

# INTERVIEWING WITH CONFIDENCE

Interviewing is not a talent you are naturally born with, but rather an important skill to develop intentionally. It is critical to master the three “P’s” of interviewing: **Preparation**, **Practice** and **Post-Interview Review**.



## PREPARATION

Do not underestimate the importance of preparing for the interview. Just like a final exam, your level of preparation will determine your success. When researching and planning for your interview, consider the following:

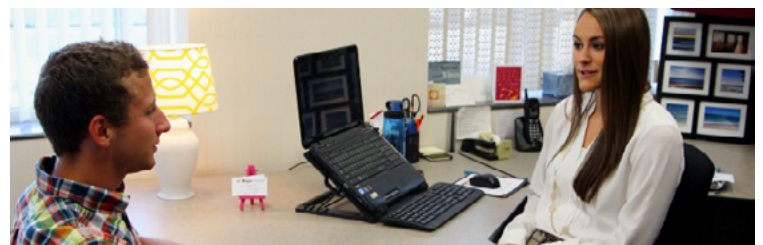
- Know yourself. What are your career interests? What are your strengths and résumé highlights?
- Know the organization and industry. Why do you like the employer and the position? Do not forget to spend lots of time on their website.
- Review the position description carefully and discuss with Career Development Center staff.
- Prepare answers to anticipated questions.

- Choose appropriate interview attire. Check out [pinterest.com/hopecollegedc](https://www.pinterest.com/hopecollegedc).
- Create an interview portfolio, which may include copies of your résumé, writing samples or other samples of your work.
- Know the questions that you want to ask. Consider asking for details about the position, organization, training and career path. Let us help you with this.

## PRACTICE

After you have completed the preparation steps, do not forget to practice. This will help you develop confidence. Effective interviewing involves the following core skills:

- Clear verbal communication. Speak at an even pace and do not ramble or give too much detail.
- Maintain positive non-verbal communication with confident eye contact and body posture.
- Demonstrate an interest in the job, expressed both in words and with your expression.
- Show excellent listening skills. Engage throughout the interview, including questions at the end of the meeting.
- Be genuine and approachable. Try not to be staged or rehearsed.



### Develop these skills by:

- Practicing the answers aloud.
- Calling the Career Development Center to sign up for a mock interview.
- Practicing online through Interview Stream on [jobstop.hope.edu](http://jobstop.hope.edu).

## **H** THE INTERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION AND RAPPORT

During this part of the interview, the interviewer will attempt to make you feel comfortable. Topics of conversation may include college events, sports and cultural activities, world events and general conversation about your Hope experience. Here are some things to consider during the first part of an interview:

- Before walking in, check your appearance to ensure a positive first impression.
- Arrive ten minutes early and know where, when and who you are interviewing with by name.
- Stand up when the interviewer approaches you; smile and introduce yourself and greet him or her by name. (i.e., “Nice to meet you Mrs. Johnson”).
- If they move to shake hands, do so - but it is appropriate to wait for him/her to make the first gesture. Shake hands firmly, standing straight and maintaining good eye contact.
- Think of the interview as a two-way conversation. It is an opportunity for both of you to gather information and to learn about your common goals, interests and experiences.
- Always be positive in your responses.

## PHONE INTERVIEWS

### PREPARATION

Have your resume, notes on the role and organization, paper and pen at your table or desk.

Use a quiet room with no distractions. The Career Development Center has space available.

Have list of accomplishments ready to discuss. If possible, use a landline for a more reliable phone connection, avoiding dropped calls.

### PRACTICE

Get the feel for this type of interview through having someone conduct a practice phone interview with you, asking you 8-10 interview questions.

Use pauses effectively to avoid “ums”, “ahs” and other unwanted verbal noise to improve your presentation.

### DURING THE PHONE INTERVIEW

Have a glass of water available.

Walk during the interview, this helps you convey confidence and energy. Speak clearly and intentionally.

### FOLLOWING YOUR INTERVIEW

Thank them on the phone for the opportunity to interview.

Send a thank you email within 24 hours after the interview.



- Listen: it is easier to answer clearly and effectively if you listen well.
- Do not be afraid of silence. Pauses always seem longer to you than to the interviewer. A pause gives you a chance to think and shows the employer you are taking the question seriously.
- If you are unsure of a question, clarify it with the interviewer. When you have answered the questions, stop; do not ramble.

## EMPLOYER QUESTIONS

The interviewer will ask questions attempting to evaluate your skills, abilities, leadership, flexibility, problem-solving, personal qualities and goals.

Use examples whenever possible. Instead of saying “I have a lot of initiative”, say “One of my strengths is initiative. For example, I thought it would be beneficial to my residence hall to start a student council, so I recruited interested students and went to the administration with a proposal. Now we have an active residence hall council.”

In addition to job qualifications, the interviewer is seeking a candidate who is competent, responsible, likeable and genuine. The following aspects are important to keep in mind:

- Eye contact. Remember to look directly at the interviewer and not down or around the room.
- Body language. Use good posture, relaxed but alert with natural hand motions. Avoid nervous tapping; remember to smile when appropriate.
- Your voice should reflect enthusiasm. Use an even pace, be clear and audible with your tone showing natural variation.
- Be confident, conveying a genuine belief that you can do the work and are excited about the opportunity. However, avoid being arrogant.



## YOUR QUESTIONS

This is your turn to gather information. Each question that you ask will provide information that will be important if you need to make a decision about accepting an offer. You do not need to wait until the end to ask your questions, feel free to ask some of your questions during the interview so the conversation has a two-way tone.

- Do not ask canned questions, instead develop questions with nuance and thought behind them.
- Quality questions show you are interested and have researched the organization and position. Depending on the situation, a sample question may be, “I noticed you are re-branding. How will this process impact this marketing internship?”
- Do not ask questions about salary or benefits. Your questions should focus on topics like these: position responsibility and challenges, questions about the organization (its mission, products, services, and competitors), training and orientation, career path options, etc.

## THE CLOSE

In this phase the interviewer will ask if you have any final questions, and then will review the next steps in the hiring process. Make sure to leave the interview on a positive note and sure of what the next steps will be. Here’s what you can do:

- Emphasize your particular interest in the position.
- State why you feel you are a good fit for the position and organization.
- If the interviewer has not told you the process that will follow, clarify the timeframe for making a decision and determining your status.

# INTERVIEWING WITH CONFIDENCE

## USING EXAMPLES

Behavior based interviewing is a popular approach employers use that requires you to provide specific responses to situations from your past. By showing how you responded in the past, you can demonstrate what your future actions will be.

Your objective should be to communicate clearly how your past experiences and knowledge may be of clear benefit to the organization. Specific examples of past performance can come from internship experiences, work experiences, academic experiences and leadership involvement in student or community groups.

To prepare for this type of question, identify key qualities from the job description and specific examples tied to those qualities. Use the CAR method for responding to these questions.

- **Context:** What is the context of the situation demonstrating a particular quality? For example, the qualification is teamwork and your context is being a leader of a struggling student organization.
- **Action:** What are the specific action steps that you took to address the challenges? For example, you led an effort to identify key stakeholders with the student group and facilitated a strategic planning session.
- **Results:** What are the positive outcomes from the situation? For example, you identified three main areas of weakness and put a plan in place to address them over the academic year. By the end of your leadership, membership increased by 25%.

## POST-INTERVIEW REVIEW

You have the opportunity after an interview is over to continue to make a positive impression. Here is what you should do:

- Debrief what occurred, note key issues, important points made, stumper questions to prepare for in the future, as well as the organization's time table for a decision.
- Send a thank you note, either via email or handwritten on stationary within 24 hours.
- Follow-up phone calls will always cause some anxiety. A follow-up strategy will increase your odds of getting the offer by 30% or more. Just be sure to be sensitive to the time line shared with you.
- When accepting an offer, make sure you have obtained a clear explanation of your responsibilities. It is common to have some time to consider the offer. Put your acceptance or any clarifying questions in writing.
- When declining an offer, be as diplomatic as possible. You want to leave the door open for future career possibilities. Express appreciation for the offer and for their confidence in you.
- When discussing salary, be prepared. The more you know about salary ranges for your career area and desired occupation, the more effective you will be in negotiations. Avoid bringing up salary until they express an interest in hiring you.

*Need further assistance?*