



EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

wm.edu/career

The interview is an opportunity for you and a potential employer to learn more about each other and is a critical step in being offered a job or internship. It is important to use professional etiquette, convey your interest in the position and organization, clearly communicate your strengths, and show your interviewer why you are the best fit.

Before the Interview

- Do your research
 - Explore the organization's website and social media channels to learn about their history, mission, services, structure, and recent news.
 - Re-read the position description.
 - Use Glassdoor to research interview questions the organization commonly asks and employee reviews.
- Know your story
 - What do you bring to the table that is unique to you and needed by the employer? (i.e. skills, abilities, attributes, experiences, knowledge).
 - Why are you a good fit with the organization?
 - What major points do you want to get across during the interview?
- Prepare questions to ask
 - Be sure to have questions prepared for the end of the interview that help you learn more about the position and organization and show your interest. You might ask about professional development, management style, culture within the organization, or hiring timeline.
 - Avoid questions that could easily be answered through information on the employer's website or social media.
 - Reserve questions concerning salary and benefits until after an offer is made or the interviewer brings up the topic.
- Practice
 - Utilize Big Interview, an online interview preparation platform through the Office of Career Development & Professional Engagement. Register for an account with your W&M credentials for free access, which includes:
 - Informative videos on different types of interviews.
 - Commonly heard interview questions and how to answer them.
 - A database of interview questions organized by industry, program, or skill set.
 - Schedule an appointment with a career advisor for a mock interview or to prepare.
- Confirm all details of the interview including date, time, and length. Note time zone differences if applicable.
 - In-Person: location of interview, parking instructions, etc. Consider a test drive to confirm directions and potential travel time, if possible.
 - Virtual: make sure you've checked your technology, speakers, microphone, and background.
- Arrive 15 minutes early for in-person interviews. Any earlier may interrupt the interviewer's schedule.
- Dress appropriately; business professional unless otherwise advised.

During the Interview

- Keep your nonverbals in mind, including a solid handshake, eye contact, smile, and posture.
- Show interest in the position and organization; be yourself, show enthusiasm and confidence.
- Provide solid examples with details; avoid one word or very short answers.
- Be positive about past experiences to show what you have learned; avoid negative descriptions.
- Always thank the interviewer/s for their time and reiterate your interest in the opportunity.

After the Interview

- Send a thank you note within 48 hours after the interview; email or handwritten is appropriate
- Reflect on the interview. What went well? What could you improve for next time?

How to Prepare

The **STAR Method** can be a great tool to utilize for responding to many kinds of interview questions:

- **Situation** – Choose a scenario that showcases your abilities/skills. “Set the scene.”
- **Task** – What was the task or goal that needed to be completed?
- **Action** – Describe the actions you took to address the situation/task. Give detailed examples and quantify if applicable.
- **Results** – Describe the tangible results or outcomes of your work. What impact did *you* have?

Interview Modes

Video or Phone Interviews – May be one sided, where you record your answers without a live person to interact with, or you may meet with a person or multiple people from the hiring committee.

In-Person - Can be anywhere from 30 minutes to a day long and may involve meeting with people individually or in small groups.

Interview Types

Standard Interviews include typical questions across all industries/functions, including:

- Tell me about yourself.
 - Focus on your interest in the position and what qualifies you to be there.
- Why do you want to work for this organization/Why are you interested in this position?
 - Be as specific as possible. Prior research is important here.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength? What do you need to improve on?
- Tell me more about... Be ready to talk about anything on your resume.
 - Go beyond the descriptions listed on your resume...talk about skills developed and knowledge/awareness gained; map experiences to the position.

Behavioral Interviews are designed to highlight your past experience and behavior, as a predictor of future behavior.

- Showcase your best performance by talking about your past experiences.
- Provide relevant examples to respond to questions related to specific skills required of the position.
 - Consider how relevant skills can be transferred from less relevant experiences.
- Apply the STAR Method (explained above) to reply to behavioral questions, such as:
 - Give me an example of a time when you had to analyze a situation to guide your action or decision.
 - Discuss a situation when you had to work with a stranger(s) and how you dealt with it.
 - Talk about a time when you had to complete a major task as part of a team. What was your role?
 - Describe a time you failed at something and what you learned.

Case Interviews are designed to assess how you think quickly to analyze problems or situations. They showcase your thought process, creativity, and communication skills. Case questions are common in consulting and business interviews.

- They're typically not searching for the right answer, except with technical questions; it's more about the process and how you got to your answer, so be creative and brainstorm without commitment.
- Organize your answer and manage your time; show enthusiasm and a positive attitude.
- Accept coaching and listen to feedback.
- Bring closure and summarize your answer.
- Questions may be styled as:
 - A brainteaser to make you think outside the box.
 - A market sizing or industry related concern.
 - A pattern or trend situation.
- Examples:
 - *How would you increase sales of reusable water bottles for an outdoor sports gear manufacturer?*
 - *Estimate how many shoes were sold in the U.S. to teenage girls last year.*
 - *How would you reduce costs within an organization that is losing market share?*