



STETSON LAW

# Interview Toolkit

An Overview of Interviews,  
Questions, and How To Prepare

From The Office of Career and Professional Development  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>Types of Interviews</b>	2
<b>Employer Research</b>	3
<b>Interview Formats</b>	4
Spontaneous Interviews	4
The Screening Interview	5
Telephone and other Virtual Interviews	6
In-Person Interviews	8
All Day	9
Lunch or Dinner Interviews	11
Final Interviews	12
<b>Interview Questions</b>	13
<b>Sample Interview Questions</b>	13
<b>Behavior-Based Interview Questions</b>	15
The STAR Method: Situation Task Action Result	15
<b>Other Types of Interview Questions</b>	17
Ethics Questions	17
Puzzle Questions	17
Group Process	18
Hypotheticals	19
Personality/Harmony/Match Tests	19
Pandemic Questions	20
Your Own Questions and How to Phrase Them	20
<b>Appearance</b>	22
<b>Interview Attire</b>	22

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# Types of Interviews

### Introduction

Whether or not you are in an active search for a job or other appointment (such as for a board, a volunteer role, or an award), an interview may be a step along the way to successfully securing the outcome you want. Usually, an interview is formally established, and you set a time, location, schedule, and other pertinent arrangements. Sometimes, it's less formal, and that (now virtual) lunch you thought was just a meet and greet turns into an opportunity to get ahead of the competition for a dream job.

It's best to always be prepared. This Toolkit is intended to help you get ready for informal, impromptu, formal, or any other kind of interview that involves someone asking you questions about your professional or personal history or desired future, for the purpose of connecting you to opportunity.

An interview is always a test. The questions may not have right or wrong answers, but the way that you answer

them—in terms of content, style, tone, and form—will be judged. It is the judging part—the aspect of the interaction that results in a next step—that defines an interview. It's important to prepare for an interview, just like you study for a test.

Your objective is to be offered the invitation to advance to the next stage of the process.

You can turn down the next stage, or you can accept the next stage. That is not a decision you should make while in the interview.

Have an interview? We strongly recommend you schedule a practice interview with The Office of Career and Professional Development by e-mailing [career@law.stetson.edu](mailto:career@law.stetson.edu)

### Types of Interviews

There are three basic types of planned interviews: structured, unstructured, and hybrid.

A **structured** interview is more formal than either of the other two and is regarded as the fairest, least likely to be influenced by interviewer bias, and the least common. In a structured interview, all candidates for the opportunity at hand are provided with the same questions or scenarios and are interviewed under the same conditions.

An **unstructured** interview is the least formal and most common of the three and is often indistinguishable from an informal conversation. In an unstructured interview, the interviewer may freely move from subject to subject and base the next question in a series on the interviewee's response to the last answer. Further, the content of the interviewee's submitted application materials may generate most of the questions. And, unstructured interviews often take place in the

# Employer Research

absence of a formal awareness of an opportunity, i.e., the interview produces the opportunity inasmuch as the candidate is creating awareness of the possibilities for themselves.

A **hybrid** interview is a combination of the structured and unstructured types, deploying structured questions that will be asked of all candidates, along with questions that arise from an applicant or candidate's specific biographical or experiential, or educational content that is unique to that individual. This is less common than the unstructured interview but more common than the structured practices. A hybrid interview usually takes place in the instance of an actual opportunity and in the instance of other candidates for the opportunity.

All of these types of interviews may include question and answer formats, targeted techniques that provide for more or less information, analytical and evaluation practices, types of impromptu tests, or other definable characteristics that are not unique to one or another interview type.

You don't have to know what type of interview you are in if you are in an interview! But it does help to understand that the interviewer is in the process of deciding whether to advance you to the next stage of selection or to divert you from the selection process.

### Employer Research

Before your interview, research the organization with whom you are interviewing and the individual with whom you will be speaking. By the time you meet the interviewer, you should know a lot about the company, firm, agency, or organization they are representing. Search engine research, including LinkedIn, can provide you with quite a lot of important information, so can friends, professors, alumni, the Office of Career and Professional Development, and other members of your support community.

Always have questions prepared to ask the interviewer. Focus your questions on exhibiting your interest in the employer, the employer's business, and your career and professional

development.

It can also be helpful to ask questions about the interviewer's experiences and background to demonstrate that you have done your research. However, be prepared with other questions in the event the interviewer you expected is replaced, as can happen. A lack of questions can destroy an interview, so always prepare 3-4 questions to ask.

We discuss how to prepare your questions later in the Toolkit in the section called *Your Own Questions and How to Phrase Them*.

# Interview Formats

### Interview Formats

Now that we have an understanding of the different types of interviews, it is time to review the different interview formats that you may encounter during your job search process. By understanding these formats you are in a much better position to be prepared and present your best self.

### **Spontaneous Interviews**

To prepare for the unexpected, sudden, and unbidden interview, you should compile a list of your talking points and story points for every occasion. Need help getting started? Answer the below questions.

1. Among my friends, I am the one who \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In my family, I am known for my \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When I communicate, I prefer to:
  - Speak in person
  - Message
  - Write, as in email
  - Talk on the telephone
  - Send a handwritten note

Review the list of interview questions at the end of this Toolkit and imagine and strategize your best answers.

Below are some strategies for ensuring you are prepared for unplanned interviews.

I don't like the idea of an elevator speech; I believe that the only thing you say on an elevator is "What floor would you like?" or "Could you hit 12 for me please?" But I do agree with being ready to answer questions about who you are and what you are doing these days, just in case you run into someone you know or someone who has heard about you and wants to help you.

— Cathy Martin, Assistant Dean for Career and Professional Development

### **Tips for Spontaneous Interviews**

- Eliminate "I don't know," "I don't know yet," "I'm not sure," and any other form of the same non-answer

from your mind and plan affirmatively not to say it in any discussion of yourself or your interests, plans, or career. You don't need to know the answer, but you do need to know how to answer in a way that keeps the conversation moving and engages the listener.

- Keep an inventory of your *Sets-Me-Apart* points, and periodically review them along with your other accomplishments. If you don't do that, the only thing that will emerge spontaneously is something that won't help you at all. As you build these points, consider thinking about how and when you have had the opportunity to develop some of the competencies employers value, like those listed below:

- \* Adaptability
- \* Anger management
- \* Collaboration
- \* Conflict resolution
- \* Critical thinking
- \* Cultural competency
- \* Detail orientation

## Interviews Formats (continued)

- \* Empathy
- \* Intellectual curiosity
- \* Judgment
- \* Relationships with others
- \* Resilience
- \* Self-discipline
- \* Service orientation
- \* Time management
- \* Wellness

- Know the answer to the big question: “What inspired you to go to law school?” and be able to deliver it well, in less than two minutes.
- You don’t need a lot of talking points, but you should write your talking points out. Your talking points are the things you want to insert into the conversation if you get the chance, that are related to your purpose, your interest, and your goal.
- Rehearse your talking points and become fluent in getting them across easily—rehearsal will keep you from being tongue tied, inappropriate, off-the-cuff, negative,

or just plain random.

- Remember that whomever you are talking to when the questions start may have ideas, opportunities, help to offer, or just want to make a connection with you. Stay engaged and at least make a new friend or a good impression.

### The Screening Interview

A screening interview is usually done over the phone or using a virtual format. It may also take the form of a brief questionnaire or survey in which you are asked to answer the questions vocally in a timed format or on camera. In some on-campus situations, like On Campus Recruiting (OCR) or On Campus Interviewing (OCI), it may be done in person. The point of the screening interview is to verify that the applicant is interested, knows the anticipated pay point and other pertinent information about the job, can work the schedule or number of hours, at the job’s location, can begin work on the appointed date, and meets the basic job qualifications.

### *Tips for Screening Interviews*

- The screening interview may be scheduled or unscheduled. You should not agree to an unscheduled interview; if an employer calls you and says, “This is so and so from Dream Jobs, LTD, can you answer a few quick questions?” the answer is “I’m so sorry, I can’t right this minute, can I call you back or can we set up a time this afternoon, (or tomorrow, or in an hour)”?
- Your best performance emerges from preparation, so once you know when your screening interview is to take place, spend time getting ready by researching the organization, the interviewer, the location, types of opportunities, and so on.
- Know how much time is allotted for the interview.
- Plan your appearance whether the interview is to be in person or on screen, and if it is to take place via telephone plan your own location

## Interviews (continued)

and identify your needs and challenges so you can address them (see the sections on phone, video, and in-person interviews).

- Identify the items you want to convey and make sure you have tested these with a coach or advisor. Most screeners are seeking the right person for their opportunity, not the person for whom the opportunity is ideal: they are not the same thing. Know and try to detail how you can contribute, not how much benefit you might receive. Know the difference!
- Express confidence in yourself and in your ability. Avoid negative self-talk, hesitation, self-deprecation, and false humility. If you are good at something, say you are. If you are not good at something put that in the category of something you are working hard at improving.
- Keep in mind that in these types of interviews it is very common for everyone to be asked the same

questions and usually in the same order.

### **Telephone and other Virtual Interviews**

Currently, you will likely experience more interviews via telephone or video. With technology more important and accessible than ever, employers will choose these formats for convenience, cost, efficiency, and safety. While the thought of doing an interview in the comfort of your own home may sound easier, these types of interviews require just as much, if not more, preparation than an in-person interview.

### ***Tips for Telephone and Virtual Interviews***

- Be seated for the interview. Standing and pacing are not ideal for the sound and voice quality.
- In setting up and establishing your interview space, look for ways to ensure clarity of communication, timeliness of information exchange, accuracy of the message being transferred, and the ability to

transmit nuances in your voice or language.

- Limit the likelihood of ambient noise, interruptions, and distraction. Practice on the equipment both as transmitter and receiver by asking a friend to work with you to establish an effective setting for your conversation. Understand how the “Mute” button can play a role in the conversation.
- Make certain your location and equipment provide adequate wireless services for what you need.

Express confidence in yourself and in your ability. Avoid negative self-talk, hesitation, self-deprecation, and false humility. If you are good at something, say you are. If you are not good at something put that in the category of something you are working hard at improving.

# Interviews Formats (continued)

- If you are using a cell phone be sure the battery is fully charged. Use your hands-free headset; if it's Bluetooth, make sure it's charged. Technical difficulties can interrupt the flow of your conversation, and that is not helpful to you.
- If you are using a video format, ensure that your camera is working, and you have tested the sound quality of your computer's audio. Best to test this with a friend, family member, or career coach from the Office of Career and Professional Development Team.
- If your host is on screen, you should be on screen as well.
- The best practice is to be as groomed as if you were interviewing in person, and you are wearing interview clothing, and using interview posture and language.
- Test the quality of your voice, volume, clarity, lighting, and any other variables with a friend, family member, or coach from the Office of Career and Professional Development Team.
- Confirm ahead of time who is to call whom and that you have a confirming email containing that information.
- Check with a career coach from the Office of Career and Professional Development on how to manage your on-screen appearance, including the frame, lighting, setting, background, expression and voice modulation. In other words, rehearse.
- Choose a professional looking setting, such as a straight back chair and a blank wall or bookshelves in the frame. If this is not possible, review options for a virtual background depending on your virtual platform. Keep it simple and clean to minimize distractions. Check the height and

frame of the picture with a friend or advisor and adjust your camera and other features in advance. Where you appear to be looking on screen varies among various video platforms (Zoom, Teams, Skype, etc).

Check with a career coach from the Office of Career and Professional Development on how to manage your on-screen appearance, including the frame, lighting, setting, background, expression and voice modulation.

- Research the employer and confirm that you know who the interviewer is, where the job is located, and any other pertinent details.
- During the interview, look at or at the image of the interviewer on the screen, and not at the image of yourself on the screen. Ensure that you appear to be maintaining eye contact. An effective way to do this

We discuss Appearance more in-depth later in the Toolkit.



## Interview Formats (continued)

is to elevate your computer 6-8 inches from the desk top so that your computer's camera is at your eye level. Again, a practice session can really help you perfect your video interviewing presentation skills.

- This is an interview. Manners are the same: “Hi, Monique, nice to meet you.” “Thanks for your time, James. I’ve enjoyed our conversation.” “Roselyn, I hope to hear from you.” “Javier, if you need further information, don’t hesitate to call or email me.”
- If you do a lot of interviewing, you may by now be used to glancing at name tags or desk signage to remind you of the name of the person you are talking to. So, when your interviewer identifies themselves –and not before–write down their name. Keep it in front of you and use it.
- Be certain that your call is disconnected when the interview is over, and you believe that no one

can hear you. It does happen. Be sure it doesn’t happen to you.

### **In-Person Interviews**

For some, the in-person interview is the most comfortable, because it gives you a chance to fully experience the interviewers, the employer’s environment, and may provide more useful information about the workplace culture.

### ***Tips for In-Person Interviews***

- Confirm the date, time, location, name, and position of the interviewer and the length of time allotted for the interview. Obtain the name of the person setting up the interview and the contact phone number of that person, especially if the interview time is before or after normal business hours. Confirm by following up with an email to the individual who scheduled the interview.
- Confirm social distancing, screening policies, mask protocols, and any other Pandemic-related information that may be pertinent to

either your interview or the organization’s employment practices. Decide what you will do if someone extends a hand to shake. Practice your response.

- Make sure you know the route to the location and an alternative route. Create maps and print directions. Drive the route and identify the parking situation prior to the day of the interview. Always ensure you have some cash on you for the unexpected parking fee.
- Make sure your transportation is in good working order. If you are driving to the interview, be sure your car has enough gas to get there and that your windshield wipers are working properly. Always be certain that your tires are safe and are properly inflated.
- Pack equipment, notes, writing tablet, extra resumes, your file on this company, spectacles, pen, and anything else you need. A padfolio is useful. Include tissues, a mint, and/or lipstick if you use it.

# Interviews Formats (continued)

- If you wear high heels, put an extra pair in the car.
- Be sure you have an umbrella.
- Turn off notifications on your cell phone, even vibration. Set your devices to Do Not Disturb.
- Check your hair, teeth, breath, and collar or tie before leaving your car. Avoid perfume or cologne. [Put your face covering in place on your face].
- Head for the reception area and announce yourself, preferably with your business card. [Because of the Pandemic, cards are not being exchanged as often in settings like these. Indeed, you may elect to not offer your card.]
- Follow the form of the interviewer's greeting; shaking hands has been replaced in some environments with other salutary gestures, hand over heart, nod, hands in prayer position over chest, or the

humorous extension of an elbow. If a hand is offered and you do not wish to shake hands, inasmuch as this is a stranger to you and it would not be prudent to do so, it is appropriate to say that you are not shaking hands during the current advisory.

- Wait to be invited to sit.

Have an interview? We strongly recommend you schedule a practice interview with The Office of Career and Professional Development by e-mailing [career@law.stetson.edu](mailto:career@law.stetson.edu)

### All Day Interview

In the later stages of selection, organizations frequently arrange for their team or teams to meet the finalist candidates. There is usually a schedule of interviews with different people in the organization who work in different areas and who work in different areas and who have some

normal contact or supervisory role for the available position. Their questions may range from highly operational to probing and revealing.

Often, the people scheduled for these interviews are not on the selection team but can interject an opinion if they have a bad experience with you. Generally, their role is to affirm that you are terrific, or to recruit you if the selection team isn't sure they can land you, or to raise concerns of they observe anything untoward. Their questions are likely to be superficial, redundant, repetitive, or irrelevant, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't take them seriously and respond with fresh enthusiasm and confidence that they are the most important people you will meet all day.

### Tips for All Day Interviews

- Note, write down, and remember names. Use names when addressing people you have met.
- Observe social distancing norms that you are comfortable with, and

## Interviews Formats (continued)

if you aren't comfortable with any of them, plan a solution in advance. Don't be moved if you have a good reason to be concerned. It may not be the place for you; this is a very personal consideration but one that is the issue of the day for many people.

- Don't get drawn into gossip or inappropriate giggles about this person or that one, inside information that you know is not right for you, or criticism of the organization's competitors or clients. In fact, avoid any mention of anyone outside of the room.
- Do not say anything negative or even slyly neutral about other law schools, other cities, or other employers, agencies, professors, or individuals.
- Do not discuss pay, benefits, or compensation with anyone but the person whose job it is to explain those things to you in a personal

setting. Do not try to negotiate pay during an interview, with anyone.

- Request water from time to time if you need it and accept it if it is offered. Make sure you have tissues with you and that they are accessible, like in a pocket. Bring your own mask.
- Request rest breaks from time to time and wash your hands thoroughly when you have the chance.
- Bring your own hand sanitizer and use it discreetly or obviously, whichever you prefer.
- In this format, you may get questions about how you are handling the issues associated with the Pandemic. Decide in advance how you will answer those and answer accordingly. Do not hedge or hesitate unless you are willing to conform to a different standard than you have established. Do not think this is a trivial or an unimportant matter to most people.

We discuss this more later in the Toolkit in *Pandemic Questions*.

- If you have a lower standard than you believe the organization may have, express your willingness to conform only if you are willing.

You are not expected to place yourself at risk before you have been offered a position and negotiated the conditions under which you will accept it.

- If you have a higher standard than you believe the organization may have, you may say so, and ask if your more restrictive position would be accepted. You are not expected to place yourself at risk before you have been offered a position and negotiated the conditions under which you will accept it.
- When you have interviewed for the entire day, you should send thank you notes via email and US Mail to the individuals you met. You may

## Interviews Formats (continued)

also send an email to the company or practice group or subgroup you met with, via the person who made all your arrangements. You should do this whether or not you want the job.

- When it is time for you to leave, gather your belongings and exit the organization gracefully before placing any phone calls or checking your messages.

### **Lunch or Dinner Interview**

Interviews over meals have become common in the legal industry and other industries but are less so under the current Pandemic conditions. If you are invited for an interview lunch or dinner, be sure you are comfortable with the location and the establishment's practices, and know your own policies with respect to indoor or outdoor seating and guest or table placement.

### ***Tips for Lunch or Dinner Interviews***

- If you are meeting your host at the restaurant, be sure you will be able to recognize them if you are both

wearing masks. If you check in with the restaurant host, you may give them your name and tell them who you are meeting.

- If you are not satisfied with the distancing protocol at your table seating, you may express your preference and ask if a larger table could be arranged. If the answer is no, make your decision and follow through on it.
- Don't order spaghetti or a challenging salad. Remember that this is an interview and choose your entrée for its manageability, ease of consumption (in reasonable quantities), and straightforwardness (you don't want to wonder how to eat it).
- Chew with your mouth closed, use your knife as a pusher (not your hands), chew carefully before swallowing and swallow before you speak. Etiquette videos for meals are available online and in reference guides, but generally,

elbows remain off the table, and don't touch anything other than your flatware and glassware.

- Don't check your messages or take calls during the meal; your phone should be set to Do Not Disturb and remain off the table.
- Do not order dessert; if others do, we recommend coffee or tea. At this part of the meal you are likely to get more questions than you can handle between bites, and sipping your warm beverage while others eat dessert is perfectly acceptable, and easier for you to navigate.
- We do not recommend that you order alcohol with either lunch or dinner and we recommend that you not provide a reason if asked. If you feel that you must partake (i.e. everyone else is), we recommend that you sip once or twice but no more. Drinking and interviews are not generally compatible.

## Interviews Formats (continued)

- Thank and part from your host or hosts before checking your messages or placing or receiving a call.
- Don't forget to send a thank you email, and a handwritten note to each of your hosts. However, the email is more likely to reach the recipient sooner because many people are working remotely.

You should not negotiate while you are on the premises or in the meeting. Always thank the deliverer of the offer graciously and express how honored you are to be invited to join the organization.

### Final Interview

A final interview is one in which you are offered the job. Of course, you may not have a final interview if you are offered the job after one of the other interviews. But in the even that you are invited to come back for one last

conversation, this is not a good time to get too comfortable. The time for that is after you have an offer letter in hand.

### *Tips for Final Interviews*

- If you are asked whether you will accept an offer of \_\_\_\_\_, you are expected to know the answer and expected to exhibit poise and reasonable sophistication.
- Your first response is that you would be delighted to be offered a position with the organization and that your response to the offer is dependent on all the aspects of the offer.
- You should request any offer in writing and request time to consider it.
- You should be very clear on what the conditions of the offer are—an example of conditions for an attorney position might be: required billable hours, contributions to health and welfare plans, hours of work, and other pertinent details.

- You should not negotiate while you are on the premises or in the meeting.
- Always thank the deliverer of the offer graciously and express how honored you are to be invited to join the organization.

There are a lot of contours and dimensions to organizations in the legal industry, and it's best to discuss the specifics of an offer you aren't sure about with a coach from the Office of Career and Professional Development.

# Interview Questions

## **Interview Questions**

If you had access to every interview question ever conceived, every interview would still be unique. Every interviewer and each company is different, and each is looking for someone special to join their team. Make sure you treat every interview as an opportunity, not just for you, but also for the person on the other side of the desk to evaluate a potential coworker. Be tuned in to opportunities to improve. Watch for clues the interviewer gives on what they are looking for.

All that being said, interviews are voice-to-voice, face-to-face, or computer-to-computer question-and-answer appointments that are often used to acquaint an employer with a prospective employee, or vice versa. They can take place at any time in the selection process and are important to the employer in comparing candidates' communications skills, validating resume contents and claims, and gaining better understanding of candidate judgment, choices, and decisions

Employers in the legal field tend to hold the view that a candidate selected for an interview is qualified to do the work and capable of doing it, so most interviews tend toward the conversational side. The employer's goal in these instances is to determine what it would be like to work with you. You too, should also be very focused on if the workplace is a good fit for you. Pay attention to things you perceive as red-flags or deal-breakers. Better to learn this information now than 3 months into the job.

## **Sample Interview Questions**

### **What do you know about our organization?**

This is a test to see if you have done your research and are prepared. If you are well-prepared, the interview is off to a positive start; if you are not, it may be effectively over.

### **Tell me about yourself.**

Decide in advance what you want the interviewer to know about you and develop talking points to aid you in sticking to the subject. You want to provide a summary about how you

stand out and what makes you unique and perhaps valuable to this organization.

### **What are your strengths?**

This is one of the most common interview questions. You need to know your strengths, in the context of this job, not in your life.

### **What are your weaknesses?**

This is another common one—you are also expected to know your weaker areas and to be in the process of improvement. In this context, a weakness is referential to the specific job you are interviewing for.

### **What qualifications do you have that indicate you will be successful in this field?**

Your understanding of the field is as important as your qualifications.

### **What new skills/capabilities have you developed over the past year?**

This is a chance to describe a developing skill or strength or to show how you are working toward personal or educational development goals.



## Sample Interview Questions

### **What are your greatest work and non-work-related accomplishments during the past two years?**

Whatever the answer, it should include a short explanation of why you consider it to be your “greatest” accomplishment.

### **Describe three things that are most important to you in a job.**

Think about why you work. Do you require or enjoy purpose, autonomy, feedback, organization, affiliation with talented coworkers, or camaraderie with a large group? This is a chance to explain how you will fit into the organization. Be sure to check the organization’s website, where you will likely find big clues about its culture.

### **What motivates you?**

This refers to your motivation to work, especially hard work and long hours of work. Why do you do what you do?

### **How would a co-worker, friend, or boss describe you?**

You might ask a former co-worker, boss, or a friend for the answer in preparation for the interview.

### **How would you describe your own work style?**

A work style can be described many ways, such as organized, deliberative, focused, creative, productive, or collaborative. You can expect a follow-up question such as, “Tell me what you mean by that description.”

### **What do you see yourself doing in 1, 3, 5, and 10 years from now?**

Do not tell the interviewer you see yourself in his or her job or that you see this job as a stepping stone. It is good to voice your intention to stay with the employer and imagine the ways you might be contributing by then. Speak of excellence, tenacity, growth, learning, professional development, and achievement.

### **What is success to you?**

You must answer truthfully and should have an answer easily at hand.

### **What specific skills acquired or used in previous jobs relate to this position?**

Service, attention to detail, collaboration, initiative, and other

categories of competencies are things you can consider in advance of the interview as part of your preparation. Virtually any job will have transferrable skills that translate well to the legal profession.

### **Why should we hire you?**

It is a good question, and you should have a good answer ready. This is a great opportunity to sell yourself, so be prepared. If you are stumped, think about these questions: What is special about you? What do you bring to the table? What do you add to their organization?

### **Why do you want to work here?**

Remember that this is not about you. You should not discuss how close the office is to your home nor how the work enhances your own portfolio. This is about the way you fit the employer’s needs, and thoughtful phrasing will lead to a win-win.

### **What salary do you expect?**

We think you should consult with The Office of Career and Professional Development in formulating an answer

# Behavior-Based Interview Questions

for this question so that you can be best prepared to position yourself appropriately.

### **Do you have any questions for me?**

It is a near fatal interview mistake to have no questions to ask, no matter how well the rest of the interview went. It is also never a good idea to throw a hardball in an interview of any kind. If the interview is a later stage interview, you might ask for clarification of something you have been told. It is always acceptable to ask the interviewer questions about his or her own tenure, career at the firm, agency, or organization.

### **Behavior-Based Interview Questions**

Behavior-based questions are growing in frequency and finding their way into the interview lexicon in the legal profession and many employers have begun using them in their hiring process. The premise for this format is that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. When they use this method, employers identify the competencies that are necessary for

the job and then ask questions about the candidates past experiences in which those competencies were utilized. In this form of interviewing, what you do not describe is as important as what you describe.

Most behavior-based interview questions begin with the phrase, “Tell me about a time when . . .” and then go on to establish the competency you may have used in the past.

Common themes in these questions involve:

- Time management
- Conflict resolution
- Anger management
- Detail orientation
- Decision-making
- Judgment
- Critical thinking
- Collaboration
- Service orientation
- Intellectual curiosity
- Relationships with others
- Cultural competency
- Wellness

For example, “Tell me about a time when you had more work than available time and important deadlines looming for each project. What did you do to resolve the situation?”

As you can see, it isn’t even clear whether the interviewer is seeking information about your time management skills or your conflict resolution competencies. You have a little latitude for interpretation. If you ask for more information, most interviewers will simply repeat the question. You must have an answer or be able to develop an answer quickly.

### **The STAR Method: Situation Task Action Result**

Your response to these questions should be specific and detailed. Tell the interviewer about a situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly describe the situation, the actions you took, and the positive result or outcome. This method of answering questions is often referred to as the STAR method.



## Behavior-Based Interview Questions

The key to an effective behavior-based interview is preparation. Your interview prep should include identifying examples where you have demonstrated successful behaviors associated with the job you want. It may be best to use specific examples of past externships, clinics, classes, activities, team involvements, pro bono, work experience, and/or personal achievements. You can discuss work, friends, volunteer experiences, or the like.

Stay away from your romance, your kids, or your parents. This isn't what the interviewer is trying to assess. Choose experiences that had a positive result / outcome.

You should keep your story very brief. This is not a chance to bring up irrelevant details or change the subject.

**Situation / Task**

**Action**

**Result / Outcome**

### *Examples where you can use STAR*

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with difficult pressure or deadlines.
- Describe a time when you had to respond to criticism you felt was not warranted.
- Describe a time when you had to deal with an uncomfortable level of conflict among peers.
- Describe a difficult problem that you tried to solve. How did you identify the problem? How did you go about trying to solve it?
- Describe a time when you tried to persuade someone to do something he/she was not very willing to do.
- When have you felt overwhelmed? Tell me about it.
- Describe a time when you decided on your own that something needed to be done, and you took on the task to get it done.

- Give an example of a situation in which you didn't back down in the face of adversity.
  - Tell me about a time you "bent" the rules. When is it okay to do so?
  - Describe a job experience when you successfully communicated with someone who did not personally like you.
  - Tell me about a time when you were on a team and one of your teammates was not pulling his/her weight. How did you handle it?
  - Tell me about a time when you were unable to meet a goal that you set for yourself. What happened and how did you react?
  - Tell me about a time when your supervisor was not satisfied with the quality of your work. What actions did you take?
- As you prepare, think generally about situations that you can utilize to answer

## Other Types of Interview Questions

multiple behavior-based questions from a single scenario. To get to a point when you feel comfortable with these types of questions, take some time to identify 5-7 pivotal moments in your life or career and write them out. These are the stories of your life, things that happened to you, situations you remember in detail. These will be personal to you, so we can't tell you what they are.

### **Other Types of Interview Questions**

We will now provide you with some information on other types of interview questions you may encounter.

#### **Ethics Questions**

Ethics questions are not unusual in the law profession, and you will commonly find them in government, in social justice organizations and agencies, in courts, in some law firms, and in other settings where difficult questions arise.

The critical aspect of the ethics question is not necessarily the answer, but the process of how you got to the answer, and the critical thinking you are able to illustrate and describe.

There is always a “why?” associated with the answer to an ethical question that you must be able to articulate and then to defend.

The ethics question may not be obvious, may sometimes involve trading off budget priorities for justice objectives, may involve fairness to coworkers or clients, firm policy v. your own policy, or your willingness to bend a rule to help a friend of the office.

In general, it's not a question of right and wrong; there are multiple ways to answer ethics questions. Usually, you are being evaluated for your fit within the organizational standards or the organizational culture. These are almost always problem-solving exercises.

#### ***Tips for Ethics Questions***

- Understand that your values should and will come into the question.
- You should not comment on the question itself or ask questions of the interviewer that would provide what you may see as clues to the

“right” answer.

- Be more cautious than you might be if you must choose between caution and intuition; if you have a strong opinion, you should voice it, but clearly and coherently rather than with force.
- Nuance is important; these questions are not usually binary.
- Don't choose a rogue answer; stay within norms of civility and social correctness.
- Express confidence; often that is the point.

#### **Puzzle Questions**

A puzzle question is less common in a professional interview in law. You find puzzle questions in Silicon Valley, in the creative professions like advertising or marketing, or in consulting jobs and professions.

In a puzzle question, a scenario is provided into which you must insert yourself: a room you must escape

## Other Types of Interview Questions

from, equipment that must be built from items provided, a river that must be crossed by a group of people. A viable or correct solution is the objective, but there may be a range of answers with one or more being better than the others. In other cases, particularly where math or reasoning is involved, there may be only one solution and an equation that leads to the answer.

### ***Tips for Puzzle Questions***

There are steps to responding to Puzzle questions and they are related to critical thinking.

1. Do not start by offering guesses or by saying anything self-deprecating or self-effacing. Instead, take a few moments to think about the elements of the problem that was described, jotting down notes if you need to.
2. Ask any questions that you need to ask, including clarifying questions, to make sure you nailed the specifics.

3. Use only what you know, and in terms of the problem itself, what is described as known and relevant.
4. Explain your reasoning in as much detail as you can.
5. Answer only with a specific solution and the reason you chose this solution.

### **Group Process**

A group process scenario is not a question but is a style of interview in which you must work with a group to show or express how you work in groups and which roles you automatically assume or attempt to assume. There are no “right way” answers to give you because this is a test of how you behave with others during given scenarios.

While the simplest form of this inquiry is a question about a time when you operated as part of a group, asking you to describe your role and your actions, the most complex form is an actual assessment of you operating in a group assembled for the purpose of

the assessment. Under that circumstance, you are given an assignment and asked to produce the outcome within a specific period of time, with specific rules, and perform fundamental tasks like establishing a leader, a scribe, and so on.

Juries do this every day, several times a day, so it is not necessarily complicated.

### **Tips for Group Process**

- The best thing to do, if you are presented with the group process exercise is to behave respectfully, volunteer, treat everyone civilly, and find ways to help the group reach its goal.
- There is always a debrief after the exercise. The best way to approach the summary phase is to speak ill of no one, to not critique yourself or second guess anyone, and to understand that in an effective group process everyone is the group—no one is exceptional.

## Other Types of Interview Questions

### **Hypotheticals**

Hypotheticals are exercises that describe situations that amount to “what would you do if...?”

Some hypotheticals are weird or ridiculous, but others are descriptions of actual scenes from the workplace and job or a situation that you might encounter.

#### ***Tips for Hypotheticals***

- The best thing to do is to answer the questions honestly as you can, and if any of these are actual things that did happen to you in the past, say so and then describe what you actually did, or what you would do differently if you faced the same situation.
- Use the STAR method described earlier in either case and be as specific as you can be without extraneous detail. Begin, up on brief reflection, by establishing the important point—your objective and what you hoped to accomplish via your prescribed course of action.

### **Personality/Harmony/ Match Tests**

These are actual instruments intended to identify good and bad matches between the job or workplace you are seeking, and you. Most are validated, but others may not be. It is up to you whether or not you want to complete them and the process.

#### ***Considerations for Personality/ Harmony/Match Tests***

- What happens to the record of my results if I get the job or if I don’t get the job?
- Are the results confidential, and who in the firm will see my results (by name)?
- Will copies of the test answers and/ or my results be made or distributed?
- What does the testing organization do with the tests, the results, and the names and other demographic information about test takers?

- Will I be provided with a summary of my results?
- Given that all these instruments are specific to the brand and the testing company’s marketing intentions, it isn’t possible to advise on any specific employer’s test.

### **Pandemic Questions**

It is likely that you are going to be asked about your personal and professional response to the Pandemic. Given that not everyone has the same risk profile, there can be sharp divisions among people on what is acceptable risk and what may not be acceptable risk for another.

These are questions that require truthful, but perhaps measured response; in fact, thinking about how you might respond if asked may be helpful in planning how you will actually behave while your region and neighborhood are operating during the pandemic.

## Other Types of Interview Questions

### ***Tips for Pandemic Questions***

Here are some questions you might imagine being asked in a job interview:

- Do you have a supply of masks or other face coverings?
- When do you wear a mask or face covering?
- To what extent are you adhering to social distancing guidelines?
- Are you able to work in our three-person office, in a cubicle near the copier?
- Are you able to work from home during the pandemic, but come into the office two or three times a week to work with the litigation team in the conference room?
- Are you going to restaurants and other destinations, like the gym, church, or movie theater?
- Do you have any relatives who have contracted the virus?

- How many times a day do you think you wash your hands?
- Do you believe how ridiculous some of these restrictions are?

Some of these questions are inappropriate, but that doesn't mean you won't be asked. And, it is important to plan your response and to be aware that your social media, your friends, or your tone may undermine an answer that is less than truthful.

The best way to handle a gap between your risk profile and your employer's is to indicate that you are willing to adhere to the employer's needs and expectations if hired, (assuming you are). When deciding if that is right for you, you should consider others in your life who may be affected by that decision.

### **Your Own Questions and How to Phrase Them**

It is important for you to prepare questions for an interview. Here are the standards for interview questions that respond to the question: "Is there anything you want to ask me?" It is usually the last thing that an interviewer asks you.

### ***Tips for Your Own Questions and How to Phrase Them***

- Don't throw hardballs. You aren't a reporter and you don't need the answer to the complex question that relates to a piece of litigation, a news story, or a juicy bit of gossip.
- It is entirely appropriate to ask about diversity, equity, and inclusion matters, directly and confidently, it's okay to ask about culture and wellness matters, and it's appropriate to ask about the organization's mentoring or other program relevant to professional development and training practices. These are things the employer should be prepared to discuss with

# Other Types of Interview Questions

you and may have already mentioned.

- A good question to ask the interviewer is why they like working there and what they like best about the organization.
- You may ask about the process, timeline for reaching a decision, and details about job duties that may not have been adequately covered.
- You should not ask about compensation, health and welfare specifics, or other money matters. If you receive an offer you may ask for clarification on those.
- You should not raise the question of your vacation (I'm planning a wedding and need the first week in June off), or any other personal consideration you will need if you were to get an offer. These are questions you ask only if you actually get an offer.

It is entirely appropriate to ask about diversity, equity, and inclusion matters, directly and confidently, it's okay to ask about culture and wellness matters, and it's appropriate to ask about the organization's mentoring or other program relevant to professional development and training practices.

# Appearance/Interview Attire

### Appearance

Appearance should be a part of your career goals. Dressing professionally is an important part of your personal presentation, and you should consistently give thought to the message you are sending with your appearance. If you show up to an event with a wrinkled shirt, it may send the message that you didn't give the event the respect or attention it deserved. Your appearance can send the wrong message about your intentions and it takes the attention away from your most important asset: your personality.

As you move forward in your career presentation, you will often find yourself needing to dress in Business Professional Attire or Business Casual Attire. You never know when an opportunity will arise to attend an event. To ensure preparedness, keep a change of clothes handy. The following levels of attire are most common in the legal profession.

### Interview Attire

- Wear a traditional two-piece suit (dark in color).
- Do not wear khakis.
- A blazer and slacks are not acceptable.
- Have your suit freshly dry-cleaned.
- A white button-down shirt is a good choice for a shirt.
- A blouse may be either a button up or can be a shell and should have a conservative neckline.
- If you wear a tie, choose a tie with either a conservative print or solid color.
- Dress shoes should be black or cordovan only.
- Heels or flats should be closed-toe and not flashy, and heels should not be more than 3 inches in height.

- Shoes should be polished.
- If a skirted suit is worn, you are strongly encouraged to wear flesh-toned hose and ensure that the skirt is of an appropriate length.
- Do not wear cologne, perfume, or aftershave (some people are allergic).
- Be neatly groomed.
- Be conservative with make-up and jewelry: less is more.

Once you begin a job, many employers will have written policies on what you are expected to wear (called a “dress code”). Following the guidelines your employer provides will help you understand what is expected of you.

If you have specific questions about attire, the members of the Career and Professional Development team are always glad to provide individual guidance. Just ask!