



INTERVIEW TIPS

The interview is one of the last steps of the hiring process - and one of the most important. You've attended career fairs and information sessions, sent resumes and cover letters, but you don't have the job yet!

Most employers will take the opportunity to meet you in person and to evaluate the "total" you. This includes your attitude, appearance, personality, confidence, and knowledge about the organization, as well as your ability to do the job. How articulately can you communicate under pressure? Can you think on your feet?

In the short amount of time that you will spend with a potential employer, you will either be screened in or screened out, so you must project yourself in a professional, positive, and enthusiastic manner. The interview is a two-way process. While you are being tested, it is also a chance for you to determine if the position and company align with your current career goals.

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Don't wait until you have an appointment with an employer to start preparing for an interview - it starts long before you meet the employer!

This handout is designed to help you with that preparation. It accompanies our Interview Tips Workshop, and includes information on the following:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Research the employer
- Decide on your attire
- Review your skills and experiences
- Find out what your work is worth
- Practice answering common questions
- Get the details (where, when, who...)
- Plan your route
- Prepare the materials you will bring
- Confirm that your technology works

DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

- Be punctual
- Demonstrate professionalism
- Be aware of non-verbal communication
- Ask intelligent questions.
- Seal the deal.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Remember important points
- Send a thank you note
- Wait
- Follow up when appropriate

RESEARCHING EMPLOYERS

Benefits of Research

Your level of preparation conveys your level of interest in the position. The interviewer expects that you have taken the time to learn about the company.

Research may help you select in advance appropriate examples to share during the interview that will demonstrate how you can contribute to the position and company goals. You will be able to prepare a list of thoughtful questions for the interviewer.

When you have a good understanding of what the organization is all about, you will feel more confident going into the interview.

Topics to Research

The topics below can be a guide for your research. You may not be able to find all of this information about the employer. What you cannot learn before, you can ask during the interview if you are interested.

- Principle products and services
- Target markets, clients or customers
- Location(s) of the offices/plants/projects
- Major competitors
- Recent items in the news
- Size of company (# of employees)
- Annual revenue
- Plans for growth
- Key challenges
- Mission
- History of the organization
- How and where your position fits into the grand scheme

Where to Find Employer Information

Engineering Career Services (1131 Martin Hall) – Read work report files to learn from students who have held a co-op position at the company.

Employer information sessions on campus (see Events on our website for dates and times)

Online resources:

- Handshake: Review job descriptions, employer profiles, and reviews left by students
- Company web page
 - About Us
 - Our Brands/Products/Services
 - Locations
 - Career
 - Leadership
 - Media
- LinkedIn company page
- Business publications such as Forbes, Business Insider, or industry-specific publications
- Company review sites like glassdoor.com (sign up with your umd.edu email address for free access)
- Terrapins Connect - Portal that allows you to connect with UMD alumni.

Beyond Company Research

For truly thorough preparation, stay up to date on the latest news about a company *and its industry*.

Consider creating lists based on #topics in Twitter (X) or setting up Google Alerts to send you emails with links to articles based on the keywords you choose.

If you are a member of a professional organization, their website or newsletter may include industry trends or news.

INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

Scheduling your Interview

When you are invited for an interview, make sure you write down the details. Ask politely for:

- Date and time of the interview – when does it start, how long might it last?
- Name(s) of interviewer(s)
- Location, directions & parking/ transportation information
- Name (you can ask the caller to spell it), title, and phone number of a contact in case you need to reach them on the day of the interview
- Special Instructions:
 - Should you bring Photo ID, Safety or Special Attire?
 - Can you bring your cell phone?
 - Do you need to prepare a presentation?
- If the interview will take place in another part of the country, get details on travel arrangements:
 - Who makes the arrangements?
 - Where will you stay?
 - How will you get there and get around?

What Should You Wear?

Employer surveys consistently indicate that clothing is an important factor in the total picture of the candidate. In the same way that you have invested in your education and the preparation of your credentials, you may want to consider investing in an “interviewing outfit.”

BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

- A two-piece business suit (with pants or a knee-length skirt) is a good choice.
- If you are unable to invest in a suit, choose nice slacks or a skirt, a coordinating collared shirt or blouse, with a blazer or a sport coat with tie.
- You do not need to spend a fortune on designer clothes. Just make sure your suit fits you well.

GENERAL TIPS ON APPEARANCE

- Personal hygiene is important. Pay particular attention to your body odor, fingernails, breath and hair. Consider using little or no perfume/cologne. The interview room may be small and scents can be stifling.
- Avoid large pieces of jewelry or jingly items that may be distracting. Make-up is not required, but if you wear it, keep it natural looking.
- Make sure clothes are clean and pressed. Shoes should be polished, not worn-looking or scuffed.
- Choose neutral colors, patterns, and accessories. Stick to a conservative style and fit. If wearing a skirt, check skirt length when sitting down.

FOLLOW EMPLOYER INSTRUCTIONS

The only instance in which you should dress casually is when the interviewer specifically tells you to do so.

- For example, a recruiter may tell you to dress casually or wear certain footwear because you will be going on a plant or site tour during your visit. In this case, go with business casual.
- Some tech companies (especially those based on the West Coast) may tell candidates NOT to dress up for the interview. In this case, you can leave the tie at home.
- However, DO NOT assume that all tech companies or tech positions respect a casual dress code at work or for an interview.
- If you are interviewing for a company where you know a “business casual” policy is in effect, you should nevertheless dress as you would for any interview.
- In general, or if you are unsure, plan to wear “business professional” attire to the interview to give a good impression and show that you are taking the interview seriously.

For more information visit: go.umd.edu/ecsattire

INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

Interview Structure and Stages

The location, format and length of an interview is determined by a number of factors, including the company's culture, budget, the position being hired and the stage of the hiring process.

During the recruiting process, you may experience a combination of the following interview formats:

- Phone
- Skype/Zoom/ Video
- On-Campus
- Career Fair
- On-site visit
- Question and Answer - Panel or Series
- Presentation or Job Talk
- Group Competition or Project
- Case Interview
- Behavioral Interview
- Technical Interview or test
- Psychometric test
- Dinner, Lunch or Reception Meet and Greet

An interview may last as little as 15 minutes for an on-campus or phone interview (or even 2 minutes at a Career Fair), or as long as 2-3 days incorporating a number of the activities above. Regardless of the length of the interview, it generally follows this structure:

Stage 1: Introductions (see page 10 for "Tell me about yourself", a.k.a. the "Elevator Pitch").

Stage 2: Q&A – The interviewer asks you questions.

Stage 3: You have a chance to ask questions about the company and position.

Stage 4: Closing (could be brief or may include a meal or other informal event) – make sure to get business cards or contact information of your interviewers.

What to Bring

Padfolio with pen. It's worth it to spend \$15 or so at an office supply store, campus bookstore or the [Clark School Store](#) to have a professional looking padfolio to hold all the documents listed below as well as a place to take notes. Look for one that has a place to hold a pen and a business card holder for the card(s) you collect at your interview.

Extra copies of your updated resume. You may end up speaking with someone who might not have a copy of your resume or who has an older version.

Reference sheet. Have a list of your references with you in case you are asked for it. See our *Resume Writing* handout for a sample, as well as tips on selecting references.

Transcript. You'll look more prepared than most interviewees just by being able to immediately produce your transcript if asked for it. Go to www.testudo.umd.edu to print an unofficial copy.

Employment History. Keep an informal document for yourself with the details of your past experience (former employer addresses, phone numbers, start and end dates, supervisor names, etc.) in case you are asked to complete an application form during your interview.

Portfolio. Printed samples of your work, papers, supervisor evaluations, and any other relevant information.

Punctuality

It goes without saying that you should be on time for an interview. It's always a good idea to give yourself some extra time in case you have delays due to traffic or public transportation. Plan to arrive at your interviewer's office about 5-10 minutes before your scheduled appointment.

What if I'm sick? What if I get a flat tire?

Have the phone number and email of your contact handy so you can call once you know you will be late or won't be able to make it. It is important for your professional reputation that you make an effort to contact the interviewer. See the *Policies* page under the *Student* section of our website for our *Campus Interview & Appointment Cancellation Policy*.

ASSESSING YOUR SKILLS

In the interview, you will demonstrate your skills through concrete examples.

As you prepare, it helps to know what employers seek. The table below includes NACE Competencies, qualities and skills that employers have identified as desirable in career-ready college students.

In the second column, you can brainstorm specific instances of when and how you used a skill. Consider the course projects you've completed, teams you've participated in, extra-curricular activities and leadership roles, and past or current work experiences even if they are unrelated to engineering.

Desired Skills	Examples of Skill Used
Career & Self-Development (LinkedIn Learning, Certifications, Conferences)	
Communication (Verbal/Written)	
Critical Thinking (Problem-Solving, Quantitative)	
Equity & Inclusion (Allyship, Anti- Bias Training)	
Leadership (Initiative)	
Professionalism (Organizational Skills, Detail-Oriented, Work Ethic)	
Teamwork (Flexibility)	
Technology (Technical Skills)	

Below, you can fill in additional skills that the company specifically requests. These can be technical (particular software package, hardware or lab techniques) or "soft" (customer service, working independently). As above, jot down specific examples of how you've used that skill.

Desired Skills	Examples of Skill Used

Reprinted courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (go.umd.edu/NACEcompetencies)

TECHNICAL INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS A TECHNICAL INTERVIEW?

Technical interviews are designed to gauge your problem-solving skills, your ability to think under pressure, and your technical knowledge in your chosen field. In a technical interview, the interviewer wants to see how you think through a problem to reach a solution.

HOW DO I KNOW IF AN INTERVIEW WILL BE TECHNICAL IN NATURE?

Ask the recruiter what to expect in the interview. This will allow you to prepare appropriately.

WHAT TYPES OF TECHNICAL QUESTIONS CAN I EXPECT?

Technical interviews may include general problem-solving questions or logic puzzles as well as focused technical questions that are specific to the job you are applying for.

GENERAL PROBLEM-SOLVING QUESTIONS

General problem-solving questions test your analytical thinking skills rather than specific knowledge of your field. These questions take a variety of forms. They may be very open-ended with a variety of possible answers (for example, “How would you improve the design of this pen?”), or they may be more precise, requiring a definite answer (for example, “Why are manhole covers round?”). Some employers may ask you to solve logic puzzles.

FOCUSED TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

These questions focus on the knowledge and skills required to perform the job. For example, a mechanical engineer entering the aerospace industry might be asked, “How does a gas turbine engine work?” A software engineer might be asked to write or debug a program. To prepare for these questions, familiarize yourself with the job description and the technical skills required, and then brush up on those skills.

HOW DO I ANSWER A TECHNICAL QUESTION?

- **Think out loud.**

According to recruiters, the most important thing to remember when answering technical questions is to verbalize your thought process. The interviewer is as interested in your problem-solving approach as they are in your solution. Make sure to provide relevant details.

- **Ask clarifying questions.**

Make sure that you understand the question and have all the information you need to solve the problem. Some questions may be intentionally ambiguous to gauge your confidence in asking questions and gathering data to tackle problems that are not clearly defined.

- **Don't bluff your way through an answer.**

If you don't know the answer, take some time to think it through. Think out loud as you consider possible approaches. If you have absolutely no idea, admit that you don't know. Admitting that you don't know is better than attempting to make up an answer.

DID YOU KNOW?

LinkedIn Learning offers an online course called **Preparing for Your Coding Interview**. It is free for all University of Maryland students as long as you sign on with your umd.edu email address.

In addition, you can check out GitHub for common technical interview questions and answers at go.umd.edu/githubinterview.

“We're interested in more than your answer. We want to know how you got there, and whether you can explain clearly how you did so.”

– *Microsoft Recruiter*

CASE INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS A CASE STUDY INTERVIEW?

Case studies are descriptions of real or hypothetical business problems. Candidates are expected to understand, analyze, and recommend solutions to these problems, as if they were working with a client. Because solving the case mirrors the actual work that consultants do day-to-day, this interview tends to be the most important part of the hiring process for consulting firms, but can also be used in business-oriented companies.

HOW DO I PREPARE?

Practice, practice, practice! Start by searching for the company online. Some companies, like Deloitte, provide their exact case study material online (caseinterviewprep.deloitte.com). If the company doesn't provide a direct hint, you should study comparable material from another company or [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com). Friends who have interned for companies using case interviews can be an excellent resource, since they are up-to-date with what kinds of questions and cases the companies are using.

WILL THERE BE MATH?

Be prepared to perform some simple calculations, using rounding and approximations to aid you. Most importantly, it is essential that you create organized, structured, and logical arguments throughout your interview. Consider using one or more frameworks (go.umd.edu/caseframeworks) to structure your response.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

- Remember that this is not just an opportunity to showcase analytical, problem solving, and more technical skills, but also a **predictive measure of how you would interact with co-workers and clients**. Make sure to project energy and interest – be likeable!
- Approach the interview as if it were a business discussion, not an interview. **Seek to engage in a thoughtful and insightful conversation with your interviewer** that demonstrates your business judgment.
- During the case, try to relax and remain confident. You can't control the topics or format, but you can – and should – deliver your best guess with confidence.
- That being said, ask clarifying questions whenever necessary. **Many cases purposefully lack details** to see if you can figure out what important information is missing. While your interviewer is there to help you throughout the interview, don't use him or her as a crutch. If he or she gives you advice, take it; assume it's intended to be helpful.
- When you are making a final recommendation at the end of the case, remember that you need to **be pragmatic**. Mention any potential concerns with your proposed solution. Does it make sense in real life? **What are the risks? How can they be overcome?**

For more information on case interviews and frameworks, explore the additional resources below.

SAMPLE CASES & TIPS

- go.umd.edu/stwalls
- go.umd.edu/whartonguide
- go.umd.edu/mckinseycase
- Search “consulting club casebooks”

FRAMEWORKS

- [*Case in Point* by Marc Cosentino](#)
- go.umd.edu/preplounge
- go.umd.edu/casepdf

CONSULTING OPPORTUNITIES AT UMD

- [Quality Enhancement Systems and Teams \(QUEST\) Honors Program](#) - 3 year honors program. Apply as a freshman: rhsmith.umd.edu/quest
- [Consult Your Community](#) student organization open to all undergraduate students at UMD: innovate.umd.edu/resources/cyc

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING?

Behavioral interviewing is based on the premise that a person's relevant past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Instead of theorizing how you *would* behave in a particular situation, you can give a specific example of a similar experience from your past that could be applied to your new workplace.

HOW DO I ANSWER A BEHAVIORAL QUESTION?

Start by referring to the examples you filled in on the table in the **Assess your skills** section of this handout. You are going to turn those examples into short stories. Each story should have a beginning, middle, and end. Be specific but don't ramble. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed account of one event. To help you structure your answer as a short story, you can use the **STAR** technique described below.

SAMPLE QUESTION: A behavioral interviewer might ask:

Tell me about a time when you were on a team and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her weight.

SAMPLE ANSWER: Here's how to use the STAR method to answer:

S

SITUATION: Set the scene by giving the context of your example.

For our final project in my Intro to Engineering Design class, we had to build a concrete toboggan that met certain specifications. I was able to be the team leader.

T

TASK/ TARGET OR CHALLENGE: Briefly describe the task, including any impediment of conflict relevant to the question you've been asked.

One of our team members wasn't showing up for our work sessions or doing his assignments. His behavior was affecting the performance and morale of the entire group.

A

ACTION: Describe the specific action *you* took to remedy the task or situation.

I met with the student in private and explained the group's frustration. He told me that he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him.

R

RESULT/ REFLECTION: Explain the result of your action. Make sure that the outcome (and your evaluation of it) reflects positively on you, even if the result itself was not favorable.

Once our teammate got help with his other class, he was not only able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful for the help. We finished our project on time and met all the milestones.

+

Tip: Don't forget to wrap up your answer by directly relating your example to the position you're applying for.

From this experience, I learned how important it is to check in with my team members earlier rather than later if we want to succeed. In a department this size, I know how important this skill would be.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose your particular field of study?
2. What courses have you liked the best? Least? Why?
3. Have you held any leadership positions?
4. What interests you in this co-op? What do you hope to gain from this position?
5. What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
6. What are your future career plans?
7. Do you prefer to work with others or alone?
8. What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in your field?
9. What interests you about our product/service?
10. What jobs have you enjoyed the most? The least? Why?
11. Why should I hire you?
12. Are you willing to travel? Relocate?

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
2. By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations, and environments.
3. Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills. How did you respond? What was the outcome? Looking back, what could you have done better?
4. Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
6. Describe a situation where your decisions were challenged by your supervisor/professor. How did you react? What was the outcome?
7. Describe a situation where you made a compromise for the overall good of the team. Why was compromising the right thing to do? What was the outcome?
8. Tell me about a time when you learned a valuable lesson from a success or a failure. How did this event shape your approach to problem solving?
9. Describe a time when you “went the extra mile” to help someone? Why did you assist them? What was the outcome?
10. What was one of the most difficult technical problems you have solved? Tell me about it in detail.
11. When have you felt overwhelmed? Tell me about it.
12. Let's say your manager gave you ten things to do by 5:00 p.m. and you realized that you couldn't finish them all. What would you do? How would you prioritize them?

HOW TO PRACTICE

- Request a mock interview with a career advisor in Handshake and practice with a friend.
- Attend an Interview Tips workshop.
- Record yourself answering questions using Big Interview (umd.biginterview.com) or use LinkedIn's Interview Prep tool, which includes common questions, approaches, and AI-powered feedback.
- Occasionally, alumni and recruiters will volunteer their time to conduct mock interviews in our office. Look for “Recruiter-in Residence” events on Handshake.
- Terrapins Connect is a portal for current UMD students to learn from alumni. You can use it to ask graduates what questions they were asked during job interviews and how they prepared. Some users may offer to conduct mock interviews through this platform.
- Review our “Best Practices for Using AI in Career Development Handout” (go.umd.edu/Altips4career)

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Here are some ideas on how to respond to questions that candidates sometimes find difficult.

"Tell me about yourself."

This question is asked to find out about your job skills, recent educational background, and any experiences related to the job at hand. Your answer to this question is sometimes called your "elevator pitch." Refer mentally to your resume; however, do not simply restate your resume. Briefly recap your skills and experiences as they relate to this particular job. Be specific and use examples to support your claim. This type of question requires you to take a few moments to describe your background, so don't be too brief. Prepare for this question in advance by thinking about what types of experiences you would talk about if asked a broad-based question such as this.

A good formula to answer this question starts with the present (what you are currently doing/ studying/ researching), continues with the background (how you became interested in the field) and finishes with the future (what you are hoping to do next – just make sure it's related to the job!)

"What is your major weakness?"

There are several techniques for dealing with this question. You can mention a weakness that will not significantly hinder you in the job for which you are interviewing. You can highlight a strength that compensates for the weakness, and/or you can describe steps you are taking to overcome the weakness. Another strategy sometimes suggested is to mention a "weakness" that may also be viewed as strength (but be careful with this one – the "I have a tendency to take on too much" weakness gets overused and employers get tired of hearing it!). Finally, you can also point out something that they already know but does not appear to be a stumbling block (a low GPA, a lack of certain technical skills, etc.). Here are some examples:

"I've always dreaded talking in front of large groups, but I took a public speaking class last semester to develop my skills because I wanted to practice. I'm steadily improving and gaining confidence in this area."

"While I have strong technical abilities, I am not as proficient in C++ as the job description specifies. However, I am a fast learner, and I am willing to work hard to get up to speed quickly."

"Why do you want to work for this company?"

The employer expects you to show knowledge of and interest in the company. You can do this with an answer that indicates that you have researched the company before the interview. Avoid talking about employee benefits – focus instead on the company and its projects. Examples:

"I've talked with some of your previous co-op students and they feel that this is a good company to work for because of the opportunities to learn about ...(insert specifics)."

"I have been reading that your company is really growing fast. I want to work for your company because the future looks promising."

"I am interested in learning more about [product or initiative] that we studied in [name of class]."

"Why did you leave your last job?"

The employer is trying to find out if you had any problems on your last job. Never say anything negative about yourself or your previous employer. If you did have problems, think of a way to explain without being negative. Don't use the word "fired". Use words such as "laid off" or "position was cut." If you were fired and are not on good terms with your previous employer, maybe you should explain. Try to show that you learned something from the situation. Tell the employer that the former problem (if it is personal) will not affect your work. Common reasons for leaving: general layoff, job was temporary, moved to a new area, company went out of business, no room for advancement, wanted a job more aligned with your skills.

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING QUESTIONS, CONT'D.

"How much do you expect to be paid?"

You may not hear this question in an interview for a co-op or intern position, since the salary is often a set figure. However, if you are asked about salary, try to avoid stating a flat dollar amount unless you know what the job pays. You should do some research on salaries beforehand so that you have an idea of the general range for co-op and internship positions in your field (salary information is available at our office and on our [website](#)). In your response you can demonstrate that you are knowledgeable about the going rate.

For example:

"My research has shown that mechanical engineering co-op students are earning a range of \$12 - \$21 with an average of \$15.00 an hour. Given my strong qualifications I feel that a salary in the range of \$15-\$17 would be appropriate."

Another option to giving a range is to turn the question back to the employer such as,

"What would a person with my background, skills and qualifications typically earn in this position?"

Or try a neutral statement like,

"While salary is certainly important, my main goal is to further develop my skills. I am sure that we can agree on a fair salary once we have determined that I am a good fit for the job."

"What are your future plans?"

The interviewer wants to know if you are ambitious, plan ahead, and set goals for yourself. The interviewer may also want to know if, after you complete your co-op or other work experience there, you might consider working for them full-time after graduation. An employer does not expect you to know exactly where you hope to go in the future, but your answer should communicate an awareness of where the position for which you are interviewing might lead.

Example:

"I know that your company has hired co-op students full-time after they graduate, and I would look forward to that possibility and to the opportunity to be a full-time member of your engineering research team. I would also consider graduate study in environmental engineering in the future. My goals will become clearer as I gain experience and have the opportunity to learn more about what it takes to be successful in research and the field of engineering."

Often, this question worries students who are considering graduate study in the future, because they don't know how much to reveal. If you choose to mention graduate study plans, keep the time frame and your plans open-ended. Even if you believe you definitely will go straight into a graduate program after you graduate, plans could change if you have a co-op job that you really enjoy and the company offers you a full-time position. So don't jeopardize your opportunity to get that job by alerting the employer to your interest in only a short-term work experience.

Also, remember to keep your answer to this question professionally-oriented (i.e., you don't need to mention personal/family goals).

QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWERS

You will want to have 5-10 questions written down to ask your interviewers. You won't ask all ten, but you want to tailor the questions to the relevant person.

The most effective questions to ask are ones that come from your employer research or show interest in the position or organization. You want to show what you can do for the company, not what the company can do for you.

Here are a few examples:

1. Can you describe the organizational structure of your company/agency/organization?
2. How does the area I would be working in fit into the overall organizational structure?
3. Can you describe the corporate culture or atmosphere of your company?
4. What kind of supervision and training do new employees receive?
5. Would I be working on my own or on a team? Can I meet my team members?
6. Would I be working with people outside of the company? Clients? Vendors?
7. What particular computer equipment and software do you use?
8. How are responsibilities and project assignments determined for this position?
9. In which location would I work?
10. Would I have the opportunity to travel/ learn about other areas of the company?
11. Have you ever hired a University of Maryland (or other university) student before? Are they currently working for you? May I speak to them at some point?
12. How would you describe the ideal candidate for this job?
13. What do you enjoy most about working here? What would you change if you could?
14. How would you describe a typical day in this position?
15. What specific projects do you see me starting first?
16. What do you hope the person in this position would accomplish in the first 2/3/6 months?
17. How many people have you hired as co-ops in the past and where have they gone after they graduated?
18. Your annual reports show a steady growth over the last three years. How rapidly do you plan to grow over the next three years? In which areas?
19. What are the biggest challenges your department/ company is facing right now?
20. How much opportunity is there to see the end result of my efforts?
21. Is there anything else/ other information I can provide to help you make your decision? (Work samples, references, etc.)
22. Is there anything that we haven't covered that you think is important to know about being successful in this position?
23. What are the next steps in the interview process?
24. If I have further questions, may I contact you? If so, how?

WHAT NOT TO ASK

Remember, you do not have the job yet, so the interview is *not* the time to ask about:

- Salary or other compensation
- Advancement, promotions or raises
- Vacation or other benefits
- Flexibility in the schedule
- Anything related to perks or benefits for you

Those are questions you will want to ask *if* and *when* you get an offer.

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Non-Verbal Communication

Remember that first impressions count. Here are some ways that you can project enthusiasm during your interview.

- Practice a firm yet gentle handshake (or be ready for a fist or elbow bump due to COVID preferences).
- Ensure you hold good posture throughout your interview.
- Be mindful your facial expressions.
- Limit nervous gestures.
- Be an active listener. Jot down notes for multi-part questions.

Pro Interviewing Tip:

Make eye contact with your interviewer(s) and remember to smile. These cues go a long way in building your credibility.

Verbal Communication

Keep these tips in mind when you are speaking.

- Be mindful of your tone and the pacing/clarity of your speech.
- Get comfortable with small-talk that might happen at the beginning of an interview.
- Avoid using filler words, such as “like” or “um.”

Virtual Interviews

Virtual and pre-recorded interviews are becoming more commonplace. Here’s what you need to know to succeed.

- Use headphones with a built in mic.
- Be intentional about your background.
- Minimize distractions.
- Dress and act like it is an in-person interview.
- Set up even/overhead lighting.
- Troubleshoot your technology.
- Use non-verbal cues (smiling, nodding, hand gestures, posture– beware of rolling chairs)
- Have materials handy (resume, notes)
- Look directly at the camera.

For more advice, see page 35 of the UMD Terp Guide: go.umd.edu/ecsterpguide

Closing the Interview

Knowing how to strongly close an interview is a skill. These three steps can help you seal the deal.

- Restate your interest.
- Thank the Interviewer.
- Get business cards/contact information (don’t connect on LinkedIn).

I’ve really appreciated the opportunity to learn more about this position, and after hearing so much about your company, I can say without a doubt that I’m very excited about the possibility of working with your company. Thank you again for having me. I’ll look forward to hearing from you.

Illegal Questions

Know your rights when interviewing. Note that hiring managers may **not** ask questions about the following:

- Health and Disabilities
- Ethnicity or Nationality
- Criminal Records or Debt
- Smoking, Drinking, or Drug Use
- Religion
- Pregnancy and Family Planning
- Marital Status
- Gender
- Salary History (some states)

See examples of prohibited and acceptable questions:
go.umd.edu/illegalqs

NOTES ON PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS

Psychometric tests can provide insight into your strengths and skills as a job candidate. For this reason, you may want to explore assessments before applying to roles or your employer may request that you complete assessments as part of the hiring process.

Personality

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test is one of the most well-known tools for analyzing an applicant's personality by assessing energy and social level, the manner by which they process information, prioritize events and assignments, along with time management skills in terms of planning and organization. Typically, these assessments are capable of characterizing an individual based on the following categories: "Extraversion vs. Introversion," "Intuition vs. Sensing," "Thinking vs. Feeling," and "Judging vs. Perceiving." Learn more at themylersbriggs.com

The Predictive Index Behavioral Assessment (PIBA) determines individuals' "cultural fit" within a company based on qualities such as impact and drive in a social setting, consistency, and stability, along with conforming to rules and structure. Learn more at predictiveindex.com/assessments/behavioral-assessment

Clifton StrengthsFinder assists with identifying your talents across four domains: strategic thinking, relationship building, influencing, and executing. Learn more at gallup.com/cliftonstrengths

Emotional Intelligence

The IHHP Emotional Intelligence Quiz is an example of an assessment that might be used to predict how someone will respond and perform in various occupational contexts. Confidentiality, motivation, and other characteristics might be evaluated through a series of "agree/disagree" questions. Learn more at ihhp.com

Cognitive Aptitude

The PI Cognitive Assessment (PICA) is an example of this type of test, which is meant to analyze a person's thinking, including their reasoning, memory, mathematical, and problem-solving skills. It can also gauge an individual's ability to learn new skills and adapt to complex situations by testing verbal, numerical, and non-verbal reasoning. Learn more at predictiveindex.com/assessments/cognitive-assessment

Common Concerns

Some consider pre-employment personality tests to be unethical as they may subject candidates to discrimination based on favorable stereotypes. Not all tests are designed for hiring, and they could potentially lead to inherent biases towards interviewees in regards to what mold they might fit, rather than the experience they are bringing.

If you are concerned about taking a psychometric test, you have a right to ask questions about the test and the company's intentions in using them. You may also contest the results if you've been informed that you "failed."

If an employer reacts negatively to these concerns, that may be an indication of the corporate culture, which you should take under consideration when evaluating a job offer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Send a Thank You Note

A thank you note is a very important step following an interview, and it is probably the most overlooked tool used by job seekers.

Take the opportunity to thank the interviewer(s) for their time, restate your interest in the position, and include any information about yourself that you may not have mentioned during the interview.

Remember that thank you letters are most effective if they are received within 24 hours after your interview.

Ideally, you should send a tailored thank you letter to each person you met with during your interview. Be sure not to lose the “formality” of the letter if you choose to send it by email.

Subject: Interview at ABC Company
From: Testudo Jones <tjonesstudent@umd.edu>
To: recruiterDoe@abcco.fake.com
CC: hiringChen@abcco.fake.com

Dear Ms. Doe:

I would like to thank you and Mr. Chen for the opportunity to interview for a co-op position with ABC Company. As you may recall, we met while you were visiting the University of Maryland yesterday morning.

The interview was extremely informative, and I especially enjoyed hearing the details about your cooperative education program and what my role would be if I were to work with you. As a result of our conversation, I am very interested in working for ABC Company so that I might gain professional experience and learn more about my chosen field. In exchange for this invaluable experience, I am confident that I would be a productive and reliable employee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (301) 555-1212, if you would like to arrange an on-site interview or if you need further information. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Testudo Jones

Then What?

After you’ve sent your thank you note, you should wait to hear from the company. Don’t sit back though - keep applying to jobs while you wait.

- There are instances in which you will want to follow up with the companies that have interviewed you. For example, if you receive an offer from one company, you will want to check in with other companies with whom you had interviewed before you accept or decline.
- If you were supposed to hear back from a company, you can follow up a week after the expected reply to check in on the status of your application.
- If you receive a rejection letter, you should thank your interviewer and you may ask them whether they are willing to give you feedback for your next interview.
- If you receive an offer letter, do not accept it on the spot. Attend our Evaluating Job Offers and Salary Negotiation workshop or see our handout on Evaluating Job Offers and Salary to learn what you should consider before accepting a position.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR JOB SEARCH!