





Interviewing and job offers

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Company research: They expect it!

There is nothing worse for an interviewer than a candidate who does not understand the basic job functions, industry or company. This is where candidates can set themselves apart. The more research you do, the easier it is to connect your experience and skills to the company and job description.

QUESTION

"Why should I hire you?"

ANSWER

"Aside from being qualified for the position, I noticed in my research that ... and I ..."



Places to research

- Company website
- LinkedIn and current employees
- Annual reports
- Better Business Bureau
- Glassdoor
- Industry and business publications

Know the answers to the following questions:

1. What do you know about the company's mission, vision and values?
2. Where does the company operate, is there a headquarters, in how many locations and countries is it located, and how many people work there?
3. What does the company do? Does it provide a product or service? What is it? Is it high end or low end?
4. Who are the customers?
5. Who are the competitors?
6. Is the company family owned, publicly traded, nonprofit or government?
7. What is the office culture or organizational structure?
8. What makes the company special?
9. Any awards, recent news, industry changes/issues, etc.?
10. What departments, projects and products interest you? Why?

You may not be asked directly what you know about the organization, but get creative in order to incorporate your research in your interview answers.



"Be yourself. Who else is better qualified?"

– Frank Giblin

Q

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Write down the questions that come up during your research, and save them to ask when you are asked "Do you have any questions for us?" at the end of the interview.

Sample interview questions

Focus answers on “you as a professional”; avoid focusing answers on “you as an individual.”

Background

- Tell me about yourself (see page 47)
- Why are you interested in the role?
- What qualifies you for the role?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What is your biggest strength/weakness? What has been your biggest achievement?
- Why should we hire you?

Behavioral

See STAR answers on next page.

- Describe a time when you had a difficult customer and how you handled it
- What have you learned from a past mistake?
- How do you resolve conflict within a team?
- Describe a project that failed

Company- and culture-specific

- What do you know about our company?
- What led you to apply here?
- What qualifications/personality traits would you bring to our company/office/team?
- What database/software programs are you familiar with?
- Why do you want to work for our company?

Professionalism/work ethic

- How do you manage your time?
- How do you evaluate success?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What do you look for in a supervisor/manager?
- Describe your ideal work environment
- Do you work better independently or in a team?
- Describe your ideal job
- Where do you see yourself in 5–20 years?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?

Academic

- What caused you to choose your particular major?
- What was your favorite course? Least favorite?
- What was your most rewarding experience in college?
- Did you complete an internship?

Questions to ask the interviewer/employer when they say, “What questions do you have for us?”

- How will you measure the success of the person in this position?
- What are your expectations of the person in this role in the first 90 days?
- What are some of the challenges in this position? Company?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to have to excel in this position?
- Why do you enjoy working for this company?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What are the company’s short- and long-term goals? What role would I play in those goals?
- What are the typical career paths in this company?
- Is there anything that concerns you about my background being a fit for this role?
- What is the timeline for next steps? If I haven’t heard from you by _____, is it all right if I follow up with you?



Illegal questions

- When do you plan to retire?
- Are you married?
- How old are you?
- Do you have or hope to have children soon?
- Do you have any health problems that would cause attendance issues?
- Where do you worship? What church do you belong to?
- Are you a Republican or a Democrat?
- Is English your first language?

It is acceptable not to answer illegal questions by simply pointing out that the question is illegal and that you would rather not get the interviewer into trouble by answering it.

Top 50 most common interview questions and answers:

- tinyurl.com/CommonInterviewQandAs

Give a STAR answer to behavioral questions

Elaborate with direction! These questions are all about the art of storytelling. When an interviewer asks for “an example of” or “a time when,” give them a STAR answer:

It is hard to know exactly what situational questions an interviewer will ask, but look at the job description and decide what areas they will likely focus on.

Example question

Give an example of when you provided great customer service.

Situation

Set the scene. What was the specific situation you were involved with? DO NOT pick a daily situation or duty you performed because it will be too general. This should relate to a specific project or moment in time.

In my time with Enterprise Rent-A-Car, customer service was always of the utmost importance. There was a customer who would fly into the airport every week and was always grouchy, so people always tried to avoid helping him.

Task

What was the end goal or obstacle you faced?

I decided to focus on being the customer's go-to person and made sure he consistently had a positive experience.

Action

What specific action did you take to accomplish the task? Keep focused on YOURSELF and YOUR ACTIONS, and do not get bogged down in the unrelated details. Do NOT dwell on a coworker's or a boss's shortfalls and mistakes or issues you've had with them.

I made a reminder every week to set aside the specific car the customer liked and made him feel like a special customer. I would have his contract ready so I only needed to check his license, swipe his credit card and send him on his way in a timely manner.

Result

What was the outcome? Take credit for what happened. Give the story closure. What did you accomplish? Always end on a positive note even if you did not achieve the result you intended. What did you learn from the mistake?

After only a few weeks, I had built such a great relationship with him that he would even choose to wait in my line just to work with me!

To start, be prepared for STAR answers that relate to all of the following:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Customer service
- Leadership
- Time management



Video and phone interviewing

The basics

- Establish the right time zone (CST/EST), and DO NOT BE LATE!
- Who is calling whom?
- Figure out an alternative phone number in case there are issues logging in to the online interview

Profile

- Have a professional photo as your icon and not a vacation or couple photo

Be proactive to prevent technical problems

- Test your audio and video
- Make sure your audio doesn't echo or have static
- Make sure your lighting is adequate and your face can be seen; natural light works best
- To avoid glare and darkened facial features, do not have a window behind you
- Close all other browsers to avoid interruptions during the interview
- Choose a location where your Wi-Fi is strong and capable of streaming
- Use a PC or laptop. Do not use a tablet or phone. This will provide a steady video feed without shaking and will allow your hands to be free
- Use a headset to minimize echo and background noise
- Run a test with a friend to make sure you can be heard and seen clearly

Look and sound professional

- This is an interview; treat it like one — dress professionally from head to toe
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Eye contact is tricky since the interviewers are on screen, but try to look at your camera directly as much as possible— otherwise, it will appear as if you are looking down
- Keep gestures to a minimum; the interviewer can only see a limited area

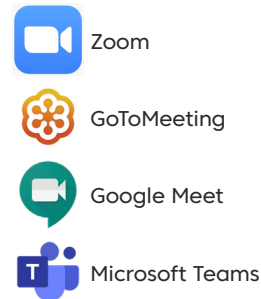
Manage your environment

- Notify roommates and family members that you have an interview
- Make sure your pets and children are in a place where they cannot be heard
- Make sure your background is clean and clear with no posters, laundry, trash, dishes or other visual distractions

What to have with you

- Bring your résumé, cover letter, job description and company research to refer to during your interview
- Adding sticky notes on your screen can remind you to address certain key points or just to smile!
- Do not rifle through papers during your interview; it is distracting and loud

Commonly used virtual interview platforms:



Make sure you download the appropriate software in advance of your interviews to avoid technical issues with your microphone and camera.



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Dress to impress

Better safe than sorry

Always go business professional if you are unsure.



Dress professionally

- Cleanliness and appropriate dress are a must
- Stick with solid colors and tighter-woven fabrics or simple patterns
- Men: charcoal gray or dark blue suits with tasteful shirt and conservative tie
- Wear a belt
- Women: a good- quality suit with flattering, unrevealing blouse
- A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers or just above the knee for good measure
- Avoid tight or overly loose-fitting clothing
- Avoid shirts with lettering or graphics
- Make sure your outfit is wrinkle-free
- Heels or flats are OK! Just make sure you are comfortable walking potentially long distances, on stairs and on all types of terrain (hello, office tour!)
- Never wear white socks

Hair and makeup

- Appear well groomed and up to date in style: clean, neat and flattering

Pleasant body odor

- Don't forget deodorant
- Avoid perfumes and colognes

Smokers

- Don't smoke once you're in your interview attire
- Clean interview attire, and keep it in a smoke-free place

Accessories

- Avoid flashy jewelry/accessories
- Keep piercings to a minimum; if you have facial or body piercings that are noticeable, you should remove them before the interview

PRC

Panther Resource Closet

Access to DU resources and affordable clothing

The Panther Resource Closet (PRC) is a free resource for all DU students that provides food, hygiene items and professional clothing.

Visit the PRC or request items through the Center for Campus Life: my.davenport.edu/student-life/resources/panther-resource-closet



Image from the University of Miami

Other options:

- Consider consignment or resale shops for new and gently used clothes
- Get fitted at a professional retail clothier and write down your correct measurements. Then search through online sales, outlets and clearance sales

Thank you to Meijer for donating to the PRC!



Evaluating job offers and onboarding

You have gotten through your interviews and have received the offer.

Do not feel pressured to accept an offer on the spot. It is always best to ask for at least 24 hours after receiving the **written offer** to make a final decision, even if you fully intend to accept it.

Salary

Can you live on this salary? Use the worksheet on the next page to make sure that you account for your current cost of living and that your bills will not exceed your projected take-home pay. While your current expenses alone may not be a reason to negotiate a higher wage, having a realistic expectation of what the salary is for a specific position based on industry standards should support your request. Before finalizing negotiations, ask about annual increases, what they are based on and how they have been issued in previous years. See onetonline.org and the NACE Salary Calculator for more information (see link on page 58).

Benefits

It is not always about the money! Benefits can be negotiable and can include insurance (medical, dental, vision, life, etc.), vacation, holidays, flexibility, overtime options, professional memberships, child care and retirement options. Keep in mind that benefits can make up about 40% of your total compensation.

Office environment and company culture

Will you enjoy it there? What are the personalities of your team members, and will you be comfortable with the management? If you got the impression you may not get along with your direct supervisor during the interview, take that into account. Do your attitudes, values and goals align? Is the office culture casual, business casual or business professional? Keep in mind what your wardrobe looks like; are you willing and able to buy new clothes if necessary?

Commuting and working remotely

This may sound trivial, but focus on what your commute will look like every day. Consider high-traffic times of day, gas, winter weather, construction, work-from-home flexibility, and how far away you are from children, day care or medical appointment locations. If you have the chance to work from home remotely, figure out how it can benefit your schedule.

Offer

Read offer letter (start date, paid time off, benefits, etc.).



Verify

Offer letters and start dates may be contingent based on a background check, an official transcript, a physical or drug test, etc.

Sign a consent form for a background check, and order official transcripts if needed.



Onboarding

Complete required paperwork: tax forms, policy acceptance, etc.

An I-9 form will be required on your first day — provide original documentation to verify your identity and authorization to work in the United States to your manager or human resources.



Orientation

An orientation is common when you are a new hire; it may be in person or virtual.



Performance review

Many companies will have a 90-day evaluation for new hires.

When starting a new position, work with your manager to set goals for the next performance evaluation cycle.

If you are moving to a different city or state, the cost of living will change.

Use the CNN Money Calculator for different costs of living: money.cnn.com/calculator/pf/cost-of-living/

The company may offer a relocation package if you are forced to move.

Salary worksheet

Estimated salary per month	+
Estimated taxes (about 25% of salary — depending on filing status/type)	-
Medical insurance (including dental and vision)	-
Unreimbursed business expenses (gas, parking, etc.)	-
Car and rent/house payments	-
Monthly bills (gas, electric, water, cable/internet, phone, student loan payments, etc.)	-
Average grocery spending	-
Misc. consistent expenses (credit card debt, outstanding bills, child care, etc.)	-
TOTAL Can you live with the amount (per month) based on your lifestyle? Do not forget about emergency funds and retirement contributions. Consider bonuses and overtime.	=

Negotiating offers

It is always awkward

Be confident in your worth and clear on your expectations from the beginning. Avoid asking about salary in initial interviews. If the salary range is not posted in the job description or provided during the interview process, use O*NET OnLine to understand the range the position should merit. Gather the information, and decide what your realistic target number should be. Expect to be at the low end of a range unless:

- You have met all AND exceeded some requirements listed in the job description based upon experience and education
- You have achieved “preferred qualifications”
- You have worked for the company previously
- The compensation is not enough to incentivize you to leave your current role

Asking for a raise or promotion?

This is no easy task, so do not do it unrehearsed. Contact your career coach to have the conversation prepared before you make the big ask. This way, you are the more prepared person in the room!



Do your research! Understand the salary range for your region and experience level:

jobsearchintelligence.com/etc/jobseekers/salary-calculator.php

Not all offers are negotiable due to interoffice equity, company policy or budgets, or nonprofit status. Review the previous page. If a company is not able to offer you more, consider negotiating for moving costs, expense reimbursement such as mileage, schedule flexibility, additional vacation time, professional development, certifications or other benefits. Engaging in negotiations does not mean you will not accept the position if requests aren't met. Now it's time to discover what they are willing to pay to secure a great candidate. Contact Career Services to gain an impartial opinion and discuss how to best leverage yourself effectively through this conversation.

Budgeting

Use the worksheet below to build your budget. Use the column to the right of the dollar amount column to track whether that expense is a need, want or savings expense.

Household:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Rent/mortgage		
Utilities (electric, gas, water)		
Cable and internet		
Home telephone		
Cellphone		
Other household expenses		
Total:		

Food:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Groceries		
Lunches and snacks		
Dining out		
Total:		

Transportation:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Car payment		
Insurance		
Gas		
Maintenance		
Public transportation		
Other (parking, etc.)		
Total:		

Children:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Day care		
Activities		
Total:		

Personal care:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Clothes and shoes		
Toiletries		
Laundry and cleaners		
Hair care		
Other		
Total:		

Entertainment:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Movies/sports tickets		
Trips		
Music/DVD purchases		
Books/magazines/newspapers		
Hobbies		
Other		
Total:		

Health care:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Doctor		
Dentist		
Prescriptions		
Insurance premiums		
Other		
Total:		

Miscellaneous:	Cost	Need, want or savings
Credit card payments		
Savings		
Education expenses		
Gifts and charity		
Pets		
Other		
Total:		

Budget alignment check

An ideal budget is 50% needs, 30% wants and 20% savings. Use the numbers from your budget above to see how balanced your budget is.

$$\text{Needs} \div \text{take-home pay} = \text{budget \%}$$

$$\text{Wants} \div \text{take-home pay} = \text{budget \%}$$

$$\text{Savings} \div \text{take-home pay} = \text{budget \%}$$

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