



INTERVIEW LIKE A PRO

Congratulations! You've impressed an employer with your resume and cover letter, and the hiring manager has invited you in for an interview. If this scenario fills you with fear, you're not alone, but understand that by careful preparation and practice, you can handle any interview situation with poise and confidence. An interview is an opportunity to showcase your personal Brand YOU in a conversation with a prospective employer. Follow our guidelines below to ace your next interview!

KNOW YOURSELF

- Conduct a self-assessment. What are your standout strengths? What are your proudest accomplishments? How have you excelled academically or professionally? If you have trouble tapping into these areas of strength, consider reaching out to trusted colleagues, friends, family members, faculty at Anderson and ask for their perspective. Remember, the key skills and attributes that you showcase are important components of your personal brand!
- List examples that demonstrate your personal brand and how you will add value in this position. Employers don't want to take your word for it—prove to them that you have the skills and expertise needed to succeed in the position by illustrating your statements with examples that showcase your personal brand.
- Still struggling? Use online resources, like LinkedIn, to research attributes listed by professionals in your field, or look up your industry and position on O*Net to find lists of skills, knowledge, and abilities required to succeed.
- Ultimately, YOU choose how to present yourself to the hiring committee, so spend time perfecting your branding message!

KNOW THE COMPANY AND POSITION

- Analyze the job description. A job description is a wish list from the hiring team! Grab a highlighter and tear the description apart, focusing on key terms, skills, and abilities. Be ready to provide examples to demonstrate how you can fulfill each component of the position.
- Research the company. There's no such thing as performing too much research on the industry or the company. Find their company page on LinkedIn and follow them on Twitter and any other social media outlets available. Scour their company website—in fact, many larger corporations have entire sections devoted to careers!



- Read industry news. Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg Business, Forbes, Mashable, and more are all great resources. Understanding the forces that currently or may impact the company in the future will showcase your deep understanding of the industry and propel you to the top of the list. Integrate this knowledge into as many interview answers as possible, and use them to shape your questions for the employer.

SHOW THE FIT

- Tailor every answer to fit the needs of the company and the position. The employer has a hiring need, and it's up to you to prove you're the right fit. Use every opportunity to showcase your knowledge of the position and the company. For example: "After thoroughly reviewing the requirements for this position, I am confident that I can bring standout strengths in X, Y, and Z areas to add value."
- Make your past experience relevant, even if it's not in the same industry. Highlight transferrable skills, including communication skills, leadership skills, and teamwork and show how you have developed them and will bring them to this new role.
- Remember that every detail matters! Everything from professional dress to your handshake to your interview answers matters and is part of your personal brand. Make sure you're sending the right message by paying attention to every aspect of your appearance and preparation.

TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

According to a 2013 national survey of employers conducted by the National Association for Colleges and Employers, the top 10 qualities sought by employers across all industries are:

1. Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
2. Ability to work in a team structure
3. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
4. Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell or influence others

Notice that these skills are not specific to any one industry, so use everything in your academic, professional, and volunteer experience as examples!

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Resume/Background based questions are designed to learn more about your past experiences, drawing heavily from information on your resume or procured through lines of direct questioning.



Keys to Success: Incorporate your knowledge of the position into your answers. Use an example for as many questions as you can. Answer truthfully and as completely as possible—vague or incomplete answers will not help you get hired!

Examples:

- Tell me about yourself.
- List five words that describe your character.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why do you want this job?
- Where would you like to be in your career/life five years from now?
- If hired, how would you go about establishing your credibility with the team?
- What is your ideal company?
- What attracted you to this company?
- What are you looking for in terms of career development and advancement?
- How would you describe your work style?
- Do you work better alone or in a team?
- What would be your ideal working situation?
- What salary are you seeking?
- What do you know about our company?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What would you do if you won the lottery?
- Who has impacted you most in your career?
- What do you see yourself doing within the first 30 days of this job?
- What's the most important thing you've learned in school/previous jobs?
- What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- What three character traits would your friends use to describe you?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What are the qualities of a good leader? What are the qualities of a bad leader?
- Why should we hire you?

Behavioral Based Interview Questions. These “story-telling” questions are utilized by employers based on the idea that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. These types of questions are presented with leading phrases that indicate an example, or story, is required: “Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of a time when...”.

Keys to Success: Utilize the STAR Format!

S - state the **SITUATION** at hand

T - describe the **TASK** you needed to accomplish

A - Explain the **ACTIONS** you took to accomplish the goal

R - Describe the **RESULT** of the actions you took



Adhering to this format will help you stay focused on the question and eliminate overly vague answers.

- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you had to prioritize.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give an example.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Tell me about a time when you motivated others.
- What is the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years?
- Give me an example of a time you did something • wrong. How did you handle it?

Tough Questions

What if the employer asks for my biggest weakness? I know I'm supposed to answer honestly, but won't that hurt my chances?

When employers ask this type of question, they are not trying to find out your deepest secrets! Rather, it is an acknowledgement that every person has areas that can be strengthened or improved. Answering honestly and demonstrating that you are doing something to address this area of opportunity shows that you not only are able to conduct an honest self- assessment of your skills, but that you are proactive enough to pursue a change. Avoid clichés like “I'm a perfectionist” or “I always work too hard” and use it as an opportunity for you to explore where you'd like to see growth in yourself.

I read that sometimes companies ask brainteaser or “left-field” questions. What if I'm not sure how to answer or I get stumped?

Ask for time! Employers would rather you take a moment to collect your thoughts than immediately start talking and then get lost. Brainteaser questions are becoming less common, but you may encounter one at some point. The key is to walk the employer through your thought process—even if you can't come up with a perfect answer, they will gain insight into your analytic and problem solving skills.



FINAL TIPS

- Arrive 15 minutes early.
- Dress professionally (and use our resources if you're uncertain what that means).
- Your interview begins the moment you exit your car and enter the building, not when you sit down in the interview room. Treat everyone with respect and dignity—you never know who might be asked for their opinion of your candidacy later!
- Always come prepared with 3 questions to ask the employer. These questions should be more in-depth than the information you can easily find on a company website. For example, questions about projects that you might anticipate in the first 6 months to a year, or how performance and success is measured, are good places to start.
- Your interview is not over after the final handshake. You must send a thank you email or hand-written card within 24 hours, so make sure that you obtain everyone's contact information.



As Anderson's Career Development Facilitator, I'm ready to work one on one with you to help you design your interview strategy and practice your skills! Our office is here to help with every step of the job and internship search, so don't wait—make your appointment today by calling Kate Williams at 277-3290.

