

Evidence Based Interview Preparation

**Kristin Staunton and Katie Flanigan
Dietrich College Career Consultants
Career and Professional Development Center**

Carnegie Mellon University

Purpose of an Interview

Employer

- Evaluate and validate candidates' skills, experiences and demonstrated results against company needs
- Hire the best possible candidate
- Hire a candidate that fits well within the corporate culture and dynamic
- Hire a candidate that has long term potential

Candidate

- Display strengths and qualifications for a particular job position
- Evaluate the suitability of a potential position and employer
- Select an employer that fulfills your professional aspirations and allows you to do meaningful work

Employer Expectations

Non-Verbal

- Sign in / arrive early
- Eye contact
- Smile!
- Posture / mannerisms
- Confident demeanor
- Professional dress
- Neutral virtual background
- Listen carefully

Verbal

- Interest in and knowledge of position
- Understanding of self (strengths / opportunities related to position)
- Being able to communicate qualifications and related experiences clearly and effectively
- Specific examples of skills
- Confidence in ability to do the job
- Honest and open communication
- Questions to ask recruiter
- Thank you note

Types of Interviews

Behavioral

Case

Technical

Presentation

Types of Interview Questions

Specific: What were your major responsibilities during your summer internship?

Behavioral-Based: Can you recall a time when you were a member of a team and there was conflict in the group? How was the situation resolved?

Situational: What would you do if a client shared that they were dissatisfied with the service they were receiving from your company?

Technical/Industry: Describe your experience with statistical software.

Professional Introduction for an Interview

An employer will generally begin an interview by asking a candidate about themselves in order to understand their background and how it pertains to a position. Sample questions include:

- Can you tell me about yourself? / Can you walk me through your resume?
- Can you share more about your background and relevant experience?

Respond by connecting your present and past to the position for which you're interviewing; it should be a roughly 2-minute response.

Introduce current studies

Discuss what relevant skills/abilities
you're developing through academics,
professional or extracurricular
experiences

State what you hope to do

Introduce previous degree

Communicate relevant professional
experience, research, education,
projects, etc.

“Connect the dots”

Discuss how your background and
current work will help you in the position
which you're interviewing

Discussing Interest in Job or Company

An employer will usually ask why you're interested in their organization and/or the position for which you're interviewing. This is because an employer is genuinely interested in understanding your motivation for pursuing a job/internship at their company.

Which of the following is the strongest response to the question:

Why are you interested in this opportunity?

1. I think this would be a really good experience, and I could learn a lot in this role.
- 2. My CMU coursework and projects have helped me develop strong skills in editing and social media marketing. I really enjoy this type of work, and I want to begin my career in marketing at your company because I like your product and company philosophy.**
3. I love writing about technology. It's an exciting subject, and I'm passionate about contributing to this field professionally.

Behavioral Questions

“Tell me about a time when you ...”

“Give me an example of ...”

“ Think of project where you ... “

... failed

... tried something new

... worked as part of a team

... pitched a new idea

... overcame a challenge

- Have real stories ready – your “greatest hits”
- Show your accomplishments in the best possible light
- Be truthful; don’t exaggerate
- Be specific

STAR Response Method

- Use this formula to develop a 90 second - 2-minute response to behavioral and general interview questions, and to communicate any project experiences:

Situation

Describe the context of the situation that applies most closely to the question asked.

What was it?
When was it?
Who was involved?
What was your role?

Task & Actions

Specify what actions you took in the situation to complete the tasks and achieve your results.

What were you asked to do?
What did you do?
How did you interact with others involved?

Results

Share the results that followed due to your actions and/or the general outcome of the situation.

How did the situation end?
What metrics can you share?
What feedback did you get?
What was the outcome?

Which is Better?

Tell me about a time you used effective communication skills

Answer one:

Well, I think I'm really great at communicating with people, at least that's what my peers have told me. I believe I display effective communication skills in my everyday interactions and in my most recent position as a mentor.

Answer two:

In my current position as a mentor for the first-year seminar course, Eureka! at CMU, I have to communicate constantly with faculty, staff, and students. This can be challenging as there are a lot of people to interact with and keep organized. I thought about ways to engage people easily and decided to create a Facebook group where we can all share best practices or issues that have come up during the week. I have also encouraged students to come to our recitation sessions early in case they want to discuss something in-person on an individual basis. By being available where my students felt comfortable, both online and in-person, I've received great feedback from my faculty about my communication approach and there are at least 3-5 students who attend my pre-recitation talks each week.

What to Look for in a Job Description to Prepare

Content Creator at Away

Responsibilities:

- Generate story ideas, write and edit articles for HereMagazine.com.
- Collaborate with other brand marketing teams to develop content.
- Work cross functionally with Away's email, social, and web teams to build and distribute content.
- Oversee HereMagazine.com web production, by sourcing images, building articles in WordPress, writing captions, and implementing SEO best practices.
- Act as a gatekeeper for Here and Away brands.

Qualifications:

- Strong organizational skills
- Have strong editing and writing skills, with a passion for discovering human interest stories and uncovering unique article angles
- Comfortable with Wordpress
- Work with a "no task is too small" attitude
- Are never satisfied with the status quo, always thinking "how can we do travel content better?"
- Love to travel (but that's a given)

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Individual Exercise

1. These are examples of skills that you could be asked to demonstrate in an interview:

- Communication
- Teamwork / Collaboration
- Conflict management
- Flexibility
- Problem-solving
- Overcoming a challenge or failure

2. Pick 1 skill to work on today. You can work on the rest later, prior to an actual interview.

3. For each skill, think of a specific example from your experience that reflects that skill. Write down a story using that example, that could be used in an interview to illustrate the skill. Follow the STAR method to write each story.

Presentations

Purpose:

Assess your public speaking skills, ability to clearly communicate your knowledge/expertise of a specific topic or skill, ability to stay calm under pressure, and more.

What to Expect: Students are asked to present one or more projects/research, with an emphasis on their individual contribution to the project/research and the skills/abilities used to develop their solution.

What should you do?:

- **Consider the project selection carefully:** Think about and assess what skills and abilities the job description requires, and on which projects you've worked that best exemplify those skills. Consider the scope and complexity of your project choice.
- **Presentation:** Ensure that your content is organized clearly-present your information in a way that allows the employer to clearly understand your skills, abilities and knowledge.
- **Content:** Bring in elements that speak to that company or current projects of theirs; small touches make a big impact.
- **Practice!**

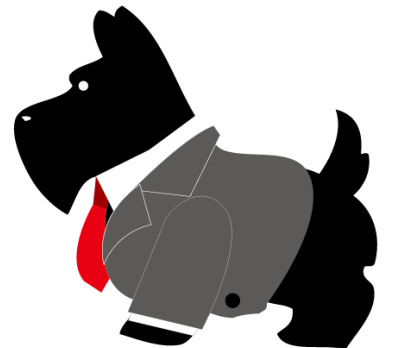
Discussing Strengths & Opportunities

An employer may ask you to discuss your strengths and/or developmental opportunities. This allows the employer to evaluate a candidate's:

- Perception of their fit for a job/internship
- Ability to conduct a self-evaluation
- Ability to improve upon existing skills/develop new skills and abilities

When you begin to respond to questions on your strengths and weaknesses:

- Ensure that you understand the nature of the question. Are you being asked to review technical or soft skill strengths and weaknesses?
- Provide the strength or opportunity/weakness, followed by a specific example of a time in which you leveraged that strength or mitigated/improved upon the weakness.



Do's and Do Not's of Strengths and Weaknesses

Do not

disguise a strength as a weakness

- “I’m a perfectionist.”
- “I can’t say ‘no’ and take on too many responsibilities.”

Do

discuss an opportunity/weakness you’re actively working to improve upon

- “I’m working on my public speaking skills by volunteering to present on behalf of my group for course presentations.”
- “I’m utilizing Coursera to learn additional Python libraries to support my research in machine learning.”

Do not

use a weakness that is critical to the job (unless prompted to do so)

- “I don’t have strong attention to detail” for an editorial role.
- “I don’t enjoy teamwork” for a position that requires you to collaborate as part of a team.

Do not

disclose an opportunity that is definitive or irrelevant to your career

- “I give very direct feedback and sometimes that upsets my teammates.”
- “I don’t have strong proficiency in German.” (for a journalism position in the United States)

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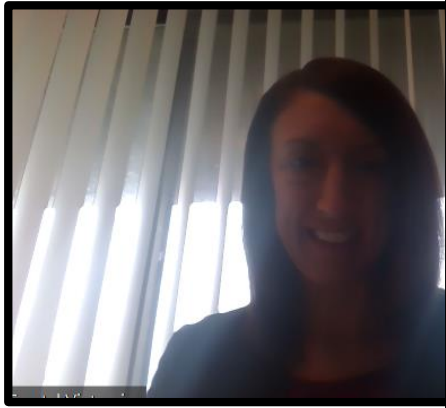
Types of Interviews

- Phone Interview
- Video (Live)
- Video (Recorded – HireVue)
- In-Person (subject to health guidelines)

Private interview rooms can be scheduled in the CPDC Interview Center, lower level Cohon University Center, Mon-Fri 8:30-5:00 pm ET.

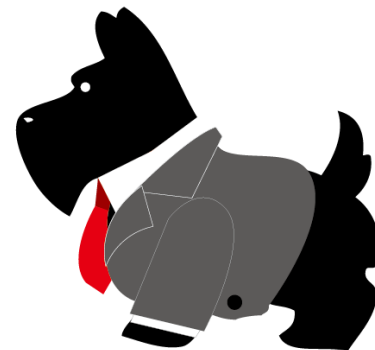
Email recruit@andrew.cmu.edu to reserve a room.

Virtual Interview Set-Up



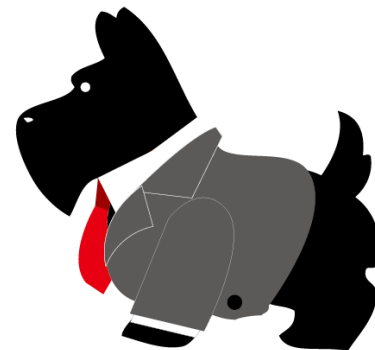
Virtual Interviews – Tips and Tricks

- Arrive early to check on your picture, audio, and how you look in a mirrored camera angle
- Position the camera at eye level, at arm's length
- Check your background - it doesn't need to be bare, but it needs to be minimal
- Dress professionally (this is an actual interview)
- Always look at the camera (put a smiley-face up by the camera via a post-it note or googly eyes)



Other Tips

- Have your resume and a sheet of paper in front of you
 - Resume can be marked up with “trigger words”, like “challenging”, “teamwork”, “success”, “problem-solving”, so you know which experience to talk about when prompted
 - Sheet of paper can have your questions for the employer, or key notes for classic interview questions
 - Never write out full responses or read directly from page – you will come off as too rehearsed!
- Always smile when responding and give non-verbal cues throughout
- Acknowledge when you’ve been asked a difficult question: “That’s a good question, let me think about it for a moment!”
- Listen carefully while being asked the question, and also be prepared for silence after you respond while recruiter takes notes



Be Prepared to Ask Questions

Examples:

Is there a typical career path for people beginning in this role?

How are projects allocated?

How would you describe the company's corporate culture?

Do employees socialize with each other outside of the office?

Could you tell me about your performance review process?

How is success measured?

Follow Up Thank You Note


- Thank them for their time and interest in you within 24 hours after the interview
- Reiterate your qualifications and interest in the position
- Mention something you enjoyed talking about during the interview, or something you learned
- Ask follow-up questions



Handshake Resource - Big Interview

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 Kevin

Fast Track

16 VIDEO LESSONS


Start now




Mastery Track

50 VIDEO LESSONS


Start now






Interview Playbooks

143 VIDEO LESSONS




Resume Curriculum

8 VIDEO LESSONS



Written Curriculum

9 WRITTEN MODULES



Negotiation Curriculum

11 VIDEO LESSONS

90 days

First 90 Days Curriculum

21 VIDEO LESSONS

Resources

[Big Interview](#): Watch videos to learn; record answers and get feedback

[Tip Sheets](#) – Interviewing Basics, Technical/Case, Virtual/In-Person

HireVue Candidate Resources:

- <https://www.hirevue.com/candidates>

Next Steps

- Practice your Interview Communication using *Big Interview*
 - Located in Handshake (Career Center > Resources > Big Interview)
- Schedule a mock interview
 - Career Center > Appointments
- Any questions? Contact Kristin: kstaunton@cmu.edu or Katie: katharif@andrew.cmu.edu