

EY Center for Careers in Accounting and Information Systems “Interview Preparation”

This is a brief overview for interview preparation. There is also a Behavioral Interview Guide that is focused on how to prepare for behavioral interview questions.

Know yourself (Who are you and what do you want?)

- What is important to you in choosing your career path and a firm/company/organization? (How do your personality, values, interests and skills influence your career decisions and satisfaction? See the Career Planning Guide.)
- What work, student organization, and volunteer experience and skills (soft & technical) do you possess that are most relevant to the employer and position?
- How can you differentiate yourself from other students (in a positive way) - what are your specific accomplishments that demonstrate the requisite skills?

Research the firm/company/organization

(Who are they and what are they looking for?)

- Research and learn their business - products/services, clients/industries, locations, size, growth plans, culture - what differentiates their company or organization from others?
- Review their website, Glassdoor.com, other sites, and news articles
- Network with professionals (at student organization meetings & events, firm office hours, Meet the Firms, other career fairs, firm tours/events, individual coffee chats)
- Ask other students and alumni who have experience with the employer about what they know and what they did to learn about the employer
- Use LinkedIn to learn more about the employer and their professionals

Prepare questions you would like to ask

- BE CURIOUS! Focus on what is most important to you | ask questions relating to your career values and interests | **make it a 2-way discussion**
- Ask about the actual work and how it is assigned, training, expectations, support, career paths, flexibility with scheduling and changing career direction, culture, hours, travel, special programs, other
- Ask about the interviewer - what they do, what they like about the firm/company/org, their career plans, what career decisions they made along the way to become a manager, senior manager, director, partner (do not ask personal questions) - if possible, look up the interviewer(s) on LinkedIn
- Do not ask about salary!

Prepare for question you can anticipate

- “Tell me about yourself.” Give a 30 - 60 second answer (there is no one right answer) - share something about yourself that is interesting (but not too personal) that highlights your career interests and goals, why you are interested in the employer, what are your passions (i.e., community service, technology, other), a challenge you have overcome, if you are first generation or self-supporting - be prepared, but **do not memorize**
- “Why are you interested in this firm, company or organization?”
- “Why are you interested in audit, tax, data analytics, systems implementation, technical support, IT security, programming, web development, systems administration, general accounting, forensics, other?”
- “What are your career goals? | Where do you see yourself in 3 - 5 years?”
- What are your **strengths**?
 - Identify 3 strengths relevant skills (based on what you know they are looking for) and give a specific example for each | don’t just give a list
 - What is one of your **weaknesses**?

- Identify a weakness that you have been working on and improving (explain how) - be honest, don't make it up

Situational / Behavioral Questions (see the Behavioral Interview Guide for more details)

- There are 4 major categories of questions: Leadership, Teamwork, Customer Service, Organization/Time Management - prepare for the category and not specific questions (don't practice 100+ questions!)
- Prepare 2 examples (stories) for each category above - **remember your story, but do not memorize!**
- Use the P-A-R (Problem-Action-Result) process to provide coherent and complete stories
 - "What is an example of a failure?" Be honest - what happened, what did you learn, how did /or will you handle it differently the next time
 - Unexpected question - don't get unnerved. You are being tested. Answer as best as you can.

Relax:

- Take deep breaths
- Smile / think of something funny
- Imagine being in a relaxing place (such as the beach or mountains)
- Don't keep looking at your notes - tell yourself that you are prepared

Types of Interviews:

Telephone:

- Stand up and put a smile on your face
- Make sure you have a good signal, and that it is quiet around you
- Speak loudly enough, and change your voice pitch so it is not monotone
- Have your resume, the job description and brief notes in front of you
- Practice a phone call to test how you sound and if you are speaking clearly

On-Campus (OCIs):

- Check-in at the EY Center (BB 2224) about 10 minutes prior to the interview time
- Dress business professional
- Bring a padfolio/folder with extra resumes and a list of questions (use brief notes only for your questions, not full sentences)
- Firm handshake, smile, and reasonable eye contact
- Most OCIs are 30 minutes, some are 45 minutes, and some are 60 minutes (two 30-minute interviews, back-to-back) - check Handshake for the schedule
- If you forget or freeze, it is OK to open your list of questions, glance briefly, and re-establish eye contact
- At the end, thank the interviewer, and ask for their business card / contact information

In-Office:

- Get the address, parking locations and directions
- Dress business professional (unless told otherwise)
- Check traffic and plan to arrive early | call if you are going to arrive late
- May include 2 or 3 consecutive interviews | ask some similar questions, but also tailor questions to show genuine interest in each interviewer | provide similar responses to be consistent
- May include a dining interview

Dining:

- You are being observed throughout for your interpersonal skills and etiquette
- May include several professionals and you, or several other students as well
- Order something reasonable (similar to others), easy to eat, filling, and not messy | only order dessert if others are doing so

- Watch your table manners - don't reach across the table to get something, and don't talk with food in your mouth
- Participate (don't be silent), and keep the conversation light; however, if possible, you can ask questions about their experiences - if they are staff, ask about the transition, training, support - don't grill them however
- Do speak with other students, whether they are from CSUN or other schools (they may be future co-workers)

Video:

- Dress the same as an in-person interview
- Use a quiet room with good lighting | check to see what is behind you
- Raise the level of your device so the camera is at eye level
- Test the software, your webcam and speakers in advance
- Sit up, make (and maintain) reasonable eye contact and smile appropriately
- Speak loudly and clearly enough so the interviewer can hear you
- Don't read notes - only glance at your prepared (and brief notes) questions if necessary

Do's

Don'ts

• Do know yourself so you can set career goals and determine what is most important for you	• Don't just focus on "getting a job" and ignore the value of identifying your needs and interests
• Do learn about each employer	• Don't ignore the unique differences
• Do anticipate questions	• Don't make up answers (i.e., weakness)
• Do prepare P-A-R stories for behavioral questions	• Don't practice & memorize hundreds of questions
• Do try to make the interview interactive - a two-way discussion	• Don't expect the interviewer to do all of the talking
• Do ask appropriate questions based on your career goals & interests	• Don't ask personal questions or questions about salary, general benefits & vacation
• Do write brief notes for questions to ask	• Don't take notes during the interview
• Do dress business professional	• Don't wear a lot of jewelry or perfume/cologne
• Do be on time (allow for traffic and parking)	• Don't blow off an interview for any reason

Interview Summary Tips:

- Dress appropriately (usually business professional)
- Smile, give a firm (but not too hard) handshake, make eye contact (do not stare), sit up
- Unless the interview is structured, engage the interviewer and ask questions throughout - make it conversational (2-way) | If it is a structured interview, you can ask questions at the end
- Be honest and sincere. Do not exaggerate or misrepresent your experience or interest.
- Bring extra resumes, and other relevant documents
- At the end, express your sincere interest, and thank them for their time and information shared
- Send a thank you note by email within 24 - 48 hours (in addition, a personal note / card is OK)