ACE the interview
The Interview Process

1 Preparation

2 The Interview

3 Follow-up

we suggest that you first view ‘Interviewing’ workshops #1 & 2; they provide information that will help you better understand this last workshop in the ‘Interviewing’ series.

Interview • 1
Prepare to Ace the Interview

Interview • 2
Handle the Tough Questions
Purpose of the Interview

The Employer Wants To Know

Who are You?
What skills, assets and experience do you offer?

Are you a good ‘Fit’?
Will you fit with our team and culture? Are you right for this company & industry?

How will you Perform?
What have you done in the past that demonstrates how you will do in future?
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What have you done in the past that demonstrates how you will do in future?

What is your ‘product’?
What does it do? What are its features?

Do I need your product?
How will it benefit me and my company?

Is your product reliable?
How do I know it will do what you say it will do?
Generally, the interviewer is looking for evidence of 3 types of skills:

- **Content Skills:**
  knowledge that is job-specific such as: classroom teaching, accounting, copy editing, financial analysis, etc. (expressed as **nouns**)

- **Functional or Transferable Skills:**
  work that you do with people, information or things, such as: organizing, managing, developing, communicating, etc. (expressed as **verbs**)

- **Adaptive (Self-Management) Skills:**
  personal characteristics such as: dependable, team-player, self-directed, creative, etc. (expressed as **adjectives**)
Types of Interview Formats

- Behavioral
- Situational
- Behavioral / Situational Hybrid
- Case – used in the Consulting industry
- Other – panel interviews, group interviews
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The management consulting industry uses the case interview almost exclusively. A case interview is the analysis of a business question and, unlike most other interview questions, it is an interactive process. The interviewer presents you with a business problem and asks for your opinion on how to approach it. Your task is to ask the interviewer logical questions that will permit you to then make a detailed recommendation. You are evaluated, not on whether you get the ‘right’ answer or recommendation,… but on your logic and the way in which you approach the problem and form the recommendation.

Typically, the first-round interview with a consulting firm lasts about half an hour. Of this time, about 5-10 minutes is for introductory chat and behavioral questions, and about 5 minutes for you to ask questions about the company. This then leaves 15-20 minutes for the actual case interview questions.

other examples of the Case Interview format, and excellent sample questions:
www.acethecase.com/site/1438552/page/760283
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The Situational Interview

In the Situational interview format, the interviewer asks you to respond to hypothetical situations that you may face on the job. These types of questions are designed to draw out your analytical and problem-solving skills, as well as how you handle problems with short notice.

Many aspects of the situational interview are similar to behavioral interviews, except the behavioral interview focuses on a past experience; while the situational interview focuses on a hypothetical situation.

Some interviews use the pure situational format.

Some interviews use a hybrid format, combining both behavioral and situational types of questions.

for examples of the Situational Interview format, and excellent sample questions:
www.quintcareers.com/interview_question_database/situational_interview_questions.html
www.quintcareers.com/situational_stress_interviews.html
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Types of Interviews

The Behavioral Interview

The interviewer focuses on behaviors and abilities that are job related, and on your actual current and past experience that demonstrate these abilities. This is the most common format (along with the combination behavioral/situational) used for general types of jobs and industries.

The Behavioral Interview format is based on the premise that past behavior and performance are the best predictors of future behavior and performance. Therefore, the interviewer asks questions about your specific experience in handling different situations. The interviewer typically uses the S*T*A*R question process:

- **Situation**  “Tell me about a situation/time when X…”
- **Task** what it was that you had to do/accomplish
- **Action** what action did you take to accomplish that goal
- **Result** what was the result; how did it turn out

Sample Question:

"Tell me about a time when you were faced with an unreasonable deadline. How did you handle that situation, and what was the outcome?"

When you hear a ‘STAR’ question, your response will be more effective if you also include the STAR elements in your response.
Stages of the Interview

1. Getting to Know You

2. Are You a Good ‘Fit’?

3. The Closing
Stages of the Interview

1. Getting to Know You

• **Includes all contacts: before, during and after the interview**
  Assume that *everyone* you meet at the interview site is part of your interview: the receptionist, building security guard, etc. Often, the hiring manager asks for their input… was the candidate polite? …rude? … professional? Therefore, from the moment you step onto the interview site, you must be ‘on’.

• **Arrive early**
  Give yourself extra time to get to the interview site; allowing for unforeseen traffic jams, flight delays, etc. If you are not familiar with the locale/city, do a dry run commute to the company site earlier in the day (or previous day) to gauge how much travel time you will need on interview day. Once there, take time first to visit the restroom; check out your appearance, gather yourself, and put on your ‘game face’.

• **Firm handshake**
  A firm handshake is important for both women and men. ‘Appropriately’ firm means: not too firm (conveys dominance, overconfidence)… and not too weak (conveys insecurity, disinterest).
Stages of the Interview

1. Getting to Know You

• **Good eye contact**
  At first introduction, and throughout the interview dialogue, maintain good, direct eye contact with the interviewer(s). Don’t glare or be too intense, however. If you are not sure how much eye contact is too much, practice this beforehand in a mock interview, and get feedback from the mock interviewer on this.

• **Good posture**
  What we were told as children still holds true! Sitting and carrying oneself in an erect, straight posture conveys to the interviewer that you’re alert and interested. Slouching conveys lazy and low energy.

• **Professional and polite at all times**
  Stay professional and appropriately ‘formal’ at all times. Even if part of the interview process involves going to lunch or dinner, or a less formal environment; be comfortable but stay in ‘interview mode’.
Stages of the Interview

2. Are You a Good ‘Fit’

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position / company?
- What are your strengths / weaknesses?
- Accomplishments you are most proud of?
- Can you give me an example of when ... (S*T*A*R)
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

You can predict most of the questions you will be asked in the interview. Prepare and practice your responses for these ahead of time!

for more tips on how to prepare, see workshop: Interviewing1 - Prepare to Ace the Interview
for tips on how to handle the ‘tough’ questions, see workshop: Interviewing2 – Handle the Tough Questions
You also need to be prepared to ask intelligent, relevant, thoughtful questions at the end of the interview. This is another way to convey your interest, professionalism, and communication ability. It also shows that you took the initiative and time to do some research on the company.

Ask at least two questions; preferably a few. If you do not ask questions, it indicates to the interviewer that you don’t really have an interest in the job or company, or that you’re not curious or inquisitive.

On the other hand, do not ask questions where the answer is obvious or readily available through some basic research on the organization’s website; or when the topic has already been thoroughly discussed in the interview. And never ask about salary and benefits in the first-round interview, unless the interviewer raises that subject first.

Your questions should not all be about your own self-interest. Be sure to also ask questions that show interest in the company; and lead with one of the company-focused questions.

See next slide for some sample questions you can ask.
Stages of the Interview

2. Are You a Good ‘Fit’ (cont.)

Sample Questions You Can Ask:

• How do you see the trend in XX impacting this industry?
• What would you say is the key differentiator between your company and the competition?
• What would be a typical career path for a new employee entering your company in this position?
• Can you describe a typical day for someone in this position?
• What is the top priority of the person who accepts this job?
• How often could I expect to receive feedback about my growth and performance?
• Is there a formal process for advancement within the organization?
• Is there a formal training program, and would that be available to me in the future?
3. The Closing

- Take cues from the interviewer that signal the interview is ending
- Request contact information; get business card
- Confirm next steps and timeline
- Confirm any requests to provide additional information or documents
- Clarify request for references
- Reaffirm your interest in the position
- Thank you! firm handshake, good eye contact, smile
Follow-Up After the Interview

- Analyze the interview

- Send ‘Thank You’ email immediately

- Send ‘Thank You’ letter within 24 hours

- Carefully write the TY letter to emphasize or clarify any part of the interview conversation

- Send a letter to each interviewer
  (if possible, personalize each note by referencing some part of the conversation you had during the interview)

- Re-affirm your interest
Check out all the career clips in the job search series

**Networking**
- Networking • 1
  - Your Elevator Speech
- Networking • 2
  - The Networking Interview

**The Resume**
- Resume
  - Make Your Resume Count
- Cover Letter
  - The Right Introduction

**Interviewing**
- Interviewing • 1
  - Prepare to Ace the Interview
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- Interviewing • 3
  - Ace the Interview
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