The adventure of finding great work can be exciting and rewarding if you prepare yourself for the process. Congratulations—you’ve taken the first step by attending this Career Center workshop.

We’re here to help you become better prepared for the adventure of finding great work. To succeed in finding the kind of work you most want, you need knowledge about the job search, your career choices and ways to get the internships and work experience you need, as well as the skills necessary to land interviews and receive offers.

Through this Interviewing Skills workshop, you can accomplish the following learning objectives:

- Understand how to prepare for an interview;
- Learn the differences between different types of interviews and interview questions;
- Develop a follow-up plan for after the interview; and
- Practice how to successfully answer questions in an interview situation.

If you like this career workshop, you’ll love our Practice Interviews. Check the workshop schedule for more information.
An interview is an employer’s chance to evaluate you as a potential employee for their company. At the same time, it is a great opportunity for you to obtain information on the employer, the available position and the organization.

Remember this difference: a resume helps the employer screen applicants—it can get your foot in the door. Interviews are valuable tools for both the employer and for you. They allow both parties to gather as much information as possible, and they help determine whether the position is a good fit for you.

Consider these four steps when preparing for your interview:

1. **Conduct a self-assessment.** Evaluate and make a list of your current strengths and skills. Then compare these abilities to the job description if it is available. Prepare a detailed example or short story describing each important aspect of your resume. This will help you present and market yourself when answering questions.

2. **Research prospective employers and industries.** Find out about the organization by talking to coworkers, teachers or experts in your particular field. Take a look at company literature such as annual reports, which can be obtained from the organization itself or in the DePaul Libraries’ Career Information Centers. Additional resources such as business and trade magazines/journals and newspaper articles can also provide useful information. Additionally, company websites are excellent resources as. Do not hesitate to call the company and ask for brochures or literature to be sent to you. When researching a company, find out about the organization’s history and its core business, including services, products, size, culture, achievements and competitors. Make sure you are aware of any major developments within the organization that have made recent news.

3. **Prepare questions.** Draw up a list of four or five questions to ask the employer about their company or position. Prepare this list of questions in advance and bring it to the interview with you.

4. **Practice interviewing.** First, script out some specific examples that demonstrate your transferable skills and outline some of your key accomplishments. Next, set up an appointment with an Advanced Career Advisor for a practice interview during the Career Center’s practice interview weeks. Practice will enable you to receive useful feedback on your interviewing style and will help strengthen your interviewing technique.
You’ve done your preparation in advance, and the interview has finally arrived. Keep the following tips in mind to help make it a success:

The Day Before

- Get directions or take a trip to the interview site so that you will know exactly where it is and how long it takes to get there.
- If you don’t know already, try to find out the name and title of the person with whom you are interviewing.
- Review your resume and written examples so that you are prepared to talk in detail about your skills and accomplishments.
- Be prepared to fill out an application form or take an aptitude test.
- Plan out what you’ll wear for the interview. Darker colored clothing with limited accessories is acceptable interview attire.

On Your Interview Day

- Bring extra copies of your resume and a list of references to the interview.
- Plan to arrive ten minutes early to get a sense of the company environment.
- Look professional and greet the interviewer with a firm handshake.
- Let the interviewer take the lead by inviting you to sit and asking the first question.
- Create rapport with the employer at the beginning of the interview.
- Use positive body language (i.e., smile, nod, be careful not to use a lot of hand gestures, give verbal feedback and maintain strong eye contact with the employer).
- Don’t slouch in the chair, chew gum or repeat nervous gestures (such as tapping a pen).
- Sell yourself by using your personality when answering questions—this shows enthusiasm about the position and the interview.
- Focus on the question that is being asked and ask for clarification on questions you are unsure about.
- Do not bring up benefits or salary—the interviewer should initiate such conversations.
GUIDELINES:

Types of Interview Questions

An employer will usually begin the interviewing process with a screening interview either in person or over the phone. These interviews usually last for 20—60 minutes, and they are often conducted by human resources professionals. Your goal for this type of interview is to prove that you have the qualifications necessary for the position and to secure the second interview.

At most organizations, the second (and subsequent) interview or the office visit is more specific than the screening interview. In this interview, the prospective employer tries to determine whether your specific skills, training and profile match the detailed duties and description of the position in question. These interviews can range from an hour in length to a full day (sometimes including breakfast and lunch).

Additionally, some organizations conduct what are called panel or group interviews in which a candidate is interviewed by various people simultaneously. The types of questions asked in this setting are the same as the questions you would expect in regular interviews. The main difference is the format and the fact that you are being evaluated by a few different people at the same time.

There are a variety of methods that employers may choose to use during the interview process. Prepare yourself by reviewing the four main types of interview questions described below.

Behavioral Questions

Many organizations use behavioral interviewing to determine whether a potential employee has the transferable skills to successfully perform the job for which they are interviewing. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.

Behavioral interviewing provides a more objective set of facts from which to make employment decisions than other interviewing methods. Unlike traditional interview questions such as “tell me about yourself,” behavioral questions require specific examples of past experiences which demonstrate the skills an employer is looking for.

Example Question: “Give me an example of a time when you had to address an angry customer.”

Answer this question by stating specifics about the situation, details about how you handled it and the outcome – situation, action and outcome.

Prepare for these types of interviews by coming up with descriptive examples for certain skills and competencies. Some of the more common skills and competencies that employers are looking for are:

- Initiative
- Interpersonal/Communication—Oral and Written
- Organization
- Teamwork
- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Technical Aptitude
- Leadership
- Goal Setting/Planning
- Time Management

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Situational Questions
In situational interviews, the interviewer inquires about how you would handle a hypothetical situation, rather than how you have handled a situation in the past. This type of interviewing is designed to see how well you can “think on your feet.”

The best way to prepare for this type of interview is to draw on similar situations (if applicable) that you have dealt with in the past. Remember, even if you cannot think of an applicable example, try to draw upon skills that you have developed through classes or jobs that you could utilize in the situation with which you are being presented.

Example Question: “How would you sell our product to a resistant customer?”

Major-Specific/Technical Questions
Major-specific interview questions can be a part of the interviewing process, but they do not necessarily encompass the entire interview. These questions are designed to test your knowledge of information that you have learned related to your field of study, such as theories and formulas. These types of questions are relatively common in the technical field. The best way to prepare for major-specific questions is to review your class books and notes.

Example Question: “Can you tell me how you would apply ______ theory to the position you are applying for?”

Case Questions
Case questions or case interviews are used frequently in more advanced-level interviews, such as in consulting firms. The case interview has evolved as a method for being able to more easily judge a set of characteristics that are necessary for skilled consultants hired by firms. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- Remaining cool under pressure;
- Analytical skills;
- An understanding of both the micro (detailed) and macro (overall) aspects of a situation;
- The ability to use common sense;
- Presentation skills;
- Energy, and
- Attention to detail.

In a business case, a candidate is provided with a set of facts about a business or business problem. Sometimes cases are presented verbally, although most commonly they will be presented on paper. The case will last anywhere from 15—60 minutes. There is no one answer to a business case question. In fact, sometimes you may never even come to a conclusion (in a verbal case) before the interviewer moves on. This is not a sign that you have failed, but rather that the interviewer has already been able to judge your ability to analyze and synthesize various facts, clarify the situation and set a framework or process.

Example Question: “Our client, XYZ Manufacturing, is losing money. Why?”
Traditionally Asked Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose to attend DePaul University?
3. Why did you decide to major in... ____________?
4. What do you know about this company and what interests you the most?
5. Why did you leave your last job?
6. What are your short-term/long-term goals? How will you benefit by achieving them?
   What plans have you made to achieve them?
7. Tell me about three of your best accomplishments.
8. What are your greatest strengths/skills?
9. Why are you interested in this particular job?
10. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
11. What do you think you can do for us that someone else can’t do just as well?
12. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
13. What else do you think I should know about you?
14. What would you like to know about our company?
15. Why should I hire you?
16. What are some of your weaknesses?
17. How would a friend describe you?
18. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
19. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
20. What have you learned from your mistakes?

Additional Traditional Questions for More Experienced Candidates

1. Tell me about your current employment. Why are you leaving?
2. How did you obtain your last position?
3. What did you like most/least about the job?
4. What were your responsibilities in your last job?
5. How has your career growth been representative of your ability?
6. Have you ever made any suggestions to top management? If so, what were they?
7. Have you ever fired anyone? What were the circumstances?
8. In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?

Scenario: Traditional Interview

Question: I see you’re involved with the Spanish Club. What are some of the benefits from this experience?

Response: As Secretary, I was responsible for organizing a display on Spanish literature for the Cultural Fair we sponsored. Most of my correspondence with publishing houses was done in Spanish and I feel this experience added a whole new business angle to my fluency. I would feel very confident communicating with your international customers on the quality control program you mentioned earlier in our discussion.

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Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to persuade someone to see things your way.
2. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
3. By providing an example, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations or environments.
4. Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
5. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
6. Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
7. Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
8. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
9. Describe the most significant or creative presentation which you have had to complete.
10. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
11. Tell me about a project you worked on with at least two other people with different approaches. How did you handle the situation?
12. How would you resolve a situation about which there was not consensus within a group?
13. Describe a situation in which you had to take a leadership role.
14. Tell me about a time when you applied what you learned in school to an internship (or full-time) position.
15. Tell me about a time when you needed to learn something quickly.

Scenario: Behavioral Interview

Question: Describe a situation where you resolved a conflict.

Response: (SITUATION) In my management class we were assigned a group project and the instructor assigned the group members. We worked in teams of four and our assignment was to analyze a small company and develop strategies to improve the organizational structure. When the project was half completed, one of the group members started procrastinating; not showing up to meetings and missing deadlines for his part of the project (ACTION) I called a meeting with the other group members and discussed my satisfaction with his actions. The other members had similar concerns about our grade being affected, so I agreed to talk with him. After we talked, he let me know he was having difficulty scheduling meetings due to work pressures. (OUTCOME) Our group was able to work around his schedule and help him out. We ended up getting an “A” on the project.
Questions to Ask the Interviewer

1. Could you describe the work environment?
2. To whom does the position report?
3. How many employees, if any, report to the position?
4. What has become of the person that previously held the position?
5. What characteristics are you looking for in a successful candidate?
6. What are the objectives for the person hired in this position?
7. What would be some challenges I would encounter my first year on the job?
8. Does your organization provide training and professional development opportunities?
9. What are the company’s objectives for the next year?
10. What is your timetable for filling this position?
11. Have I told you everything you need to know about my background? Do you have any questions or concerns?
12. What is the next step?
13. How did you start with the organization?
14. What has your career path been with the organization?
15. Can you tell me more about the organization’s history?
16. How does your company measure success?
17. What makes your product or service different from the competition?
18. What are the characteristics of your top people?

Questions to Avoid Asking

1. What salary can I expect?
2. What are the benefits at your organization?
3. When will I be promoted?
GUIDELINES:

Following Up After Interviews

One of the most important elements of a successful interview is the follow-up. Consider these tips when interacting with employers after your interview.

At the end of your interview
- Ask the interviewer what your next step should be.
- Reiterate your interest in the organization.
- Ask the interviewer(s) for a business card.
- Firmly shake the interviewer’s hand.
- Leave the office by saying goodbye to everyone you met.

After your interview
- Send a thank-you letter no later than 24 to 48 hours after the interview.
- Wait a few days or a week for a response.
- If you have not heard back from the employer, call or e-mail to inquire about the status of the position.
- Call your references to let them know that they may be contacted soon.
- Be prepared — the employer may request a background check and/or drug test.
- Evaluate yourself—think about the questions you answered well and those you would answer differently in the future.
- Consider your salary and benefits expectations—if you receive an offer, you may need to consider whether you would like to negotiate your salary or benefits package. Be sure you know the competitive salary range for the position before you begin to engage in this process.

Tips For Salary Negotiation
- Research salary statistics and know what an average starting salary is for the position for which you are applying.
- Try to defer discussions regarding salary until you are made a job offer.
- If an employer asks about salary requirements give a range of what you are looking for (i.e. $35—40,000). Never state a bottom line.