BEYOND THE ACADEMY INTERVIEWS: PREPARING FOR QUESTIONS

PREPARATION BASICS: IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS
Graduate students sometimes wonder, “What do I have to offer the world outside of academe?”
Rethink your accomplishments and abilities from the perspective of a different kind of employer.

SKILLS AND QUALITIES
• Self-motivated
• Ability to reach and defend conclusions
• Leadership
• Analytical
• Strategic thinker
• Presentation/communication skills
• Problem-solver
• Ability to deal with ambiguity
• Autonomy/teamwork
• Successful in competitive environments
• Thorough and efficient researcher
• Ability to convey complex information to a variety of audiences
• High performance under pressure

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES
You may encounter different types of interviews
• Resume-based
• Behavioral
• Case Study

Be prepared for all types.

CONVEY
• Problem solving
• Decision making
• Integrity
• Leadership
• Initiative and creativity
• Communication skills
• Interpersonal skills
• Adaptability
• Ability to deal with ambiguity

STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
• Tell me about yourself?
• What do you know about our organization?
• Why do you want to work for us?
• Why you? What can you do for us that someone else can’t?
• Your resume suggests that you may be over-qualified for this position. What is your opinion?
• Why do you want this job? Are you over-qualified?
• What important trends to you see in our industry?
• What do you find most attractive about this position? What seems least attractive?
• What do you look for in a job?
• What features did you like the most about graduate school/former position/project?
• What are your weaknesses?
• What are your long-range goals?
• What motivates you?
• What has been your toughest challenge?
• How do colleagues describe you?
• Why did you choose your field of study?
• What has been your most rewarding academic experience?
• What have you done that shows initiative?
• What frustrates you?
• What new skills have you developed in the past year?
• What have you learned from your mistakes?
• What qualities do you admire most in others?
• How would you describe your work style?
• How do you manage time?
• How do you deal with pressure?
• How do you resolve conflicts?
• Where do you see yourself five years from now?
• How do you define and evaluate success?
• How would you define a good manager?
• What is your leadership style?
**COMMON BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS**

- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to get out of a bad situation.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with unreasonable expectations.
- Tell me about a time when you successfully persuaded someone to do things your way.
- Give me an example of your ability to think outside the box.
- Tell me about a time on the job that tested your coping skills.
- When have you had to cope with the anger or hostility of another person?
- Give me a specific occasion when you conformed to a policy with which you didn’t agree.
- When have you had to deal with an ambiguous situation at work?
- Give me examples of your ability to adapt to a variety of people, situations, and environments.
- Have you ever had to deal with an unresolved situation on the job?
- Tell me about a time when you worked effectively with someone you didn’t like (or vice versa).
- Tell me about an experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally.
- Tell me about a time when you were willing to disagree with another person in order to build a positive outcome.
- Describe a time when you had to sell an idea to a boss, authority figure, or technical expert.
- Tell me about a time when your ability to reward and encourage others created positive motivation.
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to compromise your integrity.
- Describe a time when you had to bend the rules in order to be successful or accomplish a goal.
- Give me an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.
- Give me an example of the greatest success you ever had in the use of delegation.
- Have you ever made an unpopular decision?

**What questions are appropriate for YOU to ask during the interview phase?**

Use this opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer/industry, play to your strengths, and gather info. Questions that refer to information you’ve gained during the interview reflect your attentiveness and interest. You might ask:

- Is this a new or a replacement position?
- (If new, how does it factor into the employer’s overall plans for growth?)
- How would you describe a typical day for this position?
- What do you enjoy about working here? Least favorite aspects?
- What have previous people in this position moved on to?
- What is the average stay in this position?
- How much travel is involved?
- How frequently are employees relocated?
- What kind of initial training would I receive?
- What opportunities exist for professional development?
- Describe the ideal first year for someone in this position.
- What are the prospects for advancement beyond this level?
- Does the organization promote from within? Fill senior-level positions with outside hires?
- What is a typical career path at your organization?
- What is your timeline for making a decision in this search? (They will usually tell you, but if they do not, feel free to ask.)