Interviewing is all about first impressions. Your overall appearance, demeanor and attitude are the keys to success. Bottom line: people hire others they’d enjoy working with, and who share their values and work ethic. With proper research, practice, a polished personal presentation, and a positive attitude, your chances for success are greatly increased.

**Preparation**

Before the Interview

- Thoroughly research the organization and position. Research current issues affecting the organization/industry to uncover trends and current events.
- Prepare situational examples detailing major behaviors (leadership, pressure, failure, etc). Be prepared to discuss both successes and challenges, focusing on results. Tailor all responses to the specific organization/industry (very important for career changers).
- Prepare for the ‘tell me about yourself’ question. A good strategy: Think in terms of ‘why should we hire you’ and prepare your answer accordingly.
- Prepare relevant/thoughtful questions to ask that subtly highlight your research.
- In advance, prepare a strategy to get to the interview at least 20 minutes early.
- Practice, practice, practice. If English is not your first language, practice speaking clearly. Practice your answers out loud.
- Make sure your interview attire and your personal presentation are perfect. Err on the conservative/business side. The assumption is this is the best you ever look.

**What to Wear**

**Women**
- Invest in a good business suit (skirt or slacks) in darker colors
- Avoid open toed shoes
- Wear hosiery if you choose to wear a skirt
- Simple jewelry, make-up, and hairstyle
- Skirts should be no shorter than knee-length
- Conservative blouse: nothing low cut or see through

**Men**
- Invest in a good business suit in darker colors
- Wear an ironed dress shirt with a tie
- Well-groomed hair and fingernails
- Dark mid-calf socks with polished dress shoes
- Avoid cologne, facial hair, body piercings, and visible tattoos

Click on the Pinterest Logo and search UNCC University Career Center page for more professional dress ideas!
**During the Interview**

- Put yourself in a friendly, self-marketing frame of mind. Smile and be confident.
- Always let the interviewer guide the conversation. Any humor or small talk should be introduced and controlled by the interviewer.
- Listen very carefully to each question and answer exactly what was asked. Cover all the relevant points in your response. Do not interrupt the interviewer.
- Say only positive things about previous jobs and coworkers. For responses on negative issues, emphasize how you turned it into a positive/what you learned.
- You must convince the interviewer you can add value to the organization. Proactively sell your skills and experiences, emphasizing how you can add value.
- If you can’t think of an immediate answer ask for clarification of the question. This gives you time to formulate a proper response.
- Give concise, 2-minute-or-less answers, using real-life examples, for all questions. If the interviewer looks distracted or bored, shorten your answers.
- Ask several thoughtful questions about the organization and job when invited to do so. Your questions regarding salary/benefits and vacation are inappropriate until 2\(^{nd}\) or 3\(^{rd}\) interview. As always, take your cues from the interviewer.
- Your final question should address the decision-making timeline and interview process for the position. Get business cards/contact info for all parties involved.
- Thank the interviewer and if interested in the position, say so. Be enthusiastic.

**After the Interview**

- **IMMEDIATELY** send a thank you note, whether you think you want the position or not. Depending on the organization/interviewer, either a handwritten or typed thank you note or e-mail may be appropriate. The longer you wait, the less effective it will be. Reaffirm your interest in the position and re-emphasize why you’d be the perfect candidate. Re-address any answers if appropriate. Keep it short but powerful.
- A well-timed phone call or e-mail is appropriate if you haven’t heard anything by the pre-determined “deadline”, but only contact once or twice. Hounding doesn’t work.
- Be aware that other business is often prioritized over hiring decisions. Be prepared for delays and respectful of staff, such as receptionists (who may have hiring input!)

*Need formatting help? Check out our Cover Letter Guide!*
Types of Interviews

Phone Interview
• Often the first step in the formal interview process
• Used to “screen” for basic qualifications and fit
• Often conducted by HR / Recruiting

Traditional One-on-One Interview
• The most common form of an interview
• Can be conducted by a hiring manager or HR
• Questions about your background and experience
• Questions about your ability and desire to do the job

Panel Interview
• One candidate is interviewed by 2 or more people
• Allows interviews more opportunity to form opinions about you in a short period of time
• Often composed of reps from different parts of the organization

Group Interview
• Candidate is jointly interviewed with other candidates
• Assesses ability to interact with others while demonstrating leadership and showcasing your abilities

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Features and benefits of using InterviewStream include:

• **Convenience:** You can practice online, any time of the day or night, from the comfort of your own room.

• **Interview Questions Specific to your Field:** You have the option of conducting an interview with questions that are specific to your future career field. InterviewStream organizes practice interview questions by industry. This allows you to create your own practice interview related to Business, Education, Technology, Sciences, Health Care, Communications, Art, Non-Profit, Social Services, Military, Recreation, and more.

• **Getting Feedback:** After you conduct a practice interview on InterviewStream, you’ll have a video of the entire interview that you can access later. You can send anyone (professors, family members, friends, mentors) the link to this video and ask for their feedback on your responses and non-verbal communication. You also have the option of reviewing the final video yourself and revisiting any of your responses to improve your performance.
Behavior-Based Interviews

The behavioral interview is used by employers to evaluate a candidate’s experiences and behaviors in order to determine their potential for success. The interviewer identifies desired skills and behaviors, then structures open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses. A rating system is developed and selected criteria are evaluated during the interview. As a candidate, you should be prepared to answer the following example questions and statements thoroughly.

ADAPTABILITY
• Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
• Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a classmate’s or colleague’s working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.

ANALYTICAL SKILLS / PROBLEM SOLVING
• Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?
• Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. To whom did you make the recommendation? What was your reasoning? What kind of thought process did you go through? Why? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?

INITIATIVE
• Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
• Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do? What was the result? What do you wish you had done differently?

COMMUNICATION
• Tell me about a recent successful experience in making a speech or presentation? How did you prepare? What obstacles did you face? How did you handle them?
• Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your classmates or co-workers? How did you do it? Did they accept your idea?

DECISION MAKING
• Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without all the information you needed. How did you handle it? Why? Were you happy with the outcome?
• Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What obstacles did you face? What did you do?

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Describe the challenge and expectations. What needed to be done? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Elaborate your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Explain the results: accomplishments, recognition, savings, etc. Quantify.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘STAR’ Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions

http://www.RightAttitudes.com
Researching a Company

- Make sure to read everything on their organization’s website, including the About Us section.
- Look up the company on LinkedIn to see about any connections you might have or more information about the industry and their competition.
- Utilize the library reference desk to find any relevant news articles or journal entries about the organization.
- Remember – your knowledge of the company can make or break your interview!

Questions for Employers

Your turn to ask questions! Always be prepared with 10-15 questions, even though you might only ask about 2-4.

Sample Questions
- What are the organization’s strengths and weaknesses compared to its competition?
- Could you explain your organizational structure?
- How would you describe the company’s workplace culture?
- What percentage of routine, detailed work will I encounter?
- How much opportunity will I have for decision-making in my first assignment?
- Can you describe an ideal employee?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted with this company?
- Tell me about initial training and/or professional development opportunities offered here.
- What makes your firm different from its competitors?
- What do you most enjoy about your work with this organization?
What You Already Have to Offer
Focus on your special skills and qualifications for the job. This is essential to the employer. Remember that, as an international student, you actually have certain advantages over U.S. students:
• You have spent several years living and studying in a totally different culture. By doing so, you have already demonstrated how adaptable you are to new environments. An employer wants to hire someone who will adapt well in a new job environment.
• You are statistically one of very few people from your country who have uprooted themselves to come to the U.S. for an education. This means you know how to take initiative. U.S. employers like employees who take initiative.
• If your native language is not English, you have successfully pursued an educational program in a foreign language.

Tips for International Students

Knowing Yourself and the Company
• Employers in American job interviews will be evaluating how well you fit in with the work environment, your abilities to do the work, and what kind of employee you will be. As international students, they will also evaluate your language abilities.
• Show you are familiar with the company/organization and the position by doing your research before the interview.
• Know how you will fill their need. To do so, you will need to know about the company/organization, the position, the work environment, and the strengths/challenges of the company/organization.
• For many students from cultures outside the USA, speaking about your past accomplishments can sometimes be challenging. In an American interview, you will need to speak confidently about past accomplishments in order to market yourself well.

Nonverbal Communication
• Body language in an interview can be challenging for many international students:
• Typically, when you arrive for an interview, the employer will shake your hand.
• You want a firm (but not too firm) handshake; shake hands with all interviewers in the room.
• Other kinds of physical contact during the interview are not expected and can hurt your impression.
• Be calm and maintain good posture. Show enthusiasm for the job.
• When answering questions in the USA, making eye contact with the interviewer creates the impression that you are honest, personable, and confident in your answers. If you are from a culture where less direct eye contact is the norm, try to get some practice with direct eye contact with people you are comfortable with first.
• Sometimes focusing on the person’s eyebrows helps give the appearance that you are making eye contact.
• If you are being interviewed by multiple people, make eye contact with all of them when answering their questions.
• When the interview concludes, you will be expected to shake hands with the interviewer(s) again.
Reasons for Being Rejected

You thought you did a great job in the interview, but the employer just called to let you know they are moving forward with someone else. Why? Where did you go wrong? Below are some of the most common reasons why you may not have made it further along in the interview process. Talk with a Career Team member on ways you can improve!

- Poor Personal Appearance
- Overaggressive, arrogant
- Lack of confidence
- Inability to express themselves
  - (voice, grammar, diction, language skills)
- Lack of interest, passion, enthusiasm
- Overemphasis on money and benefits
- Doesn’t know enough about the job/organization
- Unwilling to pay dues – expects too much too soon
- Lack of social skills
- Indecisive
- Poor eye contact
- Lack of vitality
- Little sense of humor
- Unwillingness to relocate
- Cynical attitude
- Lazy
- Inability to take criticism
- Doesn’t share organizational values/poor fit with organization
- Poorly selected questions about position/organization

Mock Interview Program

Take time to practice with us in the following ways:

All UNC-Charlotte students and alumni can use InterviewStream to conduct free, online practice interviews with a webcam. You will have access to frequently asked interview questions, or you can choose your own questions, or you can select a prepared interview. You can record yourself responding to each question, retry, and review the final product to improve your performance.

In-Person: schedule time with your Career Advisor through Starfish to practice one-on-one for a specific opportunity or industry.