Lasell College Career Services
Interviewing Skills

From choosing a career goal to the hearing the words, “You’re hired”, getting a job takes work. Your success in interviewing is directly related to the work and time put in before the interview. Being prepared not only shapes the content of your answers to meet the employers’ needs, but allows you to demonstrate your enthusiasm and boosts your confidence. Preparation begins with understanding the goals of the employer and the candidate.

1. Interview Goals

Employer's goals:
The goal of the interviewer is to hire the right person for a specific job. In order to determine if you are the right person they seek the answers to three major questions:

- Can you do the job?
- Will you do the job?
- Will you fit in?

Candidate's goals:
Your goal is to get hired as the right person for a specific job. The interview is your chance to persuade the employer that you:

- Have the skills & knowledge to do the job
- Have the interest & desire to do the job
- Have values that fit the culture

You and the employer have the same goal - to fill the position with the right person! To achieve this goal you need to clearly present evidence that you are the right person who can and will do the job and will fit in.

Once you understand your goals, you need to gather the "inside" information on the job and organization so you can best relate your assets to prove that you’re the right person for the job.

2. Gathering Information

To convince the employer that you are the right person to fill the available position, you need in-depth information about the specific job, the employer, and about your job related assets.

To gather information about you:

- Asses your skills and personal traits
- Determine your goals and interests
- Prioritize your values
To gather information about the job:

- Carefully read the job advertisement and job description
- Conduct an Informational Interview, if possible
- Consult guides such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/oco/) which provides descriptions of responsibilities and requirements for many job titles.
- Note the tasks, responsibilities, knowledge and skills required for the position
- Compare this to your list of skills and personal traits

To gather information about the company:

- Read the job advertisement and company literature. This can either be obtained on the companies website or directly from the employer
- Visit the company website. Look for annual reports, mission statements, and strategic plans
- Search newspapers and magazines for articles on the company. To do this, use the News Databases available at the library
- Note future plans, competitors, problems, and new products/initiatives of the organization
- Compare your goals and interests with those of the employer

To gather information about the work environment and culture:

- Review the information that you gathered from company literature, website, media coverage and your informational interview
- Look for answers to questions like: How is performance rewarded? Is team work encouraged? How much overtime or travel is expected? Do they promote from within?
- Compare these to your personal values

Once you have gathered all the necessary information about you, the job, the company, and the culture, you can organize your information into an “Answer Key” that matches you to the job.

**Interview Answer Key**

If you know your interview goals and have researched the "inside" information, you are ready to create an "answer key" to convince the employer that you can & will do the job and will fit in. The following examples based on these three areas demonstrate how to organize your information:

**Can you do the job?**
In other words do you have the qualifications?

For each job requirement list your transferable skills, special knowledge and personal traits that match the requirement. Then find examples to demonstrate the level of your ability.
Example:
Job Requirements: Excel & writing skills
• Took course in Excel and received a grade of "A-"
• Taught co-worker at internship to use Excel
• Known for writing excellent Resident Assistant reports
• Often edit friends’ papers

Will you do the job?
In other words are interested in the job & the company?

List your career goals, interests and personal traits that match the specific job, company & field. Explain your enthusiasm for the job and employer based on your research.

Example:
Job is Fast Paced:
• Enjoyed fast pace of waitressing in busy family restaurant; Strong ability to multi-task

Business focuses significant resources on marketing:
• Marketing major interested in contributing to company success by maintaining and expanding market share.

Will you fit in?
In other words will you be motivated by the company's goals and policies?

Explain how your values match the organization’s culture. Include examples.

Example:
Company Encourages Team Work:
• Worked on student committee to produce fashion show
• Member of softball team

Organization Rewards Initiative:
• Started arts & crafts in after school program
• Updated contact database for my boss

The specific questions that you will be asked will vary, but if you go to the interview knowing what attributes and skills you want to emphasize you will be well prepared. Once you’re your examples prepared, you are ready to review tips on how to answer the most frequently asked interview questions.

Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions

At an interview, you will be asked questions ranging from the general, "Tell me about yourself?" to the specific, "How would you handle a particular problem?" You can't know exactly what you will be asked, but you can prepare effective responses to a variety of questions. Keep in mind
that the main goal is to show how you are the right person for the job. This means that whatever
the question, your answers need to match the specific job requirements and organization’s needs.

Tell me about yourself?
The expectation is that you will present some information about your academics, experiences and
motivation for seeking the position. Don’t repeat the story of your life. Pick courses and
experiences that relate to this job. Your answer might include:
• Why you chose Lasell; Why you chose your major; What your best courses are? Relate
these to your ability to do the job.
• List your past jobs, activities, experiences & discuss what you learned and how they
prepared you for this position
You don’t need to include all of these. Select the ones that are most appropriate.

Example:
As you know I'm attending Lasell College. I choose Lasell for its' small classes and the
opportunity to know the faculty. The small size of your organization is a good match
for my style. My best courses have been in my legal studies major. I have developed
strong research skills which I can apply in your position. I was a member of the
Student Government Association for 3 years and the chair of the Senior Soiree
committee. In addition, I worked the whole time I was in school at a busy family
restaurant. This taught me how to juggle multiple priorities which would be an asset in
your fast paced environment which you mentioned in your ad.

Why Should I Hire You? or What Are Your Strengths/ Accomplishments?
These two questions are really the same. They are requesting you to summarize your knowledge,
skills and motivations that match with the position requirements. You want to prepare a
confident, well thought-out response that will persuade the interviewer that you can and will do
the job well.
• State your skills and relate them to the job
• Describe your personal traits and how they relate to the job
• Give examples of initiative and a positive attitude

Example:
You should hire me because my skills and background are a good match with your
position. I have a good deal of knowledge in merchandising from my course work and
retail experiences. I am well organized with great follow through. And I have
demonstrated my initiative in programming activities as a resident assistant.

What is your greatest weakness?
This is probably the most intimidating question you will be asked. No one wants to reveal their
flaws, especially when the job they want is at stake. The best approach is to pick a minor
weakness and indicate how you are attempting to improve it, or put a positive focus on the
characteristic. No matter what, the best approach is honesty. It’s foolish to mislead the
interviewer. Remember even if you get hired you won’t succeed on a job that requires a skill you
don’t have.
Example:
A I have a poor sense of direction and some times get lost. I’ve learned to use MAPQUEST and leave early to avoid being late.
B Sometimes I’m impatient paper work, but it motivates me to be organized and get a lot accomplished.

Do you have any questions?
You should prepare two or three questions focused on the job responsibilities or organization. Do not focus on things about salary, time off or the parking (that information will come later). Good examples of questions to ask include:
- Specific questions about the products, services or people served
- Specific plans for new projects or directions
- Asking what are the biggest challenges in the job for which you are applying
Caution: Don't ask questions that are easily answered on the web site. Your questions need to be more in-depth.

20 Common Interview Questions

1. **Tell me about yourself?** Covered in detail in section 4.
2. **What are your weaknesses/strengths?** Covered in detail in section 4.
3. **Tell me about one of your accomplishments?** Employers are looking to find out more about you. Think of something that you are passionate about. If possible, give a work related example such as a project you completed or a promotion you received. Attending or graduating college is a typical answer, if possible, come up with a different example to set yourself apart.
4. **How has your background prepared you for this position?** Give specific examples of what you have learned in courses, connected learning projects, and past employment that matches with the specific requirements of the position.
5. **What role do you typically play in a team setting?** Be honest and put yourself in a good light. Teams need many different types of players.
6. **Describe a situation in which you had to work with someone difficult. How did you handle it?** Situational questions like these are well answered using a simple formula. SAR= Situation, Action, Result. Briefly describe the situation, then explain what action you took, and the end result. Be careful not to be negative about the other person involved.
7. **In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?** For this question, focus on your skills that are related to the position for which you are applying. Give specific examples of how you have made contributions to other positions.
8. **Why do you want to work here?** Talk about what appeals to you about the company. Show the employer that you have done some research. Avoid using “close to home” or “good hours” as your reason for wanting to work there. Instead focus on the company’s mission, goals, product, environment or particular aspects of the job.

9. **Why did you choose your major? School?** The employer is looking to better understand you and look for a match between your goals and this position. Emphasize what about the major/school matches your personality and strengths. Many people attend Lasell because of its size, personal touch and connected learning philosophy.

10. **What class did you like the most in school? Least?** For the class you liked the most, emphasize a class that you had a particular passion for and which also relates to the position you are applying to. Give a specific example of something you did in the class that you enjoyed. For the class that you liked the least, you can talk about a class that you struggled with, but you also need to follow up with talking about how your persevered in this class and that it had a successful outcome. Alternatively, for a class that you liked least, talk about a class that is not relevant to your major.

11. **Give an example of how you solved a problem.** Again you can use the SAR method (see question 6) describing the situation, the action you took and the result of your action. Pick a problem that demonstrates skills and knowledge related to the position.

12. **Which of your past jobs did you like best? Why?** Give specific examples of why you liked this job. Focus on accomplishments, responsibilities & challenges that match the requirements and environment of the new job.

13. **In what type of work environment are you the most comfortable?** Be honest, but also tailor your answer to the job. For example, if it is a position that involves a lot of teamwork, talk about how you like to work in a team. Or if the position involves working independently, talk about how you are able to successfully work independently.

14. **What are your short/long term goals?** The employer is looking to see how focused and realistic you are. They are also curious to know how long you may stay with their company. A solid answer for your short term goal would be talking about getting a job that will allow you to learn and grow in the field of xx while using the skills you have gained from Lasell and past employment. For long term goals, keep your options open.

15. **What motivates you to put forth the best effort?** Money is NOT a good answer. Knowing you did a good job, acknowledgement by others, and challenge are all good answers.

16. **How do you work under pressure?** Give an example of doing this successfully.

17. **What was your greatest failure? What did you learn from it?** Give an example of a setback that you had which was a learning experience. Being able to admit your mistakes shows maturity. Avoid examples that might reflect on your ability to do this particular job.
18. **Why should we hire you?** This is a chance to sell yourself. Be very specific listing your top qualifications and skills that relate to the position.

19. **What salary are you looking for?** Do your best not to name an exact number. If it is early in the interview process you could say something like, “I’m primarily looking for a good opportunity. I don’t have a set salary. It depends on the complete package.” Also do your research so you know what an average salary is for that position. If you are pressed for a number, give a range.

20. **Do you have any questions for me?** Covered in detail in section 4.

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**First and Lasting Impressions**

Making a good/positive impression in your interview is crucial to winning the job. Impressions are formed based on the details of your non-verbal behavior. Your actions can say "you are self-confident," and have a lasting impact. Important things to consider:

**Before you enter the door:**
- Be on time/a little early
- Get directions & do a trial run
- Practice your firm handshake
- Practice good eye contact
- Bring copies of resumes & references
- Prepare list of questions to ask

**Dress for the part:**
How important is your appearance in an interview? A Chinese philosopher once said "A picture is worth a thousand words." Most interviewers value visual information as much as verbal. Dress Professionally: Keep the focus on your abilities not on style or lack of style

**Men:**
- Dark suit, dress shirt, tie and dress shoes
- Fresh hair cut and grooming
- Consider comfort, fit, style and pressing

**Women:**
- Conservative, dress up, coordinated clothing and shoes
- Suit if possible
- Conservative accessories, make-up and hair style
- Consider comfort, fit, style and pressing

**When you arrive:**
You will be judged from the moment you arrive. Everyone will be making judgments and assumptions about you even if you are not meeting with them.
• Great the receptionist warmly, they have more clout than you might think
• Sit up straight
• Speak clearly
• Smile
• Maintain good eye contact
• Use a firm handshake

As the interview wraps up:
• Indicate your desire for job, if you want it
• Ask what the next step is and when you will hear
• Follow up with thank you note