LinkedIn
LinkedIn is a network of professionals who connect according to common interests, which may include industry, geography, specialties, career goals, and more. Your LinkedIn presence conveys the same information as a good resume and establishes an entire host of relationships that cannot be targeted using traditional job search methods. LinkedIn groups include the Columbia Career Connections, Columbia Alumni Association Network, and IvyLife. After joining groups relevant to your interests, if you are knowledgeable about the subject you can post answers to questions, and start a discussion topic. Doing so will make you more noticeable to employers and recruiters, increase your expertise, and show your interest in a specific area. See pages 67–76 for information about creating a profile and connecting with professionals.

Twitter
Twitter can provide an ever-expanding circle of contacts that can be utilized to help you find a job, share resources, or broaden your network. You can follow people you admire, follow companies, or learn about openings through @TweetMyJobs. For example, employers looking for social-media savvy candidates often Tweet jobs to their followers rather than using traditional recruitment methods.

Blogging
Use a blog to establish credibility, particularly for industries like public relations, marketing, publishing, and journalism. To blog effectively, refine your experiences, skills, and perspectives into a coherent idea that can contribute to your industry of interest in a way that other blogs do not. Many blog-hosting services are free and offer a variety of templates and arrangements to provide you with a great design. Blogging 2-4 times a week is enough to establish your professional identity and whether you get busy for a week or so, you can always ask other professionals/classmates to guest blog. Referencing and linking to other bloggers, joining blogging groups, submitting yourself for review and awards—all share your name and demonstrate your professional capability.

Online Portfolio/Personal Website
It is a good idea for artists, writers, doctoral candidates, architects, and any students looking to enter media or a creative field to establish an online portfolio or personal website to display your work. Maintaining an up-to-date online portfolio is a great way to keep track of your accomplishments, ensure your visibility on the web, and manage your online identity. There are a number of platforms to choose from. Columbia provides web hosting space to members of the university community, which you can learn more about by visiting the website of Columbia University Information Technology and clicking on the Web Publishing link. Alternatively, you could use a free blogging platform, such as Wordpress or Blogger, or you could opt for a more design-oriented platform intended for creative professionals and visual artists, such as Carbonmade or Dripbook, some of which have small monthly or yearly fees. Whichever platform you choose, make sure to update your portfolio regularly and include your web address in both your resume and LinkedIn profile.

Introduction to Interviewing

Why the Employer Wants to Interview You

When an employer determines, through reviewing your resume and cover letter, that you have the necessary skills and experience to succeed in their organization, he/she will invite you for an interview. The interview is designed to closely assess your experiences and motivation and to determine whether you will fit well with the organization. Interviewing is the most personal part of the job search process because it involves assessing whether a candidate will mesh well with a company's culture. Fit can be measured by evaluating a candidate's interpersonal skills, interests, and general presentation. With research and proper preparation, you can demonstrate why you are the right candidate for the position.

Preparing for Your Interview

Follow these steps to best prepare for an interview.

• Purpose: Why do I want this job? You must have a purpose and objective in mind and be able to clearly articulate that to the employer. Know yourself and your resume and be able to tell the interviewer how your skills and experiences match an organization's needs and position requirements. Identify the skills you have developed through
the experiences that you listed on your resume. Think about how those skills, personal qualities, academic, and co-curricular experiences make you the best candidate. See page 11 for top 10 personal qualities/skills sought by and employers, and meet with a CCE career counselor to discuss your preparation. Please be aware of your online image and make smart professional decisions regarding all postings and updates you make to sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and blogs.

• Prepare: Time and time again, employers state that students do not know enough about the organization with which they are interviewing. All students can improve their interviewing skills by knowing as much as possible about the position, organization, and industry associated with the opportunity. Doing research demonstrates how interested you are in a specific position or organization. Expand your research by learning about current trends and events that might impact your future employer. Review the organization’s corporate literature and website. The CCE website provides many industry resources, including free access to the Vault and Wetfeet Career Libraries. In addition to the organization’s website, conduct research online to learn about current events that involve the organization. As well, use social media sites such as LinkedIn and Twitter to cross reference the organization.

• Practice: Many people practice for an interview by writing down answers to common interview questions. While organizing your thoughts on paper is helpful, the best practice is done verbally. Review interview questions and practice answering them alone or with a friend. Most importantly, meet with a career counselor for a mock interview and get feedback on your interview style, presentation, and body language. Call 212-854-5609 to schedule an appointment with a counselor. Each semester, CCE career counselors partner with Columbia alumni to provide additional mock interview slots. Check careereducation.columbia.edu/calendar for specific dates and sign up for an interview! When scheduling an appointment, you can ask for the mock interview to be video recorded for you to view later. Also, remember to forward the job description and your resume to the counselor in advance.

The Night Before Your Interview

The night before your interview ensure that you have taken the following steps to prepare and feel confident:

• Read through your notes and documents (e.g., your resume, cover letter, job description, company or industry summaries) one last time.
• Know the route you will take to the location and how much transportation time you will need.
• Examine your clothing for stains and wrinkles. Look for scuffs on your shoes. For additional information, please refer to the “Professional Image” tipsheet on the CCE website at careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/tipsheets/skills-professional-image.
• Visit the Macy’s and Bloomingdale’s Clothing Closet at CCE to borrow suits and accessories for the purpose of attending an interview, career fair, or professional networking event. For more information about the Clothing Closet visit careereducation.columbia.edu/services/clothingcloset.
• Set your alarm so that you have enough time to get to the interview without rushing.
• Get a good night’s sleep.
• Print multiple copies of your resume.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE INTERVIEW?

• Have you thought about your goals, values, and skills and how they match the opportunity?
• Have you researched the field, organization, and position?
• Do you know the name and title of the interviewer?
• Have you prepared an appropriate interview outfit?
• Have you identified the time and place of the interview and the best method to get there?
• Have you made extra copies of your resume and list of references?
• Have you practiced questions on pages 51–57?
During the Interview

To succeed on the day of your interview remember to:

- Be on time for every interview by arriving at least 10 to 15 minutes early. In addition, be considerate and polite to all staff members (e.g., doormen, administrative assistants). You never know who will provide input for a hiring decision.
- Turn off all mobile devices.
- Discard any chewing gum, breath mints, etc. Do not smoke right before your interview as the smell of smoke on your clothes might be distracting to an employer. In addition, you should not wear excessive amounts of perfume, cologne, aftershave, or distracting jewelry as many employers cite these as annoyances.
- Be enthusiastic and convey this enthusiasm to the interviewer.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer when he or she speaks to you. Make sure you answer the question your interviewer is asking.
- Prove you are the best candidate for the job by demonstrating to the interviewer what makes you different and superior to other candidates. Correlate your skills, accomplishments, and objectives with those sought by the employer.
- Provide specific examples whenever possible. This strengthens your answers to questions.
- Bring several copies of your resume.
- Never apologize for any perceived lack of experience or background. Focus on the positive aspects of your training and experience.
- Request a business card from the interviewer so that you may send a thank-you note.
- Be aware of your body language. Your posture, eye contact, and use of hand gestures all contribute to the impression you make on the interviewer. The following examples of proper body language and behavior, specific to the U.S. job market, may help you assess your presentation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posture</th>
<th>Your posture can convey confidence or insecurity. Sit up straight and send a message that you are comfortable and confident.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Maintain eye contact with your interviewer. In addition, be sure to make eye contact with everyone in the room. If you focus all of your attention on one person, you will not engage other interviewers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>Avoid fidgeting because it is extremely distracting. Use your hands to express yourself, but do so in moderation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Be clear and direct. Avoid the use of filler words between phrases or sentences. Do not ramble. Silence is acceptable. When you finish making your point, stop!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

After the Interview

- Send a thank-you note within 24 hours of the interview. (See the sample Thank-you Letter on page 46.) Your form of correspondence (email versus hand-written) should reflect the industry and the immediacy of any potential offer. For example, if a decision is to be made within a day or two, be sure to send an email. Convey your enthusiasm for the position and provide any additional information that you might not have mentioned in the interview. You may wish to make reference to the conversation you had with the employer so that he or she remembers you and knows that you valued your opportunity to interview. Address the note to the correct person using his or her title. Make sure to ask your interviewer for a business card before the interview is over.
- Evaluate your performance. Did any questions stump you? Now is the time to improve your answers for the next interview.
- Follow up, professionally and only once, if you do not hear from the employer after the reply date that the interviewer indicated. Call the interviewer and inquire about the position.
- During second interviews, you may meet with more than one person or participate in a group interview. This is also your opportunity to observe the office dress code, corporate culture, and work environment. Think about whether you could picture yourself working there on a regular basis. Learn as much as you can about the organization so that you can make an educated decision about whether or not you would be happy there. (Please see the Second Interview information on page 61.)
**Interview With Confidence Worksheet**

Two types of questions you are almost guaranteed to be asked in a job/internship interview: “Tell me about yourself,” and a behavioral question, such as “Tell me about a time you worked on a team.” With the former question, the employer wants you to articulate your interest in the position and industry and to offer information about relevant skills and experience you bring to the position. With the latter question, the employer wants to know how you behaved in or handled a specific situation with the idea that past behavior predicts future behavior. In preparing to answer both questions, it is important to spend time reflecting on your experiences and be able to articulate not only what you did, but also how your experiences influenced you and shaped your thinking about your career direction or workplace behavior and attitudes.

**Tell me about yourself.**

For this question, consider an answer that provides some relevant background information about your interest in the field and position in addition to your relevant experience. It is a brief story about what has shaped your interest and motivation to pursue the opportunity for which you are interviewing. Draw upon your answers to all or some of the questions below to craft your answer.

How did you become interested in this industry/job function? What experiences piqued your interest in this field (classes, internships/jobs, books, etc.)?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What have you done in this field to pursue/explore this interest or that has confirmed your interest?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What experiences/accomplishments have given you the skills the employer is looking for (activities/leadership, internships/jobs, volunteering)?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why is this position of interest to you now?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

**Behavioral Questions**

Behavioral questions usually start with “Tell me about a time when” or “Give me an example of a time/experience when” (See page 54 in this guide for examples of behavioral questions). The interviewer is looking for a concrete example that demonstrates a specific skill or quality that will make you an asset to their team. It is very important to give a specific example rather than to speak in generalities.

It is also useful to think of the answer to this question as a story with a specific structure that relays not only the experience but also what you learned from the experience. One way to structure your story is captured by the mnemonic ‘STAR’, which stands for: Situation, Task, Action, and Result.
**Situation:** What was the situation/problem/conflict you were facing?

**Task:** What task(s) did you identify to respond to this situation/to solve the problem?

**Action:** What action did you take?

**Results:** What lessons did you learn, what skills did you gain, and/or what qualities did you develop through this experience that will help you contribute to the prospective employer’s team in the position for which you are interviewing?

Remember that the employer wants to know if you have certain transferable skills and qualities that will help you be effective in the job.

**Activity:** Read through the job description of a position you are interviewing for/interested in and identify all the skills and qualities they are seeking (usually in the responsibilities and qualifications sections). For each skill and quality you list, think of two concrete examples from your past experience that demonstrate those skills and qualities. Examples can come from internships, school activities, volunteer work, and even personal hobbies. Using the worksheet below, construct your stories/answers according to the STAR structure.

**Situation • Task • Action • Results**

**Job competency you want to demonstrate:** ____________________________

**Situation:** ____________________________________________

**Task:** ____________________________________________

**Action(s):**
1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

**Specific verbs/phrases you can use to pinpoint your job competencies:**
1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

**Result(s):** ____________________________________________

**Application (what did you learn from this experience?):** ____________________________________________

**Are there any relevant quantifiable details? Are there any relevant contextual details?** __________________

[Worksheet for constructing stories/answers according to the STAR structure]
Sample Questions

There are three principal types of questions you may encounter during an interview: 1) traditional, 2) behavioral, and 3) industry specific.

Traditional interview questions focus mainly on general information that you can answer directly. Some of the questions will be based on your application, so know your resume thoroughly in order to answer questions effectively. In addition, use examples that will help illustrate your point and give the interviewer a greater sense of who you are as a person, student, and potential employee. Below are common questions that you may be asked during your interview:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you decide to go to Columbia?
- Why did you major in ________?
- Tell me about your job at _____________.
- Why did you leave your job/internship at ____?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your long-term and short-term goals?
- How do you plan to achieve your goals?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in your chosen career?
- Which three adjectives best describe you? Why?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What can you offer our organization that no one else can?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievements?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why should I hire you?

Columbia students often identify: “Tell me about yourself,” “What is your greatest weakness?,” “Why should I hire you?,” and “What salary do you expect and/or require?” as the most challenging interview questions to answer. Following are suggestions for tackling these difficult questions.

- **Tell me about yourself.** This innocent sounding question is one of the hardest interview questions to answer. You do not know what the employer is looking for specifically. However, this is also one of the best questions to be asked. At no other time will you be given so much latitude to answer a question. You want to be sure to capture the interviewer’s attention with a clear, quick, and focused response. This response (“two-minute pitch” or “elevator speech”) should give a summary of your background, focusing on why you are a good fit for this position in this organization. Please keep in mind that the employer is not interested in learning about your entire personal history. Before the interview, prepare an answer to this question. Write out your relevant or professional qualifications using the past, present, and future approach. Choose four to five highlights of which you are most proud (past and present). Be sure to back up these qualifications with examples, generally from your resume. Then, explain how you believe you can help this employer.

- **What are your greatest weaknesses?** When you answer this question you should be cautious. This is not an opportunity to confess a major flaw in your personality that would disqualify you from further consideration. However, it should not be a strength cleverly disguised as a weakness (e.g., “I’m a perfectionist”). In your answer include ways that you are trying to improve upon this weakness. In addition, anticipate several follow-up questions related to your weakness. It does not have to be a personality trait—you could choose a skill deficit or lack of experience, which may be easier to improve.
• Why should I hire you? In your answer, focus on what makes you unique and what you offer to an employer. Do not attempt to compare yourself with other applicants. Explain the combinations of skills and experiences you offer and why these will be valuable to this company.

• What salary do you expect and/or require? To answer this question properly, you need to do research into the position and the company. You want to be able to give the employer a salary range that you are comfortable with and that matches the standard rate for this position in this industry. When stating your salary range, also adjust for the cost of living in the city of your choice. For additional help, refer to salary.com.

Behavioral interview questions are based on the premise that past behavior predicts future performance; therefore, you should assess your skills and abilities so that you are prepared to answer any questions that require thorough descriptions of your past. To answer these questions, identify the skills employers are most interested in and select examples that illustrate these skills. Examples can be drawn from your academic coursework, internships, volunteer work, and student activities. When answering these questions, your answers should be organized and illustrate your thought process. You may wish to use the STAR framework (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to help structure your answers. Detail your situation, your tasks, your actions, and your results, and then summarize your overall experience. Below are sample behavioral questions that you may be asked during your interview:

Leadership
• Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond what was expected of you.
• Describe the most significant leadership role you’ve held. What was your greatest challenge?
• Have you ever had an idea or a goal to achieve something that required action by other individuals beyond yourself? How did you find or mobilize the resources to make the idea or goal become real? How did you manage the unforeseen events along the way?

Problem Solving/Analytical
• Tell me about an assignment you worked on in which you had to amass a huge amount of data and then analyze it.
• Can you tell me about a situation where your analysis of a problem was deemed to be incorrect? What did you do next?

Initiative
• Tell me about a project that you persevered through after initially wanting to abandon it.
• Tell me about a time when you worked under deadline pressure.

Communication
• Describe a situation in which you had to convince others that your view, approach or ideas were right.
• What is your approach in meeting new people? Describe how you might typically behave in a business context versus a social context.

Teamwork
• Describe a situation when you needed to sacrifice your personal objectives for the team’s benefit.
• Describe a situation where the true teamwork was the only means of achieving the most effective results. What were the elements of the team dynamic and how did you contribute to the dynamic?
Industry-specific interview questions test your knowledge of and skills as related to the industry to which you are applying. This is your opportunity to reveal research you’ve done online and by talking with professionals.

Academic
- Tell me about your research and your plans for publication.
- What course, not currently in our catalogue, would you like to develop?
- Would you be comfortable teaching a course on ___________?
- How do you structure your courses?

Architecture
- Name your favorite architects and what you admire about their work.
- Talk to me about your design philosophy.
- Are you LEED certified and/or do you have experience working on a LEED project?
- How do you feel your studio work relates to practical projects you might encounter here at our firm?

Consulting
See page 57.

Engineering

Biomedical Engineering
- What is the mechanism of ELISA?
- How would you measure the permeability of a tissue engineered construct?

Chemical Engineering
- How do you go about mixing two unknown chemicals?
- What is unit operation?
- How would you separate water and benzene?

Civil Engineering
- In your opinion, what is the best design for building bridges?
- What are some of the different ways to lay a foundation?
- What is softsoil?

Computer Engineering
- What are data structures?
- What is the difference between recursion and iteration?

Earth and Environmental Engineering
- How much do you know about energy audits, and what are the differences for new and existing buildings?
- Name three major contributions made in the energy field this year? On climate change?

Electrical Engineering
- How are analog signals converted to digital signals?
- Explain the differences between a transistor and capacitor.

Industrial Engineering
- What is called DC in supply chain management?
- What is setup time, operation time?
- Why is statistics important in Industrial Engineering?

Mechanical Engineering
- Explain power technology.
- Explain Newton's Laws.
- How is a factor of safety used in design?

Finance
- What was the closing number for the Dow Jones Industrials two days ago? (Sales and Trading specific)
- How do you value a company? (Investment Banking specific)
- Why sales and trading? Why not banking?
- If interest rates rise, what happens to bond prices and yields?
- Name three stocks/companies that you think are undervalued and why?
- Company XYZ released increased quarterly earnings yesterday, but their stock price still dropped, why?
- Is 15 a high P/E (price to earnings) ratio?
- What are some reasons that two companies would want to merge?

Law
- In what law specialization are you interested?
- Have you ever attended a court hearing or employment tribunal? What was the outcome?
- How do you respond under stress?
- In your view, what are the major problems/opportunities facing the legal industry?

Marketing
- If you were to introduce a new product into a foreign market, what are some of the factors you would need to study in that country?
- You need more shelf space in a store. How do you convince the store manager to give it to you?
- What are some of most effective ways social media is currently being used by people in the marketing field?
TALKING ABOUT EMPLOYMENT GAPS DURING INTERVIEWS

As mentioned in the Resume Section of this Career Planning Guide (see page 23), many individuals have taken time out of the workforce during their careers for a wide range of reasons. You may be asked about these employment gaps during job interviews and thus will want to be prepared to answer such questions as “What have you been doing for the past three years?”

• The key is to come up with a response that you feel comfortable with, keeping in mind that you do not need to divulge too much information; here are a couple of examples:
  ○ I was at home taking care of a sick family member/taking care of my young children.
  ○ I was out of the workforce due to a health issue, which is now resolved.

• The most important aspect in this conversation is to emphasize that you are ready and excited to get back to work.

• If you volunteered, worked on projects, served in a professional association, took classes, or did anything else that was professionally related during your time out of work, be sure to highlight these experiences and the skills that you gained: My volunteer experiences during this time have been rewarding and have allowed me to hone my leadership and management skills.

• If you took time off to take care of family members, whether children or an adult, think of all the skills you used: multi-tasking, solving problems, managing time, handling stress, negotiating and mediating (especially with healthcare issues); you can point out these skills as well and how they will be useful in your new job.
At a Glance: Consulting Case Interviews

What is a case interview? A case interview is the analysis of a hypothesized business question. Unlike most other interview questions, it is an interactive process. Your interviewer will present you with a business problem and ask for your opinion on resolving it. Your job is to ask the interviewer logical questions that enable you to make detailed recommendations. In this context, the interviewer is attempting to assess your ability to synthesize the elements of the problem into a coherent and cohesive solution.

What do case interviews evaluate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How you approach a problem</th>
<th>How you engage with people</th>
<th>What you know about business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Structured, logical thinking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Organization and detail orientation</td>
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<td>• Comfort with numbers</td>
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<td>• Ease of communication</td>
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<td>• Confidence and poise</td>
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<td>• Enthusiasm for problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Business intuition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A few, fundamental business concepts and frameworks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What happens during a case interview? During the interview, you will likely be asked to answer at least one of three types of questions…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brain Teaser</td>
<td>Why are manhole covers round?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Sizing</td>
<td>How many dry cleaners are there in NYC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Case</td>
<td>Your client is one of the leading manufacturers of bathroom taps and fixtures. Recently it has noticed a decline in profits. Why are the profits declining? What can the client do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How should I approach the case interview? Use RASCALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeat</th>
<th>Ask</th>
<th>Stop</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Loosen Up</th>
<th>Summarize</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Listen to the question</td>
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<td>• Rephrase what you hear</td>
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<td>• Make sure you and the interviewer are on the same page about the question</td>
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<td>• Ask as many clarifying questions as you can about the problem</td>
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<td>• Use this time to show enthusiasm. If the product you are discussing is tires, think about tires. Get interested in tires. Show this through your questions</td>
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<td>• Ask your interviewer “Do you mind if I take 30 seconds to step back and collect my thoughts?”</td>
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<td>• PAUSE</td>
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<td>• BE SILENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>• THINK</td>
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<td>• (It may feel awkward, but your interviewer will see this as a sign of maturity and confidence)</td>
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<td>• Structure your response, write it down</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Draw pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create charts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide organization</td>
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<td>• Think of each point you want to make as the topic sentence in a paragraph – give an overview of what you will say, and then say it</td>
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<td>• Use headlines to describe what you are thinking (e.g., talk in topic sentences)</td>
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<td>• Converse with the interviewer about the approach you have devised</td>
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<td>• Let your answer feel like a conversation – as if you are making a recommendation to a client</td>
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<td>• RELAX</td>
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<td>• Smile</td>
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<td>• Show confidence in your answer</td>
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<td>• Show enthusiasm for the topic</td>
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<td>• Show interest in asking for feedback from the interviewer on your approach</td>
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<td>• Articulate your conclusion</td>
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<td>• Reiterate your main points</td>
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<td>• Highlight the most important parts of the conversation (so the interviewer remembers!)</td>
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What else can I read/do? *Case in Point* by Marc P. Cosentino, *Vault Case Interviews Practice Guides*, and *WetFeet Ace Your Case Guides*. Access guides through the CCE website: careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/library. Practice with peers in the Columbia Undergraduate Consulting Club and/or Columbia Graduate Consulting Club.
Illegal Interview Questions

United States, federal, state, and local laws regulate the questions a prospective employer can ask, including:

- What is your age?
- What are your religious beliefs?
- What is your ancestry, national origin, or birth place?
- What is your native language?
- Are you single, married, divorced, or widowed?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Do you have a police record?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- Are your parents citizens?
- Do you have any children and/or are you planning on having more?

How to Handle Illegal Interview Questions

- Remember it is not illegal to answer an illegal question if you feel comfortable doing so. Conversely, you can respond by saying, “I do not feel that is relevant to the position or interview.”
- Examples if you choose to answer:
  - What is your national origin or place of birth? “I am authorized to work in the U.S.”
  - Do you have any disabilities? “I have no issues that would keep me from effectively carrying out this job.”

Legal Interview Questions: Be prepared to answer questions about your whether you are legally able to work in the U.S., whether you have ever been convicted of a crime, or if you have relatives who work for the company.

Good Questions to Ask

At the end of any interview, you will typically be given the opportunity to ask questions. This is a great chance for you to find out more information and demonstrate the research you have done on the organization or industry. Listed below are questions you might ask at the end of an interview.

Questions for Supervisors

- What are the ongoing or special departmental projects?
- What are the daily responsibilities of the position?
- What are company expectations for the position? What does the company or division hope that the employee will accomplish?

Questions for Peers

- What is a typical workday like for you?
- Have you seen opportunity for professional growth?
- What are the greatest challenges you face on the job?

Questions for Human Resources

- Is there a training orientation for new hires?
- What is the timetable for advising applicants of their status?
Non Face-to-Face Interviews

The Telephone Interview

A telephone interview is usually used to screen candidates to narrow down the pool of applicants who will be invited for face-to-face interviews. It can also be used for out-of-town candidates.

Prepare for a telephone interview the same way you would for an in-person interview:

• Do research on the company.
• Anticipate questions and practice answers.
• Conduct a telephone mock interview.

Special circumstances to make a telephone interview successful:

• Schedule an appointment for your telephone interview. If the call comes in by surprise, try your best not to answer questions on the spot but rather schedule an appointment so that you can be well-prepared.
• Make sure to confirm details of the appointment, with whom you will be speaking, and who will be initiating the call.
• Make sure that you receive the call in a quiet, comfortable, and private space where there will be no interruptions or background noise. If possible, use a land line rather than a cell phone. Make sure to turn off call waiting so that the call won’t be interrupted.
• When your phone rings, make sure that you answer and not a family member or a roommate and answer by stating your name: “Hello, this is _________."

Advantages of a telephone interview:

• You can refer to your resume and other preparatory notes that you’ve made. If you’re good at multi-tasking, you can have your computer open to the company website. However, don’t read your replies. Make sure that your tone is conversational. Another advantage of the telephone interview is that you don’t have to dress up. However, some candidates do prefer to dress up because it makes them feel more businesslike, serious, and focused. Do not smoke, chew gum, or eat during the interview but do have water handy.

Telephone Interview Etiquette

• At the outset of the interview, try to ascertain the caller’s name and title and address him or her as Mr. or Ms. Ask if you can be easily heard and adjust if need be. Put warmth into your voice and sound energetic and enthusiastic. Listen carefully to the questions and don’t interrupt. If you need the interviewer to repeat a question, just ask.
• Remember, the goal of a telephone interview is to set up a face-to-face interview. As the interview winds down, try to suggest a follow-up in person meeting to further discuss your qualifications. Make sure that you follow up with a thank-you note by regular mail or email. Even though the interview was conducted by telephone, you should still express your thanks in writing.
The Webcam Interview (Skype, Facetime, iChat)

This type of interview has become increasingly popular with the improvement of video conferencing technology. It enables companies to interview candidates over great distances and it saves time and reduces travel and hotel costs. It is better than phone interviews in that the interviewer can see the candidates clothing, body language, and facial expressions.

Necessary Equipment

• In terms of equipment, you need a webcam, microphone, and video chat software. A fast, reliable internet connection is essential in order to avoid fuzzy transmissions and dropped calls. It is probably a good idea to get online at least 15 minutes early in the event of any unexpected technical glitches that need to be addressed.

Placing Yourself and the Webcam

• The webcam should be placed at eye level. The camera should be showing your head and the upper part of your torso. Dress as you would for an in-person interview, but black clothing usually shows up best on camera. Don’t sit head-on to the computer screen because your image may look like a mugshot. Instead, angle your knees to the corner of the computer screen and then turn your head slightly back to look at the camera. Don’t lean forward. It’s okay to look at the screen when the interviewer is talking but make sure to look at the webcam when you are talking in order to simulate direct eye contact. Some experts say that it can be helpful to place a photograph behind or around the webcam.
• Remember that the interviewer will be seeing not only you, but the background as well. You don’t want to show the interviewer a messy room or office.
• Lighting is very important. You need to make sure that your face is lit and that there is no bright light behind you. Experiment in order to find the most flattering lighting and seating position. Make sure that there will not be any background noise such as a barking dog and absolutely no interruptions.

When the interview starts, it’s okay to acknowledge that this is an unusual situation. Then follow all the same protocols as if it was an in-person interview. Since the webcam interview is new to many job candidates, it would be an excellent idea to do a practice Skype interview.
The Second Interview

Congratulations—you made it through your first-round interview! At this point, the employer is seriously considering hiring you for the position. However, while your confidence should be up, you still have work to do.

To secure an offer, you want to build on your previous performance and demonstrate why you are the best candidate for the job. The second interview is crucial in determining your fit with the organization, as well as your particular skills and knowledge. Employers are looking to see which candidate has the best ability to get the job done and to work effectively on a team. Employers will evaluate your interaction with others, your job-related abilities, your company and industry knowledge, and your enthusiasm.

What to Expect

During second-round interviews, you usually meet with several individuals. Typically, you meet one-on-one with employers in back-to-back appointments; however, you may meet with several people in a group-interview setting. Expect to meet with a range of coworkers, peers, and superiors. Keep in mind that these are the individuals with whom you will work on a daily basis. Therefore, as you proceed through the interview process, evaluate not only your own performance but also what kind of impression they make on you. For example, would you like to work in this type of environment with these supervisors and colleagues? If not, why not?

Questions posed during the second-round interview are often more specific and focus more on the particulars of the job and your understanding of the organization and industry. Therefore, research the technical aspects of the job and anticipate questions posed in industry jargon. Additionally, behavioral questions are common during a second interview.

Lastly, your interview may extend into social gatherings, receptions, or dinners. Be sure to maintain your professional behavior in these settings. Exhibit comfort and always remember that your actions in these situations are evaluated with respect to hiring.

How to Prepare

The second interview is the opportunity to let your research pay off. Employers are looking to see competence and compatibility. Review your resume once again and focus on discussing your internships and other related work experience in more detail. Think about what you have learned, the skills you have developed along the way, and how they relate to this particular employer.

Knowledge about the organization is essential when demonstrating your interest in the job. Why do you want to work for this company and not for their competitors? Try to identify and speak with people in the organization (through CCE, alumni, peers, faculty, and family) to gain knowledge about the organization. By speaking to current and former employees, you will show that you have done your homework and have found out what makes the company unique. When you research the company and speak with contacts, seek out information on any recent events affecting the company and industry (e.g., mergers, management changes) as well as the organizational structure and culture. In addition to the organization’s website, conduct research using online search tools like Google or Bing to learn about the most current events that involve the organization. As well, use social media such as LinkedIn to cross reference the organization and identify alumni who work there that may be able to offer their perspective on the organization.

Before you head out the door, make sure you have:

- The complete contact information for your principal contact within the organization, including his/her title, address, and phone number.
- All travel details including dates, times, locations, and phone numbers.
- Any documentation you need such as plane/train tickets and extra resumes.
- A map of where you are going.
- A schedule for the day’s or weekend’s events.
- A list of professional references (please refer to the “References” tipsheet on the CCE website for additional information).
- For those who participate in On-Campus Recruiting, please keep in mind that second-round interviews are typically not held at CCE but rather at the company offices.