

Interviewing

A stylized illustration of a lighthouse with red and white horizontal stripes, situated on a small dark island. The lighthouse is surrounded by large, fluffy, light blue clouds. The background is a dark blue sky with several white stars. A white rectangular frame encloses the top half of the page, containing the title 'Interviewing'.

Interview Prep and Attire

Sample Interview Questions and Rubric

Interview Tips and 30 Second Commercial

Informational Interviewing Questions

The Career Development and Internship Program
The Lighthouse: Center for Exploration and Discovery
Virginia Wesleyan College

Before, During and After the Interview

Preparing for the Interview

- Be able to discuss your skills, interests, values and goals that relate to the position
- Research the employer and know about their mission, services and products
- Demonstrate that you have the necessary position requirements
- Know what type of interview to expect (i.e. initial screening interview, Skype, telephone interview, second/site interview, panel interview)
- Be prepared to respond to common interview questions
- Practice your interview skills through a mock interview

What to Bring

- Professional portfolio to carry documents and take notes
- Extra copies of your resume
- Samples of your relevant work
- Reference list
- Any requested documentation
- A writing utensil

During the Interview

Make A Good First Impression

- Be on time – plan to arrive 10-15 minutes before your interview is to begin
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer during your greeting and throughout the interview
- Extend a firm handshake and use appropriate salutation (Mr./Ms./Dr.)
- Do not bring your cell phone

Remember:

- Anything that could detract a recruiter from paying attention to your qualifications (i.e. facial hair, jewelry, heavy perfumes/colognes) will negatively impact the professional impression you want to achieve
- When in doubt, be conservative!

After the Interview

- Send a prompt thank-you note for the interview (Hand-written and email)
- Follow-up regarding your status in the process if the employer has not contacted you within the agreed upon time frame (you can initiate contact and ask if a hiring decision has been made)

Appropriate Interview Attire

General Rules:

- Attire should be conservative in appearance...not the typical styles you may wear as a college student
- No denim or sports clothing of any kind
- Avoid distracting print patterns
- Clothes should be neatly pressed
- Dress shoes should be clean and polished
- Hair should be trimmed and neat
- Colognes and perfumes should be used SPARINGLY, if at all
- Remove all visible body piercings other than small earrings for women.

Rules for Men:

- Wear a simple tie
- Dress shirt in oxford cloth or starched cotton, preferably white or a pale color
- Conservative suit, preferably in charcoal or navy, alternatively a navy blazer with gray or khaki pants
- Socks that match your pants
- Polished dress shoes (loafers or laced shoes), no sneakers or boat shoes
- Clean shaven face (neatly trimmed beard or mustache is acceptable)
- Trimmed and clean fingernails.

Rules for Women:

- Tailored skirt or pants suit is preferred in conservative colors: black, charcoal, navy, brown, hunter green
- Skirt length no higher than two inches above the knee. Make certain skirt is not too tight or hikes up the thigh when seated
- Blouses, sweater sets, and scarves can add color to your outfit; color or print should not be distracting
- Blouses or sweater sets should not be tight or reveal cleavage or midriff
- Hosiery should be a neutral or skin tone
- Polished, closed-toe pump shoes (avoid very high heels)
- Keep accessories to a minimum; it is acceptable to wear one small earring in each ear, a necklace or pearls, or a scarf; limit the number of rings to one for each hand; avoid large, clunky, or noisy jewelry
- Neat hairstyle; long hair should be pulled back away from face
- Make certain fingernails are not too long; any nail polish should be freshly applied and not be distracting in color or design
- Carry only essential items in a small purse; avoid the awkwardness of a large bulky handbag.

Interview Questions

Common Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

- Keep your answer to one or two minutes
- Give a short version of your resume—general goals, skills and background
- Focus on the skills, experiences and education you will apply to THIS specific position within this organization

Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.

- Strengths: Relate your skills to the position description (give an example of your strength in action)
- Weaknesses: List a weakness you are working on to improve and does not directly disqualify you from the position (employers want to see that you are self-aware and taking steps to better yourself)

Why are you interested in our organization? What interests you about this job?

- Share an informed interest and passion: know the organization's mission, products, size, reputation, history and how your role will support/impact the organization
- Talk about their needs and how you can make a contribution to the company goals

Where do you see yourself in five years?

- Demonstrate that this position fits into your short and long-term goals
- Be realistic: research the structure of the organization and identify where entry-level employees progress
- Before sharing graduate school plans, research whether the employer supports further education (typically, educational benefits are to be discussed after an offer of employment has been made)

What experiences have prepared you to succeed in this position?

- Relate your experiences (work, volunteer, research, student activities) to the requirements of this position
- Share specific examples which apply to your desired position

Behavioral Interview Questions

Employers ask behavioral-based questions to learn about how you have responded to specific situations in the past. Keep in mind that by them asking about your past behavior, they can get a better sense of how you will perform on the job in the future.

- Prepare and share specific examples – do not give hypothetical responses
- Anticipate the questions you'll be asked by looking at the specific job description

STAR Technique

Considering this technique can help you organize responses to behavioral questions.

Situation	What was the SITUATION?
Task	What TASK(S) did you identify that had to be completed?
Action	What ACTION did you take?
Result	What was the RESULT of your actions?

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Tell me about a situation in which you demonstrated leadership.
- Describe a time when you did not succeed and how you handled that situation.
- Describe a difficult co-worker or customer and how you successfully worked with that person.
- Tell me how you manage time amid competing responsibilities.

Case Interview Questions

Case interview questions are most common in consulting and strategic management interviews where your ability to listen effectively, analyze information, seek additional details and present your approach to solving the question will be related to your future work. Questions usually center on real-world problems so that the interviewer can see how you structure and think about solving the problem.

Tips for Case Interview Questions

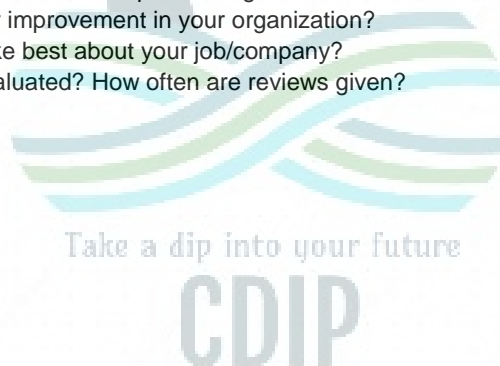
- Ensure that you understand the basic elements of the question
- Identify what information you need about the case (geographic location, budgetary information, number of employees, competitor information, etc.)
- Explain why you are seeking this additional information and how you are making decisions – the employer will want to understand your thought process
- Organize your response so that you are presenting your ideas in a logical and coherent manner
- Emphasize how you plan to solve the problem, not the actual solution (keep in mind that there is not one right answer)

Sample Case Interview Questions

- You are a utility company in a small town and your customers are not paying on time. What would you do?
- You have just been promoted to be the President of the University that you are currently attending. What do you think is the biggest challenge you would face?
- Your client is considering launching a new product. What should you consider to bring the product to market?

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

- What specific skills or qualities are especially important for me to be successful in this position?
- What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
- What kind of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
- What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
- What are some opportunities for improvement in your organization?
- What do you (the interviewer) like best about your job/company?
- How will my performance be evaluated? How often are reviews given?



Interview Rubric

	Excellent interview: You could get a job offer!	Average interview: you could get called back but it is not certain.	Interviewing skills need significant improvement: You would not get this job.
First Impressions	Your appearance is professional—you are wearing a business suit. You greet and shake hands with your interviewer correctly. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.	You look nice but you do not wear a suit. Your greeting is appropriate but you forget to shake hands with your interviewer. Your conversation is enthusiastic and engaging.	Your attire is not professional—you wear jeans or shorts to this interview. You do not greet or shake hands when you meet your interviewer. Your conversation is not energetic.
Interview Content	You are knowledgeable about the organization and position you are interviewing for. You display poise and confidence. You relate your skills to the job very well.	You are knowledgeable about the position but not the organization you are interviewing with. You display adequate confidence in your answers. You state your skills but do not adequately relate them to the job.	You are not knowledgeable about the position or organization you are interviewing with. You are not confident in answering questions about yourself. You do not state the skills you have to do this job.
Interview Skills / Techniques	You have excellent eye contact with your interviewer without staring. Your language and grammar is appropriate. You do not use “um” or “and.” You speak at the right speed.	You have adequate eye contact with your interviewer. Your language and grammar are adequate. You say “um” or “and” a few times, but not enough to disrupt the interview. You talk a little too fast or too slow.	You look at the floor or ceiling when speaking. Your grammar and language are not appropriate. You say “um” or “and” too many times. You talk too fast or too slow.
Closing	You successfully convey your interest in this position. You ask appropriate questions to the interviewer. You thank the interviewer.	You convey some interest in the position. You are not prepared to ask any questions. You thank the interviewer.	You do not show any interest in this position. You do not ask any questions. You do not thank the interviewer.

Take a dip into your future

CDIP

TOP TEN INTERVIEW TIPS

#1 RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW.

Know the exact names of people, the employing organization, related departments and the job title for which you are applying. These names may come up during the interview and knowing them makes you appear prepared and confident. Research trends in the field and be familiar with the employer's mission, vision and goals.

#2 PREPARE IN ADVANCE FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

Review and rehearse interview questions. First, identify what the question is really asking. Jot down ideas and key points that you want to make if that question is asked. If you don't do this, you may be inarticulate, come up with a weak response, or say too much. In these situations, the more you say, the worse the response often becomes. You can also set up an appointment for a mock interview to practice questions.

#3 PREPARE GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYER.

Do not inquire about salary, fringe benefits, or vacation days. Don't say, "No, I don't have any questions. You've already answered them," and miss your opportunity to ask questions that can make you stand out from other applicants. For example: ask about on-the-job training or opportunities for career growth and development.

#4 YOUR PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

If you are interviewing for positions with major corporations, financial institutions, or CPA firms, how you dress can strongly influence whether or not you receive an offer. Dress in a conservative manner by wearing a business suit, minimal jewelry, conservative shoes and coordinated accessories. Hairstyles should also reflect a professional status and cosmetics should be natural.

#5 ARRIVE 10 TO 15 MINUTES EARLY.

Too many bad things can happen if you "cut it close" or are late, while good things are possible if you are early. When possible, do a dry run a day or so prior to the interview so that you will know the traffic patterns, parking, etc.

#6 THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES ARE CRITICAL.

Research has shown that most employers form an initial impression of you during the first five minutes of the interview. Personal appearance, confidence in your voice, a firm handshake, effective eye contact, and a good response to the first question are critical.

#7 MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE EYE CONTACT.

This is particularly important when making key points. If interviewing with a panel, be sure to make eye contact and build a connection with each interviewer.

#8 SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY.

Answer the interviewer's questions honestly and concisely, but don't be afraid to ask questions as well. Don't just make general or vague statements. Give details about yourself. Let them see your personality!

#9 BE ASSERTIVE.

Don't leave the interview without having expressed your "marketable points."

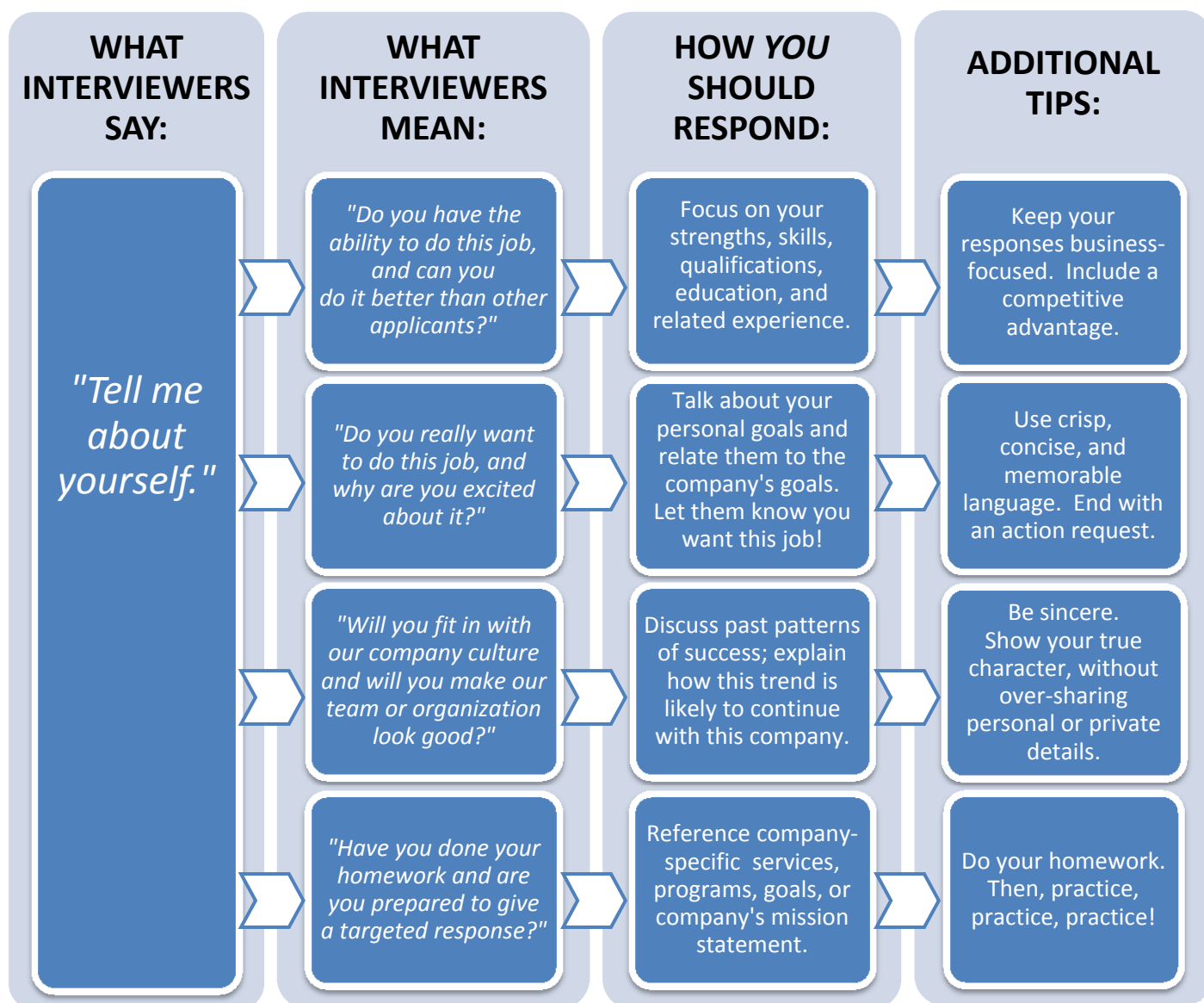
#10 FOLLOW UP.

Send or email a thank-you letter preferably one or two days after the interview. Reiterate your interest in the position.



Network Your Way Into The Career You Want: The 30 Second Commercial

A *30-Second Commercial* is YOUR opportunity to market YOU. It's your unique response to the question, "Tell me about yourself." While each interview is different, you can count on this question being asked every time—it's the most common icebreaker used by interviewers. A polished response is a first sign of preparedness. Remember, first impressions are lasting, so you may only have one chance to get it right!



30-Second Commercial: Putting It All Together...

THE BASICS:

- ☒ Who am I?
- ☒ Why am I talking to you, and what is my objective?
- ☒ What is my past experience and what are my strengths?
- ☒ What are my past accomplishments?
- ☒ How did I achieve those accomplishments?
- ☒ What are my passions?
- ☒ How do my passions apply to this company/job?



DO:

Be concise

Be assertive and confident

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

Be honest

Make your response relevant to the job

Be specific and use examples

DON'T:

Ramble

Be arrogant or "cocky"

Sound scripted

Raise any red flags

Leave the interviewer thinking, "So what!?"

Get bogged down with industry jargon

Example 30-Second Commercial:

"Hello, my name is Bob Marlin. I am extremely interested in the Executive Mascot position that was recently posted on your company's website. I am a recent graduate of Virginia Wesleyan College with over 50 years of experience as a Marlin representing VWC and over 12 years motivating Marlins. I offer an unparalleled level of energy and excitement, and I am extremely reliable—having never missed a game. Being the product of the student body, I understand the importance of representing myself and institution in a positive way. I'm prepared to offer this same level of dedication to your company, and I'm excited about the new challenges ahead of me."



NEXT STEPS:

- **Keep it current!** Continually update your commercial; work from your resumé.
- **Practice!** Out loud, on camera, or with a friend or mentor.
- **Network!** Use your commercial every chance you get--not just for formal interviews.
- **Homework!** Research potential employers and package yourself to meet their needs.



THE LIGHTHOUSE
Go. Do. Discover.

Questions to Ask During an Informational Interview

1. What is the title of the person you are interviewing?
2. What are other commonly-used titles for the position?
3. What are the duties performed during a typical day? Week? Month? Year?
4. Do you have a set routine? (As the person describes the duties, ask what skills are needed). How much variety is there on a day-to-day basis?
5. What kinds of problems do you deal with?
6. What kinds of decisions do you make?
7. What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
8. How did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?
9. How did you get your job? What jobs and experiences have led you to your current position?
10. What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
11. What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying? Most challenging?
12. What do you like and not like about working in this industry?
13. What are the various jobs in this field or organization?
14. Why did you decide to work for this company?
15. What do you like most about this company?
16. Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?
17. Why do customers choose this company?
18. Are you optimistic about the company's future and your future with the company?
19. What does the company do to contribute to its employee's professional development?
20. How does the company make sure of technology for internal communication and outside markets (such as e-mail, internet, intranets, world wide web, video conferencing, etc.)?
21. What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?
22. How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
23. Is there a basic philosophy of the company or organization, and if so, what is it? Is it a people, service, or product oriented business?
24. What can you tell me about the corporate culture?
25. What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in the job you hold? Are there incentives or disincentives for staying in the same job?
26. What educational program is recommended as preparation? (Distinguish between courses which are desirable and which are indispensable).
27. What kinds of courses are most valuable in order to gain skills necessary for success in this occupation?
28. What degree or certificate do employers look for?
29. What kind of work/internship experience would employers look for in an applicant?
30. How can a person obtain this work experience?
31. Does your work relate to any experiences or studies you had in college?
32. How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
33. What courses have proved to be the most valuable in your work?
34. How important are grades/GPA for obtaining a job in this field?
35. How did you prepare for this work? If you were entering this career today, would you change your preparation in any way to facilitate entry?
36. What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field or job?
37. Are any co-curricular activities recommended?
38. What steps besides meeting education and experiential requirements are necessary to "break into" this occupation? (i.e. exam? Union membership?)
39. What are the important "key words" or "buzz words" to include in a resume or cover letter when job-hunting in the field?
40. What are opportunities for advancement? To what positions? Is an advanced degree needed? If so, in what discipline?

41. What were the keys to your career advancement? How did you get where you are and what are your long-range goals?
42. Which skills do employers look for?
43. What are the main or most important characteristics for success in the field?
44. What are the different settings in which people in this occupation may work (i.e. educational institutions, businesses, etc.)?
45. What other kinds of workers frequently interact with this position?
46. Is there evidence of differential treatment between men and women works with respect to job duties, pay, and opportunities for advancement?
47. What are the employment prospects in the local geographic area? Where are the best employment prospects? Is mobility a necessary factor for success?
48. What are the typical entry-level job titles and functions? What entry level jobs are best for learning as much as possible?
49. Who is the department head or supervisor for this job? Where do you and your supervisor fit into the organizational structure?
50. What are some related occupations?
51. What are the different salary ranges?
52. Does the typical worker have a set schedule (i.e. 8 am – 5 pm) or are the hours flexible?
53. Is there flexibility related to dress, work hours, vacation schedule, place of residence, etc.?
54. What work-related values are strongest in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence)?
55. What are the demands and frustrations that typically accompany this type of work?
56. Is there a typical chain of command in this field?
57. How can you determine that you have the ability or potential to be successful in this specific occupation?
58. If your job progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?
59. If your work were suddenly eliminated, what kinds of work do you feel prepared to do?
60. What obligations does your employer place on you outside of the ordinary work week? What social obligations go along with a job in your occupation?
61. Are there organizations you are expected to join? Are there other things you are expected to do outside of working hours?
62. How has your job affected your lifestyle?
63. What are the major rewards aside from extrinsic rewards such as money, fringe benefits, travel, etc.?
64. Is this a rapidly growing field? Is it possible to predict future needs for workers in this field?
65. Where might job listings be found?
66. What entry-level positions are there in this field that a (fill in the blank) major might consider?
67. What does the employer know now which would have been helpful to know when he/she was in your shoes?
68. Do you have any advice for someone interested in this field/job? Are there any written materials that you suggest I read? Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
69. Do you have any special word of warning or encouragement as a result of your experience?
70. These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, and values):_____. Where would they fit in this field? Where would they be helpful in this organization?
71. If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why? What would you change?
72. Do you think I left out any important questions that would be helpful in learning about the job or occupation?