

# Interviewing Skills: Strategies for Success



# Agenda

- Preparing for the Interview
- Sample Questions and Answers
- Stumpers and other Tough Situations
- Your Questions?

# Preparing for the Interview

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Doing Your  
Homework

# Preparing for the Interview: Doing Your Homework

- Review the material you submitted, including:
  - ✓ Your resume
  - ✓ Your transcript
  - ✓ Your cover letter
  - ✓ Writing sample

# Preparing for the Interview: Doing Your Homework

- Review the material you submitted
- Review the organization
  - ✓ Internship description
  - ✓ Organization's / Department's webpage
  - ✓ Previous internship evaluations
  - ✓ Internet and Lexis Nexis

# Preparing for the Interview

Practice

*Practice*

***PRACTICE!!!!***

# Preparing for the Interview: Practice, Practice, Practice

- **Develop practice questions & answers\***
  - ✓ **Organization website**
  - ✓ Friends, peers, advisors
  - ✓ Internet

# Preparing for the Interview: Practice, Practice, Practice

- Develop practice questions & answers
- **Mock interview(s) with peers, advisors, UCCS staff**



# Preparing for the Interview: **Nuts and Bolts**

- **Stuff to prepare**
  - ✓ **Spare resumes, reference lists, and business cards**
  - ✓ **Snack foods**
  - ✓ **Notepad, folder and pens**

# Preparing for the Interview: Nuts and Bolts

- Stuff to prepare
- **Guidelines on what to wear**
  - ✓ Classic rather than trendy clothes and hair
  - ✓ Clothes pressed and creased; shine your shoes
  - ✓ Go easy on the scents, piercings, and visible body art\*
  - ✓ Consult the organization and web for ideas and images

# Preparing for the Interview: Nuts and Bolts

- Stuff to prepare
- Guidelines on what to wear

**It's always better to be the best  
dressed person in the room**

# Preparing for the Interview: Nuts and Bolts

- Stuff to prepare
- Guidelines on what to wear
- **Getting yourself there**
  - ✓ Know where you're going
  - ✓ Review logistics early enough to change them
  - ✓ Leave time for delays, BUT arrive  $\leq 10$  minutes early

# Preparing for the Interview

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Your Preparation  
Questions?

# The Handshake

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How **NOT** to shake hands...

# The Handshake

- ✓ Aim
- ✓ Eye Contact
- ✓ Web-to-web & Palm-to-palm
- ✓ Hand Hug / Test the tomato
- ✓ Release

# The Handshake

*PRACTICE!*

# Types of Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

**Q:** How is answering interview questions like ordering food at In-n-Out Burger?



# Types of Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

A: There's a **SECRET MENU!**



# Types of Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

## A: There's a *SECRET MENU!*



- Double Meat
- 3-by-3
- 4-by-4
- 16-by-16!!!!!!!
- Animal Style
- Flying Dutchman
- Protein Style
- Neapolitan Milkshake

# Types of Interview Questions

## The Secret Menu

There are the questions they ask you:

Tell us about yourself

What are your strengths?

How would your supervisor describe you?

# Types of Interview Questions

## The Secret Menu

And then there's what they *REALLY* want to know!

Tell us about yourself...

What are your strengths...

How would your supervisor describe you...

*...and why should that matter to them?*

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions



# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions

Give me an example of a problem you encountered and how you handled it.

Please give me an example of when you had to work cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal.

Tell us about your greatest professional accomplishment.

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions

- ✓ Ask you to talk about a **specific example** usually related to the SKA\* they're looking for.

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions

- ✓ Ask you to talk about a specific example related to the skills, knowledge, and abilities they're looking for.
- ✓ Are about **why** you did what you did and the **thought processes** behind the action as well as **what** you did.

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions

- ✓ Ask you to talk about a specific example related to the skills, knowledge, and abilities they're looking for.
- ✓ Are about **why** you did what you did and the **thought processes** behind the action as well as **what** you did
- ✓ **Past Performance ≈ Future Performance**

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE/BEHAVIORAL Questions

- ✓ Ask you to talk about a specific example related to the skills, knowledge, and abilities they're looking for
- ✓ Are about **why** you did what you did and the **thought processes** behind the action as well as **what** you did
- ✓ Past Performance  $\approx$  Future Performance
  
- ✓ De-emphasize personal biases and culturally-based communication differences

# Types of Interview Questions

## ANSWERING Objective Questions

1) **E**xample – Tell the story

2) **A**ction – What you did

3) **R**esolution, Reasoning, Relevance

Stuff like: Why you did it

What it says about you

How it'll be beneficial to the organization

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE Questions

*Give me an example of a problem you encountered and how you handled it.*

**Explanation**

**Action**

**Resolution/Reasoning/Relevance**

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE Questions

Give me an example of a problem you encountered and how you handled it.

Please give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal.

Tell us about your greatest professional accomplishment.

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE Questions

Give me an example of a problem you encountered and how you handled it.

Please give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal.

Tell us about your greatest professional accomplishment.

**PRACTICE** talking about your **most relevant** examples beforehand!

# Types of Interview Questions

## OBJECTIVE Questions

### Common Themes

- ✓ Dealing with/resolving conflict
- ✓ Working with others/alone/difficult people
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Ethical situations
- ✓ Promoting diversity
- ✓ Innovation/imagination
- ✓ Novel situation
- ✓ Saving money

# **Types of Interview Questions**

## **Guidelines for everything else**

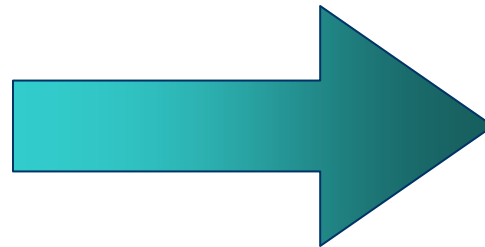
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# Types of Interview Questions

## Guidelines for everything else

- 1) Use short, specific, and **relevant** examples whenever you can.

How do you handle conflict?



Tell us about a time you helped resolve a conflict at work.

# Types of Interview Questions

## Guidelines for everything else

- 1) There are rarely ever any 'wrong' answers to interview questions, just more or less **relevant** ones.
- 2) Explain/illustrate your reasoning and thought processes.

If you were a cucumber in a salad and were about to be eaten, what would you do?

What makes you the best applicant for the job?

How many gas stations are there in the United States?

# Sample Questions and Answers



# Sample Questions and Answers

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**Tell us about yourself**

# Sample Questions and Answers

## Tell us about yourself

- ✓ Almost always the very first question of an interview!
- ✓ Prepare your “90-second infomercial” beforehand

# Sample Questions and Answers

## Tell us about yourself

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But how do you decide  
where to begin and what  
to include?

# Sample Questions and Answers

## Tell us about yourself

**Tell us about yourself, especially...**

...your **relevant** skills and experiences.

...what interests you about this position/this organization.

# Sample Questions and Answers

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**What is your  
greatest weakness?**

# Sample Questions and Answers

What is your greatest weakness?



# Sample Questions and Answers

## What is your greatest weakness?

- ✓ Stick to something professional everyone can relate to
- ✓ *AVOID* critical SKAs
- ✓ Stress what you're doing to address the weakness and the progress you've made

# Sample Questions and Answers

## What is your greatest weakness?

- ✓ Being patient
- ✓ Work-life balance
- ✓ Perfectionism
- ✓ Attention to detail
- ✓ Multi-tasking
- ✓ Dealing with interruptions

# Sample Questions and Answers

Where do you see  
yourself in 1 year?  
5 years?  
10 years?

# Sample Questions and Answers

Where do you see yourself in \_\_\_ yrs?

- ✓ Be genuine and tell the truth

# Sample Questions and Answers

**Where do you see yourself in \_\_\_ yrs?**

- ✓ Be genuine and tell the truth, but also...
- ✓ Try to convey commitment to and interest in organization
- ✓ Stay positive
- ✓ Be as definite as possible

# Sample Questions and Answers

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Do you have  
any questions  
for us?

# Sample Questions and Answers

**Do you have any questions for us?**

The Three Forbidden ANSWERS!



1)

2)

3)

# Sample Questions and Answers

**Do you have any questions for us?**

## The Three Forbidden ANSWERS!



1) Nope

2) How did I do?

3a) Did I get the job?

3b) When do I start?

# Sample Questions and Answers

## Do you have any questions for us?



- ✓ Stick to short, easy questions
- ✓ Avoid interviewing the interviewers
- ✓ Stay away from controversial or sensitive issues
- ✓ Have a few questions written down before the interview!

# Sample Questions and Answers

**Do you have any questions for us?**

Some *GREAT* answers!



- 1) "How soon do you expect to make your decision?"
- 2) "What projects are coming up that I might get involved in?"
- 3) "Thank you very much for this opportunity..."

# Sample Questions and Answers

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*YOUR  
QUESTIONS?*

# **Stumpers and Tough Situations**

**What to say when you have no idea**



# Stumpers and Tough Situations

## What to say when you have no idea

- ✓ EXPECT this to happen and have a strategy for it
- ✓ Treat it as something that, while unfortunate, is a normal part of interviewing.

# Stumpers and Tough Situations

## What to say when you have no idea

- ✓ EXPECT this to happen and have a strategy for it
- ✓ Treat it as something that, while unfortunate, is a normal part of interviewing.
- ✓ Your reaction drives their reaction.

# Stumpers and Tough Situations

## What to say when you have no idea

“Could you please repeat the question?”

“That’s a good question. Let me think about it for a few moments.”

“I don’t have an answer for that right now. Can we come back to it?”

# Stumpers and Tough Situations

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“Could you please repeat the question?”

“That’s a good question. Let me think about it for a few moments.”

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Start answering what you think they’re asking.

Then: “Is this the sort of information you’re looking for with this question?”

# Stumpers and Tough Situations

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“That’s a good question. Let me think about it for a few moments.”

“I don’t have an answer for that right now. Can we come back to it?”

Start answering what you think they’re asking. Then: “Is this the sort of information you’re looking for with this question?”

**Send a response after the interview with your Thank You note.**

# Stumpers and Tough Situations

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*YOUR  
TOUGH  
SITUATIONS?*

# Closing Thoughts



# Closing Thoughts

## ✓ Send Thank You Notes

- Email is fine
- To individuals or to your “handler”

# Closing Thoughts

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- ✓ Send Thank You Notes
- ✓ Tell the truth

# Closing Thoughts

- ✓ Send Thank You Notes
- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Stay positive
  - Don't diss your previous workplaces/bosses/home campus
  - Use positive examples whenever possible
  - Smile and get plenty of sleep beforehand

# Closing Thoughts

- ✓ Send Thank You Notes
- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Stay positive
- ✓ Use humor with caution
  - Avoid sarcasm, irony, and political jokes altogether!

# Closing Thoughts

- ✓ Send Thank You Notes
- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Stay positive
- ✓ Use humor with caution

✓ ***PRACTICE!!!!***

# Closing Thoughts

- ✓ Send Thank You Notes
- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Stay positive
- ✓ Use humor with caution
- ✓ Practice

*Try to have fun!*

*QUESTIONS?*

