

Working Learner Interview Preparation

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RESOURCE	Guide

Applying for student employment is an exciting opportunity to strengthen your skills and have the opportunity to learn more about your institution in a specific office or department. There are a lot of values to working for your institution such as schedule consideration, development and growth opportunities, wrap around support, and networking. If you aren't quite sure how to best prepare for an interview, that's okay! It's not uncommon for students to experience their first ever job interview when applying for campus employment. Here are a few ways to prepare before the interview, what you can do the day of your interview, and some things you can do after the interview.

Before the Interview

Research the area you are interviewing for:

- Be sure to review the job description again to make sure you know the job duties and expectations. You may have applied for a couple jobs and want to be sure you know this specific role.
- Look into the department's or office's website, social media, and resources in which you are applying. Campus departments and offices usually have a mission, vision, and/or values and it can be helpful to be familiar with this and see what their purpose is. It's important to know what the office does and the activities it carries out so you can understand the context you'll be working within and can speak to this in your interview answers.
- Through your research, look into the office's hours of operation to make sure you can bring along your availability with consideration of classes, clubs, and external obligations, within the office's open hours. For example, if you have weekend availability but the office is only open during the workweek of Monday – Friday, it is important to know that so you can plan accordingly.

Consider interview logistics:

- Make sure you know where you are going for an in-person interview.
 - Make a trip to the location to make sure you know how long it will take you and how to navigate transportation such as parking or bus routes, biking paths, walking paths, stairs or ramps, etc.
 - You may be going to a part of campus or a completely different campus you've never been to before and making a trip prior to your interview day can ease your nerves and allow you to plan accordingly.
 - Be sure you have the interviewer's contact information so you can reach out if there is any unavoidable delay to you on the day of the interview.
 - Don't be afraid to go into the office or department and ask the front desk if this is the location you are looking for and share that you are planning for an interview and will see them again soon!

- If you were not provided context on the interview style, feel free to ask. This can include a panel of multiple people, a group interview where you would be with other students interviewing for the same position (particularly if there are multiple hires like for housing or mentoring positions), one on one interview with just the hiring manager or supervisor, over the phone, online/virtual, presentation interview, etc. Knowing the style of interview helps you prepare accordingly and eliminates the stress of the unknown.
- Plan out your outfit
 - It may seem silly, but try on the outfit you are thinking of wearing. Make sure you know where it is, that it's clean and wrinkle free, still fits and is all ready for your big day. Dressing for success is always suggested, but remember that working on campus means you are a student first. If your institution provides student access to professional clothing through a career closet or donation center, plan enough time to swing by and pick out your outfit.
 - Not sure if there is a specific expectation of what to wear? Ask if it is expected you wear business professional clothing to the interview to seek specific guidance and clarification from your point of contact for the interview. When all else fails, aim for business casual, at least.
- Is your interview virtual?
 - Scope out a quiet place and do a practice call to check internet connection, test out your mic and speaker and ensure you have limited background noise.
 - If you have a roommate, coordinate with them to make sure you will have privacy and focus during your interview. Or even consider renting a study room on campus for you to carry out your interview with no interruptions or added stress.
 - Make sure you have the appropriate platform downloaded such as Zoom, Skype, Teams, Google Chat, etc.
 - Check the lighting and make sure it is not too harsh or too dark.

Prepare:

- Practice answers to common interview questions.
 - Consider specific examples of how you have demonstrated different skills outlined in the job description such as customer service, leadership, technology, communication, research, mentorship, etc. Remember that these examples don't have to be from a different job! You may be a leader in a club you're a part of on campus or shown strong communication skills in a group project you accomplished in class. Think of *all* your experiences, not only those you may have been paid for.
- Work with your campus's career services office to practice your interview skills through a career advising appointment or even a mock interview.
- Some universities, offices, or departments provide their students with the questions prior to an interview to best prepare. If you are provided the questions, be sure to practice them and ensure you have specific examples and the ability to highlight your interest and your ability. If you were not provided the questions, that's okay! That's not uncommon and in this case you will utilize the approach of understanding the job description, department/ office, and expectations as fully as possible and practicing based on the style of interview you will be having.

- Plan out what you are going to bring and include a notebook and pen so you can take notes or jot down the questions to help you best process, based on your learning style.
- Remember that student employment is an opportunity for you to strengthen your skills and can help you be even more prepared for your future career. Consider how the job you are applying for may connect to your future career or your major and how this position can help you be marketable. You may think it doesn't quite fit, but you'll be surprised at how transferable skills can be! Talking about the skills you have as well as hope to gain are great things to include in your interview responses as you demonstrate your interest in the role as more than simply a job or a way to make money.
- Bring along at least two questions you want to ask the employer. It's important you get the chance to interview them, too! These questions may be about the job description, how scheduling or hours would be determined, what their other student employees enjoy about the role, specific skill based questions, or even what they like about their own job. Intentionally select your questions and be sure to bring them with you.
- Everyone has nervous habits and it's important to know yours before going into an interview. Ask those who know you best or even your career advisor while you practice for the interview what your nervous habits are, if you don't know. Awareness is the key to success. Some common nervous habits during interviews can include jiggling your leg, playing with your hair, clicking pens, word fillers such as "um" or "like, fidgeting or hand movements, or facial expressions. Once you know what some of yours may be, try practicing answering interview questions particularly avoiding that habit. It could be as easy as tying back your hair if you're a hair twirler or folding your hands in your lap if you are a fidgeter.
- Consider using AI to help you practice! You can ask your chosen platform for sample interview questions for the specific job you are applying for or even share the job description. This can be a helpful way to get some direct answers and even reply with your answers to get some feedback on how to strengthen those responses even more.

Day of the Interview:

In Person Interview Tips:

- Arrive five to 10 minutes early to the location of your interview. This is prior to the start date and should already consider traffic, travel time, and other logistics you thought through prior.
- Consider everyone you interact with as part of the interview – be kind and build rapport with the desk staff who checks you in as well as those who interview you.
- Be sure to silence your cell phone and eliminate any distractions such as chewing gum.
- Introduce yourself and based on your comfort, shake hands with those interviewing you.
- Be attentive and relaxed while still remaining professional.
- Take your time when answering your question and ask for clarification or a question to be repeated as needed and within reason. If you were provided the question beforehand, have them printed with you so you can refer to the printout without having to have the question repeated.

Virtual Interview Tips:

- Give yourself enough time to test all of your equipment (computer, speaker, microphone) and internet connection again before clicking into your virtual link.
- Arrive five to 10 minutes early to your virtual waiting room.
- Silence notifications on your computer and silence your phone.
- Eliminate distractions such as chewing gum or things within your room or interview space that will be distracting to you.
- Take your time when answering your questions. If you need the question to be repeated and they haven't provided you the question, ask if they can drop them into the chat so you can read them while you consider your answer and to allow you the chance to answer each question fully.

Overall Considerations:

- Think positively and feel confident knowing student employee positions have a special opportunity to teach you what they want you to know. A big part of these interviews is getting to know each other and sharing your interests by understanding what the job will entail through your own research.
- Communication is more than what you say and don't say, it's also how you say it and your body language. Consider your non-verbal responses and ensure you stay physically open, manage facial expressions, tone of voice, and avoid those nervous habits you discovered when you were preparing.
- Remember to bring your questions with you so when they are done asking you their questions, you have time to ask your own.
- If the information is not provided to you at the end of the interview, ask about next steps and timelines.

After the Interview:

- Within 24 hours, send a formal thank-you by email to the members of your hiring committee or the individual carrying out your interview.
 - If you were not allotted time to ask your questions in the interview, consider including your questions in your follow up email.
 - If you asked your questions and remember what the individual interviewer said that you enjoyed, consider including that in the email as something you appreciated learning or hearing from them.
- If you haven't heard within the timeline they provided you, follow up on the status of the process with your interview point of contact.