

The key to successful interviewing is **effective preparation**. It is critical for you to be prepared to talk about yourself and your interest in the job to convince a hiring committee of your ability to do the job.

The two major areas you need to prepare for are:

YOURSELF	PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Interests • Experience • Accomplishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of the institution • Structure of the department • Knowledge of products, services or research areas • Understanding of the position

In order to prepare for questions about yourself, use the following model:

1. Read through the job description several times, highlighting skills and experiences required for the job. Next, go through your resume or CV and highlight experiences you have had that provide evidence that your abilities and/or experiences meet the criteria for the job.
2. Next, come up with an example of how and when you used each skill.

EXAMPLES

- "I have developed strong research skills through my work at the National Institute for Environmental and Health Sciences exploring. . ."
 - "This year, I submitted 2 articles that were accepted for publication, demonstrating my effective writing skills . . ."
3. Finally, use these anecdotes to practice answering some of the interview questions below with a friend, supervisor, colleague, or partner.

To prepare for questions about the employer, visit:

- Employer's homepage
- Informational websites about different industries (www.chronicle.com, www.wetfeet.com, www.vault.com, etc.)
- Libraries
- Bookstores
- Current employees
- Professionals in the field

Sample Questions

Questions asked by employers:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
3. What interests you most about this position?
4. What can you offer us?
5. What are your greatest strengths?
6. Can you name some weaknesses?
7. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
8. What do you know about our organization (products, services, research, departments, etc.)?
9. What did you enjoy most about your last employment experience? Least?
10. How do you think your advisor/supervisor would describe you?
11. Why do you want a job that you are overqualified for? (if applicable)
12. What skills have you developed through your graduate studies and/or postdoc that relate to this job?
13. What are your salary expectations? (HINT: Answer with a question: "What does the typical range look like for someone with my experience?")
14. Why are you applying for positions outside of academic settings? (if applicable)

Behavior-based questions:

15. Describe a time when you had difficulty working with a professor/advisor/supervisor/co-worker in the past. How did you handle it?
16. Give me a specific example of a time when someone criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond?
17. Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?
18. Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?
19. Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your lab/group was facing. What was the challenge? What role did you play?
20. Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer or professor. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
21. Describe a time when you got co-workers who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?
22. Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
23. Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?
24. Describe two specific goals you set for yourself and how successful you were in meeting them. What factors led to your success in meeting your goals?

Questions asked during academic interviews:

1. Describe your current research.
2. Why did you choose to focus on this area?
3. What will your next research project be? Are you planning to make any future changes to your current project?
4. Describe your philosophy of teaching.
5. How do you motivate students?
6. Describe a course you have taught in the past and how you evaluated the students' learning.
7. How would you teach this (introductory level, intermediate, advanced level) course? What primary and secondary texts would you choose?
8. How have you used technology in the classroom?
9. How would you increase enrollment in this major?
10. Describe your ideal course. What does the syllabus look like? What texts would you envision using?
11. Why are you interested in this college/university?
12. Tell me where you see yourself in 5 years.....10 years.....20 years.....

Questions you might ask employers:

1. Can you describe the primary responsibilities of this position?
2. What does a typical day look like?
3. What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) right now?
4. May I talk with the last person who held this position?
5. What is the usual promotional time frame?
6. What do you like best about your job/this organization?
7. Has there been much turnover in this area?
8. How is performance evaluated?
9. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
10. What is the management style of the person who will serve as my supervisor?
11. Is there a lot of team/project work?
12. What is life like in this city/town?
13. What are the next steps? When should I expect to hear from you?

INTERVIEW DO'S	INTERVIEW DON'TS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the department before the interview • Review sample questions and practice your answers • Schedule a mock interview with OITE • Bring extra CVs/resumes to the interview • Dress professionally • Bring a list of questions you have for the interviewers • Send follow-up thank-you letter • When discussing offers and salary, talk in terms of a range, not a single figure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive late! • Accept a formal interview to "practice" your interviewing skills • Ask about salary during the initial interview • Ask about a position for your partner • Argue with the interviewer • Volunteer negative information • Continue to interview after you accepted a position (508 compliant)