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# INTERVIEW SUCCESS

Office of Career & Professional Development  
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## **Overview:**

Ideally, an interview is a conversation. Interviewers are wondering if they will enjoy having you around the office/assigned to their projects, specifically:

- Are you enthusiastic about my work, my clients, my organization?
- Do you have a positive, confident attitude?
- Do you show lawyerly traits and skills – caring about your work, understanding context, exercising good judgment, being curious, listening well?
- What is your motivation to do well at this work?
- Is there a good fit between you and the organization's work and culture?

## **Preparation:**

Prepare for interviewing generally, and then you need a small amount of time to prepare for each particular employer. Good preparation increases confidence. Remember – all questions are variations of “give me a reason to hire you.”

- Develop your “movie trailer!” Prepare your messages – not word-for-word but key points. What do you want to convey to the employer? Your messages should be about authentic qualities or traits you have that are important to the employer's bottom line work or mission. How does who you are link to what they need?
- Review all your accomplishments and reflect on what they demonstrate about your unique traits and what you are capable of doing. Do not focus solely on law-related and school-related accomplishments; value all you have done! Be ready to describe experiences and abilities by using specific examples.
- Identify the most interesting or different things you can relate – most interesting accomplishments, stories, interests, traits. You are trying to be memorable!
- Research the employer: website, summer surveys by past student employees (on HCO), google, check lexis/westlaw if you find specific cases or deals on their website that interest you.
- Review your resume and cover letter – be ready to talk about anything on there, so if you forget the details of something you mentioned, refresh your memory.

## **Best Practices During an Interview:**

### **Do's**

- Be yourself – professional, but authentic; do not try to be who you think they want – people do not enjoy work when they are pretending to be someone else.
- Answer thoroughly – give a good story, example, or opinion – yet have it be short. If you find yourself going on (the interview looks away or at her watch) or

rambling (“what was the point I was making” your mind is asking?) find a way to end your answer, quickly.

- Listen carefully to the question – ask to clarify if you are not sure what the interviewer is asking; take time to reflect if you haven’t thought of an answer in advance (e.g., “That’s a great question; let me think for a moment.”)
- Keep the conversation flowing – short answers like “yes” and “no” stop conversations; give information to illustrate or stimulate links to other topics, e.g., “Yes, I do like research; my friends tease me because I view it like a scavenger hunt and get excited when I find authority on point. I think that attitude helped earn me my “A” in LW&R.”
- Use body language that says “I am interested and engaged” – make eye contact; lean in; have a strong core; smile. Be aware of expressions or physical tics that can communicate other messages.

### Don'ts

- Don’t be thrown by a chatty interviewer. Stay engaged in listening to the interview and engage in the casual conversation he directs. Do not redirect it to your qualifications. At the end you can say “It’s been so nice talking to you about X; before I go I would like to highlight these experiences in case you find them of interest” ... then elaborate briefly.
- Avoid colloquialisms, slang, and verbal fillers (e.g, “um” “you know” “like”).
- Never complain about previous employers, co-workers, other students, schools, or experiences. People like to hire people they think will assume the best about others and will keep quiet about deficiencies or human faults.
- Pay attention to personal details – dress professionally, do not smoke in your interview clothes as the smell lingers, check your hair and make-up before going into the interview.

### Logistics:

- Be on time (or early – never late) and rested. If lateness is unavoidable, call to give notice.
- Make notes after the interview because you think you will remember impressions, things you said, what you remember about an interviewer, but often in the press of the day that information disappears.

### Tips for Specific Types of Interviews:

**Screening Interviews: Typically 20 to 30 minutes;** usually with one interviewer but can be with two or a panel; this is **the type of interview that happens at EIP or PIPS Day**. Sometimes these can be by telephone. If you seek a job with an EIP employer and will not be on campus for EIP, you can apply and ask for a screening interview at the employer’s office. If you remain in the running for the position, typically the employer will call you in for a **callback interview**.

**Callbacks: A longer interview than the screening** - most often at the employer’s office. Typically, you will meet with 4-6 attorneys for about thirty minutes each. Callbacks mean you are in the running and the employer wants more people to give input on whether you are the right fit for the work or office. Each employer creates its

own format for the call back, so do be sure to ask beforehand. **The call back interview sometimes includes a lunch.** [Click here for tips on Callback Interviews](#) including how to respond to an offer for a callback promptly, how to schedule the callback strategically, out-of-area callbacks, and best practices to turn a callback into an offer!

**Panel: An interview of more than two people;** often used for District Attorney, Public Defender, and other government employers. Make eye contact with all interviewers; when one asks a question be sure to have good eye contact with that person when answering but do not neglect the other interviewers; sometimes the panel can include a “bad cop” plant – someone who is antagonistic, irritating or quiet – be sure to keep your cool and keep including that person in your eye contact and answers.

**Telephone:** Increasingly out-of-area employers are using phone or Skype interviews, particularly for screening interviews. **Smile when you are speaking**, even though the interviewer can't see you – voices sounds more relaxed and natural when we smile. **Most students find the biggest challenge is not speaking over the interviewer.** Short silences are okay in interviews generally, and particularly okay in telephone interviews. **Pause before answering** in telephone interviews if you are afraid of interrupting.

### **Answering Interview Questions:**

- **Keep it short:** Your answers should be between 15-30 seconds each.
- Every question is really, **“Why should we hire you?”** So continue to answer that question in every question the employer asks.
- **Tell a Story:** Every answer should highlight your skills and be backed up by a story.
- **Be Passionate/Excited:** Your energy and tone count for as much as your actual words.
- **Have planned at least three points you want to make in your answers:** You should not memorize them but generally have a story or a point to make about three qualities you want to be sure they learn about you; have them at the ready to use if a question is posed that will enable you to make those points.
- **Do Not Get Phased by Stressful Questions:** Some employers, particularly for litigation positions, may phrase a question aggressively to see how you handle pressure. Do not become defensive; remain confident (knowing this is a strategy – do not take the question personally); stay on message (those planned points help you do that!). [Click here to learn more about answering Stressful Questions \[link needed\]](#).
- **Relax and have fun:** If you get the job, you will be spending a lot of time with these people, so let them see your true (professional) personality.

### **[Strategies to Answer Commonly-Asked Questions](#)**

### **[Questions To Ask the Interviewer](#)**

### **[Inappropriate Questions and How to Handle Them](#)**