



COW CREEK CAREER CENTER

Interview Guidelines



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PREPARATION IS ESSENTIAL

Research the company. Go beyond the company's mission and vision on their website. Check online resources for articles about the industry or the specific organization in publications. Talk with people who work for the organization and people in your network including Drake alumni.

Research the position. Know and understand the position for which you are applying. The more you know about the position and all it entails, the better prepared you will be. Be ready to provide relevant, detailed examples of your work, education, and community engagement matching your skills with those necessary to succeed in the position.

BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEW

The most common interview format today is behavior based, which stresses specific examples of past experience. The success of a behavior-based interview depends on your ability to articulate examples that best illustrate what you can do for an employer by telling stories with a beginning, middle and end. Your answers should clearly demonstrate:

What did you do?

How did you do it?

What was the result?

Your interview is a great opportunity to establish a connection between your skills and what the organization is seeking. Organize your thoughts before speaking. Be sure to answer the question first and follow up with examples and additional information. The more you practice and become familiar with questions that could potentially be asked, the more comfortable and organized you will be.

A behavioral interview is based on the idea that a candidate's past performance is the best predictor of future job success. Many employers use a mix of behavioral and traditional questions when interviewing candidates. As a job seeker in a behavioral-based interview, it is most appropriate to answer behavioral questions with S.T.A.R. story. S.T.A.R. stands for Situation/Task, Action, and Result. A successful S.T.A.R. story is one that includes a situation/task from past experience, the action you took to overcome that problem and the result of your action. This can include examples from internships, work experiences, volunteer experience, or academic classes. Results should include the lessons you have learned in addition to the resolution of the problem.

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EXAMPLE

Tell me about a time when you were faced with a difficult situation completing a project.

ANSWER: Once, when I was working on a work assignment, my team was asked to turn in our project ahead of schedule because of an upcoming holiday weekend (**Problem**). Since we originally planned to have two weeks to complete the work, this task became a bit of a challenge. As the group leader, I thought about what each of my team member's strengths were and I delegated part of the project to members based on each of their strengths (**Action**). Because we divided up the workload and each team member was working on a section with which they were highly skilled and efficient, we were able to complete the project within the allotted time (**Result**).

COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position/organization?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What motivates you?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding educational experience.
- Cite a situation from your past that required you to respond to pressure. How did you deal with it?
- What are your short term/long term goals?
- Give an example of a problem that you have solved and the process you used.
- Describe a situation in which you had conflict with another person and how you dealt with it.
- What challenges are you looking for in a position? • How would you define a conducive work atmosphere?
- Give an example of an important goal that you had set for yourself and tell about your success in reaching that goal.
- Tell me about a team project you are particularly proud of and your contribution.
- What have you done that shows initiative?
- How would your past professors and employers describe you?
- Why should we hire you? • How do you handle stress?
- Will you relocate? In the future will you relocate?
- Is money important to you?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?

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QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

Most employers will provide you with an opportunity to ask questions. It is very important that you go to the interview prepared to ask insightful questions about the organization and position. Keep in mind that you are also evaluating the organization during the interview. Write your questions down and take them with you.

Some examples are:

- If you had an ideal candidate, what skills and personal qualities would the candidate possess?
- Where do you see the organization going in the next five years?
- You seem very enthusiastic about the organization. Can you tell me some of the reasons why people like working here?
- What are the success factors for a person to be effective in this role?
- How are employees evaluated?
- What is the promotion/advancement potential within the organization?
- What is the time frame for selecting a candidate?
- What are the next steps? What does your hiring timeline look like?

Remember to...

- Answer questions honestly.
- Listen— If you don't understand a question, ask the interviewer to rephrase it.
- Relax. Don't be afraid to pause for a second before beginning your answer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Don't make the mistake of thinking your interview is over once you walk out the door. Following up is a very important step. Send a thank you note within 24-48 hours of the interview to all of the people with whom you interviewed. See the Career Center's information page about how to follow-up/Thank you's.

Be sure to ask for their business cards while at the interview so you have their contact information. The note does not need to be long, but it should mention something meaningful from the interview. The format may vary depending on the type of organization. For tips on content and delivery, see the resources available in the Career Center.

If you don't hear anything from the organization within the suggested hiring timeline, it is appropriate to call or email to find out the status of the hiring process. Remain positive and professional in all of your communication with the potential employer. Even if you are not hired right away, maintaining a good impression in the employer's mind can lead to future opportunities.

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