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*Interview Preparation
for
International Students
and Postdocs*

Cornell Career Services



Objectives of this Workshop

- Discuss how U.S. culture influences the interview process
- Outline three steps for a successful interview
- Provide strategies and resources for practice answering interview questions



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Interviewing in the U.S. May Be Different Than What You're Used To





U.S. Interview Basic 101

U.S. Interview

Be punctual. Be punctual. Arrive 5 to 10 minutes prior to appointment.

Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.

Open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.

Researching the organization and demonstrating that knowledge during the interview is expected. Shows initiative and interest.



Three Steps for a Successful Interview

- Research the employer and position.
- Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests.
- Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions.



Step One Researching Employers

What do you research?	Where do you research?
News	Employer Website
Mission Statement	LinkedIn
Products / Services	Employer Facebook Page
Division / Unit for Which You Are Interviewing	Employer YouTube Channel
Competitors	Glassdoor via career.cornell.edu
Interview Information	



Step Two

Analyze the job description and how it connects to your skills, experience, and interests

Understand the Position

What are employers looking for?

Educational Background

Experience

Skills

Interest

Understanding of Job /Role/ Career



The “Framework”

Employer Values	My Qualifications
Computer Science and/or engineering background	
Keen interest in technology	
Strong analytical skills	
Interpersonal skills	

Position Description:

Goldman Sachs Software Engineer

Qualifications:

- Computer Science and /or engineering backgrounds
- Keen interest in technology
- Strong analytical and organizational skills
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Highly motivated and adaptable
- Accurate and detail oriented
- Creativity



Understanding Yourself

- Cultural diversity and global perspective
- Insight into your field / specialization area
- Language skills
- Adaptability
- Demonstrated ability to overcome obstacles
- Career goals



Step Three

Understand interview types and practice answering potential questions.

Interview Types
Phone / Skype Pre-Screening
On-Campus
On-Site / Super Days
Virtual
Traditional / Behavioral



Interview Approaches

Traditional	Behavioral
How would you behave in a particular situation?	How did you behave in a particular situation?
Interviewer will allow for theories or generalizations.	Interviewer will want specific details.
Widely used for screening applicants	Use past behavior to predict future behavior.
Questions pertain to the job and your qualifications.	Most questions start with the phrase:
Examples: Tell me about yourself. Why are you interested in this position?	Tell me about a time... Can you give me an example when...



Think STAR

'STAR' Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions	
S ituation	Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?
T ask	Describe the challenge and expectations. What needed to be done? Why?
A ction	Elaborate your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?
R esults	Explain the results, accomplishments, recognition, savings, etc. Elaborate.



Employer Values	Possible Questions
Excellent Interpersonal and Communication Skills	Tell me about when you didn't communicate things as clearly as you should have.
Computer Skills / Technology	Tell me about the most complex information you have had to interpret.
Organizational Skills	Describe a time when you had carefully laid plans and things changed at the last minute. How did you react?

Goldman Sachs
Software Engineer

Qualifications:

- Computer Science and /or engineering backgrounds
- Keen interest in technology
- Strong analytical and organizational skills
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Highly motivated and adaptable
- Accurate and detail oriented
- Creativity and entrepreneurial spirit



Illegal Interview Questions

(Refer to the *Career Guide*, page 71)

- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Marital Status
- Physical and /or Mental Status
- Ethnic Background
- Country of Origin
- Sexual Orientation
- Family Status
- Age



An Interviewer May Ask

- Are you authorized to work in the US?
- Do you now or will you in the future require sponsorship to work in the US?
- Do you have a work permit for the US?
- Are you a US citizen? (*but only if position requires citizenship such as jobs in government*)



Answer of “Are you authorized to work in the US?”

YES! (You have CPT & OPT)

- Familiarize yourself with OPT/CPT regulations on the isso.cornell.edu website
- If necessary, talk to an immigration advisor at ISSO before the interview
- Be confident !



During the Interview

- Be aware of body language and eye contact
- Ask clarifying questions if necessary
- Be positive; **show enthusiasm** and **confidence**
- Always remain calm and positive, even if you feel that the interview is not going well!
- Thank the interviewer for their time
- Ask for a business card



Asking Questions at the End of Your Interview

It is **YOUR** time to assess the FIT!

- Can you tell me more about the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?
- How do you define the culture of this organization?
- What have you enjoyed most about working here?
- What do you like best about working for this company?
- What have past employees done to succeed in this position?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?



Interview Tips and Suggestions

- Slow down your speaking speed
- Never hesitate to confirm or ask to repeat a question if you do not understand
- *Don't worry about your accent!*
- Practice rephrasing; don't be flustered by searching for the "right" words
- Don't use an obviously memorized script



Practice

- Become comfortable talking about yourself and highlighting your skills
- Learn to answer concisely; not too long (over 2 minutes) or too short (20 seconds)
- Frame your answers (e.g., “I see two main points that relate to this issue...”)
- Use Mock Interview Services at career offices



Follow Up

- Send thank-you notes **within 24 hours** to each interviewer
- Spell names correctly and use correct titles
- Check on application status
- If rejected, consider sending another letter thanking the employer for the opportunity to interview then reiterating your interest in the organization and the position



Next Steps...

- Get to know yourself.
- Research employer.
- Study job description.
- Utilize Optimal Interview.
- Make an appointment with Gaeun Seo, Ph.D. Graduate and International Advisor for more specific questions.
- **Schedule a practice interview.**



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QUESTIONS?