

# **INTERVIEWING GUIDE**

**Stanley R. Becker Career Center**



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# Interviewing

Interviewing is a two-way process that allows the employer to assess your fit for the position and organization by asking questions about your experiences, qualifications, and career interests, while also allowing you to learn about the organization and specific position to which you are applying. The employer is not only assessing your fit for the organization, but also Union College's fit as a target recruiting school. As such, it is important for you to remember that you represent yourself and Union.

In this guide you will learn what you need to do prior, during, and after an interview. This guide will also go into more specific detail on different interview formats, specific interviewing strategies, examples and tips on how to answer interview questions, how to follow up, and how to negotiate offers after an interview.

## Pre-Interview

Employers want intelligent individuals who can do the job, who are genuinely interested in the opportunity, and who complement the team. To interview well, you must demonstrate these attributes while also relating your knowledge, skills, and abilities to the position.

### Research

- Research the organization's website and conduct online searches for recent news on their company. Look at their mission statement, values, structure, products, and services offered.
  - Is the company publicly traded? If yes, consider looking at press releases to learn more.
- Acquire information about the position by reading the job description, knowing the duties/responsibilities, and talking to people doing this or similar work.
- Have you reviewed the "interview tab" on Glassdoor? Yes, it is self-report, so the information is not validated. However, it is good resource for interview questions that candidates were asked. It also shares information about salary, benefits, etc.
- Are there items/skills/tools/processes that were on the job description that you are not familiar with? Research them prior to the interview.
- Be sure to know what format the interview is. Phone, video (live or pre-recorded), on-site, etc. Once you know this, prepare for the interview based on the format. If in-person, be sure you know what time you should arrive, where to go, whom you should ask for upon arrival, and the length of the interview.

### Reflect

- Use the research you have collected to make a case for why you want to work for the organization and why you are the best candidate for the position.
- Review the job/internship posting and highlight similarities between the responsibilities and your qualifications.
- Prepare to speak about everything on your resume.
  - Can you talk about everything on your document if they asked? i.e., Why did you pick your major, what have you used Excel for, tell me more about your class, explain in further detail your experience at \_\_\_\_\_, tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_ experience.
- Create at least 10 insightful questions to ask the employer based on your research that cannot be answered by reviewing information on their website. Reference page 13 for further tips.

### Practice

- Schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor. Becker Career Center offers interview preparation and mock interview appointments designed for you!
- To practice virtual interviewing utilize *Union Big Interview*, a software program available on Becker's webpage that provides access to free, virtual interview practice, feedback, and guidance.
- Practice answering questions that they might ask you.
  - Research and practice industry related interviews questions.
  - Generate a list of questions utilizing resources like *Glassdoor* and practice your responses to commonly asked questions with someone who can provide constructive feedback.
- Practice general interview questions. Reference page 12 for sample questions.

**What to Bring to the Interview?**

- A portfolio, padfolio, and/or a professional carry bag or briefcase
- A pen and notepaper
- 5-10 copies of your resume
- Your list of prepared questions for the interviewers

**Professional Dress** (Please reference our Dress for Success handout on the Becker Website)

- Solid, dark, or neutral colored pant or knee length skirt suits
- Long-sleeved dress shirts or high neckline blouses
- Clean dress shoes and socks that you can comfortably walk in, with no marks or scuffs
- Conservative ties coordinated with suit
- Belts that match the color of your shoes and attire
- Moderate jewelry
- Neat and professional hairstyle
- Clean-shaven or neatly trimmed facial hair
- Light fragrance
- Natural style for makeup and nails
- Try on your interview attire and make sure it fits properly prior to your interview

**Arrival & Introduction** (For in-person interview)

- Turn off your cell phone and discard gum or mints before entering the interview site.
- Arrive 15 minutes early to get settled and be ready when the interviewer greets you.
- Greet your interviewer, make eye contact, smile, and offer a firm handshake (if appropriate or wave).
- Be prepared to engage in small talk.
- Remember that you are being evaluated from the moment you arrive. Be courteous and respectful to every individual with whom you interact.

**NOTES**

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## **During the Interview**

The interview starts as soon as you walk through the door, enter the online waiting or meeting room, or pick up the phone call. The employer must decide on who is the best candidate, so you must do your best to present yourself during the minimal time you have with them.

- Listen carefully to the questions asked and be sure to answer the questions clearly and succinctly. Once you answer the question, stop. Do not ramble or go on tangents.
- Sit up, lean forward, speak confidently, be positive, and avoid fidgeting.
- Support your statements with specific examples. This will help make your experiences more tangible.
- Focus on the qualifications you have, not on those you don't. The fact that you're interviewing for the position means that you have the necessary prerequisites.
- If presented the opportunity to ask questions, ask insightful questions to demonstrate your genuine interest in the position. Reference page 13 for further tips.
- At the end of the interview day, thank the interviewer(s) for their time, shake their hand (if appropriate or wave), and tell them that you look forward to hearing from them.
- Avoid talking about salary or benefits during the interview. If asked for salary requirements, say that you are interested in the opportunity and that you trust the organization will offer a competitive salary commensurate with your qualifications and target position. Do not provide a salary number. But do plan for this discussion and practice your response (just in case.)

## **Post-Interview**

Your post-interview actions can be just as important as what you do to prepare or what you do during the interview. An employer may be trying to decide between you and another candidate and a follow-up thank you might be the thing that sets you apart.

- Write down the names of everyone that you interview with and what you discussed as soon as you can. This type of information is great to mention in a thank you, follow up email, or second round interview.
- Always send a thank you e-mail or handwritten note to each individual with whom you met within 24 hours of your interview.
- Call or e-mail your contact if you have not heard from them within the discussed time frame (when you should hear back). If no time frame was discussed, follow up one week later.
- May sure to keep an eye on your texts, answer all phone calls during that period even if you don't recognize the number, check all your emails including spam, and any other form of contact you may have given them. (The last thing you want to do is miss a communication about the opportunity.)
- Meet with a Career Advisor for advice on accepting/rejecting an offer and salary negotiation.
- If you are not selected, remember, rejection will happen - persevere and move on. There are also multiple opportunities that may arise at that company so remember to be graceful and thankful for the opportunity to have even interviewed.

# Virtual Interviews

Companies are increasingly using virtual interviews as a way to save money and abide by safety protocols while also trying to get an understanding of your behavior, speech, professional dress, and fit for the company.

To practice virtual interviewing, utilize ***Union Big Interview***, a software program available on Becker's website. You can practice for specific industries, graduate school programs, and behavioral interviews.

## General Virtual Interview Tips

- Dress professionally (from head to toe in case you have to stand up and move around).
- Make sure the internet connection is stable and that you know how to use the platform beforehand.
- At least the day before, install software, download plugin, or adjust anything you may need to in case there are any technical issues you have to deal with.
- Utilize a quiet space like the Career Center or eliminate all background noise and interruptions in your own home or shared living space. Call (518) 388-6176 to reserve an interview room in the Becker.
- Remove objects in the background that are distracting and inappropriate (posters, cans). You can also use an appropriate virtual background or the blurred background option.
- Take into consideration the distance you sit from the camera, typically trying to get waist up, as if you were sitting across from one another at a table.
- Pay attention to the lighting in the room and strategically position yourself to avoid shadows and glares.
- Make sure your cell phone is muted or turned off so that it does not disrupt the interview.
- Close all other apps and tabs so you are not distracted, especially by incoming e-mails. It is very obvious to the person you are speaking with if your eyes are looking at another tab/window.
- Don't allow yourself to fidget, be sure to maintain good posture, and smile.
- Always look into the camera lens, even if that means you cannot look into your monitor to look at the interviewer's face. If you look into the lens, their perception will be that you're looking at them.
- Speak slowly and clearly and be sure to sound confident, capable, and interested in the position.
- At the end reaffirm your interest in the position, ask about next steps, and thank the interviewer(s).

**Virtual Live:** Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies moved screenings/interviews onto virtual platforms like Zoom. It is important to understand the etiquette of a virtual interview and how it differs from other situations you may have used a virtual platform (class) and how it differs from an in-person interview.

- Make sure you ask beforehand who will be calling who/hosting the meeting for the virtual interview and clarify in advance the time zone in which the call will take place.
- Login at least 5-7 minutes before to be prepared to enter waiting room (depending on the host setting it is possible that there will be no waiting room or camera to check over yourself before entering the meeting).
- If you cannot hear the person on the other side asking questions, tell them. You can ask for a back-up phone number to call them and continue the interview, or you could reschedule the interview. It is better to reschedule or reconfigure the interview than pretend like you can hear them.
- Ask for contact information (email and phone number), if you do not already have it, so you can follow up.
- Send a thank you email/handwritten note to the interviewer(s) within 24 hours of completing it.
- Write any notes on a pad of paper- do not attempt to type notes into a word document/Google Doc on your computer as it can make you look distracted.

**Virtual Pre-Recorded:** More companies are using computer generated interviews to weed out candidates. To complete this interview, a person logs into a system and records themselves answering questions that are given to them on the screen through the web page. Typically, people are given a time limit to answer all the questions and cannot log out and back in again. A due date or time frame in which to complete is typically given.

- Make sure you are fully aware of all the guidelines, including the time limit and whether it is possible to re-do answers.
- Practice on ***Union Big Interview***.

## Phone Interviews

A phone interview is a cost effective and efficient way for employers to initially assess potential hires. Many of the same guidelines that apply to in-person interviews also apply to phone interviews. However, there are several things to keep in mind about phone interviews.

It's a good idea to dress in a professional manner, and to sit up straight at a desk. Doing so gets you into the interview mindset and helps keep you focused on the conversation as a professional interaction. Although they pose some challenges, there are also some benefits to phone interviews. For example, you can have your application materials, your resume, and a list of questions in front of you to reference throughout the interview.

- Ensure that you are in a quiet, private place, where you can eliminate background noise and distractions.
- The Career Center has interview rooms available; call (518) 388-6176 to reserve a room.
- Know ahead of time who is responsible for initiating the call. If they are calling you, be ready 10 minutes prior to your agreed time. If you are responsible for calling, call at the exact designated time.
- Be sure to clarify in advance the time zone in which the interviewer is.
- Use a land line, if possible, and do not use the speaker phone feature. If you are using a cell phone, turn notification sounds off, and be sure service is consistent.
- Do not do anything that you wouldn't do during an in-person interview. This includes, eating, drinking, chewing gum, and checking your email.
- You are not able to convey meaning and emotion via non-verbal communication. As a result, you must use tone and voice modulation to convey your meaning, interest, and enthusiasm.
- Have a pen and paper available to take notes.
- Address the interviewer(s) by name.
- Smile throughout the phone interview. Interviewers can hear it in your voice when you do so.
- Speak slowly and clearly and be sure to sound confident, capable, and interested in the position.
- If you do not understand a question, it is okay to ask the interviewer to repeat it.
- When the interviewer is speaking, listen carefully and let them talk without interruption. You may take notes if you would like to respond to something they say later.
- At the end reaffirm your interest in the position, ask about next steps, and thank the interviewer(s).
- Ask for contact information (email and phone number), if you do not already have it, so you can follow up.
- Send a tailored thank you email to the interviewer(s).

# Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral Interviewing is a technique in which the interviewer probes for details about your past experiences to assess your qualifications for a particular position. These questions typically address themes focusing on communication, teamwork, leadership, persuasion, problem solving, initiative, handling conflict, decision making, and overcoming failure.

The more detailed and specific you are in describing your important/relevant experiences, the stronger a candidate you become. When descriptions for experiences are vague, it undersells the experience and reduces the chance of hearing back from employers. To create strong, action-oriented descriptions, focus on answering these questions:

An effective strategy for answering behavioral interviewing questions is the **STAR** Method which stands for **Situation, Task, Action, Result**. To respond, detail the specific **situation** or **task** you faced, the **action** you took, and explain the positive **results** of your actions.

## STAR

*(Situation) What did you do?*

*(Action) How did you do it?*

*(Task) Why did you do it?*

*(Result) Were there any results you achieved?*

If an employer were to say: “Tell me about a time when you had to utilize creative problem-solving skills.” You would use the **STAR** method to respond. For instance, “As Treasurer of the Biology Club, we saw the club membership increase from 10 to 25 from my junior to senior year, but our club received no additional funding. This meant that our field trip to the Museum of Natural History would either be cancelled or that we’d have to be selective in choosing who went. Instead, I reached out to campus departments and was able to secure a co-sponsor for the event. As a result of their co-sponsorship, all 25 of our members were able to go to the museum.”

## Behavioral Interviewing Tips

- Identify specific scenarios from past experiences that effectively demonstrate skill sets consistent with the themes mentioned above. Include examples from past internships, work experiences, extracurricular activities, leadership roles, athletic experiences, coursework, etc.
- Reflect on your experiences prior to your interview, so you have multiple examples and do not need to repeat the same situations for answers.
- Use these scenarios to prepare answers using the **STAR** method.

## Sample Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about the best presentation you’ve ever done.
- Give me an example of a time when you worked with a group/team to determine project responsibilities and establish a plan. What difficulties did the group/team have? What was your role?
- Give me an example of a time when you played a leadership role in a work situation, course project, student club, or team setting.
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make recommendations to solve a problem.
- Describe a time where you had to go above and beyond the “call of duty” in order to get a job done.
- Describe a situation when you tried your hardest but didn’t achieve the desired result. What did you learn and how did you handle it?

# Case Interviewing

The cases could be a hypothetical situation or one the company currently has or previously had. Typically, the cases are based around a question/situation, similar to what you might encounter in a consulting position. You will be asked for your opinion and tested on your ability to come up with a coherent and realistic solution for handling a particular situation.

**The Purpose of a Case Interview is to See if You:** Are a logical, analytical, and organized thinker | Pay attention to details | Are a structured problem solver | Communicate clearly, confidentially, and professionally | Are familiar with general business concepts | Are comfortable with math

(Companies want to see how you lead, manage, deal with conflict, face adversity, and support and influence.)

## **What to Expect:**

- An interview that lasts 30-60 minutes (on average).
- Having to answer, “Why consulting?” or “Why do you want to work at \_\_\_\_\_?”.
- Having to respond to hypothetical or actual previous/current business problems or situations.
- Being judged on how you approach, address, and create possible solutions for an issue.

## **How to Prepare:** What is the company? Who is your audience? Who are you helping? What are their needs?

- Get to know the company with who you’re interviewing. Look at the web site, read press releases, and do some searching on Google and Google News. Know the company’s recent successes/challenges/ changes.
- Familiarize yourself with the general industry and what services/products the company provides because that may help you understand what kinds of questions may be asked.

## **How to Execute: (Focus on breaking down the case into approximately 5 parts.)**

1. Show how you will review and analyze the information: Listen, rephrase, ask clarifying questions You should ask the interviewer logical questions that enable you to make detailed recommendations. Take notes and ask for a minute to get your thoughts together (if needed).
2. Analyze/identify what the problem/issue is: Structure your response including (charts, graphs, and pictures).
3. Break the main problem into smaller sections and approach each section: Outline the problem and establish section headings/topic titles to help organize the information.
4. Come up with solutions for each of the problems: Think in detail, discuss the realistic solutions you came up with, discuss the reality behind each recommendation, discuss how your solution impacts the company, etc.
5. Talk about how you plan to present the information: How you will address sharing technical information to a non-technical audience, discuss your main points/important details, and answer in an organized and conversational format.

**Tip:** This interview is a true test of your problem solving and creative thinking skills. Convey your logic and thought process. Be sure to articulate the steps you used to solve the questions.

- Identify specific scenarios from past experiences that effectively demonstrate skill sets consistent with the themes mentioned above. Include examples from past internships, work experiences, extracurriculars, projects, etc.
- Practice, listen/read carefully and take good notes and consider asking appropriate clarifying questions.

**Questions:** Types of case questions include brain teasers, profitability improvement, marketing-sizing questions, industry analysis, investments, and operational cases. Each may require the ability to perform basic math.

**Use the STAR Method:** STAR stands for *Situation, Task, Action, Result*.

## **Sample Questions**

1. How many dry cleaners are there in New York City?
2. Your client is one of the leading manufacturers of paper towel roll holders. Recently, it has noticed a decline in profits. Why are the profits declining? What can the client do?
3. What is the anticipated growth of cell phone usage in the world during the next five years?
4. How many individuals, under 40 years of age participate in online social networking communities in the US?
5. Choose one retail store that you think has a strong future and tell me why?
6. If you were the CEO of Starbucks, what would you do to improve the company’s economic future?
7. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation to solve a problem.
8. Give me an example of a time when you worked with a group/team to determine project responsibilities.



# Technical Interviewing

A technical interview may involve an assignment and feel like more of a test than an interview. You should be prepared to show your skills and prove you have the knowledge and skills to perform a task. Some of the same guidelines that apply to other interviews also apply to technical interviews. Popular opportunities (Internship, Associate, or Full-time roles) in this field may include software developer/software engineering, data scientist, and data structures intern.

## **Your technical interview could be in a few different forms:**

- Real-time monitored remote challenge/test/assessment via synchronous video call (screen share)
  - Think out loud as you are approaching the solution, take an appropriate amount of time, and welcome hints if provided (it is likely that they will help you while you are planning your solution)
- At-home challenge to complete within a certain timeframe
  - You may receive this test to see if you should be invited to an in-person interview
  - May take 1-3 hours to complete
- In-person white board activity (usually part of the “super day” interview)
  - Will most likely need to complete in person coding-challenges in front of an interviewer(s)
  - May take 1-2 hours

For all interviews- read, plan, then write code. Understand the instructions before beginning. Considering attempting to solve the bonus requirements.

## **Process to dealing with a question/challenge:**

**Think about the problem:** Ask clarifying questions as you may get additional information or helpful hints. You want to fully understand the given information and the associated task.

**Working around the solution:** Take a minute to strategize and formulate your approach. Doing so, think out loud so the interviewer can test your “logical” thinking, which is the main point of this round. Do not forget that the interviewer is more interested in your approach towards the solution so try to optimize it by introducing a “not so great approach” and then a better one, however, be mindful of the time. You could start with commenting out a pseudocode on the screen as you are brainstorming.

**Implement a solution:** This is where the actual implementation is and should not take a lot of time. Interviewer might help if you forget documentation for certain functions or programming paradigms of the language.

**Review and evaluate the solution:** Check for errors and try to ensure that your code is bug-free and be prepared to explain what you did and why.

## **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

Be prepared for screening, general, behavioral, and skill related interview questions. Be prepared to talk about your related experience, related projects, your education, problem-solving abilities, analytical skills, and questions that probe into your transferable and soft skills. Most technical questions have one answer, but some have a few that could be correct. See pages 2-4 to learn more general interviewing tips.

**Interviewers look for:** | LOGICAL THINKING | Coding skills | Limitations and Robustness | Communication  
So... refresh on fundamentals: Data structures: Stacks, Queues, Arrays, Binary Trees, String Manipulation, etc.

**Unsure:** What if you are unsure of how to answer or solve a challenge? First, re-look at the given information and task and Consider breaking down the challenge even further and see if that helps. Then you should consider explaining the methods you know will work for solving a problem. You can also mention how you may attempt to approach searching for information around solving the posed problem.

## **Practice:**

- Do enough preparation and be honest about what you don't need and need more practice with. Start early and plan practice time into your week. You may want a few weeks to prepare at solving 1-2 coding interview questions a day. Practice not only mock coding but also behavioral questions.
- Time yourself during practice – writing code/solving a problem and debugging. You need to be efficient and effective.

## EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

### Popular Questions:

- What coding language are you the most experienced with?

*Answer Tip:* You can mention what languages you have exposure to and highlight what you have the most experience with. This may be a good opportunity to briefly discuss related projects/experience to support indicating you have extensive experience with that language.

### General Technical Questions:

- What coding language do you prefer to use?
- What is a SAN (Storage Area Network)?
- Tell me what you know about database optimization.

### Behavioral:

- Tell me about a time when you worked with challenging code.
- Give me an example of a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
- Tell me about a time you failed and how you reacted/what did you learn.
- What would you do if your teammate asked you to review their code and it was full of bugs?
- How did you learn \_\_\_ programming language? (College class or self-directed training, etc.)

### Brainteasers:

- How many gas stations are there in the U.S.?
- What is the Sum of numbers 1-100?
- Why are manhole covers round?

### Whiteboard: (Sorting, graphs, math, testing code skills are tested)

- When given A linked list - Find the middle element of the linked list.
- When given An array of size N-1, with numbers ranging from 1 to N- but one number missing- Find the missing number.

### Questions to ask the interviewer:

- What frameworks and/or tools does your company use (unless you already know)?
- How do you test your code?
- What is a challenging/most interesting project you have worked on here?

### TIPS

- Pick one programming language and know it really well.
- Make sure you have a good internet connection, updated software, and a quiet place to interview.
- Keep it simple and clear – easy-to-read code.
- Don't worry about bringing a laptop or coding samples (unless the interviewers request those items).
- Understand how to deconstruct complex concepts.
- The interviewer is more interested in the approach than the answer.
- Make sure to show your passion for your field as well as your drive and creativity.
- Partial credit may be given for showing work and explaining your thoughts and process.
- Draw pictures as you write if you are a visual or kinesthetic learner, this may help.

### Resources:

**Self-Directed Training:** [codecademy.com](https://www.codecademy.com), [coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org)

**Book:** [Cracking the Coding Interview](#)

#### Sites:

[Programming Interviews Exposed: Secrets to Landing Your Next Job](#)

[Elements of Programming Interviews: The Insiders' Guide](#)

[HackerRank](#) (IBM sends a test thru this site before they do anything else)

[Geeks for Geeks](#) (Interview practice and learn coding basics)

[Leetcode](#) (Interview Prep)

[Code Wars](#) (Companies like Janel Group use this for technical interviews)

[Pramp](#)- (Technical interviews)

# Interview Questions

Every interview is different! Make sure to take time to practice answering questions about your personality, your experiences, and your interest in the field/company you are interviewing for. Here are examples of commonly asked questions, additional practice questions, and sample questions you can ask the employer at the end of your interview. We recommend that you come into the Becker Career Center for practice.

*COMMONLY ASKED:*

These three questions are common interview questions, and we have strategies for answering each. It is recommended that you familiarize yourself with common interview questions and strategies to respond.

**1. Tell me about yourself.**

**Purpose of Question:** This type of question is very popular in the beginning of an interview and is used to transition from small talk to formal interview questions. It is used to assess your communication skills, as well as your interest and enthusiasm for the organization and career field.

**Strategy for Responding:** To answer, give the interviewer a little background on yourself, how and when you became interested in this field, and explain why the opportunity and organization made you want to apply.

**Sample Response:** "I am a senior Environmental Science major at Union College and am very interested in sustainability initiatives. As Vice President of the Environmental Club, I research and plan relevant activities and projects for the club to participate in. Last fall, I organized a community service project at the Boston branch of Sustainable Farming International, an organization dedicated to educating third world communities on the benefits of sustainable agriculture. After volunteering for this organization and seeing how many communities could be improved from proper education in sustainability practices, I became inspired to intern for them that summer. Upon seeing your position posting and doing more research, I was excited to learn that your organization also has a focus on sustainable agriculture education and outreach and decided to apply."

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## 2. Why should we hire you? (Variation: How has your liberal arts degree prepared you for this position?)

### Purpose of Question

Employers want to hear you articulate how your education has prepared you to do their job. They want you to make a connection between your education and ability to do the job.

### Strategy for Responding

To assist you, we've developed an acronym – EDUCATES – to help you articulate the skills and characteristics that you've developed or enhanced at Union.

<b>E</b> mpathy	Consider multiple alternative perspectives
<b>D</b> isciplined approach to inquiry	Provide evidence-based conclusions/solutions
<b>U</b> nity	<b>Work effectively in teams, collaborate</b>
<b>C</b> ommunication	<b>Communicate effectively in writing and orally</b>
<b>A</b> nalytical	<b>Identify relationships among seemingly disparate parts</b>
<b>T</b> hinking	<b>T-Shape (deep and broad), creatively, integrating knowledge</b>
<b>E</b> thical	Engage in and do the right thing
<b>S</b> elf-Reflection	Develop humility, courage, tolerance and learn how to learn

The core four – Unity, Communication, Analytical Skills and Thinking skills are the skills most often identified by employers and professors as valuable to both education and employment.

### Sample Response

Throughout undergrad, I have strengthened my critical **thinking** skills that have allowed me to think deep and broad. Through my coursework and research, I developed effective **communication** skills both orally and in writing, and strong **analytical** skills that have allowed me to identify relationships among seemingly disparate parts. I learned how to **work effectively in teams**, and how to look at the world through other's eyes and this **empathy** will certainly help me when I deal with current and prospective clients. Finally, Union College has taught me the importance of **ethics**, engaging in and doing the right thing. Together, these skills will help me to effectively solve any problem I encounter now and in the future.

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### 3. Where do you see yourself in 3 - 5 years?

#### Variations

- How does this position fit into your long-term goals?
- What are your career goals?

#### Purpose of Question

This question is used to evaluate your commitment to the occupation and career field and assess your long-term plans. Employers want to hire dedicated, enthusiastic individuals that are going to put their energy and passion into the position and organization, thus making it successful.

#### Strategy for Responding

To answer, let the interviewer know that you have thought long term, that their organization is a part of your plan, and that you're genuinely interested in the opportunity. Mention a long-term career goal, break down the major steps you need to reach it, and provide tentative timelines.

#### Sample Response

I hope to learn the key responsibilities of this position quickly and begin to add value to the department. Once I have a solid understanding of my role, I hope to take on additional responsibilities and eventually hold a leadership position.

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**These are not the only questions that an interviewer can ask!**

**See the following pages for examples of:**

Screening questions

General questions

Behavioral questions

Questions to ask employers

**Remember:**

**These are just general questions-**

**You should research and practice field specific questions as well!**

# Practice Questions

## **SCREENING QUESTIONS**

- Tell me about yourself?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What do you know about this company?
- What would you say are 3 of your greatest strengths? Your weakness (1)?
- Walk me through your resume.
- Why are you interested in working in this field?
- Where do you see yourself in 3-5yrs?
- Tell me why do you think you're a good fit for this position?

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

- What has been your most rewarding college experience?
- Describe the ideal job for you?
- Tell me about your leadership experience.
- Tell me about your \_\_\_\_ experience. i.e. internship, academic, project, activities, leadership, athletic, etc.
- Talk to me about your \_\_\_\_ skills. i.e. computer, programming, CAD, interpersonal communication etc.
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
- How would a professor describe you?
- What would your former employer/supervisor say about you?
- How has your liberal arts education prepared you for this role?
- What is the one experience you think has prepared you the most for this role?
- What skills do you have that you think qualify you for this position?

## **BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS**

- Tell me about a time you had to work with a difficult colleague or classmate.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me an example of a time when you took the lead to motivate others.
- Give me an example of a time when you failed. What was your response to the failure?
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and how you were able to meet or exceed it.
- Tell me about a project/team that you led.
- What has been your greatest accomplishment?
- What do you think your learning curve would be coming into this field, industry, or job?
- Talk about your ability to multitask. Give me example of a time you had to.
- Describe an experience you have had working with individuals from diverse backgrounds?

## **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

- Would you rather work with information or with people?
- Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
- How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our company?
- In the past year how have you increased your field related knowledge?
- What should we expect from you within the first 90 days of employment?
- Please give me the definition of the position of which you are being interviewed.
- What do you find most attractive about this position? What seems least attractive about it?
- Do you consider yourself a leader?
- What important trends do you see in this industry?
- What are the cutting-edge issues in this industry?
- What was the last book you read? Movie you saw? Sporting event you attended?

# Questions to Ask Employers

Following the conclusion of the interviewer's questions, they will most likely ask if you have any questions for them. Saying no will indicate to the employer that you are not interested. Asking insightful questions about the position and employer, demonstrates to the interviewer that you have done your research and are genuinely enthusiastic about the opportunity.

## Tips for Asking Insightful Questions

- Write down your questions and, if necessary, refer to them at the appropriate time.
- Do not ask questions that can be easily answered by viewing the employer's website.
- Do not ask questions about salary or benefits. Wait until the employer makes an offer to discuss them.

### *"DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR US?"*

**Position Related:** Your first set of questions that you want to ensure you have time for, should directly relate to the position that you are interviewing for. This will show the employer that you are genuinely interested in this opportunity.

- What are the characteristics of the people who will succeed in this position?
- What are some of the first assignments I might expect if hired in this position?
- What is a major project would/may I be involved with?
- What are the key challenges you expect the person in this position to face?
- Have you had individuals in this position who have done it very well? If so, can you explain?
- How will individual performance be measured in this position?
- What are some of the day-to-day responsibilities?
- What are the biggest challenges I will face in the first 90 days?
- I know that the pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions for many companies how did your company respond?
- Reflecting on your own experience, what have you seen the company do to promote diversity and inclusion?

**Department Related:** Ask questions about the department/functional area this position is in to learn more about the work environment, the culture, and the team dynamics.

- What are the key metrics that you use to evaluate this department?
- What are the key objectives for this department in the next 6-12 months? How does this role support these objectives?

**Company Related:** Learn more about the company and gain a holistic picture of the organization.

- How would you describe the culture of the department/organization?
- What are some of the key challenges for the organization?
- What do (each of) you like best about working for (company name)?

**Additional/Broad Questions:** These questions can typically be asked to each interviewer and allow you to assess the consistency of responses and get a holistic picture of your search process.

- What are the next steps in this interview/application process? What is the timeline?
- What initially attracted you to this company or what has made you stay at this company?

## Illegal Questions

Federal and state laws prohibit employers from asking questions to uncover personal information unrelated to the position for which you're interviewing. Specifically, employers are not allowed to ask questions about your **race, gender, religion, marital status, family status, disabilities, ethnic background, origin or birthplace, sexual orientation, or age**. If you're asked an illegal question on an interview and want to process it, you can contact Becker Career Center. During the interview, you have a few options of how to handle this situation.

1. Answer the question directly **only** if you're comfortable and don't believe it will affect your candidacy.
2. Do not answer the question, tell them you don't see how it pertains to the position, and ask politely if they would explain the relevance, re-phrase the question, or move on to the next question.
3. Redirect the question and then provide an answer. For instance, if an employer asks if you have any disabilities, you could reply, "If you're asking whether or not I can perform these tasks, I can."

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Thank You Notes

After an interview, you should always send a tailored thank you e-mail or handwritten note to each individual (separately) with whom you met within 24 hours of your interview. Thank the interviewer(s) for their time, reaffirm your interest in the position, and reference something you learned about the opportunity. This is an example of a thank you e-mail:

Subject: Thank You

Dear Terrance Johnson,

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the Program Coordinator position at the Hayes Community Center. I enjoyed discussing your vision for the organization including the focus on engaging with more community partners and local businesses. The interview confirmed my interest in the position.

I greatly appreciate you taking the time to speak with me and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Anita Career

### Follow-Up Message

To follow up with an employer regarding your application or following your interview, e-mail is the best way to communicate with them. Re-affirm your interest in the position and ask for an update on the timeline or the status of your application. This is one example of a follow up e-mail:

Subject: Program Coordinator Position

Dear Terrance Johnson,

I'm writing to express my continued interest in the Program Coordinator position, and I was hoping for an update on the status of my application. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Anita Career



# OFFERS

## **Negotiating Employment Offers**

An employment offer consists of benefits package and a salary figure. You must analyze both aspects and see if they are the right fit for you at this time. The following components might be part of your job/internship offer for you to review: base salary, start date, bonus structures, sign-on bonus, relocation expenses, benefits, insurance, retirement plans, life insurance, paid vacation, unpaid leave time, holidays, sick days, tuition reimbursement, and any other perks. If you feel your offer is low, you can meet with a Career Advisor who can help you do some research to present to the employer in hopes of influencing the employer to change the offer.

## **Accepting Employment Offers**

Once you have decided to accept a job/internship offer, contact the employer right away so you can move forward with completing all required hiring paperwork. If the offer was delayed from the original, make sure to get it in writing before you sign. You should contact them through the form of communication they used to offer you the position. If they gave you a deadline to accept, contact them earlier than the last day to show your genuine interest and start with a positive impression.

## **Declining Employment Offers**

If declining a job/internship offer, you should do so through the form of communication most utilized throughout your interview process with that employer. Write a draft before e-mailing or calling. Contact the employer as soon as possible so you do not delay their process. When declining, make sure you thank the employer for their time and wish them success. If you are accepting another offer, you do not need to let the employer know this. You can simply let them know this opportunity was not the best fit for you at this time. Below is an example email:

Dear Ann Shoehorn,

Thank you for offering me the Program Coordinator position. Regretfully, I must decline your offer because it is not the best fit for me at this time. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me and for the generous employment offer. I was impressed by your company's mission and commitment to quality service and wish you and your colleagues continued success.

Best regards,  
Bruce Williams

## **Reneging Employment Offers**

Reneging on a job/internship offer means to go back on one's word or promise. Once you accept an employment offer, you should not be actively applying to other opportunities or interviewing with other organizations. You need to honor the time commitment and stay for the duration of the internship, or at least one year for a job. If you renege on an employment offer, you can damage the relationship with that employer and tarnish your reputation. Additionally, if networking was involved and your contacts were references for you, they might be hesitant to serve as a reference for you again in the future. If you are thinking about reneging on an offer, meet with a Career Advisor.

Any Union College student who reneges on the acceptance of an offer obtained through the campus recruiting program, which includes alumni and employer contacts, will be immediately suspended from all recruitment activities provided by the Becker Career Center for the remainder of the recruiting term. Students must meet with a member of the Becker Career Center Employer Relations team to be considered for reinstatement and access to the recruiting platform. Students are strongly encouraged to explore all employment options in order to secure a position that is the right fit for them.