



LANDMARK
COLLEGE

Career Connections

802-387-6823

careerconnections@landmark.edu



Career Guide:

The Interview Process

Table of Contents

- [Preparation](#) Page 3
- [Deconstructing a Job Posting](#) Page 4
- [First Impressions](#) Page 5
- [During the Interview](#) Page 6
- [Classic Questions](#) Page 7
- [PAWS Worksheet](#) Page 8
- [Behavioral Questions](#) Page 9
- [Utilizing the STAR Approach](#) Page 10
- [STAR Interview Worksheet](#) Page 11
- [Recognizing Thematic Questions](#) Page 12-13
- [Questions for the Interviewer](#) Page 13
- [Continuous Improvement](#) Page 14
- [Mock Interview Prep Sheet](#) Page 15
- [Resources](#) Page 16

Preparation

The purpose of an interview

An interview is a mutual exchange of information between an employer and you, as a candidate for a position. The primary objectives are to:

- Supplement résumé information
- Show that you understand your strengths and weaknesses and have a sense of direction
- Enable the employer to evaluate your personality and attitudes in terms of the demands of the organization and position
- Allow you to gain information about the organization and the job that is not available through other sources
- Give you and the employer an opportunity to discuss the desirability of further contact or an offer of employment

Do your research

Research all available information about the organization

- Explore the organizations website and online presence. Search social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn for recent news and individual profiles
- Review products and services, mission, annual report, structure, and culture
- Identify personal, professional, and academic contacts that can provide additional external information about the organization

Deconstruct the job or internship posting

- Gather and print all information for the job or internship posting
- Identify required qualifications – for example, degrees, certifications, licenses & courses
- Make a list of how you meet required qualifications
- Identify sought after skills & abilities – such as communication skills, problem solving ability
- Make a list of your experiences that demonstrate required skills & abilities

Tailor Your Resume & Cover Letter

- Showcase the matches between required qualifications and your personal attributes, experiences, skills, and abilities as you develop your resume
- Focus on key qualifications and strengths for your cover letter
- Know yourself and demonstrate that you have thought about the position and why you are a good candidate

Deconstructing a Job Posting

Use the following checklist as you put together a draft résumé. Then review your draft with Transfer & Career Service staff.

Job Title _____ Employer/Organization _____

Type of job (internship, full-time, volunteer etc.) _____

Required Qualifications	How do you meet the criteria?
Skills, abilities and duties	How do you meet the criteria?

First Impressions

Your Online Presence

- Conduct a web-search on yourself to see what employers can access, including social networking sites. Make sure all information available is professional.

Personal Appearance

- Know that different organizations have different expectations regarding what you should wear to an interview
- When possible, visit the organization in advance of the interview to observe dress standards
- Research suggests that interviewers decide to hire you within the first 5 ½ minutes of the interview
- Try on clothing several days before the interview and ask someone you trust for their opinion
- Dress to impress, wear clothes that fit well, are clean and that display confidence
- Avoid tattered or over worn clothing, low-cut shirts, short skirts, distracting jewelry, overly fashionable attire (when in doubt dress conservative) and the powerful scents and odors from, perfume, cologne, food, or cigarettes

Arrive Early

- Provide yourself with ten minutes to observe the work setting and get comfortable

What to Bring?

Select a slim professional looking folder sleeve and neatly arrange documents

- Résumé & cover letter
- Reference list and reference letters
- Pen and blank paper
- Portfolio and work samples if appropriate
- Contact information of employer and directions to interview site
- The job description
- Correspondence with the employer, personal research, and notes
- Two or three questions to ask the employer

During the Interview

The Greeting

Your interview begins when you walk through the door

- Be courteous and professional with the reception staff
- When you shake hands, smile and make eye contact
- Take your cues from the interviewer, the setting will determine the type of greeting
- Don't worry about being nervous, that is normal
- Understand that "small talk" often proceeds the formal interview, this is meant to help you relax
- Pay close attention to names

The Questions

Interviewers ask a variety of different types of questions designed to learn more about the applicant in order to assess qualifications. With preparation and practice you will be able to respond to different types of interview questions and convey your attributes, skills, and experiences

- Actively listen to each question, it is okay to ask for clarification
- Make eye contact with the interviewer as you answer the question
- Glance at other members of the interview team to include them in discussion
- Be aware of your own body language and that of the interviewer and make adjustments if necessary
- Be confident and friendly, be aware of your tone and posture, do not fidget
- Stay focused on the topic of the question asked
- Be honest if you don't know the answer to a question, it is okay to ask the interviewer to repeat a question or clarify a question or to come back to a question.

The Closure

At the end of the interview you will be asked if you have any questions about the organization and the job

- Utilizing your prepared questions, ask the employer questions that were not addressed in the interview
- Find out when a decision is being made and when it would be appropriate to follow-up
- Thank the interviewers for their time and express interest in the position, take cues from the interview – it is often appropriate to shake hands at the end of the interview

Classic Questions

Many employers rely on a series of standard or “classic” questions and you should prepare for them:

- Tell me about yourself
- What are your skills related to this position?
- Why do you feel you will be successful in this type of work?
- What do your co-workers say about you?
- How do you go about making important decisions?
- What did you learn or gain from past work experiences, volunteer opportunities, or internships?
- How do you build and maintain effective work relationships with colleagues?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What are your short-term goals? Two years, five years? How do you plan to achieve them?
- Why should we hire you?

Responding to Classic Questions

Use the information that the employer volunteers about the organization and the position when responding. Try to summarize information about yourself so that it relates to the requirements of the position. When an employer asks these questions, the employer is looking for those aspects of your life that are relevant to the job, such as how you became interested in the field, related experience, and courses taken.

Answering Classic Questions – The PAWS Model

PAWS stand for – **Profile, Academic, Work & Skills**

Here are some examples of what to discuss in each of the four areas. The answer should take ninety seconds – the length of the average attention span

Profile – Mention how you became interested in this field and point out relevant community involvement, extracurricular activities, memberships, and personal interests that further demonstrate your commitment to the field

Academic – Talk about your educational background (degrees/diplomas/certifications) and other related training and professional development initiatives/courses that you participated in

Work – Highlight paid or unpaid work experience related to the job

Skills – Refer to specific technical skills that relate to the position or field (programming C++, knowledge of GIS) and relevant transferable skills (time management, problem solving skills)

PAWS Work Sheet

Use the space below to brainstorm ideas for responding to “classic” interview questions.

My Profile

My Academics

My Work Experience

My Skills

Behavioral Questions

Behavior-Based Interview Questions

Employers want to know how you have performed in the past. Your past experiences are a good indicator on how you will perform in the future. Behavior-based interview questions are developed around the skills and traits the employer considers necessary to do the job.

Examples of Behavior-Based Questions

- Tell me/us about a time when...
- Describe a situation in which...
- Recall an instance when...
- Give me an example of...

Common Behavior-Based Question Themes

- Working effectively under pressure
- Handling a difficult situation with a co-worker or customer
- Thinking creatively
- Being tolerant of a different opinion

Behavior-Based Questions & Negative Information

Remember that behavior-based questions often try to get at how you have responded to negative situations. You will need to have positive and negative examples ready. Prepare in advance for behavior-based questions. It is best to describe the situation in under two minutes.

- Identify six to eight examples from your past experiences where you exhibited top behaviors that an employer may seek
- Generate both positive and negative examples – employers will be interested in both
- Understand that employers are interested in situations that started off negatively and then culminate positively or with the best possible outcome
- Vary your examples; utilize work and volunteers experiences, Clubs and sports teams
- Try to use recent examples from within the past year. For example, a college student should avoid examples from high school.

Important Items to Remember with Behavior-Based Questions

Students who do not research and prepare for these questions find them difficult. Be certain to tell the truth, get to the point, and stay focused. Behavior-based questions are a good way to present special accomplishments, both personal and professional.

Utilizing the STAR Approach

Answering Behavior-Based Questions using The **STAR** Approach – **S**ituation or **T**ask, **A**ction You Took, **R**esults You Achieved

Situation or Task

- Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish
- You must describe a specific event not a generalized description of what you have done in the past
- Be sure to provide enough detail for the interviewer to understand
- The situation can be from a previous job or internship, a volunteer experience, a student club or sports team, or any relevant event

Action You Took

- Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you
- You may be describing a group project or effort – focus on what *you* did during the example provided
- Don't tell what you might do – focus on what you actually did

Results You Achieved

- What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Answering Behavior-Based Questions – What is the employer looking for?

The following questions are an excerpt from *The Ultimate Job Search Kit* by Damir Joseph Stimac. He emphasizes competencies sought by the interviewer with parenthesis.

- Describe a situation where you had to use reference materials to write a research paper. What was the topic? What journals did you use? (research & written communication)
- Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker or classmate criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has the event shaped how you communicate with others? (oral communication)
- Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company or class was facing. What was the challenge? What role did others play? (creativity & imagination)
- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a specific deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn? (time management)
- Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome? (teamwork)
- Describe two specific goals you set for yourself and how successful you were in meeting them. What factors led to the success of you achieving your goals? (goal setting)

STAR Interview Work Sheet

Use this worksheet to practice brainstorming specific examples that you can utilize when addressing behavior-based interview questions. Think of a specific example and then utilize the worksheet to structure your reply.

Brainstorm specific skills that you used in a certain situation that you can draw upon in your answer.

Situation or Task

Action

Results

Recognizing Thematic Questions

Throughout an interview, potential employers will employ different types of “thematic” questions to elicit responses that help them gauge your appropriateness for the position. Framing possible questions and preparing answers is the best way to prepare. Utilize a Mock Interview to work on thematic questions that you feel may challenge you.

Hypothetical Questions

Hypothetical questions ask you what you would do in a future work-related situation. Along with creativity and imagination, hypothetical or situational questions elicit problem-solving skills. Below are some examples of hypothetical or situational questions:

- A co-worker has a deadline to meet the next day. You too have projects that are due the following week. You are worried that you are not going to complete your assignments on time. The co-worker asks for your help. What would you do?
- You have a conflict with someone who is senior to you and is not your supervisor. Describe how you would handle it.
- Your boss is critical of a project you have completed. How would you handle this?

Creative & Analytical Questions

Some interviewers utilize unusual questions that have no direct answer. In these situations, the employer is interested in your ability to process information quickly. Logic and creative problem-solving figure largely into being able to answer these questions. Employers place emphasis on the thought process rather than the conclusion. Listed below are a few examples:

- Estimate the size of the DVD rental market in Tokyo, Japan.
- If you were President of the United States, what issue would you tackle first?
- Why is a manhole cover round?

Utilize this five step process for this type of question:

1. Listen carefully to what is being asked
2. Ask clarifying questions to determine what the interviewer is looking for
3. First state how you would gather the data necessary to make an informed decision
4. Discuss how you would use the data to generate options
5. Based on the data you gathered, the available options, and your understanding of the position, explain how you would make an appropriate decision or recommendation

Questions about the Organization

Researching the organization and being intimate with the job posting are essential parts of getting the job. It is also a great opportunity for the interviewee to state what they have to offer in relation to core business functions. Be prepared to interject what you have to offer when you see questions like these:

- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about the services we offer?

Questions about Career Goals

The most important part of your career is to get started and to keep it moving. It is important for the interviewee to think optimistically about the prospective job when applying and be able to articulate how the position can enhance your career. How you answer these questions sets an important tone. Listed below are two questions that often surface in an interview:

- Where does this position fit into your career goals?
- Why did you apply for this position?

Some key considerations to make as you answer career-based questions:

- Is this position in your field of study?
- How important is practical real world experience for you right now?
- Are you considering graduate school?
- Is this position a good starting point?
- Does the position involve teamwork, research, customer-service, projects or independent work and how would these experiences enhance your professional growth?

Questions for the Interviewer

When you draft questions for the interviewer, try to refrain initially from utilizing interview preparation tools. It is important to come up with questions that are based on your own personal research of the organization or business and based directly on the job posting and your qualifications, skills, and attributes. Some of your prepared questions will get answered during the interview – do not ask these questions. Asking questions is a demonstration of your enthusiasm and knowledge of the company, so make sure you have several questions that require an answer. Here are a few examples:

- Please describe a typical day on the job
- I'm interested in learning more about _____ (some facet of the organization) could you tell me more about it?
- I am clear on the job roles. I am particularly interested in developing _____ skills. What kind of opportunity will there be in this position to develop these skills?
- What do you like most about this organization?
- What do you see as the greatest threat to this business?
- How are employees evaluated and promoted?
- Is there a typical career path for a person in this position?

Continuous Improvement

Current data on the 21st century economy suggests that the present generation of new job seekers will change jobs more often than any other preceding generation. Simply stated, the growth of technology has made it difficult to predict what the jobs of tomorrow will truly look like. That means interviewing skills are more important than ever.

Career Cruising

Career Cruising is the online career development tool for all Landmark College students. We encourage all students to meet with a Career Connections counselor to activate an account. A great deal of the information in this resource was adapted from the "employment" section of the Career Cruising online platform. For further exploration of the additional interview topics listed below, log-in to your Career Cruising account to learn and build skills.

Interviews are a dynamic process. As you gain experience and increased levels of professionalism, a variety of different types of issues can surface. Utilize Career Cruising to find out more about challenging situations listed below...

- Salary
- Silence
- Note-taking
- Being stumped
- Negative situations
- Many short-term jobs or gaps in employment
- Having never worked or no recent work history
- Being over or under qualified
- Low grades
- Interview talker
- Ageism
- Disclosure of disability
- Reasons for leaving the last job
- Poor or no references
- Proprietary information

Please note that the "disclosure of disability" is an individualized process. Advice on how to disclose or not to disclose is a conversation to have with a career counselor or trusted faculty or staff member.

Mock Interview Prep Sheet

Conducting a Mock Interview with Career Connections counselor at Landmark College is a great way to get started on developing your interviewing skills. We understand that every student will enter the preparation phase for employment and internship interviews with different levels of readiness and goals.

Student Interview Experience – Check All That Apply

- I participated in Admissions Interviews for College
- I have interviewed for a paid work position or paid internship
- I have interviewed for a Landmark College paid work position
- I have never interviewed for a paid work position
- I have interviewed for a volunteer or unpaid internship position

Student Mock Interview Goals

- I want to gain practical interview experience
- I am preparing for Landmark College interviews – summer employment staff, Residential Advisor, Campus Ambassador, Orientation Leader, on-campus work study
- I am seeking summer employment
- I am graduating and entering the job market
- I am preparing for an internship interview
- I am preparing for an employment search in my chosen career

Student Mock Interview Areas of Focus

- Classic Questions
- Behavioral Questions
- Hypothetical Questions
- Creative & Analytical Questions
- Questions about the Organization
- Questions about Career Goals
- Questions for the Interviewer
- Disability Disclosure
- Complete Mock Interview addressing all different kinds of interview questions

Resources

This document utilized and adapted resources, with permission when possible, from the following sources:

- Career Cruising, Toronto, Canada: <http://public.careercruising.com/us/en/about-us/>
- Stimac, D. J. (1997). *The Ultimate Job Search Kit*. Lawrence, KS: Seaton Corp.
- University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Co-operative Education Program and Career Services: <http://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/>
- Wayne State University Career Services, Detroit, Michigan: <http://careerservices.wayne.edu/behavioralinterviewinfo.pdf>