

EVANS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY & GOVERNANCE

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

# GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING



Evans School

Curiosity, Confidence, Courage.



# PURPOSE

worry though -- effective interviewing (and relaxation techniques) can be learned! By knowing what to expect and being prepared, you can greatly enhance your chances of receiving offers.

How you manage the interview process will ultimately determine whether or not you get a job offer. Don't

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

RESEARCH	LOGISTICS
<p><b><i>Demonstrate knowledge of the organization:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vision/Mission</li> <li>Current projects &amp; initiatives</li> <li>History</li> <li>Industry-wide new &amp; Policies</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Know the position forward and backward:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key competencies</li> <li>Responsibilities</li> <li>Potential projects</li> </ul> <p>*Connect your skills to competencies, responsibilities &amp; projects throughout interview</p> <p><b><i>If possible, look up the interviewers:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their role in the organization</li> <li>Alma mater and organizations</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Types of Interviews:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phone Screenings</li> <li>In-person (most common)</li> <li>Video/Skype</li> </ul> <p><b><i>What to bring:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Padfolio, Pens &amp; Paper</li> <li>Extra resumes &amp; references</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Traveling:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map the route &amp; research parking options</li> <li>Arrive 10-15 minutes early</li> </ul> <p><b><i>What to wear:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dress one professional level higher than people at the organization</li> <li>Avoid strong cologne or flashy jewelry</li> </ul>
PRACTICE & PREPARE	
<p><b><i>Practice out loud:</i></b> Sharing experiences, skills, and examples will be vital to your interview success. Practicing out loud will help you be clear and succinct.</p> <p><b>Concise answers</b> are no more than 2 minute long. <b>Avoid filler words</b> such as “umm” or “kinda”.</p> <p><b>Consider your tone</b> as you practice, show your interests through your voice and through smiling.</p> <p><b>Practice making eye contact</b> and showing good posture.</p> <p><b>Request a Mock Interview appointment with your career counselor to get extra practice!</b></p> <p><b><i>Prepare questions:</i></b> <b>Brainstorm 3-5 questions</b> to ask your interviewers. Use these questions to show your interest in the position and to determine if the position is right for you. <i>Example Question:</i> What are the skills and attributes most needed to succeed in this position?</p>	

# Types of Interview Questions

**Behavioral questions** should be expected in an interview. These questions ask you to describe specific situations when you have demonstrated a critical skill to the position. **Examples:** *Tell me about a time when you performed well in a crisis. Describe a time when you were under pressure and did not meet a deadline. What is the most challenging project you've worked on? Describe your most challenging work environment? How did you adjust?*

**Strengths and Skills Questions:** Anytime you identify a strength, make sure you are supporting it with proof through sharing an example or telling a story. **Example:** What do you consider to be your greatest strength?

**Weaknesses Questions:** Focus on what you've learned about managing this weakness, how you have improved, and how you continue to grow. Don't dwell on why it's bad. Avoid highlighting a weakness that would disqualify you from the job. **Example:** What do you need to improve at?

## Other Common Questions

### Tell me a little bit about yourself.

One good way to respond is to cover three things: where you've been, where you are now, and where you want to go in the future. Try to talk about what has motivated you to choose your path toward or through your profession. Don't share your entire life story—keep it focused on telling me about you as it relates to what we're discussing (the job).

### Why should we hire you?

This is your chance to truly sell yourself. You should be prepared to answer this question every time you walk into an interview. Do this by demonstrating alignment in three areas:

- **Technical:** tell them how your experience and education have provided you with the skills to do the nuts and bolts of the job.
- **Cultural:** explain what it is about their organization that you respect (i.e. their mission, their capacity for innovation, their reputation as a leader) and why that is important to you.
- **Professional:** describe the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship. How will your success in this role add value to their organization and, in turn help you achieve your long term professional goals?

The **STAR method** will help you respond thoroughly to interview questions. It also provides the interviewer with a relevant, concrete, descriptive example of using your skills and displaying your past accomplishments.

<b>S</b>	=	Situation	Set the stage for your story. Describe the situation. How did you get involved?
<b>T</b>	=	Task	Define what you had to accomplish. What was your objective?
<b>A</b>	=	Action	Describe the steps you took to achieve your objective. What skills did you use?
<b>R</b>	=	Result	What was the result or outcome? What did you accomplish and learn?

## Table of STAR Stories Interview Preparation

### YOUR MOST RELEVANT EXPERIENCES

TOP SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS SOUGHT BY THE EMPLOYER

	<p><i>S: What was the assignment?</i></p> <p><i>T: What were you trying to do?</i></p> <p><i>A: How did you do it? What skills did you use?</i></p> <p><i>R: What did you learn, and how would you apply that here?</i></p>			

# Interview Closure & Follow Up

## Close the interview

Reiterating why you believe you are the best fit for the position. Find out what the next steps are in the process and when you can expect to hear back. Leave the interview by giving a firm handshake and thanking the interviewer for their time.

## Send a thank you

Email or handwritten note within 24 hours after the interview (either is fine). If you met with multiple interviewers, send a thank you to each person. In addition to saying thanks, **reiterate your interest in the position, consider referring to something mentioned in the interview, and re-highlight your top skills.**

## Thank You Note Structure

*Dear Mr./Ms. Name of Interviewer:*

*1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph: Thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration. Re-emphasize your interest.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph: Write about your skills and strengths as they relate to the position. Refer to something specific that the employer mentioned during the interview and address the needs you may be able to meet for the employer. Mention any additional points you would like to make that you did not mention during the interview or that you would like to re-emphasize.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph: Thank the employer again for his/her interest in you as a candidate. You may write something to the effect of "I look forward to learning of your decision" or "I am excited about gaining more knowledge in the field of state government" or "The position at your agency is a very exciting opportunity for me."*

*Sincerely,*

*Your Name*

## Follow up

It is completely acceptable to follow up with the interviewer if you haven't heard back from the company in the timeframe they indicated to you. Reiterate your interest in the position and inquire if any hiring decisions have been made.

## Tips for Success

**If you are offered the job**, congratulations! There are a few things to do before you go celebrate:

- This is the time when salary and benefits should be discussed.
- It's okay to take some time deciding; most employers want you to think about the offer before making a decision. Confirm with the employer when they need a final decision.
- Many times you will need to accept an offer in writing or sign a contract. The job is not yours until you have a written agreement.
- Negotiate your salary based on the range that was given in the job description or previously disclosed. Avoid negotiating in writing (via email)—always try to negotiate in a conversation. Things in writing are much more final, and it is difficult to discern tone. When negotiating, focus on the added value you bring to the organization, as well as any additional unique qualifications you bring (such as a Master's degree). Do not ask for more money based solely on financial need (i.e. cost of living, supporting a family, etc.), but make sure you are telling them why your contributions to their team are worth more (i.e. the experience, skills, education, you bring to their team). (*See Guide to Salary Negotiation for more info.*)

**If you are not offered the job**, remain gracious and positive. You never know what connections the employer may have elsewhere in the field or what future positions may come open. Reiterate your continued interest and encourage them to reach if hiring needs change. Not being hired is not a sign of failure or rejection. It only means you haven't found the right fit for you (yet).

**If you are declining an offer**, that is okay! Be gracious and express your thanks. Let them know that you seriously considered it, enjoyed learning more about their organization, however ultimately decided the role is not the best fit for you at this time. You may share more information if you wish, but it is not necessary to tell them all of your reasons for declining. Remain professional—you may encounter this person professionally or personally later on, and do not want to burn any bridges.

**If you want to consult with Career Development about accepting or rejecting an offer, or negotiating salary, stop by the office, contact your career advisor directly via phone or email, or schedule an appointment through EvansJobs.**

## Overall Interview Advice

- Speak slowly and announce clearly- smile so your answers come across positively
- Focus on non-verbal behaviors such as eye contact, tone of voice and body language
- Be sure to obtain business cards from everyone in the interview so you can follow up with thank you notes
- When doing a video or skype interview, test-run the program through which your interview will be conducted ahead of time. Arrive early to the interviews so you can make any adjustments prior to the interviewer arriving. Ensure your background environment is clean and dress as if you were at an in-person interview