THE REST OF YOUR LIFE STARTS HERE

CLIMB HIGH
CLIMB FAR
YOUR GOAL
THE SKY
YOUR AIM
THE STAR

IN MEMORY
OF
MARK
AND
ALBERT
HOPKINS
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The combination of the perfect resume and winning cover letter should result in a number of interview opportunities. Too often, job hunters put all their efforts into getting the interview and forget about preparing for the interview. Preparation is as important for an effective interview as it is for the winning cover letter.

An interview should be a conversation between people who are trying to learn more about each other. The interviewee has as much responsibility for the success of this meeting as the interviewer. A successful first interview will result in an invitation for a second interview, or even an immediate offer, if well executed.

**Types of Interviews**

Behavior-based or situation interviews are used when the interviewer is trying to find out how you react in prescribed situations. The interviewer knows what characteristics are important in that unique work environment and wants to determine your potential for success. The interviewer will outline situations similar to those you might face on the job, and your answers will be compared to those shown by successful employees. The premise is that past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior. The interviewer may give you a situation and ask what you would do. Use the pronoun “I” to emphasize what you did. The interviewer usually starts these questions with, “Tell me about a time when you...” or “What would you do if...?” or “If you have a group project and one member of the team is not contributing, what would you do?” These situation examples usually come from items on your resume.

The STAR technique is an excellent way to prepare vignettes to paint vivid pictures to demonstrate strengths, accomplishments, or highlight skills.

**Situation:** Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

**Thinking:** Reflect - What goal were you working toward? How were you critically analyzing the situation? What were you observing?

**Action:** Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don’t describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word “I,” not “we” when describing actions.

**Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and don’t be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end?

Write down your STAR(s) on index cards, create a 1-2 minute long vignette, and practice out loud.
Case interviews are usually used by management consulting firms. The purpose is to give you an opportunity to think out loud about interesting problems and how you would solve them. Frequently, there is not one right or wrong answer. The case is often somewhat vague, and you should start out by asking pertinent questions that will narrow the field. Usually, you will not have shown any knowledge of the case problem on your resume. Your resources are your analytical and problem solving skills. There is an entire literature on how to prepare for a case interview. Particularly good guides are those within our Wetfeet Career Library and a book entitled Case in Point. It is worthwhile attending one of a number of case interview workshops sponsored by the ’68 Center for Career Exploration.

Questions

Ask questions at the end! Do not ask questions which are answered in the recruiting material; however, you may ask for a more complete explanation of some statement contained in the publication. Your questions should reflect an understanding of the industry or organization. Before you ask your first question, you may want to mention points that weren’t covered in the interview. “Yes, I do have some questions, but first I would like to talk about…”

Salary

Salary is usually not discussed until the on-site interview or when an offer is made. If the interviewer does ask you, you can respond with a question about the salary range for that job or suggest that salary is only one of the factors you will consider when making the decision about which offer to accept.

Before you leave the interview, be sure you understand the next step in the process. The interviewer will tell you when you might expect to hear from the employer, if the second interview will be on the telephone, or if you will be asked to provide additional information. Do not ask the interviewer how well you did – you will probably know, and such a question puts the interviewer in a very awkward position.

A timely thank you note to your interviewer for his or her time and consideration is essential and required. Due to quick hiring decisions, send an email thank you note as soon as possible highlighting your appreciation, enthusiasm for the work, potential fit, etc. You can always follow up with a written thank you note, however you never want to jeopardize your candidacy with a “late” initial thank you!

Salary negotiation is discussed in more depth in the Closing the Interview and Next Steps section. If you do not feel comfortable about interviewing, schedule a mock interview with an Advisor or attend one of our workshops to learn interview basics.
Great! You’ve secured an interview. What’s next? It’s prep time.

The Days Leading Up to the Interview

☐ Envision yourself acing the interview. Be certain in your mind that you will execute the interview with perfection.

☐ Research. Find out all the relevant pieces of information including the following. Who will you be speaking with? What is their title, division, etc.? Are they politically strong enough in their organization to assist you if they wanted? How much time do they have to speak with you? What does the interviewer do on a daily basis? What specific position do you seek? What traits would an ideal candidate have in such a position?

☐ Prepare your story, and do so in writing. It is similar to writing several personal statements and essays and takes substantial time. Once you have your story on paper, proceed to tape record your answers to the questions you expect to get, and listen to yourself again and again, polishing your approach each time. Would you or your friends hire you based upon these responses? If not, edit and re-edit your responses.

☐ Review your resume and ask yourself questions. Think about why you elected to join a group and your contribution to it. Can you talk about a time when you defined a problem, how you planned the solution, what obstacles you encountered, and the outcome? Be sure to have a few stories or vignettes to illustrate your points during an interview. Good stories always leave good impressions and make you a memorable candidate.

The Day of the Interview

☐ Dress for success. No interviewer will object to neat, clean, tidy, and conservative.

☐ Plan to arrive early for your interview. If you are interviewing on campus, check the schedule for the interviewer’s name. If there are multiple schedules be sure you are looking at the right one. Arrive ten minutes early and put the initial wait to good use to review your notes about the employer, and review the plan you have designed for the interview.

☐ Do not be passive. Avoid answering questions in monosyllables. Never be afraid to say, “I don’t know” or “I hadn’t thought about the question in that way.” Always try to tell a story which includes why you chose a course or activity and your contribution to the group. Emphasize the positive viewpoint and never apologize for your major. You have learned to think, to communicate, to analyze problems, and pose solutions. Talk about any special knowledge you have gained from your course work and other activities or summer experiences.
Virtual Interviews

☐ Dress up for the interview, even if it is over the phone. Yes, we are not joking. They can’t see you, but they can sense you, and you will feel and act differently if you were dressed up than if you were not. That’s partly why radio performers don’t go to their offices in pajamas.

☐ Plan for technological difficulties. Keep your computer plugged in so the battery doesn’t die, and keep your phone on hand in case the interview mode changes at the last minute.

☐ Pay attention to your physical background. You’ll look much more professional sitting at a desk or table and against a neutral background without any clutter. Make sure that you don’t have wine glasses, cigarettes, or clutter visible in the background.

☐ Pay attention to the lighting. Aim light at yourself from the front, not from behind you. A lamp with diffused lighting about six feet in front of you works well. You can also try covering your light source with a cloth to soften it. And make sure that you’re not back lit from a window or light source behind you; if you are, you can end up appearing on the screen as just a dark silhouette.

☐ Keep other programs on your computer closed, especially if they might make noise during the call. You don’t want a beep every time you receive a new email, for instance, or a reminder popping up of that other interview you have tomorrow.

☐ Position yourself correctly. Don’t sit as close to the computer as you normally would. Instead, sit a bit farther back so that your face and upper shoulders are framed in the shot. Additionally, place the computer slightly higher than you normally do, so that it’s capturing you face-on and you’re not looking down at it. (An easy way to do this is to simply prop it up on some books.)

☐ Use the highest-speed Internet connection you can. On slower Internet connections, video may not align well with the audio and can cause awkward time lags, so use the fastest connection you can. If nothing else helps, try plugging your computer directly into your Internet cable, rather than using a wireless connection.

Remember to:

- Smile a lot while you speak on the phone. They can most certainly feel it and it will make all the difference.
- For phone interviews: Use hand gestures. They will feel your passion and expressiveness. Also, stand up. You are more alert and articulate as a result of standing up.
- Eliminate as much improvisation as possible. Read your story off of your notes while sounding completely natural on the phone. Eliminate errors as a result of this. They can’t see that you are reading off of your notes as long as you sound natural.
- Feel confident on the phone without being arrogant. Arrogance comes from ignorance. Confidence comes from competence.
- Remember to look into the camera, not at the picture. Looking directly into your webcam will read as direct eye contact on your interviewer’s end.
- If you find the image of yourself distracting, cover it.
- Recognize that it’s a numbers game, have a ton of phone interviews.
Interview Questions

Typical Questions

Tell me about yourself.
How did you become interested in ___? (industry, field)
With what other organizations are you interviewing?
Why should we hire someone with your background?
How are you different from other Williams students?
If you had it to do over again, how would you change your Williams experience?
Tell me about any leadership responsibilities you’ve had.
How do you organize yourself to complete a job?
What about our mission speaks to you?
How do you work within a group? Give me an example.
Tell me about a job you didn’t like.
Is there anything you would like to add, any questions?
Tell me about a time when you had to juggle at least three things.
How do your values align with our mission?
Why are you interested in my organization?
Our program lasts for two years – after that, then what?
Describe a pressure situation and how you handled it.
What is not on your resume that I should know?
What is the most important thing on your resume and why?
Describe your greatest accomplishment?
Describe your greatest failure?
Is graduate school in your future?
What have you learned from your mistakes?
What would your best friend tell me about you?
What do you know about our company?
Who are your heroes?
Describe a time when you had to sell your ideas to others with a different point of view and describe the outcome.
What’s the last book you’ve read, other than required reading?
What part of the newspaper do you read first and why?
What motivates you?
What does an English major know about advertising?
Tell me about your travels.
How do you define success?
What are the characteristics of a good manager?

Things You Should Not Be Asked During an Interview

An interviewer should not ask you questions that are not job related. Legislation exists to discourage discrimination making it illegal to ask about age; social, religious or political preferences; national origin; ethnic background; sexual orientation; or arrest record. If you are asked a difficult and possibly illegal question, try to avoid a direct answer. Be sure to mention any possibly illegal questions to one of the ‘68 Center for Career Exploration staff immediately after your interview.
Interview Questions

Next Steps

Negotiating a Salary

Often times, entry-level salaries are non-negotiable because you are one member of an entering “class” of new employees, all of whom are going through a similar orientation and training process. If this is the case, employers will usually tell you. Otherwise, you are free to attempt a negotiation. Benefits can always be negotiated as well. The negotiation can be a friendly exchange and logical discussion in which both parties have acceptable reasons for their positions. You have to determine whether or not you will accept the offer as initially given. If the answer is “no,” you need to determine what your breakpoint is (What will your anticipated expenses be? Cost of living, bills etc.). In other words, what is the minimum you will accept?

You will need to establish justification for the higher ask. Do your homework on what average starting salaries are in various fields by consulting with your career counselor or alumni advisors. Perhaps you have data from recent graduates who have received better offers. Whatever points you decide to base your decision upon, they should be based on objective data.

After the initial offer, always ask for time to consider it. Don’t try to negotiate for less than a $1000 differential. Employer responses vary: We’ll talk about it and get back to you. Our offer is firm. I’m sorry we can’t do anything, our offer is final. Think it through and see your career counselor to talk through your script before you call.

Running out of time to decide? Waiting to hear from other offers? Negotiating an extension of the reply date to an offer is an option to consider. Employers don’t want someone who is unsure about a job to be pressured into accepting, but they want to be sure they have the targeted number of exceptional new hires. Before you request your extension, check with other employers you’re interested in on where they are in their decision-making processes. You should have your potential offers in priority order so you know your top choices. Remember, once you accept an offer, either verbally or in writing, you must notify all other employers and withdraw from consideration.
Professional attire in an interview conveys respect for a potential employer and signals that you understand how to dress in a professional work environment. Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach to dressing professionally, this guide outlines some of the basic rules to follow.

**Business Professional vs. Business Casual**

Business Professional is the most formal approach for interviewing, but it needn’t be intimidating. We’re talking suits, dress shirts, ties, and polished shoes. Business Casual, on the other hand, rarely ever means “casual”. Think clean, pressed collared shirts and nice pants or a skirt; sweaters, but no tie; a sports coat or a cardigan. It’s more relaxed, can include more color and more personality. Confused? Let’s go a bit further:

**Business Casual**

- **Slacks or Skirts**: Wool, gabardine, chino, or corduroy slacks. Skirts should fall to the knee while standing. Despite being slightly more casual, slacks and skirts must still be crisp and wrinkle-free.

- **Shirts**: Collared shirts in solid colors or tasteful patterns are okay. You may keep the collar open under a sports coat, blazer, or sweater, and a tie is not necessary. Blouses can be more colorful, but should still be cut conservatively.

- **Sports Coats or Blazers**: In some cases, you may want to wear a seasonally appropriate sports coat or blazer. A blazer or sports coat can be a part of your outfit or worn in lieu of an overcoat. Consider corduroy, cashmere, cotton, linen, or wool gabardine fabric.

- **Sweaters**: A nice crew or v-neck sweater in good condition can complement your collared shirt, and a cardigan goes neatly with a blouse. Be sure there are no loose threads and that it’s not pilling. You can take it to a dry cleaner to have it de-pilled.

- **Shoes**: You can follow the rules for business professional above. However, you might also choose coordinating flats or loafers that match your ensemble.

- **Accessories**: Keep it simple, but feel free to pick accessories that show your personality.

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**What Not to Wear**

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Professional Dress
Business Professional

Suits: Choose a pant or skirt suit in black, gray, navy blue, or other neutral tones. Be sure it’s dry cleaned, pressed between heavy wearings, and tailored to fit your body. Suits made of wool blends tend to last longer and wrinkle less.

Shirts/Ties: Button down dress shirts and ties or blouses should be worn with your suit. Choose neutral colors. Avoid shirts that are too formfitting or sheer. Choose ties in solid colors or subdued patterns that complement the color of your shirt.

Leg wear/Socks: Socks should be a color one shade darker than your suit. If you choose to wear a skirt, pair it with stockings or tights, even in warm weather. They should complement either your skin color or the suit.

Coats: Consider investing in an all-weather 3/4 – or full-length wool coat for use in autumn and winter. A tan or black trench coat might be useful for mild or rainy days in spring and summer.

Shoes: Choose black or brown leather dress shoes, or a classic pair of pumps or flats in black, brown, navy blue, or taupe. Avoid extreme styles, i.e. excessively pointed or square-toed shoes, or shoes with unusually thick soles or high heels. Shoes should be polished, in good repair, and comfortable. Do not wear brown shoes with a black suit!

Belts: If your slacks or skirt have belt loops, you must wear a belt. Your belt should be leather and should coordinate with your shoes.

Accessories: The most important thing to remember is less is more.

Jewelry: Keep it simple. Avoid extreme styles. No more than two rings per hand. No ankle bracelets, and keep to one piercing per ear. Avoid wearing any other piercings during the interview as they may be distracting.

Briefcase or Portfolio: A leather briefcase or portfolio can be used for interviews and can carry a pen, notepaper, and copies of your resume. Always bring one nice pen, you’ll look prepared!
Stop by the ’68 Center!

Our staff can work with you one-on-one so you can practice your interviewing skills.

We can help by answering your questions and walking you through the process.

Meet with a Peer Advisor for quick questions!

Williams
’68 Center for Career Exploration

Connect with us!
Mock interviews are a great way to help you become a successful candidate. Book an appointment with an advisor in Handshake today!

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Meet with a Peer Advisor for quick questions!

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