

# INTERVIEW GUIDE



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

THE CAREER CENTER

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[Big Interview](#) is a free online training system that helps you practice and improve your interview technique and build your confidence.

## PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Looking to improve your **interview skills** and get feedback?  
Consider signing up for a mock interview!



Practice in-person, phone, or virtual interviews!

Sign up in NoleNetwork by selecting "appointments." Select a day/time and upload your résumé or personal statement.

# Prepare for an interview

## Know the organization

- Know what service or product it provides.
- Familiarize yourself with the mission, vision, and values.
- Research the size of the organization and organizational structure
- How much potential for advancement is there?
- Who are the organization's officers, administrators, etc.? Review their background and recent achievements.

## Know yourself

- Be able to talk about your short and long-term goals.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be able to demonstrate skills and knowledge you've gained from academic work and experience.
- Be able to talk about how you deal with challenges, conflicts or failure.
- Understand the type of work environment you thrive in.
- Know what qualities you're looking for in an employer.

## Communicate effectively

- Anticipate typical questions and prepare answers.
- Be able to discuss your résumé, experiences and accomplishments.
- Use specific examples when answering questions.
- Consider signing up for a **mock interview** to practice your interview skills out loud.
- Use **Big Interview** to record yourself answering interview questions.

## Do your research

The interview is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the organization to an employer. It is also an opportunity for you to learn whether your values align with that employer or institution.

## Learn about the organization

- **The organization's website & social media:** Gain knowledge on the corporate divisions, brand, and locations
- [Vault Top Ranked](#): Top 100 organizations by industry available in the Firsthand database on the Career Center website
- **Current news:** Check news sites for stories about the organization and industry, or use Google Alerts to notify you when they are in the news
- [GoinGlobal \(H1-B visas\)](#): Worldwide job and internships for more than 120 locations with H-1B visa search engine.
- [Glassdoor.com](#): View employee reviews as well as sample interview questions, salaries, etc.

## How does this organization align with your values?

- [Corporate Equality Index](#): National benchmarking tool on corporate policies, practices and benefits pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) employees.
- [Assessing an Organization's Diversity & Inclusion Commitment](#): The Career Center's resource page about evaluating an organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

## Researching salary

Research salary ranges by position, job level, and location.

- [NACE Salary Calculator](#)
- [OnetOnline Wages & Employment Trends](#)
- [Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates \(by geographic area\)](#)
- [Salary.com](#)
- [CareerOneStop Salary Finder](#)

# Plan for your interview

## Types of interviews



### Pre-recorded/timed video

These vary depending on the platform used, but you will be recording your answers to interview questions. It may be timed, or you could be given the opportunity to re-do your answer. Regardless, you should practice for a pre-recorded interview the same as you would for other types.



### Phone

Since the interviewer can't see your face, it's important to convey enthusiasm, sincerity and friendliness through your voice. Remember to speak clearly, and dressing professionally will boost your confidence.



### Video

Use a laptop, tablet or desktop, not cell phone. Make sure your camera angle is looking straight at you. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer and keep your hands in your lap to keep them still.



### In-person

Confirm the location in advance. Bring extra copies of your résumé in a padded portfolio.



### Presentation or performance

In some situations, especially academic settings, you may be asked to lecture or present in your area of expertise in addition to participating in other kinds of interviewing

## Before the interview

- Know the type of interview, and plan accordingly.
- Arrive on time or a little early, dressed appropriately in business professional for the industry.
- Know the types of questions that are common for the industry you're interviewing for and prepare to answer them.
- Prepare thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer. Make sure to not ask questions that can be easily searched online.
- Make sure all technology is working properly, and choose an appropriate location if interview is virtual or by phone.
- If traveling for an interview, confirm logistics regarding interview itinerary and travel costs. Pack light, and use carry-on luggage for interview outfit essentials.

## During the interview

- Make sure your cell phone is on silent and you've brought any requested documents.
- Answer the questions completely but don't become long – winded.
- Avoid discussing salary and benefits unless the employer brings it up.
- Smile and be authentic when answering questions.
- Make note of who you spoke with.

## After the interview

- Thank the interviewers for the interview opportunity.
- Send thank-you notes or emails to each interviewer, if possible, within 24 hours of the interview.
- Evaluate your interview. What did you do well? What could you improve upon? Did you like the organization? See page 4 for more.
- Keep a record of next steps.
- Follow up as necessary and stay positive!

# Sample interview questions

Practice answering different types of questions out loud in front of a mirror, with a friend or family member, on a video recording, or utilizing a platform like [Big Interview](#).

If availability permits, you can schedule a mock interview with your Career Liaison or other trained Career Center staff, tailored to your individual occupational area, industry, or graduate school interview. Access [NoleNetwork](#) to search for available mock interview appointments or contact your Career Liaison.

## General questions

- What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

## Behavior-based questions (assess ability to problem solve and produce results)

- Describe an example where you worked as part of a team.
- Tell me about a time when you stepped up and took a leadership position without being asked.
- Describe a time when you utilized organization tools to keep yourself on-task.
- Tell me about a time when you motivated others.
- Describe a situation where you included others in a task that would have been easier to do by yourself.

## Emotional Intelligence (assess ability to handle stress or regulate emotions or expressions)

- Tell me about a time when you felt unfairly criticized by your superior.
- Tell me about a time when you tried and failed.
- Describe a situation when you underwent significant stress. How did you cope?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker or team member. What did you do?
- Describe a situation when something was better left unsaid. How did you make that determination?

## Stress/Case Questions (assess technical knowledge and how well you perform under pressure or in stressful situations)

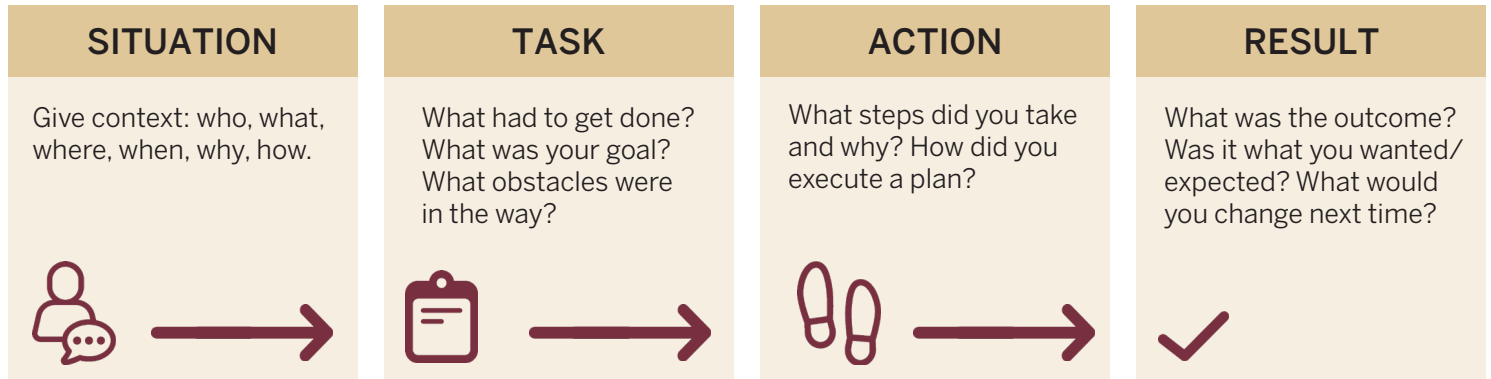
- How many VW Bugs would fit inside a 747 aircraft carrier?
- You own a large chain of banks. You are tasked with determining whether or not it would be best to continue supplying personnel to staff each banking location or to employ an ATM option for your customers. What do you decide to do?
- You are the leader of a seven-person team on a project with a deadline fast approaching. You have noticed the productivity of your team members declining over the past week and suspect that morale is dropping. What do you do?

## Atypical Questions (assess and observe your personality and thought process)

- What college subjects did you like best? Like least? Why?
- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- Fork, knife, or spoon. Which do you pick?
- You are lost in the forest close to nightfall. The temperature is rapidly dropping. You know there is a town close by, but you are unsure of the actual distance. You have a compass, a flashlight, a canvas tarp, a lighter, and a canteen of water. You only have the strength to carry two of these items with you as you attempt to find civilization before the temperature drops too low for survival. Which do you take?

# The S.T.A.R. Method

The S.T.A.R. Method is a simple formula to use when answering behavior-based questions.



**Using the S.T.A.R. Method: Describe a time when you showed initiative on the job.**

- Situation:** “My supervisor was given the task to plan and present a team building workshop for our entire staff. She was already overwhelmed so I offered to do some research create some ideas.”
- Task:** “I began researching team building workshops online and found some great ideas that I thought would work. I was also able to connect with a colleague who had attended a similar workshop recently who shared his thoughts on his experience.”
- Action:** “Using what I learned in my research and speaking with my colleague, I created an agenda with activities for the entire workshop and presented it to my supervisor.”
- Result:** “My supervisor was so impressed that she used my exact agenda and activities without making any changes.”

## Reflecting on your interview

Make each interview a learning experience. As soon as possible after the interview, reflect and write down what you have learned. Ask yourself:

- Was I well prepared and able to integrate my research into my responses?
- Did I speak clearly and articulately, demonstrate enthusiasm and avoid verbal fillers?
- Did I sit in an upright and natural manner and use appropriate eye contact, and hand gestures?
- Did I connect my background and skill sets including transferable skills, to the position and/or industry?
- Did I prepare appropriate follow-up questions for the employer?
- Which questions were most challenging and why?
- What did I do well?
- How can I improve for my next interview?

Evaluating your interview performance is also a way to keep track of important information about each interview such as who interviewed you, and any items that may come up in a second interview.

# Case and technical interviews

## Case interviews

A case interview is an interactive way for an employer to test a candidate's knowledge on industrial trends, logical but creative solutions, and ways to implement change. This is most common in the business and information technology industries. Although there is generally no correct answer, you are expected to ask the interviewer logical questions regarding the case, then make a thorough recommendation to solve the problem.

The characteristics of case interviews include:

- Situation-based interview questions
- No right or wrong answer
- Assessing logical and creative-based critical thinking skills

These questions can include real-world problems that the company is working/has worked on. For example: You may be asked to analyze a decline in profits for a particular service or resource, identifying why that would be the case, and offering recommendations and implementations on addressing this issue.

## Technical interviews

Companies utilize the technical interview to assess specific technical knowledge required for the occupation and the organization. This type of interview assesses a candidate's problem solving skills, reasoning abilities, and technological skill level. Interview components can include at-home challenges, phone screenings, in-person questions and assessments that can include puzzles, writing exercises, pair-programming, and coding problems.

A critical part of understanding the technical interview process involves inventorying your skill set and experiences. Consider:

- What technical-based courses (i.e. Data Structures and Algorithms) have I taken?
- What relevant class projects or certificates did I complete?
- What transferrable skills did I develop through my experiential learning opportunities (i.e. internships, shadowing, part-time jobs) that can translate to this position?
- How do I articulate my competencies built through personal projects or other work?



## PROFESSIONOLE CLOTHING CLOSET

The **ProfessioNole Clothing Closet** provides FSU students a way to access free professional attire appropriate for career fairs, interviews, and the workplace.

[career.fsu.edu/clothingcloset](https://career.fsu.edu/clothingcloset)





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