Judgment

- Works on most important business priorities
- Is able to distinguish assumptions from facts

### Question Examples

1. Give me an example of a good decision you have made in a work situation. What did you do and why was it a good decision. What was the result of your decision?



## Be Prepared for these Questions...

Tip: you should also always have questions for your interviewer.

### Tell me about yourself?

**What they are really asking is:** What makes you special? Why should we hire you?

**Tip:** Prepare several selling points about yourself. Give a quick elevator speech that overviews your degree, skills, experiences and achievements these past four years at Johnson & Wales University.

### What are your greatest strengths?

**What they are really asking is:** How do you perceive your talents and abilities that would be an asset to our organization?

**Tip:** Sell yourself. If you don't promote your strengths nobody else will. Prepare 3-4 responses that show you are confident in your abilities and demonstrate for them how.

### What are your greatest weaknesses?

**What they are really asking is:** How honest and realistic are you being about yourself?

**Tip:** Present your weakness as a positive and don't talk too long or emphasize your downfalls. Give examples that focus on weaknesses you've learned from.

### Where do you see yourself five years from now?

**What they are really asking is:** Are you committed to staying here for a while?

**Tip:** Be aware that they will not hire someone who will be around only for a year or two. Show flexibility and eagerness to learn new things. Express your interest in doing the current job to the best of your abilities.

### Describe a situation when you worked on a team project where members disagreed with each other or were not doing their fair share?

(This is one of the most important behavioral questions that you are going to be asked)

**What they are really asking is:** Prior to going to a higher authority, did you have the necessary leadership skills to rectify the situation.

**Tip:** The interviewer is interested in hearing that you worked with the other student(s) to discuss the problem and possible solution. After giving the individual an opportunity to rectify the problem and still nothing happens; then the situation needs to be addressed to a higher authority.

### If you could be a kitchen appliance which one would you be and why?

**What they are really asking is:** How creative are you? And how quickly can you respond?

**Tip:** Don't say a blender; it's an obvious answer. Pick something more creative and definitive of you.



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## Always Have Questions for the Interviewer...

Tip: this shows that you are interested and have done your research.

### **What are you looking for in the ideal candidate for this position?**

**What you are really asking is:** a question that allows you to counter by adding particular skills or qualities that you left out of the interview.

### **How would you describe your management style?**

**What you are really asking is:** for insight into whether you might get along well with this company.

### **What do you like best about working for this organization?**

**What you are really asking is:** for insight into the culture of the organization and this allows the person answering the question to feel good.

### **What would you like to see happen six to twelve months after you hire a person for this position?**

**What you are really asking is:** for clues on whether the expectations for the job are realistic.

### **Is there anything you are still wondering about my candidacy that might keep you from offering me this position? Is there anything I can further clarify?**

**What you are really asking is:** to show you are open to feedback or critique. It shows the employer you want every opportunity to reassure him/her that you would be a great employee.

### **What is the average length of time employees stay with the organization?**

**What you are really asking is:** it lets them know you are not a "job hopper".

### **What types of formal training or on the job training does the organization provide?**

**What you are really asking is:** it lets them know you are interested in improving your skills.

### **What is the next step in this process?**

**What you are really asking is:** it lets them know you are interested in the position.



# Sample Thank You Letter

*City, State Zip*  
*Your Return Address*

*Date*

*Contact Name*  
*Contact Title*  
*Company Name*  
*Company Address*

Dear *Mr./Ms. Contact Last Name*:

It was a pleasure interviewing with you on *[date]* for the *[title]* position. Spending that time with you has made me even more interested in working at *[Company Name]* when I graduate in *[graduation date]*.

The information you shared with me regarding *{reference to interview questions}* was relevant to what I am looking for in an employment opportunity. The interview process reinforced my belief that this is a company I would be proud to work for. I am very interested in pursuing this opportunity further.

Please contact me at *{phone number with area code}* if I can answer any further questions regarding my education, experience, or intentions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Your Signature**

*Your Name*

**NOTE:** this is just a sample Thank You letter. You need to write your own, in your own words. Remember to keep the tone professional. Referring to something (good/interesting) that you discussed during the interview is a good way of making the recruiter remember you.

## Interview Jitters? Don't underestimate the value of a mock interview!

Our staff can work with you one-on-one so you can practice your skills.

We can help you by answering your questions and walking you through the process.

### Professional References

Ensure that you have permission to use your references. Prepare your reference sheet, bring it to the interview with you and provide it to the employer if you are asked for it.

For help with your references visit us at: [link.jwu.edu](http://link.jwu.edu) > Career



## Connect with us!

### Experiential Education & Career Services

Mock interviews are a great way to help you become a successful candidate! Visit our office on-campus for further assistance.



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John Hazen White Building – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
(401) 598-1070 | M-F 8:30a – 4:30p

Harborside Campus  
Friedman Center – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
(401) 598-4611 | M-F 8:30a – 4:30p