

# Interviewing Skills Handbook

Information provided by:

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# INTERVIEW PREPARATION

## GETTING STARTED

An interview is a **conversation** between two parties. It allows you and the employer to **gather additional information** to make an informed decision. Employers are looking to answer 3 questions: **Can you do the job?** (qualifications), **Will you do the job?** (interest and enthusiasm), and **Will you be a good fit?** (alignment with company culture). Through the interview you can develop a better understanding of the job expectations, organization culture, personality of future team members, and specific goals you would be working towards to make a decision if that position is the right fit for you.

Knowing how to interview is an important skill to have. Interviewing is going on a **fact finding mission**. Similar to different roles you will be performing, interviewing requires developing a rapport with others and asking follow up questions to identify what actions to take next. The following information will provide you with tips to be **confident and prepared** for your next interview.

### Before the Interview Tips:

- **Do Your Research/Consult Your Network**
  - Look through our “Job Search Handbook” for additional tips on gathering information about the position and organization. Doing your research will help you establish a better understanding of what the employer is looking for and what follow up questions you should ask.
  - **LinkedIn**: If you’re provided with the name of the interviewer(s) you can find search their profiles. Viewing the profiles can provide **additional information** into their experiences and interest where you might have some **similarities** (ex: research interests, activities during college, professional memberships).
  - **Reach out to colleagues**, former/current supervisors, family, and/or friends that might work or have worked for the organization. **Learning about the reputation** of a facility from others can help you prepare for the interview as well as determine if the position is a good fit for you
- **Practice Makes Perfect**
  - Interviewing is a skill, and like most skills, it requires practice. Practice **writing out your answers** to some sample questions, have friends and family ask you sample questions, practice your responses while looking in a mirror, and/or schedule a **mock interview** with our office to gain additional feedback.
- **Prepare Questions**
  - One of the worst things you can do is have no questions. From your research, develop questions that **cannot be answered through looking at their website**.
  - Some suggestions on questions are asking about the interviewer(s) experiences at the organization and goals specific to the time (if they haven’t been covered during the interview). Also, you might want to **take notes during the interview** to develop follow-up questions
  - We suggest having **3-5 questions** prepared prior to your interview. If some are answered during the interview process, that’s ok! Be sure to take notes during the interview leading to some follow up questions.
- **Print Out Your Documents**
  - Bring a **folder or padfolio** where you can store your required documents (ex: resumes, CVs, writing samples) for the interview.
  - Ensure that you **have extra copies** of each document for everyone participating in the interview.
- **Dress for Success**
  - In most cases, a **business suit is best**, also be sure to **shine your shoes** prior to the interview as some recruiters will make first impressions on your appearance
  - For additional information, check out our PDF on dressing for success for your next interview [http://bit.ly/29VPY01!](http://bit.ly/29VPY01)

# DURING THE INTERVIEW

## ADDRESSING PRE-INTERVIEW NERVOUSNESS

You've made it to the interview location on time! If you have some pre-interview jitters, take a few **deep breaths** and/or go to the bathroom to check your appearance and give yourself a pep talk. Studies have shown that using some **power poses** (ex: standing like superman/wonder woman) can increase one's confidence levels. For more tips check out the list below or stop by our office!

### Successful Interview Tips:

- **Arrive 15 Minutes Early**
  - Plan out your route prior to the day of the interview, so that you are familiar with the amount of time it will take to get to the interview.
  - **Driving?** Be sure to research parking procedures and build in extra travel time for potential traffic.
  - **Public Transportation?** Look up the schedule and allow extra travel time for potential delays.
- **Check Your Nonverbals**
  - Slouching in your chair? Tapping your pen? Shaking your leg? Being nervous is completely natural during an interview. However, it is important to prevent them from manifesting in our body language.
  - **Good posture, smiling,** and having a **firm handshake** will all leave a positive impression on the interviewer.
- **Think Through Your Responses**
  - Words such as “think,” “guess” or “feel” **sound indecisive**, instead of using them, just state what you were going to say!
  - Take a deep breath to frame your answer to **avoid using vocalized fillers** “like” and “um.” Occasionally taking a pause before starting your answer also conveys confidence and thoughtfulness.
  - Never apologize for any shortcomings and avoid any comment that can be construed negatively. Place your focus on the positive, either providing examples of how you've improved or used the situation as a learning experience.
- **Ensure a Strong Follow Up**
  - Before leaving the interview, **ask for the business card** of all those who participated in the interview. It will help you when crafting thank you notes.
  - Craft a thoughtful **thank you note for each interviewer**. For more information, check out the “Cover Letters & More” Handbook!

## ADDITIONAL TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

During your job search, you might undergo a variety of interviews. Some reasons for this can be employers wanting to have a preliminary interview before inviting you to their facility, if the interview location is a far distance from your current location, or employers want to gather additional information before making their final decision. Either way, we've included some examples of different types of interviews below, as well as tips for you to do your best!

### Phone Interviews

- **Smiling and standing** will convey a positive attitude and enthusiasm in your voice.
- Have your resume, notes, and questions on the position and organization, paper and pen in front of you.
- Have a **professional sounding voicemail**. If an employer calls and you don't pick up, or accidentally reject the call, you might not want them to listen to a voicemail you recorded as a teenager.
- Find a **quiet space** with little to no echo to conduct the interview.

## Screening Interviews

- Screening interviews are brief (5 to 30 min) typically conducted over the phone by someone in human resources to **determine if you meet the qualifications** of the position.
- Have a **copy of the job description** at hand as the skills and requirements will be the focal point of the interview.
- Because of the brief nature of screening interviews, be sure to have a few experiences ready to outline your skills and abilities!

## Skype/Teleconferencing Interviews

- When interviewing, look **directly into the camera** to appear as if you are making direct eye contact with the interviewers.
- Ensure that you have a **professional username**. A username like “Luvs2ShOp” will not create a good first impression.
- Create a **neutral background** that will keep the focus on you. Having dirty clothes or posters on the wall behind you will take away from your interview, so you’ll want to have a simple backdrop behind you. Some options are hanging a bed sheet behind you or interviewing in front of a blank wall.
- **Lighting** is important. You want to make sure that you can easily be seen by the interviewer(s) and that the lighting isn’t distracting (ex: too bright can be blinding, too dark can make the interviewer squint).
- **Practice** – Conducting a Skype call with a friend or family member can help you gather feedback to prepare for your interview.

## Group Interviews

- **Introduce yourself and engage with the candidates.** Though the other candidates might be competition for the current position, chances are they can end up being colleagues down the road. Remember, you’re interviewing with everyone you meet during the day of your interview, and you never know whose watching.
- **Avoid repeating answers** mentioned by other candidates. Look to build on the answer, or provide a different scenario or example to demonstrate your qualifications while avoiding repetition.
- When applicable, **incorporate other candidates in your responses.** If you discussed a current trend in the field with another candidate in the waiting room, go ahead and mention that person and example during the interview. You will be demonstrating your ability to work in a team.
- **Be Respectful.** Many people can view a group interview as a competition, and you want to avoid stepping on any toes. Cutting off another candidate during a response, always being the first person to talk, or getting into an argument with another candidate will not put you in a favorable position with the other candidates and the interviewer(s).

## Second Round Interviews

- Congrats on the second interview! This interview can be longer than the first to meet with multiple individuals at the organization, so prepare to **maintain a high level of energy** throughout the day. Pack snacks, bring a water bottle, meditate or do whatever you need to be mentally and physically prepared.
- Inquire if an **itinerary** will be provided so that you can **do your homework** (aka LinkedIn) on the people you will be meeting.
- If you discussed a recent trend in the field at your first interview, bring some **follow up talking points** to demonstrate that you’ve done your research and have come prepared to be a successful team member!
- Additionally, create a **new list of specific questions** that will help you build on the information you have gathered previously. Strong questions can help you stand out as well as provide you with answers to make the best decision for your career!

## Behavioral Based Interviewing Questions

Have you heard an interview that started with “Tell me about a time when...?” or “Describe a situation where you...?” If so, then you have experienced a Behavioral Based Interview Question. Employers ask candidates these types of questions to **learn more about the person’s experiences**. Concrete examples assist employers in making informed decisions during the hiring process. When responding to these questions, envision **telling the interviewer a story**. To provide a concise and detailed answer, we strongly suggest employing the **STAR method** in crafting your response.

STAR stands for

- **SITUATION** – Describing the specific event to provide a clear understanding for the interviewer
- **TASK** – Identify what the task was – was it a class project, clinical task, or a certain procedure?
- **ACTION** – Discuss specific actions you took, if on a team, what did your role look like?
- **RESULT** – What was the result? Were you successful, did you resolve the issue?
- **REFLECTION** – What did you learn from the experience? How will you address future scenarios?

Using the STAR method provides you a framework to tell your story and show the employer how you performed a task, and most importantly, provides you the opportunity **to reflect and describe how you would potentially address** similar situations in the future.

**Question: Describe a time when you advocated for a patient or client.**

S: During my hospital fieldwork, I worked on an orthopedic floor that cared for complex patient cases. The patient that I was treating was in a lot of distress and seemed very uncomfortable.

T: I needed to assess this patient, as she was recovering from a severe back injury.

A: I asked the patient if there was anything she needed that no one has asked her about. Her eyes lit up a bit and she said “yes, actually, I would really like to brush my teeth.” It turns out that no one recognized her need to brush her teeth.

R: The patient told me that the simple question meant a lot to her and she felt more comfortable after we were able to brush her teeth. I advocated for this patient in a small but very impactful way.

R: Moving forward, I have continued to pay attention to the small details and asking the “simple questions” when working with patients because I have continued to develop a strong rapport with all my patients.

**Question: Tell me about a time when you demonstrated teamwork.**

S: When working as a research assistant at Jefferson, one of the lab directors needed one of my team members to stay late to complete surgeries required for our student.

T: After discussing with my team members, I decided to volunteer as since many of them had additional time commitments.

A: I was able to complete and document over 50 mouse surgeries that needed to be performed.

R: Research project is ongoing, however, my team mates and lab director commended me on how well and efficient I was able to complete the required task.

R: When working in teams, I will continue to keep the lines of communication open to ensure that we are all working to the best of our abilities to complete our goals successfully and on time.

## STAR METHOD OUTLINE

Question: \_\_\_\_\_?

<b>STAR METHOD</b>	<b>RESPONSES</b>
Situation	
Task	
Action	
Result	
Reflection	

\*Brainstorming previous experiences and examples helps develop and strengthen synapses in the brain, which will lead to easier recall when responding to questions during an interview!\*

## ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During the course of your interview, you may be asked a question that is considered illegal by federal, state, or local laws. In the majority of cases, the employer will ask out of genuine curiosity or interest as opposed to using your answer to discriminate against you. Depending on your comfort level, you might choose to answer them honestly. If you are concerned with providing information to employers or if the information provided will be used against you negatively, there are a few options. You can choose to respond to the question by *redirecting the focus to your qualifications and ability* to complete the job successfully. Also, you are within your rights to respectfully respond to the interviewer *and mention that you are not comfortable answering that question*. Whatever option you choose, be sure that it is one you feel the most comfortable and confident pursuing. Below are a list of illegal questions and suggestions on how to respond:

<b>AGE:</b>	As long as you meet minimum age requirements, this is irrelevant.
<b>MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY:</b>	Questions concerning marital status, number of children, and family planning should not be asked.
<b>RELIGION:</b>	Inquiries into religious denomination are unacceptable.
<b>FINANCIAL STATUS:</b>	An applicant's credit history, charge/bank accounts, etc. is private information in most instances.
<b>HEIGHT/WEIGHT:</b>	Unless this is a genuine occupational qualification, no inquiries should be made in this area.
<b>CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY:</b>	While it is legal to ask if an applicant is authorized to work in the United States, it is improper to inquire about an applicant's citizenship.
<b>DISABILITIES:</b>	Employers may inquire about an applicant's ability to perform job functions with or without accommodation, but not ask directly if an applicant has a disability.
<b>ARREST:</b>	"Have you ever been <i>convicted of...?</i> " is a <i>legal</i> question (if the crime named can be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question) versus "Have you ever been arrested?" which is an improper question.

### Examples:

**Interviewer:** "This position requires overnight shifts. Do you have children?"

**Interviewee:** "I can and will be able to fulfill the travel and work schedule that this position requires."

**Interviewer:** "Where do you live? Isn't that town far away?"

**Interviewee:** "I live close enough to work to be able to make it in on time for the scheduled hours."

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Preparing for the job interview can be difficult, which is why we've included some sample interview questions below. To get additional practice, be sure to schedule a mock interview session!

- Tell me how you found out about our organization.
- Why did you change careers? What made you leave the field of \_\_\_\_\_ to become a \_\_\_\_\_?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- What leadership skills do you possess? Describe a specific time when you used your leadership skills.
- Why should I hire you? In what ways can you contribute to this organization?
- What is your greatest accomplishment and why?
- Tell me about a time when you were disappointed in your own performance.
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a faculty member or supervisor. What was the situation and how was it resolved?

- I am going to give you a scenario about Mr. Brown. He is a 46-year old patient with lung cancer. You walk into his room and you see that he has not eaten any of his dinner. What is the first step you would take in regards to this situation?
- Tell me about a situation when you provided full support for a team decision, even though you didn't necessarily agree with it.
- Careful listening and effective communication go together. Tell us about a specific time when your skill in listening helped you communicate better.
- When we get emotionally involved in a problem situation, it is often difficult to be objective. Tell us about a time when you were proud of your ability to be objective even though you were emotional about a problem situation.
- Please provide an example that shows your skill in interacting with people who have different values or perspectives than you.
- Describe a single time when you delivered service in a way that clearly showed care and concern for another individual.
- Describe a time when you advocated for a patient or client.
- Tell me about a time when you employed the use of evidence-based practice.
- Tell me about a time you failed? What did that look like and how did you learn from that experience?

## **JOBSEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **TO DISCLOSE OR NOT TO DISCLOSE**

Disclosure is a very personal decision. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you are *not legally obligated to disclose your disability unless it is likely to directly affect your job performance*. According to the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the request for reasonable accommodations does not require disclosure prior to the start of employment.

Many organizations openly encourage applicants with disabilities because of the perspective they can bring to the team. Disclosing this information might suggest that you have a lot of transferable skills such as: creative problem solving, determination, assertiveness, resourcefulness, time management, and organization. In the next section we highlight different times during the job search process to disclose your disability if this is something you choose!

### **TIMING THE DISCLOSURE**

Below we have outlined 4 different stages of the job application process in which **you might choose to disclose** your disability to an employer. It is also important to be mindful if the organization will be a good fit for you. If you feel that the employer is too caught up on your disability rather than focusing on your skills and abilities, it might not be the best environment for you. Please consult the Career Development Center or the resources included in this packet if you have any additional questions!

#### **Resume**

- Having previous experiences related to your disability that can speak to your abilities and fit for the position and organization.

#### **Cover Letter**

- If the position relates to your experience as a person with a disability, where you can demonstrate how your previous experiences make you a qualified candidate.

#### **Prior to the Job Interview**

- If accommodations will be necessary the day of the interview, contact someone in HR to place a request.
- If you have a visible disability, you can choose to disclose prior to the interview to keep the focus on your answers and qualifications rather than your disability.

#### **Following the Job Offer**

- If you will require any accommodations when considering the position, you can communicate with your direct supervisor as well as the HR office.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Still unsure of what path is best for you? Consult some of the resources we've included below, and be sure to contact the Career Development Center for a one-on-one advising appointment!

- <http://www.rileyguide.com/abled.html>
- <http://askjan.org/corner/vol01iss13.htm>
- *Job Search Handbook for People with Disabilities* (copy in the Career Development Library)
- [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)
- *Careers and the DisABLED Magazine* (copies are sent to the Career Development Library)

Reference: Johnson, Betsy. Disclosure of a Disability in a Job Interview. NACE Journal, Feb 12

## LGBTQ JOBSEEKERS

Going through the job search process as a member of the LGBTQ community may require you to navigate additional obstacles. Doing your research will help make the job search feel less daunting. Visiting websites such as [http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non\\_discrimination\\_laws](http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/non_discrimination_laws) can help you identify employment non-discrimination laws by state. The U.S. Department of Labor released a report (<https://www.dol.gov/asp/policy-development/lgbt-report.pdf>) addressing the workplace rights of members within the LGBTQ community.

Federal and state resources aren't the only way a jobseeker can obtain information to prepare for the job search and interview. Looking into company websites and policies can establish a better idea if the organization is one that is friendly and accepting of LGBTQ employees. A frequently asked question of many job applicants is whether or not they should come out as a member of the LGBTQ community. In the next section we will address situations where you might choose to come out to an employer.

### DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO COME OUT

Everyone's experiences are unique. Coming out is **always a choice**, and a candidate should never feel pressured to out themselves unless it is their decision. We've included three different stages in which candidates might choose to come out as a member of the LGBTQ community, and how they can frame and control the narrative!

#### Resume

- Include volunteer experiences with LGBTQ organizations **outlining the skills** that translate the position you are seeking.

#### Cover Letter

- Discussing examples from LGBTQ-specific clubs or organizations that **align with the mission and values** of the organization or the **qualifications** they are looking for in a candidate.

#### Interview

- Framing your experiences as a member of the LGBTQ community as strengths. **Outlining the skills** you've developed from your experiences and how those will **benefit the organization**.
- Asking questions to learn about the **culture and HR policies** of the organization.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Still unsure of the best course of action you should take? Schedule an appointment with our office or reference some of the resources listed below!

- <http://www.thetaskforce.org/>
- <http://www.outforwork.org/>
- *Your Queer Career* (copy in the Career Development Library)
- <http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index>
- <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>