



*ROLLINS OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT*

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Key Purposes of an interview? .....	3
Interview Formats.....	3
Interview Attire .....	4
The Interview Process .....	4
Interview Questions.....	5
Tips For Answering Sticky Interview Questions.....	5
Behavioral-Based Interview Questions – The S.T.A.R. Method.....	6-7
Interview Elimination Factors.....	8
Questions For The Interviewer.....	8
General Interview Tips.....	9
Thank you Email Message.....	9
Virtual Interview Tips.....	10
Tips for International Students.....	11

# Three Key Purposes of An Interview

## An organization performs candidate interviews to determine:

- **Skills and Qualifications:** Evaluate if the candidate matches the desired skills, experiences and overall qualifications for a position within the organization.
- **Personality and Traits:** Assess whether a candidate's personality and traits are a good fit for the position, team and culture of the organization.
- **Motivation and Goals:** Understand the candidate's motivation and career goals related to the position and organization.

## Interview Formats

There are many different interview formats, but overall the organization is ultimately utilizing various formats to determine which candidate will be the best selection for the job and the organization. Below is a summary of various interview formats:

**Initial Screening** – A screening is usually a short 15-30-minute interview done by an organization's human resources recruiter. It will usually be conducted virtually, and is used to determine if you meet enough of the organization's desired requirements before proceeding with any additional interviews.

**One-on-One** – This is the most common type of interview. It is typically conducted by the person authorized to do the hiring, called the hiring manager. This interview will generally last 45-60 minutes and will assess your overall skills, experience and motivation for the position and the organization.

**Panel** – A panel interview differs from a one-on-one interview in that instead of speaking to one person, you'll be speaking to two or more individuals during the interview. The interviewers often represent various departments or levels within the organization. In this situation, keep in mind that you should respond to the person asking the question, but don't keep your eye contact focused on only one person. Throughout your answers, rotate your eye contact with all members of the panel so they remain engaged.

**Round Robin** – Round robin interviews, like panel interviews, involve several interviewers, but instead of meeting them all at once, you will move from interviewer to interviewer. You may be asked similar questions from each interviewer, and it's okay to repeat your answer to each interviewer. Therefore it's okay to ask some of the same questions to different interviewers to hear their different perspectives.

**Peer Group** – A peer group interview is often included as part of a round robin interview, so that you will have the opportunity to meet with some of your potential coworkers. These individuals will evaluate your "fit" with the existing team. This is a great opportunity to learn about the team and the organization from a group of your potential peers.

**Rollins Campus Recruitment** – On-campus interviews are scheduled by organizations through the Office of Career Development. The interviews are held on campus, but otherwise are the same as other forms of interviews. These interviews generally serves as the first interview and is then followed by a second-round of onsite interviews, if you are selected from the first round.

# Interview Attire

## Dress To Impress

When going on an interview, it is recommended that you dress professionally. If in doubt, err on the side of dressing better than you think might be necessary. It is said that 70% of a first impression is a result of appearance and body language. You want your overall appearance to express professionalism. Realize that each organization may have different expectations as to how employees are to dress on the job. However, since you are unaware of these organizational differences, it is always wise to choose professional attire.

The main Emory University Career Center also offers a professional clothing closet allowing you to check-out clothing to use for a career fair or other professional attire events. Visit the main Emory Career Center from 8:30am – 4:00pm during the Fall and Spring Semesters and bring your student ID with you. There is no fee to use the clothing, however you are required to dry clean the garments before returning them to the clothing closet. The Emory Career Center is located on main campus in the B. Jones Center on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor located at 200 Dowman Drive.

# The Interview Process

## Stage 1: Greeting

When you arrive, remember to be polite to everyone, even the person that greets you. The greeting includes meeting the interviewers and spending a few minutes developing rapport. When the interviewer approaches, you should stand, make eye contact, and smile while shaking hands. You should wait to take your seat until instructed to do so. Be aware that the interviewer(s) might engage you in a bit of small talk before getting down to the serious questions.

## Stage 2: Employer Questioning

Employer questioning will take up the bulk of the interview time. This is when you will be asked questions about your background, skills, experiences, and your motivation in the position and the organization

## Stage 3: Candidate Questioning

After you are questioned, you will be asked if you have any questions. You should always have questions – it demonstrates your interest in the position and the research you've done in preparation for the interview. Once you finish your questions, the interviewer should tell you the timeline and next steps in the interview process, but if they do not, it is fine to ask about the next steps and interview timeline.

## Stage 4: Closing

At the close of the interview, it is appropriate to indicate your enthusiasm for the position, and it is fine to request contact emails so that you may follow-up with your thank you message. You should leave the interview with another firm handshake and a smile, and if it is a virtual interview, smile and end the interview with something like, "I hope you have a wonderful day."

# Interview Questions

Several questions will be asked of you that are geared towards getting to know you, your background and experiences, and your goals for the future. Be prepared to expand on any item on your resume involving your work experience, skillsets you've utilized, and volunteer activities.

The employer is looking for information on your skills, abilities and purpose for pursuing this work. Questions will focus on your past, present and future self. Even though some questions may be more general in nature, feel free to give answers with specific examples to illustrate your points.

Typically, the interview will start with a question along the lines of "Tell me about yourself." This is not an opportunity to recite your entire autobiography, nor is it a time to just talk about your graduate school experience. Relate your professional and academic story to the interviewers in such a way that they understand the reasons WHY you are pursuing your MPH degree and why you are excited about the opportunity and their organization..

## Additional typical questions you may receive include:

- Why did you choose to study public health?
- What are your greatest strengths/weakness?
- What technical skills do you possess?
- What would your last boss say about you?
- How do you like to be managed?
- What are your career goals?
- What do you like most/least about your current/previous job?

## Tips For Answering Traditional Interview Questions

**Strengths** – Focus more on the hard skills requested in each job description (these are objective, such as technical skills, vs. subjective, such as "hard worker"). Provide at least 2-3 hard skills and perhaps at least 1 soft skill like your "communication skills," remembering to give context behind how you developed your skills.

**Weaknesses** – Do not say that you have none, this question is to assess your self-awareness. However, try not to pick a weakness that is listed in the job description. For example, if the job description states the candidate must be able to multi-task, it would not be advisable to state you cannot multi-task as that is a requirement of the job. However, we all have weaknesses. It is okay and appropriate to express a weakness as long as you are taking steps to improve in that area, and that it will not affect your job performance. An example might be public speaking. You can state that you are gaining more experience in public speaking because of presentations in your coursework at Rollins, and that you are becoming more confident and effective with your presentations.

**How you like to be managed** – Keep the tone positive, stating what you do like instead of saying what you don't like. For example, you can say "I prefer clear goals and expectations and open lines of communication with my supervisor to make sure I'm on track to accomplish our goals."

**Career goals** – When asked about your career goals, try to relate your career goals to the realm and the organization is possible so that the interviewer knows you are truly interested. If you state career goals that are completed unrelated to the type of work you are interviewing for, the interviewer may question whether you will be worth investing the time and money to train you for job.

**Salary** – Ideally you will not ask about salary until you are made an offer because that is the time you have the most negotiation power. However, if you are asked during the interview process what your desired salary range is, it is best to state you are negotiable and that what is most important to you is the impact you can have and the knowledge and skills you can contribute and gain within the organization. Also, if the interviewer does not accept this answer and asks you a second time what your desired salary is for the position, you do need to provide a range. So make sure you have done some research on the role and have an idea of the typical salary ranges. See our "Salary Guide" for more detailed information on how to negotiate your salary

## BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Behavioral-based interview questions are the most common type of interview. These questions typically begin with phrases such as “Tell me about a time...”, “Give me a specific example of...”, or “Describe a situation where...” They consist of very specific questions about past behavior, which are typically followed up with more probing questions. You will be asked in detail about different topics and to describe the context and the actions you took during specific situations. This allows the interviewer to understand your thought processes and assess how you will react and handle different situations if you are hired for the position.

It is possible to prepare for these types of questions as they tend to center around several themes, including demonstrations of leadership/initiative, teamwork, dealing with conflict, failure, goal-setting, communication, analytical skills, creativity, decision making, flexibility, and commitment, to name a few. You should have examples demonstrating these qualities, and be sure to vary your examples (e.g. don't take them all from just one area of your life) and try to use fairly recent example, within the last 2-3 years if possible.

Prior to interviewing, review the position qualifications. Identify specific examples from your past experiences that illustrate the skills or attributes required in the job description. For example, if the job description states that the employer is looking for someone with initiative, think of an example from a previous job, class, or volunteer/club organization that provides an example of when you demonstrated initiative. The most important part of your answer are your behaviors (actions you took) because they believe you will take those same actions in the future.

You might also want to think of three accomplishments you are proud of in general, as each example you come up with could easily answer any number of interview questions. For instance, your story about fundraising for your student organization might demonstrate motivating others, problem solving, leadership, and initiative. As a result, it could be used for any of these behavioral interview questions. With practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of examples to respond to a number of different behavioral questions. Review your previous jobs, involvement in student organizations, roles on team projects, etc. to help you think of your examples or stories. Then practice telling them in a detailed but concise manner.

## THE S.T.A.R METHOD

We advocate using the S.T.A.R. Method when framing your responses to behavioral-based interview questions. The S.T.A.R. Method is a way of answering resume-based interview questions that provides interviewers with clear, concrete and concise answers. Interview questions that are answered in the S.T.A.R. Method get to the heart of what a candidate ACTUALLY did in a previous work experience.

S.T.A.R. answers should typically be no more than 1-2 minutes long, and delivered with energy and enthusiasm about a real experience you have had (preference is to describe a work/internship-related experience, but it does not have to be one, as long as it describes a relevant skill or behavior, so if the best example is from a volunteer or club organization, feel free to use that as your example. You also need to practice your answers out loud, to ensure it flows well and that you clearly state the “Actions” you took and so you don't go over 2 minutes.

# THE S.T.A.R Method Explained

## Use the S.T.A.R. Method to frame your responses to behavioral-based questions:

**Situation** - Describe the situation in detail while being concise and straightforward. Make sure to give enough detail so that the interviewer can understand the situation at hand. Pretend you're talking to a friend – don't start in the middle of the story and don't assume they've read your resume.

**Task** - Detail what your task or obstacle was (even in a group setting).

**Action** - Detail what your actions were to complete the task or overcome the obstacle.

**Result** - Detail what the result of your action was and the outcome of the situation

## Sample Response using The S.T.A.R Method

**Question:** Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone difficult on a team and how you overcame that obstacle.

**Situation** – “I was assigned to work with a group of 4 other students on a project for a Health Management Course class.”

**Task** – “Our assignment was to conduct a cash flow analysis of a local clinic.”

**Action** – “One of the group members failed to show up to our first weekly meeting and didn't notify anyone in the group. Her part of the project was critical, and I could see that the other members were concerned about her not showing up. I told the group I would reach out to her after our session to make sure everything was ok and emphasize to her how critical her role is to the success as a group.

I emailed the group member after our session and received a reply the next day. It turned out that her grandmother had just passed away and she was really struggling. I asked if there was anything I could do and she said it would be great if we could give her a few more days to complete her portion. I said of course and that we could actually get together if she would like, prior to our next meeting, and I could help with her portion of the project and give her an update on the group's progress.

**Result** – She seemed very appreciative and attended all of our future meetings and did an excellent job on her portion of the project. We ended up receiving an A as a group on the assignment.

## Additional Questions to utilize the S.T.A.R Method

- Describe a time when you had to work with someone difficult on a team and how you overcame the obstacle.
- Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. What did you learn?
- Could you describe a time when you set a goal and were able to meet it?
- Tell us about a time you experienced conflict with a team member and how did you handle it.
- Describe a time when you received negative feedback and how you handled it.

For more examples, simply search the internet for “behavioral based interview questions” and you will discover hundreds! <sup>7</sup>

# Interview Elimination Factors

1. Not being prepared for the interview - failure to have a knowledge of the role and the skills required stated in the job description, and failure to conduct research on the company.
2. Failure to express enthusiasm for the job and the organization.
3. Poor eye contact and body language, not expressing confidence in your abilities.
4. Vague answers with little context or detail as to how you developed a skill set.
5. Asking about salary in the first interview. You only discuss salary if the recruiter/ or interviewer ask you what salary you are looking to make, at which time it is appropriate to discuss salary.
6. Career Goals that are completely unrelated to the job/realm.
7. Expressing negative views around former bosses, jobs, school, etc.
8. Not having questions about the job and the organization when you are asked, "What questions do you have for us?"

## Great Questions To Ask The Interviewers

It is critical that you have several questions prepared at the end of an interview in order to demonstrate your interest and learn more about the role and the organization. Below are some standard sample questions you may ask. It is a good idea to generate more targeted questions as you do your research on the organization and position.

### **Example Questions to ask the Interviewer:**

- Q: What do you hope the new hire can accomplish in the first 6 months of the role?
- Q: Could you describe some of the projects I would be assisting your team with over the next 6-12 months?
- Q: For the idea candidate you are searching for to fill this role, what are the 2-3 critical skills or abilities they should possess to be successful?
- Q: How will this role interact within the team and how will this person help the team be successful?



# Interview Tips

## INTERVIEW TIPS

### Tips for before the interview

- ✓ Research the organization. This will help you formulate targeted questions to ask, and will prevent you from inquiring about easily discernible information.
- ✓ Research the interviewers, too! When scheduling an interview, ask for the names and roles of all the individuals with whom you'll be meeting/speaking. Use LinkedIn to learn more about their role in the organization.
- ✓ Thoroughly evaluate the job description to analyze how your skills and experiences related to the job
- ✓ Practice your answers with friends, record it with your phone, and request a mock interview with our office.
- ✓ Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of references in a professional-looking portfolio.
- ✓ Focus on things you can control – it's ok to be a little nervous, just focus on expressing your enthusiasm for the role and the organization, and have examples ready to describe how you've gained the skills and traits being requested in the job description.

### Tips for during the interview

- ✓ Stay positive and enthusiastic about the job even if a question doesn't go well, don't let it mess up the rest of the interview.
- ✓ Speak clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a few seconds to collect your thoughts.
- ✓ Don't say negative things about other people or previous positions.
- ✓ Listen closely to the questions being asked. It's ok to ask if they can repeat a question to make sure you understand the question.
- ✓ Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- ✓ Taking notes during an in-person is acceptable – simply ask first if they mind. However, do not “fiddle” with your pen or the notepad because that is very distracting. Put your pen down when you are not taking notes.

### Tips for after the interview

- ✓ Thank the interviewer and ask about the next step in the interview process.
- ✓ Ask for an email so that you can send a thank you email message. Send it within 24 hours.
- ✓ Reflect on what you did well during the interview and what you could have done better so you can improve in the future.

## THANK YOU EMAIL MESSAGE

- ✓ Within 24 hours of an interview, you should send a thank you email message to the interviewer(s). In the email message, reinforce what excites you about the role (you can mention something you learned from your interview discussion) and express enthusiasm for the organization and the next steps of the interview process.
- ✓ Typically, you will write to the main person who has been communicating with you throughout the interview process, and if it was a panel/team interview, you can request that your message be share with the panel/team.
- ✓ The message should be shorter in length, usually only a paragraph or less, because you don't want a long message that takes up too much of the interviewer's time.

# Virtual Interview Tips



Many interviews are being performed virtually, especially for an initial screening interview, which could be performed via systems like Zoom or by phone depending on the employer's preference.

Prepare for a virtual interview just as you would for a regular interview. Do not make the mistake of thinking that an interview is somehow less formal or important just because it is virtual. On a Zoom/Skype interview, you should still look professional as if you were in-person.

Always practice ahead of time with someone to work on speaking and looking right into the camera. This will also give you an opportunity to test your interview outfit and background to make sure they look visually appealing on your screen.

Choosing an adequate location and adjusting environment settings are a must prior to your Zoom/Skype interview. Search for a quiet room/location with no distractions. Also, make sure to test your equipment and connection ahead of time. Confirm that your environment and connections are appropriate and stable. Be sure to also test the microphone and webcam, so you may make volume and camera positioning adjustments ahead of time. If your built-in microphone creates echo, try an external microphone for better sound. Arrange your chair to create the optimal "screen-shot" of yourself, preferably with your head and shoulders in the screen. Be conscious of what's behind you on the walls and on screen, make sure it's not distracting. A neutral color blank wall works best. Lastly, experiment with the lighting prior the interview; you don't want to appear as a dark shadow during the interview. Lighting should be positioned in front of the screen, shining at you, not behind you. Furthermore, it is important to eliminate all distractions to minimize interruptions in the interview such as closing additional browsers, reminders, and windows with running programs on your computer.

During your interview, dress professionally. This will put you in the mindset of a formal and professional setting. Make sure the interviewer also has your phone number ahead of time in case of a connection failure. Don't over-use hand gestures and maintain proper body posture. Despite our natural tendency to look at the interviewer on the screen to make eye contact, make sure you primarily are looking toward the camera. If you find the image of yourself distracting, cover it. Lastly, remember to be friendly and smile during the interview. Be sure to thank the interviewer for their time and ask the interviewer for their contact information for follow-ups or any additional questions that you may have

# Tips For International Students

## Cultural norms for interviewing in the U.S.

Interviewing can often be even more confusing to international students, as cultural norms vary from country to country. Below are some additional tips that may assist you in gaining comfort with the process.

## Physical Appearance

**Eye contact** - In the U.S., eye contact is expected and shows confidence.

**Handshake** - Should be firm to show confidence.

**Posture** - Posture should be relaxed, but not slouched. This again demonstrates confidence and capability.

**Punctuality** – For in-person interviews, you should plan to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to your interview. This will allow you time to find the location in a relaxed manner. Make a good impression on the individual who greets you, and demonstrate your eagerness for the position. For virtual interviews, be available at least 5 minutes prior to the start time.

**Attire** - Appropriate attire supports your image as a professional candidate who takes the interview process seriously. Professional attire is always the safest bet.

## Personal Qualities

Applicants in the U.S. are expected to be able to:

- ✓ Promote their own skills and abilities. This is not to be taken as boasting, rather it is exhibiting confidence in your abilities based on past experiences.
- ✓ Be aware of their goals, strengths, and weaknesses – U.S. employers do not want to hear from an applicant that they are willing to do anything, although they do want someone who will have the flexibility to pitch in when needed. Employers are looking to hire someone who wants to do the job for which they are interviewing. They are not looking for someone who applied just because there happened to be an opening. You must be able to explain what interests you about the job and why.
- ✓ Effectively manage their time.
- ✓ Work well with teams and have good communication skills

## In preparation for an interview,

Study commonly asked interview questions. Utilize the S.T.A.R format to write answers to those questions. Record yourself with your phone and practice your responses in front of a mirror as well as with friends. Also, be sure to consider scheduling a mock interview with the Office of Career Development to receive feedback on interview skills.