Interviewing Skills

The purpose of a good resume is to get the employer to contact you for the interview. The purpose of the interview is to get a job offer. If you have a good resume, you may be invited to interview for a position. Interviewing is usually the second stage of the job search process. Remember that you are not only trying to get a job offer but you also need to assess if this employer/position is the right position for you. You need to evaluate the employer and the position. Interviews are a great opportunity to determine if you will fit within a particular organization. An interview is a two-way communication where both parties are examining the positives and negatives of entering into a contractual relationship.

*Learn as much as you can about the company and position you are applying for.* You need to have a basic understanding of the company, services and/or products they provide, business practices, industry trends, recent news or company changes and company culture. Much of this information can be found by researching the company’s web site, networking with contacts within the company and researching employer databases such as Hoovers.com. If possible, try to obtain a complete job description prior to the interview. If this is not possible, search for similar positions using the Occupational Outlook Handbook or O*Net. Both of these are web-based systems and you can look up information by job title and/or industry.

*Practice interviewing with the Career Services Office staff, friends, family or by yourself.* A well-prepared interviewee spends time practicing responses to questions. There is a standard set of questions that most interviewers will ask. Reviewing and rehearsing your responses will make you feel more comfortable during the interview. A style of interviewing that employers currently use is behavioral-based interviewing. The interviewer will ask questions that require the respondent to use actual examples of past behaviors. For example: “Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to complete a task or project.” Think about past experiences, both job and internship, and have ready examples about leadership, conflict management, interpersonal skills, initiative and motivation. Click here for a listing of Behavior-Based Interviewing Questions. Click here for a listing of Questions Asked By Employers.

*Be prepared to answer questions by employers and be prepared to ask questions as well.* Evaluating and having a thorough understanding of your interests, skills and abilities as they relate to the position will help you in answering questions. Although you want to be prepared with answers to questions employers may have, you also want to sound genuine and sincere in your answers. It’s best to have a general idea of the types of questions they will ask and be able to communicate your answers in a concise way, while allowing yourself freedom to change gears if asked a question outside of what you are prepared to answer. Below is a list of possible questions employers may ask and questions you may want to ask employers.
### STAR Behavioral Interview Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation or Task</th>
<th>Description 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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action you took</td>
<td>Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results you achieved</td>
<td>What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?</td>
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</tbody>
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### Examples of Behaviorally-Based Interview Questions

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
Tips from Employers

Predictors of Success When Interviewing

- Ability to communicate clearly and concisely
- Demonstrated teamwork skills
- Demonstrated leadership skills
- Demonstrated problem-solving skills
- Career-related work experience
- Involvement in campus or community activities
- Ability to identify and give good examples of transferable skills
- Knowledge of the organization
- Asking good questions
- Flexibility
- Enthusiasm
- Ambition and motivation
- People skills
- Good grades
- Professional Appearance

Knock-out Factors

- Poor career planning
- Lack of qualifications
- Inability to express oneself clearly
- Insufficient evidence of achievement
- Failure to research organization
- Showing a lack of interest in the organization
- Unwillingness to relocate
- Appearing overbearing, overaggressive or conceited
- Seeming to be interested only in money and benefits
- Failure to follow up after interview
QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

Be prepared for your job interviews by practicing your responses to the following questions. You should not, however, memorize answers; avoid giving rote responses. Instead, develop outlines of major points or themes you want to emphasize during the interview.

- What goals have you set for yourself? How are you planning to achieve them?
- Who or what was the greatest influence on the development of your career interests?
- What factors did you consider in choosing your major?
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Tell me about yourself.
- What two or three things are most important to you in a position?
- Tell me about a project you initiated.
- What are your expectations of your future employer?
- What is your GPA? How do you feel about it? Does it reflect your ability?
- Why did you select Cazenovia College?
- Tell me about how you perceive your strengths. Your weaknesses. How do you evaluate yourself?
- What was the most useful criticism you ever received and who was it from?
- Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used to solve the problem.
- What has been your greatest challenge?
- Describe a situation where you have a conflict with another individual, and how you dealt with it.
- What were the biggest problems you have encountered in college? How have you handled them?
- What are your team-player qualities? Give examples.
- Describe your leadership style.
- In a particular leadership role you had, what was the greatest challenge?
- What idea have you developed and implemented that was particularly creative or innovative?
- What characteristics do you think are important for this position?
- How have your educational and work experiences prepared you for this position?
- What have been your most satisfying and most disappointing experiences at Cazenovia College?
- Take me through a project where you demonstrate _____________ skills.
- How do you think you have changed personally since you started college?
- Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud of your contribution?
- Why did you choose the extracurricular activities you did? What did you gain?
- What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with the pressure?
- Tell me about a difficult decision you have made.
- Give an example of a situation in which you failed, and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view.
- What frustrates you most?
- What can you contribute to this company?
- What characteristics are most important in a good position?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- Are you willing to relocate or travel as part of your career?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- Describe a leadership role of yours and tell me why you committed your time to it.
- How are you conducting your job search, and how will you make your decision?
- What is the most important lesson you learned in or out of school?
- Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult. How was the person difficult, and how did you handle it?
- We are looking at a lot of great candidates; why are you the best person for this position?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What else should I know about you?
QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE INTERVIEW

When an employer asks if you have questions, you should be prepared with questions you can ask about the job. Asking questions demonstrates interest, allows more time to make a strong impression, and enables you to determine whether the job is really for you. All questions should be job related. It is imperative that you ask questions, if you don’t the employer may assume you are not interested in the job or have not researched the company and/or position.

- What specific skills and experiences would you ideally look for in the person filling this position?
- What will be the major responsibilities of this position?
- Could you tell me about some typical first-year assignments for a new or entry-level employee?
- What characteristics best describe the individuals who are successful in this position?
- How would you describe a typical day in this job?
- What is the career path for a person who is successful in this position?
- Could you discuss how new employees are evaluated during the training period?
- What kind of training can a new hire in this position expect in the first three months?
- Could you outline some special projects which are currently on-going in your department?
- How many people have been employed in this position and where have they gone? What is the average length of stay in this position?
- How does one advance in the organization?
- What is the greatest challenge your organization (or department you will be working in) faces during the next year?
- In what type of professional development activities do your employees become involved?
- What other positions and/or departments will I interact with the most?
- What impact might the economy have on my position in the next two to three years?
- What could you say are the biggest challenges this organization has?
- What changes do you anticipate in the next few years?
- What are the challenging facets of the job?
- How would you describe your corporation’s personality and management style?
- Why do you enjoy working for your firm?
- What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
- To whom would I report?
- What percentage of routine and detailed work would I do?
- How much opportunity is there to see the end result of my efforts?
- How much guidance or assistance is made available to an individual in developing his/her skills?
- Can you describe an ideal employee?
- Why did you decide to go with ABS Company?
- What has been your most rewarding work experience?
- Has your organization hired Cazenovia graduates in the past? If so, what is their success record?
- What will be expected of me as a new employee?
- Are there any negative aspects to the job?
- Will I have the opportunity to meet with those who would be my co-workers?
- How much travel is normally expected?
- What is the average age of the top managers?
- Do most managers in my field have graduate degrees? If yes, in what?
- If I am extended an offer, how soon would you like me to start?
- What else can I tell you about my qualifications?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- May have your business card?
<table>
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<th>INQUIRY AREA</th>
<th>ILLEGAL QUESTIONS</th>
<th>LEGAL QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| NATIONAL ORIGIN/CITIZENSHIP | • Are you a U.S. citizen?  
• Where were your parents born?  
• What is your “native tongue”? | • Are you authorized to work in the United States?  
• What language do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job.) |
| AGE                 | • How old are you?  
• When did you graduate?  
• What is your birth date? | • Are you over the age of 18? |
| MARRITAL/FAMILY STATUS | • What is your marital status?  
• With whom do you live?  
• Do you plan to have a family?  
When?  
• How many kids do you have?  
• What are your child care arrangements? | • Would you be willing to relocate is necessary?  
• Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary?  
(These questions are okay assuming they are asked of all applicants for the job.) |
| AFFILIATIONS        | • What clubs or social organizations do you belong to? | • List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job. |
| DISABILITIES        | • Do you have any disabilities?  
• Please complete the following medical history.  
• Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred.  
• What was the date of your last physical exam?  
• How’s your family’s health?  
• When did you lose your eyesight? How? | • Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job).  
• Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?  
• As a part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.) |
| PERSONAL            | • How tall are you? How much do you weigh? (Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential for the safe performance of the job.) | • Are you able to lift a 50 pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as this is a part of the job? |
| ARREST RECORD       | • Have you ever been arrested? | • Have you ever been convicted of _______? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question.) |
| MILITARY            | • If you’ve been in the military, were you honorably discharged? | • In what branch of the armed forces did you serve?  
• What type of training or education did you receive in the military? |