

# INTERVIEWING GUIDEBOOK



**MORAVIAN  
COLLEGE**  
CAREER & CIVIC  
ENGAGEMENT

**CENTER FOR CAREER & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

[www.moravian.edu/careercivic](http://www.moravian.edu/careercivic)

[CAREERCIVIC@MORAVIAN.EDU](mailto:CAREERCIVIC@MORAVIAN.EDU)

610-861-1509

MORAVIAN COLLEGE

# CENTER FOR CAREER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

---

careercivic@moravian.edu

www.moravian.edu/careercivic

610-861-1509

Center Drop-in Hours: Monday-Thursday: 2-4pm



@MCCareerCivic



Moravian College Center  
for Career and Civic  
Engagement



MCCareerCivic

# THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

---

The heart of the job search process is the interview. This is your chance to show your stuff. It is where your motivations and the organization's needs come together. To be best prepared for the interview, you must know how to match the employer's needs to your skills and abilities.

*The Center for Career and Civic Engagement understands that each student has unique needs impacting their job and internship/co-op search. For more specialized search strategies for you or your student group, please contact us.*

## Two types of interviews are the most common:

- **The Screening Interview.** A short interview (often over the phone or online) in which first impressions are quite important.
- **The On-Site Interview.** Usually a longer follow-up to the screening session. You must be able to establish rapport quickly and sustain it.

**Note:** The interview process can be brief, or several steps over a long period of time. Be flexible when possible, as each employer/program has unique needs.

## 1. Pre-Interview Prep

A successful interview begins before the interviewer(s) start asking you questions. To be successful, make sure to complete the following before your interview:

- Review information about the company in such diverse resources as websites, directories, social media, current employees, and annual reports.
- Update your online resources including your LinkedIn account, and any portfolios, blogs or personal websites.
- Develop some of your questions for the interview.
- Be sure to know yourself and be able to identify your skills and abilities.
- Review your resume and cover letter.
- Anticipate and prepare for questions the interviewer(s) will ask.
- Confirm your schedule, date, time and location.
- Know the interviewer's (or interviewers') name(s), pronunciation, spelling, pronouns, and title(s) (Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs., Mx, Dr.).

Remember to bring a briefcase, professional bag or portfolio to interviews. It should contain:

- A notepad
- One or two pens
- Several extra resumes
- Several copies of your reference list
- Letters of recommendation (if you have them)
- Work samples (where applicable)

## 2. First Impressions and Introductions

**Note:** Best practices for interviews vary from culture to culture (such as eye contact duration, personal spacing, etc.). The advice outlined here applies to accepted/preferred behavior in the United States. If you are interviewing outside of the United States, it is important to research information about appropriate communication, dress, etc. for that country/culture. You may also reach out to the Center for Career and Civic Engagement with any questions related to interviewing.

### APPEARANCE

Interview clothing is typically conservative and conservative suits are generally best. This may change if you are interviewing for an “image” career, such as fashion merchandising, where a “fashion statement” is not out of order.

- Wear a professional suit.
  - Jacket, blouse or button-down shirt with tie, skirt or pants.
  - Solid, dark or neutral colors
  - Closed-toe heel or shoe
  - Be sure your socks match your shoes/suit.
- Make-up should be subtle; not too much.
- Wear sparse jewelry. Nothing distracting.
- Avoid too much perfume or cologne.



*If you're ever unsure about your appearance, come see the Center for advice and feedback.*

### HANDSHAKE

- Hand is extended straight and firm, locking thumbs.
- Keep your hand dry and apply moderate pressure, not too much or too limp.

### VOICE & TONE

- Speak clearly when possible and at a level that will enable the interviewer to understand everything you are saying. Speak firmly, clearly, and not too fast or too slow.
- Avoid filler words like “um”, “like”, etc.

### EYE CONTACT

- Hold eye contact when speaking and listening to the interviewer. This shows you are listening carefully and are concerned with what the person has to say. It's okay to break eye contact when thinking of an answer.

### POSTURE & GESTURES

- Sit straight and avoid nervous habits (like shaking and tapping) when possible.

# 3. Answering Questions

Preparation and practice are keys to your success. Most questions will relate to your educational background, work experience, career goals, personality, and behavior traits.

Behavior-based questions are those in which an interviewer asks a question about your past behavior in a situation (such as, “Describe how you handled a conflict situation in a professional setting” or “Tell me a time when you led a group and discuss the result”). Whatever the question happens to be, you want to answer it as it relates to the position you are interviewing for.

## The S.T.A.R. Method

- **Situation.** Describe a situation. What were the circumstances surrounding it?
- **Task.** Explain the task you undertook.
- **Action.** What did you do and how did you do it? Be detail oriented.
- **Result.** What was the result of the situation? Was the job more efficiently performed? Less costly? Made easier? Talk about increasing efficiency, productivity, morale, or elimination of waste. Try to give an example with a positive outcome. But even if it is negative, let the interviewer know what you learned from the experience.



**Note:** Your example does not have to be an on-the-job experience. It can be taken from the classroom or from extracurricular activities. Anything that can convey your skills is appropriate to use. See examples of both traditional and behavioral questions at the end of this guidebook.

### Illegal Question Examples

- Are you married, divorced, separated, or single?
- Do you go to church regularly?
- Do you own or rent your home?
- What does your spouse think about your career?
- Are you living with anyone?

**Note:** If you are asked an illegal question, be tactful. You can decline to answer the question. You can also ask how it is relevant to the job in question. It may also be important to take warning from questions like these, and consider whether the work environment at this company will be right for you.

### Answers to Negative Questions

**Question:** Describe one of your biggest weaknesses.

**Answer Examples:**

■ **Discuss a negative that is not related to the job being considered.**

“I don’t enjoy accounting. I know this is very important, but I find keeping the books boring. I really enjoy selling, so it is great that this job is primarily selling...”

■ **Discuss a negative already known to the employer and turn it to your advantage.**

“I lack extensive work experience, but I have participated in many student organizations. In fact, I am the president of the Psychology Club. As president I was able...”

■ **Discuss a negative that you have improved upon.**

“I used to over-commit myself and miss deadlines with my classwork. To improve on this, I read about time management and learned what I was doing wrong. In three weeks, I improved my performance and found that I could meet my deadlines with no problem...”

■ **Discuss a negative that also can be a positive.**

“I am very detail-oriented. I know I have to fight the temptation to spend lots of time getting things perfect. For instance, on one project I spent four hours editing. While the end result was positive, I’ve learned to set boundaries and time limits to more effectively manage my projects.”

### SAMPLE TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work as a...?
- Why did you choose Moravian College? Why did you choose your major?
- How has your education prepared you for this position? Are your grades a good indication of your abilities? Why? What was your favorite course/least favorite course? Why?
- How did you learn about us? Why do you want to work for us? What do you expect from your employer?
- What do you think makes a good manager?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing organizations such as ours?
- What activities have you participated in during college? Tell me about your involvement.
- Tell me about a goal you have NOT attained? Why not?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing organizations such as ours?
- What motivates you?
- What are the most important rewards you expect from your career?
- What have you learned from previous work experiences that will assist you in this position?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of? Why?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What are your short/long term goals? Where do you see yourself in five/ten years? How long do you plan to work here?
- Are you willing to relocate/travel? Do you have any geographic restrictions?
- What are three of your strengths and weaknesses?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- What do you do in your free time?
- How do you deal with stress?
- Have you thought about attending graduate school? When? Where? Subject/Major?
- Give an example of any major problem you faced and how you solved it.
- What was your greatest failure, what have you learned from it?
- Why should I hire you?

### SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS:

- Tell me about a recent project you had to plan. What went well? What might you have done better?
- Tell me about a specific time when you eliminated or avoided a potential problem before it happened?
- What is the most difficult situation you have faced? How did you handle it?
- Tell me when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time you were criticized. What was the issue involved, who made the criticism and how did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to approach several different people for support or cooperation. How did you approach them?
- Give me an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation. What did you do to gain the team or groups' cooperation?
- Describe a time on the job when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Tell me about a recent team you worked on/with. How may you have handled someone who was not as cooperative as needed?
- How would you motivate someone who is not motivated?
- Tell me about a time you had to conform to a policy with which you didn't agree.

## 4. Asking Questions

This is your time to find out more about the company and see if it really is the right fit for you. Employers expect you to ask intelligent questions about the organization and the nature of the work. Intelligent questions come from detailed research and should not include questions that can be easily answered through exploring the organization's website.

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWER

- How long has this position been in the organization?
- What am I expected to accomplish in the first year? How will I be evaluated?
- Based on your experience, what issues would someone new in this position probably encounter?
- I see the organization's trend is towards \_\_\_\_\_. What does the future look like for this \_\_\_\_\_?
- What type of person would be the ideal candidate for this position? Personality? Work style? Background?
- What do you like most about working with XYZ? What do you find challenging?
- With whom would I be working in this position?
- You have just acquired XYZ Company. How do you think this will affect your hiring?
- How would you describe the culture/work environment?

## 5. The Follow Up

- Record what happened during the interview.
- List the names of the people you spoke with.
- Send a thank you note to all those you met with, preferably the day after the interview.

### SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

Good morning, Interviewer's Name:

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me yesterday about the Position with Company. It was a pleasure meeting with you, and I truly enjoyed learning more about the role and the company. After our conversation, I am confident that my skills and experiences are a great match for this opportunity.

I am very enthusiastic about the possibility of joining your team and would greatly appreciate a follow-up as you move forward with the hiring process. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or phone. Thanks again, and I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Best,  
Your Name



# PHONE/VIDEO INTERVIEWS

---

Phone and video interviews, just like in-person interviews, take preparation, concentration and a little bit of luck. The phone/video interview is basically a “trial run” for “in person”. Employers view it as a chance to screen applicants and see if they are interested enough to bring the candidate in. Just a reminder: it is not always the most qualified person that gets the job, it is the person that can best sell their accomplishments and best fits in with the existing team.

## PREPARATION

- Sit at a desk or table in a quiet room so you can concentrate on the interview. Make sure to turn off all other phones, televisions, music, etc. so you will not be distracted/interrupted.
- Tell your roommates, parents, anyone who is around not to interrupt during the interview. Someplace where you can be alone is preferable.
- Be aware of your background and appearance (especially for video interviews). Always remain professional in dress, and be sure there is nothing distracting (such as posters or laundry) in view.
- Listen to the outgoing message on your voicemail. How does it sound? Is it something you want potential employers to hear? Also be sure that your mailbox isn't full!

## REMAIN CALM

- Sound positive, friendly and in control.
- Have a pen and pad of paper ready and a copy of your resume in front of you.
- If interviewing virtually, be sure to look up (into the webcam) and maintain good posture if able.

## WATCH OUT FOR FAMILIARITY

- Just like in a face-to-face interview, address the interviewer by Dr., Ms., Mr., or Mx.
- If there are multiple people on the line write their names and titles down (especially for phone interviews).

## ACT PROFESSIONALLY

- Speak as clearly as possible and do not chew gum or eat during the interview.
- Take brief notes because they can be helpful in the face-to-face interview.

## CLOSING

- Follow the same follow-up procedures as a traditional interview.