

Behavioral Interviewing

The STAR model:

STAR Answer	
S	Describe a Situation
T	Describe a Task
A	Describe the Action you Took
R	Describe the Result of your action

ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS!

Utilize the Mock Interview resource Big Interview

Practice your interview skills, whether you're interviewing for a job or graduate school.
<http://cpp.biginterview.com/>

Career Center Calendar

Check www.cpp.edu/~career for current dates, times and locations for Drop-In Advising, workshops and career events.

“Drop-In Advising”

Brief, 10-15 minute sessions with a Peer Advisor who can provide you the tools and resources to be successful. No appointment necessary!

Monday-Friday: 11am-3pm

Summer Hours:

Please call office for Summer hours.

“Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her own weight.” If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is gaining wide acceptance among employers. By focusing on the applicant's past actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

Behavioral questions concentrate employers' questions on areas they believe are important to candidates' success. If you have training or experience with traditional techniques, you may find the behavioral interview quite different in several ways:

- Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you behaved in the past.
- Expect the interviewer to follow up, question and probe (think of “peeling the layers from an onion”).
- The interviewer will ask you to provide details, and may not allow you to theorize or generalize about several events.
- The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are more important.

The behavioral interviewer works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

- Employers predetermine the skills they want, and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. To identify which skills an employer might be seeking, talk with others in the field, read the company literature (especially job descriptions), and listen closely during the company information session.
- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors, actions or skills, especially involving coursework, projects, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.
- Use examples from extracurricular activities such as running a marathon, your volunteer work, exhibiting paintings in an art show, climbing Mt. Whitney, biking across country or other personal accomplishments.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation and be ready to give details if asked.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don't embellish your examples or omit important facts.
- Always listen carefully to each question, ask for clarification if necessary, and answer the question completely.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

These are often difficult questions to answer on the fly. Careful preparation is the key to effective answers:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Give a specific example of a time where you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.
- By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- Describe a time in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you keep yourself focused?
- Give me an example of an important goal you've set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

TELEPHONE/VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING

Telephone and virtual interviews are often used to screen candidates who are being considered for in-person interviews. They may also be used by employers as a way to evaluate your communication skills, or to minimize the expense involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates. Popularity of virtual interviews has been growing throughout the years. It provides the employer to better connect with their candidates.

Telephone interviews are sometimes arranged in advance, but when you have been actively forwarding your resume to employers, or if your resume is searchable in an on-line job board, you never know when an employer might call and ask if you have a few minutes to talk. Conversely, virtual interviews are set up in advance giving you time to prepare.

How do I prepare?

When you know about a telephone or virtual interview in advance, prepare for it just as you would for a regular interview.

How can I succeed?

In a telephone and virtual interview, your objectives are:

- Follow the same guidelines as for a traditional interview (please refer to our interviewing handouts found online and in the Career Center)
- To agree on a time, date and place for your face-to-face interview, or to learn when you can expect to hear from them. It is acceptable to ask for an appropriate time for you to follow up with the interviewer.
- To ask two or three brief question about the position, if the job description was very general or not clear. For example, you could clarify your understanding of the job by

asking a question like “does this position report to the finance department?”.

Most of the time, telephone and virtual interviews are NOT the time to ask detailed questions about specific job responsibilities, or to discuss salary or benefit packages. The interviewer is usually just trying to get to know you, and there will be plenty of time during in-person interviews or during the offer process to explore other considerations.

Tips for Effective Interviews

Getting Ready...

- Dress Professionally (be aware the employer may ask you to stand up to see your entire outfit). Neutral and solid colors are recommended for virtual interviews because they look best on video and do not create distractions. Women should stay away from shiny jewelry.
- Keep your resume in clear view, so you can refer to it if needed.
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted.
- Clear the room of distractions. Turn off the stereo and the TV, close the door and eliminate the possibility of background noises intruding on your conversation. For virtual interviews, become familiar with your technology in advance and make sure to set up 15 minutes prior to your interview.

During the Interview...

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
- Keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. When you smile, your facial muscles help your voice sound upbeat, and conveys positive verbal queues to the listener.
- For virtual interviews, look at the camera, NOT your monitor! Be aware of the transmission delay that often occurs with Web-based interview connections.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- You may ask about the interviewer's position with the firm.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer. Let them finish speaking before you speak.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts before speaking.
- Give concise answers; attention spans are shorter on the telephone.

After the Interview...

- Review your notes about what you were asked, what you learned, and how and when you will follow up.
- Remember to say "thank you." If you are able to obtain contact information for your interviewer, follow-up with a thank you note that reiterates your interest in the job.