

Interviewing Practice Guide



1. Please tell me about yourself.

- a. Employers are looking for a brief, 2-3-minute introduction to your relevant career interests, background (education, involvement, experiences), and skills.
- b. You want to provide an overview, so don't go into too much detail on specific experiences. You'll typically answer more specific questions later in the interview.
- c. Ensure your answer relates to the company and the position for which you are interviewing.

2. What led you to apply for this position with our office?

- a. Employers are looking to see if you have done your research on the position and organization.
- b. Be sure to conduct research beforehand which should include checking your understanding of the job description and researching the organization through their website and in the news.
- c. Identify what sincerely interests you about the organization and job responsibilities; Describe how both are in line with your long term career goals.

3. What would you like to accomplish over the next five years?

- a. Employers are looking to see if you have some career direction and trying to determine how committed you are to staying with the company long-term, or at least for a few years.

4. What skills or assets do you consider to be your strengths?

- a. In preparation, identify at least 3 strengths that relate to the position's responsibilities.
- b. Give examples of how and why these are your strengths, and discuss how the strengths were developed and are utilized.

5. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?

- a. In preparation, identify at least 3 weakness or areas-needing-improvement *that will not hinder you from performing the position's main responsibilities.*
- b. Explain how you are working to overcome the weakness or what you are doing to improve it.

6. What motivates you most in a job?

- a. Give a sincere answer on what does or would motivate you in the prospective position.

7. What did you enjoy most about your previous employment? (Or activities if no employment)

- a. Give a sincere answer on what you enjoyed about a past experience without mentioning salary, benefits, vacation time, etc.
- b. Use an example that relates to the organization or position for which you are interviewing.

8. What did you enjoy least about your previous employment? (Or activities if no employment)

- a. Mention a minor aspect of your previous position or experience that you did not enjoy or you wished was different. Avoid salary, benefits, vacation time, etc.
- b. Do not talk negatively about previous employers, supervisors or coworkers. Do not rant.
- c. Ensure your answer is not directly related to the organization or position. (i.e. Do not mention you hated working weekends/evenings if that is likely required in the current position.)

Behavioral Interview Questions – STAR Answer Format

Behavioral interview questions are commonly used in interviews to determine how you handled specific situations in the past. Past behaviors are often a very good predictor of future performance. You will want to answer these types of questions using the STAR answer format outlined below.

- **(S) Situation** - Give a brief explanation of the situation and provide enough background information so the employer understands the situation. Avoid ranting or speaking poorly of others in a negative situation.
- **(T) Task** - Describe your role in the situation, what you were assigned/supposed to do, and the objective/goal?
- **(A) Action** - Describe the actions you took, what your intentions were, and how your actions affected the situation. This is the most important part of your answer and should be the lengthiest.
- **(R) Result** - Describe the result of the situation, what you learned or would do differently if you encountered the situation again.

When using the STAR format, select one specific example from work, school, activities, or volunteering that best answers the question.

9. Please describe a time when you had a disagreement with a co-worker or classmate. Describe the situation, your role, the actions you took, and how the situation was resolved.

- a. Your answer must describe an experience from work, school, or an extracurricular activity where you had a minor disagreement with a coworker, or a fellow member or classmate.
- b. The employer is looking to see how you approached the situation, if you handled it calmly and professionally, and how you were able to come to a resolution. The employer will consider your tolerance for differences of opinion, your level of communication skills, and your attitude.
 - i. **Situation** – Give a brief explanation of the situation and provide enough information that the employer understands both sides of the disagreement.
 - ii. **Task** – Describe your role in the situation.
 - iii. **Action** – Describe your actions, your intentions, and how your actions affected the situation.
 - iv. **Result** – Describe the result of the situation and how you interacted with the individual post-disagreement. Be sure to include what you learned or what you would have done differently.

10. Please describe a time from work or school when you worked on a project with a diverse group of individuals. Describe the experience and how these differences affected the group project.

- a. Your answer must describe a group or team project from work, school, or an extracurricular activity where the group members were different from each other (age, ethnicity, major, background, etc.).
- b. The employer is looking to see how you approached the situation and interacted within a diverse group to get something done. The employer will consider how well you work with others to achieve a goal or task, how well you appreciate individual differences, and your level of professionalism and attitude within the example.
 - i. **Situation** – Provide a brief overview of how the group/team was established, the size of the group, the differences among the members, and the common goal or task.
 - ii. **Task** – Describe your role in the group and what you noticed about the group differences.
 - iii. **Action** – Describe your actions, your intentions, and how you contributed to the group and influenced the task or goal. Describe how the differences among members affected the group interaction in achieving the task or goal.
 - iv. **Result** – Describe the result of the situation, how the differences played a role, and what you learned or would do differently if you encountered the situation again.

11. Please describe a time from work or school when you had to interact with an angry or frustrated person. Please describe the situation, what actions you took, and the resolution.

- a. Your answer must describe a situation from work, school, or an extracurricular activity where you had to interact with someone who was upset with you or about something that occurred.
- b. The employer is evaluating your customer service, communication, and problem-solving skills. The employer will consider if you were able to remain calm, professional, and appropriate, if you listened to the person's concerns and addressed them, and how resourceful you were at providing a solution.
 - i. **Situation** – Give a brief explanation of the situation and provide enough information that the employer understands why the person was upset and how you were involved.
 - ii. **Task** – Describe your role and how you addressed the reason for anger/frustration.
 - iii. **Action** – Describe your actions, your intentions, and how you communicated with the person, and the steps you took to help resolve their anger or frustration.
 - iv. **Result** – Describe the result of the situation, how you addressed the person's concerns, and what you learned or would do differently if you encountered the situation again.

12. Tell me about a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, gain support and achieve good results.

- a. Your answer must describe a situation from work, school, or an extracurricular activity where you had to take a leadership role, gain support and demonstrate the initiative to complete a task/project or solve a problem.
- b. The employer is evaluating your leadership skills and if you can effectively problem solve. The employer will also consider: what type of leadership style do you possess? Were you resourceful and did you offer a viable solution? Did you handle the situation on your own or bring in any assistance if appropriate?
 - i. **Situation** – Give a brief explanation of the situation and provide enough details that the employer understands what you were trying to complete/solve
 - ii. **Task** – Describe your role in the situation, your reason for taking the leadership role, and what you were doing to gain support and address the situation
 - iii. **Action** – Describe the actions you took, what your intentions were, and how you communicated with the person/group and any attempts you made to complete the project or fix the situation
 - iv. **Result** – Describe the result of the situation, if were you successful in completing the project or solving the problem, and what you learned or would do differently if you encountered the situation again

13. Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.

- a. Your answer must describe a situation from work, school, or an extracurricular activity where you had to balance priorities/projects and meet deadlines/complete requests.
- b. The employer is evaluating your multi-tasking, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. The employer will consider if you were able to select the appropriate priorities and follow through.
 - i. **Situation** – Give a brief explanation of the situation and provide enough information that the employer understands the priorities you were juggling.
 - ii. **Task** – Describe your role, what you did to address the situation, and how you determined which priorities would take precedent.
 - iii. **Action** – Describe your actions, your intentions, and how you managed your priorities.
 - iv. **Result** – Describe the result of the situation, how the you met the deadlines/completed the requests, and what you learned or would do differently.

Ending the Interview

At the end of the interview you should always have three (3) to five (5) questions prepared you can ask the interviewer about the position or organization.

Sample Questions You Can Ask:

- What can I expect in a typical day or week in this role?
- If hired, what would be my first project?
- What are the goals of this department/company?
- Who would my co-workers be, and what are their functions?
- What are the main challenges associated with the team?
- How would you characterize successful employees in this department? What are their common qualities?
- If I meet or exceed the company's expectations, will there be additional opportunities to expand my responsibilities?
- What is the department head's leadership style? How often would we interact?
- What can you tell me about the culture and the environment?
- What makes this company different from its competitors?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- How many candidates are being considered for this position?
- When do you plan to make your hiring decision?

Don't forget to send a thank-you email or letter after both phone and in-person interviews.

Sample Thank-You Email:

Subject: "Thank You – Company Name Position Title Interview"

"Dear Mr./Mrs. _____,

Thank you for taking the time to interview me on [insert date of interview]. I appreciate your interest in my candidacy for the [insert position title] position.

It was great to speak with you and learn more about this available opportunity at [insert company name]. I am pleased to have had this opportunity and thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]"

After reviewing this information, if you would like to schedule a mock interview with Ilitch School Career Services, please call 313-577-4781 or email ilitchcareers@wayne.edu.