

# The Ultimate Interviewing Guide



*A comprehensive guide designed to assist you with preparing for an interview, impressing potential employers, and overcoming the most challenging interview questions!*

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# Preparing for the Interview

## Important Things to Know!

### Yourself

- Spend time reflecting on what makes you unique!
- Be prepared to discuss your skills related to the position, interests, strengths, weaknesses, values, and career goals.

### The Industry

- What is the employer's place in the market?
- What are the latest trends in this industry?

### The Employer

- What is their mission, vision, and values? What are they known for? What services or products do they offer?
- What new products did they launch recently? Who do they serve?

### The Position

- What are the specific job responsibilities?
- How do you qualify?

# Preparing for the Interview

## How To Answer “Tell Me About Yourself”

This is generally the first question in an interview. It is similar to your Elevator Pitch. Be sure to connect your qualities to the position and company.

### **Include:**

- Education & relevant experience & skills (what value would you bring to the organization)
- Something that sets you apart (what is unique about you)
- Why you want this job and/or why you are a good fit

### **Sample**

I am a 4th-year business administration student at Cal State Fullerton specializing in marketing. In my role as Vice President for the American Marketing Association, I presented 5 proposals for funding, resulting in two \$300 grants. I am interested in this position because...

# Behavioral Questions

## Why Are They Asked?

Behavioral questions are used by employers to evaluate a candidate's past experiences and behaviors in order to determine their potential for future success in the company.

## How Are They Asked?

The interviewer looks for desired skills and behaviors by asking open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses. As a candidate you should be prepared to answer these questions using the "S.T.A.R" method.

## How Do You Answer Them?

### S– Situation

Briefly tell the interviewer the situation or background of the story. Provide just enough information to give context.

### T– Task

Identify the problem or challenge you were faced with.

### A– Action

Describe the actions you took. Be sure to include your role in the story, not just what your group or team did as a whole. Use "I" not "we."

### R– Results

Explain the (positive) outcome of the situation and/or how you approach this type of situation now.

# Behavioral Question Categories

## LEADERSHIP

- Tell me about a project when you had to take the lead.
- Tell me about a difficult group you worked with. What were the obstacles? How did you handle it?

## COMMUNICATION

- Tell me about a recent successful experience in creating and giving a speech or presentation.
- Describe a time when you had to handle a difficult or angry customer/client.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

- Describe a project or situation that best demonstrates your problem solving abilities. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker.

## TEAMWORK

- Describe a situation where others you were working with disagreed with your ideas. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate or colleague not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?

## TIME MANAGEMENT

- How do you manage multiple tasks with competing deadlines?
- Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks?

# Behavioral Question Categories

## INITIATIVE

- Tell me about a project you initiated. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of an important goal you set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take?
- Tell me about a time when you improved a process or came up with a creative solution.

## ADAPTABILITY

- Tell me about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a goal that you did not reach. What obstacles did you encounter?

## Sample STAR Question with Response

Q: Tell me about a time when you successfully completed a new project.

**Situation:** "I was asked to develop a new electronic filing system to replace the paper files."

**Task:** "My supervisor wanted to eliminate all paper files. We thought digital files would increase customer satisfaction."

**Action:** "I developed an excel spreadsheet to log which files existed. I then prepared new electronic forms accessible online to replace the old forms."

**Result:** "The customers are now able to update the information online without filing a new form each time. All files were updated into the new system in a timely manner and customers expressed being more satisfied."

# Behavioral Questions

## Remember:

Anticipate possible follow-up questions during the interview. Follow-up questions allow the employer to get a better picture and address any aspects that may have not been discussed during your answer.

## Examples of Follow Up Questions:

- How did you handle that?
- What was your reaction?
- How did you feel about that?
- What was the outcome/result?
- What did you learn from that?
- What did you say?
- Can you please expand?
- Would you do anything differently?

- How did they react?
- How did you resolve that?
- What happened after?
- What action did you take?
- What steps did you take?
- Were you happy with the outcome?
- What do you wish you had done differently?

## Remember:

When preparing for an interview, reviewing common questions and brainstorming possible answers beforehand can help you answer questions more thoroughly and confidently.

# Other Common Questions

- **Why do you want this job? Why this company?**
  - Let your research shine!
- **What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses/Areas of growth?**
  - **Strengths:** What are they? Be confident. Provide examples of instances where you have used your strengths and how this has helped you succeed. (Be sure to tailor this to the position!).
  - **Weaknesses:** Show that you have identified these areas of growth and provide examples to show how you are working to improve them.
  - **Ex:** I believe I could be better with my Excel skills. I am currently tracking all of my spending in an Excel spreadsheet and using auto generating formulas in order to become more familiar with Excel's capabilities.
- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**
  - Does not have to be a detailed plan, simply show you have put some thought into your future goals and ambitions.
- **What characteristics will make you successful in this position? Why should we hire you?**
  - Connect yourself! Why should they choose you over other candidates?

## Important Things to Remember

- Confidently shake hands with the employer.
- Use appropriate eye contact.
- Smile and present a warm demeanor.
- Be aware of posture.
- If you are having a hard time answering a question, take a moment to gather your thoughts.
- Ask for clarification when needed.
- Remember you are also "interviewing" them to determine if it's mutually a good fit. Be sure to ask them good questions at the end of the interview!



# Professional Attire

## General Guidelines:

- Stick to conservative colors (black, navy blue, gray)
- Keep your accessories to a minimum
- Polished shoes/closed-toe shoes
- Tailoring is key! The right outfit can go very wrong if it does not fit well
- Avoid heavy make-up and colognes/perfumes
- Neatly trimmed facial hair

## Tops

- Solid colored shirt or non-distracting pattern
- Suits with a jacket and tie
- Collared dress shirts/blouses with a jacket

## Bottoms

- Slacks/pants or skirts not shorter than two fingers above the knee



## TIP

Your professional image helps make a critical first impression with employers. Make sure you prepare your wardrobe in a way that exudes professionalism and reflects your personality. Remember that along with your preparation, how you present yourself during the interview is an essential part of landing the job!

# End of the Interview Questions

## General Guidelines to Remember:

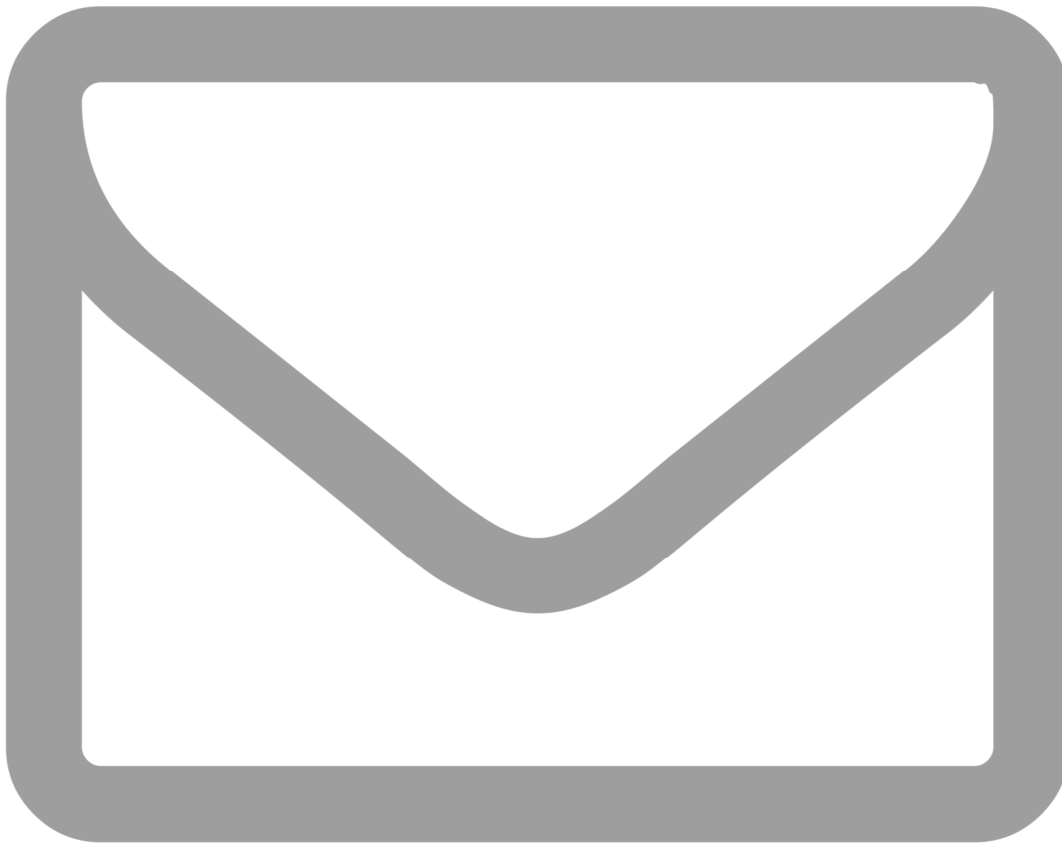
- Do not ask about benefits, vacation, salary or similar topics during the interview (this is a conversation to have after you receive the offer).
- While you will probably be given the opportunity to ask questions during the last 8-10 minutes of the interview, you can ask a question at any time if it relates to the discussion you are having.
- Use this time to ask things you can't find out online.

## Sample Questions:

- What skills and personal qualities are you looking for in your ideal candidate?
- Could you describe what a typical week/day/month on the job would be like?
- Was there anything about your job that came as a surprise when you transitioned from college to a corporation?
- What do you see in the future for this industry?
- How will this position be evaluated?
- How has this position evolved?
- Tell me about your initial and future training programs.
- What do you most like about working for this company?
- How would you describe your organization's management style?
- What have former employees done to succeed in this position?
- How are you responding to the problem of \_\_\_\_\_? (trend, competition...)
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

# Following up After the Interview

Upon completion of your interview, it is important to send an email or handwritten thank you note within 24 hours of your interview to make a good impression. In the thank you note, thank the interviewer for their time and recap some of the topics that were discussed. Find a way to summarize and restate some of the reasons why you are the best candidate for the position. At the end, ask any follow up questions that you might have regarding the position, job responsibilities, or company culture.



**\*\*Pro-tip:** Make it personal! Refer back to something important and personal in the interview to demonstrate that you were listening! (i.e. "I really enjoyed our conversation about company's name's commitment to diversity in the workplace.").

# Sample Thank You Letter

Dear (insert name):

Thank you so much for the time you spent with me discussing the position of \_\_\_\_\_. I sincerely enjoyed meeting with you and your team to learn the specifics of your requirements for the job.

Our conversation confirmed my interest in becoming part of \_\_\_\_\_. I was particularly pleased at the prospect of being able to contribute article ideas while collaborating with the head of the bureau and develop my multimedia skills. *\*Insert a few of your strengths as they relate to the position.\**

Please feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any further information. Thank you again for the opportunity to interview with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

(Full Name)

\*Tip: If you forget to mention a topic in your interview, you can mention it in your thank you letter! (i.e. a related project you did in class)

# Interview Checklist

## BEFORE

- Do your research:
  - Know the position and thoroughly read the job description
  - Company information, including mission/vision
  - Industry
- Generate "S.T.A.R." responses to common behavioral questions:
  - Adaptability
  - Communication
  - Initiative
  - Teamwork
  - Leadership
  - Time Management
  - Problem solving
  - Conflict
- Schedule a mock interview with a career advisor at Business Career Services.
- Check your interview attire for professionalism and prepare it a few days before.
- Verify the time, date, and location of your interview.
- Do a test drive to the site to know approximately how long your commute will be—accounting for traffic. Know where to park and where to check in.
- Bring a padfolio, 4-5 printed resumes, sample pieces (if appropriate), business cards, notepad, and pen.
- Arrive and check in no earlier than 15 minutes to your interview site. Remember, your interview starts the minute you walk into the building. Maintain professionalism and greet those around you as you wait.

## DURING

- Be confident and engaged.
- Shake their hand, make eye contact, smile, and be aware of your posture and tone.
- Politely and professionally ask for your interviewers' contact information.

## AFTER

- Send a follow-up email or thank you card within 24 hours.

# Need Help or Want to Practice?

**Schedule a Mock Interview with your advisor at Business Career Services today!**

Your career advisor will modify the mock interview to suit your position, company, or industry

*\*Please book 2 back-to-back appointments*

*\*After you make your appointment, send your resume and the job posting to:*

*businesscareers@fullerton.edu*

## How to make an appointment:

Make an appointment on our website!  
[business.fullerton.edu/CareerServices](https://business.fullerton.edu/CareerServices)

Visit us in  
SGMH 1401!

**OR**

Call us at  
(657) 278-8738

No time for an interview? Navigate to “BigInterview” through the “Interviewing” section of our website for a virtual interview!



# Use Firsthand to help you prepare!

For more potential interview questions, check out the industry-specific Interview Guides through Firsthand!

## FIRSTHAND

### Accessing Firsthand

CSUF business students, faculty, and staff have been automatically granted access to Firsthand.

*Easy 3-step process to gain access:*

- 1) Go to <http://fullerton.firsthand.co/register/>
- 2) Register your account with your CSUF e-mail
- 3) Verify your e-mail



### How Else to Use Firsthand for Interview Prep

Firsthand is a premiere resource website with insider information about companies, industries, and professions. Its easy-to-access resources include:

- 5000+ company profiles
- 600+ internship profiles
- Career topic guidebooks
- Sample resumes and templates
- Employer Research
- Industry Articles

# Notes

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