

Interview Preparation Guide



ROLLINS
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC
HEALTH

OFFICE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

PHONE: (404) 727-9957

E-MAIL: rsphcareerdev@emory.edu

WEBSITE: <http://www.sph.emory.edu/careers/current-students/index.html>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?	3
II. INTERVIEW FORMATS	3
III. INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS	4
IV. SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW	5
V. INTERVIEW ATTIRE	6
VI. INTERVIEW KNOCK-OUT FACTORS	7
VII. THE INTERVIEW PROCESS	7
VIII. TRADITIONAL/SELF-AWARENESS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	8
IX. BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	9
X. UTILIZING THE S.T.A.R. METHOD	9
XI. APPLICANT QUESTIONING	10
XII. TIPS FOR BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE INTERVIEW	11
XIII. A NOTE ON THANK YOU NOTES	11
XIV. PHONE INTERVIEWS	12
XV. SKYPE INTERVIEWS	13
XVI. SPECIAL TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	14

WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

An interview is a meeting between an employer and candidate, or prospective employee, to determine if the candidate matches the desired skills and credentials for a given position or for an organization as a whole. Interviews are also used to assess whether a candidate's personality would be a good fit with the "culture" of an organization and to ascertain a candidate's career goals. Throughout the course of an interview, a recruiter ultimately seeks to determine:

- what a job candidate wants,
- whether the person can and will perform the job to their satisfaction, and
- whether the candidate will be compatible with the existing team.

INTERVIEW FORMATS

There are many different interview formats used in the United States, but overall, there is a similar pattern and a shared set of cultural expectations involved. Below is a summary of each interview type.

Informational Interview – Informational interviews are sought not to obtain a job, but rather to learn more about a field or company and to build your network of contacts. Further information for *informational interviews* is on Page 4.

Screening – A screening interview is sometimes conducted for available positions. This interview is typically done by a member of Human Resources. It may be conducted in person or more often over the phone, and is used to determine if you meet the *minimum* requirements listed for the job or internship.

One-on-One – This is the type of interview with which most people are familiar. It is typically conducted by the person authorized to do the hiring, called the hiring manager. This first interview will assess your skills and your knowledge as they relate to the job.

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 at the same time. 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 that it's completely appropriate to maintain eye contact with all members of the panel.

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. It's therefore ok to ask some of the same questions of 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 you on your "fit" with the existing team. This is a great opportunity to learn about the culture of an organization and the work environment from a group of your potential peers.

Meal – In business environments, job candidates are sometimes invited to either a preliminary or a follow-up interview involving a meal or social event. This interview is designed to assess how you handle yourself in a social situation. It's important that you carry yourself professionally and have excellent table manners even if the event is considered casual. If it's a sit-down dinner, you should select your meal carefully. And always stay away from alcohol even if others are partaking!

Campus Recruitment – On-campus interviews are scheduled through the Office of Career Services and are held on campus, but otherwise are the same as other forms of interviews. This interview generally serves as a first or screening interview, leading to a second onsite interview should you impress the recruiters. Please review our [On-Campus Interview Policies and Procedures](#).

Follow-up – Some positions require more than one interview. A follow-up interview is often similar to an initial interview, whatever the style, but usually longer. It can be ½ to two full days. You might have several one-on-one interviews, or a combination of one-on-one and panel interviews. Lunch or dinner is often a part of the second interview process. You will probably meet your immediate supervisor, human resource professionals and coworkers. You might also meet with higher level members of the organization.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Why conduct an informational interview?

Informational interviews can be considered a cross between networking and interviewing. Unlike networking, you will have a scheduled meeting with someone. But unlike job interviewing, you will initiate the meeting (rather than the employer), and the purpose is not to get a job – the purpose is to learn more about a given field or profession, and how to best prepare to market yourself and to develop the skills needed to succeed.

There are several good reasons to conduct informational interviews, including:

- ✓ To explore careers and clarify your career goal
- ✓ To expand your professional network
- ✓ To build confidence for your job interviews by practicing discussing your skills and responding to questions in a low-stress environment
- ✓ To access the most up-to-date career information, such as industry trends, company needs, and desired skill sets
- ✓ To identify your professional strengths and weaknesses, including having your resume reviewed

Studies indicate that "informal contacts," such as those made through informational interviews, account for almost 75% of all successful job searches. That's why informational interviewing is the ultimate networking technique.

Steps in conducting an informational interview

1. Identify a position/field of interest to you
2. Identify potential contacts for interviews through professors, colleagues and others you know in classes, conferences, meetings, etc. and set up appointments. Start with the people you already know. Then search other resources such as professional organization directories and websites.
3. Always be polite in introducing yourself – send a cover letter explaining why you are writing and asking for a few moments of their time. Remember to include a statement asking that if they don't have time to talk, if they can refer you to someone else who might be of assistance. Your letter should include:
 - A brief introduction about yourself
 - Why you are writing to this individual
 - A brief statement of your interests or experiences in the person's field, organization or location
 - Why you would like to meet/talk. Be straightforward in explaining why you are seeking information and/or advice from him/her.
 - The last paragraph of the letter should always include a sentence about how and when you will contact this person again.

Most of the time, your prospective interviewee will be more than willing to take 20-30 minutes to answer your questions. Sometimes the person will want to talk over the phone, but often he or she will invite you to his or her workplace. If you can, choose to visit his/her workplace because you'll learn more and make a stronger connection with the person.

Sample Letter Requesting an Informational Interview

April 20, 2007

*John Doe
American Cancer Society
1599 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329*

Dear Mr. Doe:

I am a graduate student at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. I plan to graduate with a Master of Public Health in behavioral science and health education in May, and have focused much of my studies on examining behavioral risk factors for cancer. Last summer, I held an internship in the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at the CDC, where I engaged in research on the relationships between nutrition, physical activity, and cancer prevention.

Due to my interests in cancer prevention and control, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you briefly to discuss your career path and outlook on the field. I would also enjoy hearing about the challenges you face in your position, as well as strategies that you have found to be effective in your work and the skills you think are necessary to succeed. I am especially interested in your views regarding the potential impact of current research findings in the areas of obesity and physical activity to the future of cancer prevention efforts. Any further insights you have would be greatly appreciated.

Attached please find my resume for more information on my background. I will contact your office next week to see if there might be a mutually convenient time for us to meet. If you are unable to assist me at this time, perhaps you could suggest a colleague who might be able to answer my questions. I can be reached by phone at (404)555-3333 or by email at ssstudent@sph.emory.edu. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Suzanna Student

4. Be prepared! Research the organization and the person with whom you'll be speaking. The more you know, the better you'll be able to formulate questions pertaining to the organization and job. The more knowledge you have, the more confident you will feel about your ability to communicate effectively.

Potential questions include:

- How would you describe the work environment/corporate culture?
- What kind of experiences – paid or unpaid – would you encourage people to have when pursuing a career in your field?

- What educational preparation do you recommend?
- What types of strategies are important for success in your field?
- What is the most effective job search method in your industry?
- What are typical entry-level job types, titles and functions?
- What skills/characteristics do you think contribute to success in this field?
- What helped or led you to get into this line of work?
- Do you know of anyone who is also interested in [insert interest here]? Would it be alright for me to contact him/her?

5. Send a thank you note!

Tips for success

Don't mix informational interviewing with job seeking. Employers will grant informational interviews when they firmly trust that you will not hit them up for a job. The minute you begin trying to get a job, the employer will feel misled.

Should you discover a job that you do want to apply for during the course of the interview, wait until the informational interview is over. The next day, call the employer and tell your contact that the informational interview not only confirmed your interest in the field, but also made you aware of a position for which you would like to formally apply.

Whether it turns out you are interested in the company/field or not, always be sure to send a thank you note.

INTERVIEW ATTIRE

When going on an interview, whether informational or for a position, you should dress professionally. This also applies for attending any events where you may be networking with those in your field.

Dressing nicely and appropriately is a compliment to the person you meet and shows that you take the interview seriously. If in doubt, err on the side of dressing better than you think might be necessary. Even if you are aware that employees of an organization dress casually on the job, dress up for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer.

Attire should be conservative, meaning neat, clean, and understated. Clothing should be fresh and pressed. A two-piece matched suit in a dark color such as navy blue is always the best and safest choice. Do not wear anything too tight or low-cut.

Here are more things to remember:

- Shoes should not have scuffs, and heels should be low.
- For women, jewelry and makeup should be minimal.
- For men, no jewelry except watch and wedding ring (if applicable).
- Make sure that your briefcase or purse is not tattered and matches your clothing.
- Be sure not to put on too much perfume or aftershave. Your scent should not linger in their office!
- Gargle and brush your teeth.
- Use deodorant/antiperspirant.
- Fingernails should be clean and short. If using polish, choose a neutral or clear color.
- Hair should be combed and neat. Be careful not to play with you hair during the interview.

The Office of Career Services is happy to review your resume attire to determine its appropriateness. Please schedule an appointment with us in advance, and either wear or bring in your clothing.

INTERVIEW KNOCK-OUT FACTORS

1. Lack of knowledge or skills necessary to do the job - not qualified
2. Poor personal appearance (makes a poor first impression)
3. Not prepared for the interview - failure to conduct research on the company
4. No confidence or poise (fails to look the interviewer in the eye, no enthusiasm)
5. Unable to express ideas clearly (gives vague, evasive or no answer to questions)
6. Only interest in job is the amount of money the position pays
7. Poorly defined short (3-5 yrs) and/or long (5-10 yrs) term career goals
8. Asks few/poor questions about the job
9. Displays little or no real interest/enthusiasm in the company/field (job shopping)
10. Unhappy/ unpleasant personality (dislike former jobs, unhappy personal relationships, dissatisfaction with collegiate experience)

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 and experience, your past performance, and your interest in the position. Further explanation of these questions can be found on Page 8.

Stage 3: Applicant 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. You should always close by asking about the next steps in the interview process.

Stage 4: Closing

At the close of the interview, it is appropriate to indicate your enthusiasm for the position and to request business cards from the interviewer(s) so that you may follow-up with a thank-you note. You should leave with another firm handshake and a smile.

TRADITIONAL/SELF-AWARENESS 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, GPA, extracurricular involvement, etc.

The employer is looking for information on your skills, abilities and willingness to learn. Questions will focus on your past, present and future self. Even though some questions may be general, feel free to give answers with 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 life story to the interviewer in such a way that he or she comes to understand why you got to be there today.

Other typical questions you may receive include:

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

Tips for answering sticky traditional interview questions

Strengths – Focus on hard skills (these are objective, such as technical skills, vs. subjective, such as "hard worker"), and remember that you can provide more than one.

Weaknesses – Do not list anything that could impinge upon your job performance for the position at hand, and always state how you are addressing the weakness. Do not say that you have none – these questions are asked to assess your self-awareness. It is ok and appropriate to express a weakness as long as you are taking steps to improve in that area and it will not affect your job performance.

How you like to be managed – Keep the tone positive, stating what you do like instead of what you don't - e.g. "I prefer clear expectations and then the autonomy to carry out tasks" rather than "I don't like to be micromanaged."

Career goals – Make sure they relate to the job/organization at hand.

Salary – Do not provide a number if asked! Compensation issues should be delayed to the end of the interviewing cycle. Providing a salary requirement prior can reduce your negotiating power when considering an offer. If asked, here are some alternate options:

- You would be pleased with a salary commensurate with the skills you have to offer the organization.
- You need to learn more about the responsibilities the position entails.
- You need to do more research on salaries in the field and/or that part of the country.
- Your salary requirements would be dependent on several other aspects of the position, such as room for advancement, benefits package, etc.

BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavioral-based interview questions are becoming extremely popular, if not the norm. 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 what you did, thought, and felt in key situations as if you were reliving them. This allows the interviewer to understand your thought processes and decision-making skills.

Preparing for behavioral-based questions

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 examples.

Prior to interviewing, review the position qualifications. Identify specific examples from your past experience 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 a situation from a previous job or school in which you demonstrated initiative. The most important part of your answer is the behaviors illustrated, not necessarily the result.

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.

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 2 minutes long, and delivered with energy and enthusiasm about a real experience you have had (preference is to describe a work-related experience, but it does not have to be one, as long as it describes a relevant skill or behavior). You also need to practice your answers out loud, to ensure continuity and that you don't go over 2 minutes.

Use the S.T.A.R. Method to frame your responses to most behavioral-based interview 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 to a Behavioral-Based Question Using the STAR 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 my financial analysis 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 weekly meetings or respond to e-mails. Her part of the project was critical, and I could see that the other members were getting frustrated and stressed out.

First, I suggested that we as a group divide up her portion of the project. Although this resulted in extra work for all of us, the burden would not be as great that way. The next time I saw the group member in class, I approached her to ask her if everything was ok. "

Result – "It turned out that her car had broken down and she was dealing with an ill family member. I updated her on the progress of the team and offered to give her a ride to our next meeting. She seemed very appreciative and did start coming to our meetings thereafter. The other team members were understanding, and we ended up receiving an A on the assignment."

Examples of behavioral-based interview questions

- 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?
- Describe a time when you set a goal and were able to meet it.
- Describe a time in which you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- 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!

APPLICANT QUESTIONING

It is critical that you have questions at the end of an interview, in order to demonstrate your interest. 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.

Sample Questions for the Hiring Manager:

- What will be the priorities for the new hire in the first three months?
- Is this a new or existing position?
- What are some of the department's ongoing and anticipated special projects?
- Describe your ideal candidate.
- Describe a typical day.
- What do you expect to be the most challenging aspects of the position?
- What are the possibilities for professional growth and promotion?

Sample Questions for Human Resources:

- Are employees encouraged and given the opportunity to express their ideas and concerns?
- What do employees seem to like best and least about the company?
- What is the rate of employee turnover?
- How large is the department where the opening exists?
- Why is the position open?
- Does the job involve travel?
- What type of orientation or training do new employees receive?
- How often are performance reviews given?

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 the internet to find out more about their role in the organization, areas of interest, publications, etc.
- ✓ Analyze your skills and how they relate to the job
- ✓ Rehearse answers
- ✓ Plan your attire
- ✓ Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of references in a professional-looking portfolio
- ✓ Focus on things you can control – don't think of it as a competition, just focus on putting your best foot forward

*Tips for **during** the interview*

- ✓ Be positive and enthusiastic about the job!
- ✓ BE YOURSELF!!!
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts.
- ✓ Do not use any negative language or say negative things about other people or previous positions.
- ✓ Be honest. Don't try to cover up mistakes – focus on what you learned from them.
- ✓ Listen, and use body language to show interest.
- ✓ Smile, nod, and give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
- ✓ Ask intelligent questions that demonstrate the fact that you have done your research.

- ✓ Do not ask about salary.
- ✓ Taking notes during an in-person is acceptable – simply ask first if they mind. Notes can be especially useful if you have a poor memory, and can be used when preparing your thank you notes.

*Tips for **after** the interview*

- ✓ Thank the interviewer and ask about the next step in the interview process
- ✓ Ask for business card so that you can send a thank you note
- ✓ Send the note via mail or e-mail within 24 hours
- ✓ Reflect on what went right and what went wrong during the interview – write down notes for future reference

A NOTE ON THANK YOU NOTES

Within 24 hours of an interview, you should send a thank you note to the interviewer(s). In the note, reinforce your interest in the position. Take the opportunity to highlight something that was positive from the interview, or restate something that you learned from the discussion.

E-mailed thank you notes are perfectly acceptable. Mailed thank you notes can be handwritten or typed. If a company is very conservative, typing the thank you note is a safer route. You can write to all the people with whom you interviewed, or you can identify the decision-maker and write to him or her, requesting that he or she share your thanks with the rest of the team. The latter is more pertinent to a second interview.

There are plenty of sample thank you letters on the internet. Just remember to keep it short and simple – one or two paragraphs in length.

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Often you will be faced with a phone interview as a screener to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. While you're actively job searching, it's important to be prepared for a phone interview on a moment's notice. You never know when a recruiter or a networking contact might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. This also means that the greeting on your answering machine or voicemail should be professional – no music or silly messages.

Generally, the goal of a phone interview is to secure an in-person meeting. On occasion, you may end up interviewing solely via phone if you are being considered for an out-of-state or country position. Whenever possible, recruiters want to lay their eyes on you before rendering a final decision.

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Do not make the mistake of thinking that an interview is somehow less formal if you are on the phone. While you can wear your PJ's on the call, some candidates prefer to dress in professional attire so that they can "feel the part" and make sure that they project a professional image.

Make sure to speak slowly and enunciate. Watch your intonation and project enthusiasm. Smiling while on the phone can go a long way in demonstrating your eagerness for a position! Note that verbal tendencies such as saying "um" or "ah" are more noticeable on the phone, so try to keep them to a minimum. Don't feel you have to fill in the silences. If you've completed a response, but the interviewer hasn't asked his or her next question,

don't start babbling just to fill in airtime. Also feel free to pause after a question is asked if you need time to think, just ask for a moment or rephrase the question asked. Career Services is happy to conduct a mock interview with you over the phone from a neighboring office if you wish to get feedback on how you portray yourself on the phone.

One advantage of a phone interview is that you can have notes spread out in front of you to jog your memory and can take copious notes as the interviewer talks – just be sure not to shuffle papers around audibly. It is preferable to take a phone interview on a land line if possible, to allow for better reception and a decreased chance of dropped calls. Make sure you are in a quiet room, removed from any possible interference, and do not eat or chew gum, although you may want a glass of water nearby.

When finishing up, be sure to get contact information for all interviewers so that you can follow up with a thank-you note. Re-affirm your qualifications and express your interest in the job and the organization. Ask about next steps and say you would appreciate the opportunity to talk about the position further in person, if appropriate.

SKYPE INTERVIEWS

Skype interviews are becoming more and more popular among employers. Skype interviews enable a more diverse pool of applicants and are very inexpensive to implement. It decreases the cost of traveling for interviewers and interviewees. While the interview can be conducted in the comforts of your own home, there are a few things to keep in mind to ensure a successful interview.

A Skype interview is no different from a phone interview and an in-person interview. Before scheduling Skype interviews, review your online presence. Make sure your profile picture and user name are professional. This will be the interviewer's first and sometimes last impression of you. Familiarize yourself with the Skype program prior to the interview. 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, as they may read differently on screen.

Choosing an adequate location and adjusting environment settings are a must prior to your Skype interview. Search for a quiet room with little to no distraction at all and make sure to adjust the thermostat to a comfortable temperature. 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 reflective of your job position and professionalism. Lastly, position lighting in the most flattering form; you don't want to appear as a dark shadow during the interview. Lighting should be position 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, from head to toe. This will put you in the mindset of a formal and professional setting. The interviewer may also ask you to stand up or you may need to reposition your webcam or adjust the lighting, so you don't want to be caught off guard with pajama bottoms and a dress shirt. Furthermore, give the interviewer or staff your phone number ahead of time in case of a connection failure to proceed with a standard phone interview. Prevent over-use of hand gestures and maintain proper posture and body language. Although, it may be acceptable for hand gestures and movements in an in-person interview,

over-usage of hand gestures and body movements creates crowding on screen and make you look extremely busy. Despite our natural tendency to look at the interviewer on the screen to make eye contact, make sure you look at the camera instead of the screen. If you find the image of yourself distracting, cover it. Lastly, be engaging and remember to smile during the interview. Be sure to thank the interviewer for their time and ask interviewer for their contact information for follow-ups or any additional questions that you may have.

Use the aforementioned traditional methods to follow-up on an interview. Hand-written cards and emails are acceptable forms to thank them.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Cultural norms for interviewing in the U.S.

Interviewing can often be even more daunting 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* - You should plan to arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your appointment. This will allow you time to find the location in a relaxed fashion, make a good impression on the individual who greets you, and demonstrate your eagerness for the position.
- *Attire* - Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry in which you are trying to become employed. Your attire should always be conservative – a suit is best. You should always wear clothing appropriate to the position for which you aspire.

Personal Qualities

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

- ✓ Promote their own skills. This is not to be taken as boasting, rather it is exhibiting confidence in your abilities based on past performance.
- ✓ 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*.
- ✓ Communicate their needs and interests directly.
- ✓ Effectively manage their time.

Communication tips

If English is not your primary language, you may enhance your communication skills by:

- Talking and speaking up in class
- Making presentations
- Making friends and talking with Americans
- Taking communication courses for credit

- Attending workshops sponsored by the Office of Career Services and ISSP
- Joining and participating in multinational clubs
- Watching television
- Reading newspapers and academic publications

In preparation for an interview, study commonly asked interview questions, write answers to those questions, 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 Services to receive feedback on interview skills for traditional, telephone and Skype-style interviews.