

# INTERVIEWING GUIDE



SAREMI CENTER FOR  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT

[saremi.center@aic.edu](mailto:saremi.center@aic.edu)

(413) 654-1411



Saremi Center for Career Development

## **Preparing for Interview Success**

The interview process is more than just answering questions; it's about showcasing your preparedness, adaptability, and professionalism. By planning ahead, understanding your interviewers, and making a strong first impression, you can set yourself apart from other candidates. This guide focuses on essential strategies from planning to behavior management that will help you succeed in your next interview.

### **Know Your Interviewers:**

Researching your interviewers is an important first step. Before the interview, find out who they are by reviewing LinkedIn profiles or the company's website. This gives you insights into their roles, interests, and backgrounds, allowing you to tailor your responses and build rapport. Bring the list of names and roles to the interview and prepare questions that reflect your genuine interest in their work.

### **Rehearse Logistics:**

Preparation is key to minimizing stress. Rehearse your route to the interview location to avoid last-minute issues. Drive to the location in advance and at the same time of day as the scheduled interview. Be aware of any construction along the route and either allocate more time or find an alternate route, if possible. Ask the employer in advance about the parking situation and know where you need to go. Check the weather forecast and plan accordingly by bringing a jacket or umbrella—you don't want to show up to your interview all wet! This extra preparation ensures you will arrive on time, dry, calm, and collected.

### **Handle the Unexpected:**

Rule # 1: Don't be late for an interview! However, even with the best planning, unexpected things happen. If you run into traffic, an accident, or any other delay, always notify your interviewer ahead of time. Have a contact name and phone number handy in case you need to make last-minute adjustments. Apologize when necessary and remember, professionalism is key, even when things go wrong.

### **Arrive Early and Prepare Yourself:**

Arriving early is a smart way to handle pre-interview nerves. Get to the interview location at least 20 minutes early to allow time for a final check of your appearance and to use the restroom. Plan to report to the reception area 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start to give yourself a moment to calm your nerves and get focused.



## Saremi Center for Career Development

### **Make a Great First Impression:**

*"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."* First impressions are critical. Greet your interviewers with a firm handshake, maintain eye contact, and smile while introducing yourself by name. Sit with good posture and remain composed throughout the interview. These small behaviors communicate your professionalism and confidence. A positive first impression can set the tone for the rest of the interview.

### **Why Behavior Matters:**

Your behavior during the interview gives the interviewer a glimpse of your adaptability, cultural fit, and problem-solving abilities. Stay composed and attentive, even in stressful situations, and demonstrate your ability to work well with others. Positive behavior helps the interviewer see you as a good fit for the company's values and culture.

### **Conclusion:**

By taking the time to research your interviewers, plan the logistics, and handle unexpected issues with grace, you can ensure that your behavior and first impressions reflect your best self. Following these tips will allow you to present yourself as a professional, prepared, and adaptable candidate who is ready to succeed in any interview setting.



Saremi Center for Career Development

## **Before, During and After Your Interview**

Preparing for a job interview can be a nerve-wracking experience, but with the right approach, you can walk in feeling confident and ready to succeed. This guide provides practical steps for each phase of the interview process: from researching the company and practicing your answers beforehand, to making a great first impression and handling questions smoothly during the interview and following up professionally afterward. By following these simple yet effective strategies, you'll be well on your way to acing your next interview.

### **BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

#### **Research the Company:**

Take some time to learn about the company's mission, vision, values, and products/services. Review its website, social media, and recent news to understand the company culture. Explore its sustainability policy, outreach programs, and volunteer opportunities as well. If you know someone who works at the company, consider asking them for insights into the company, including its history and the people with whom you'll be interviewing.

#### **Prepare Your Answers:**

Practice common interview questions. Jot down bullet points for each question on a notecard so that you can practice them repeatedly until you're comfortable with your answers and delivery so that your answers flow naturally. Use the CAR (Challenge, Action, Result) Method to structure your responses, especially for behavioral questions. This will help you stay organized and demonstrate confidence.

#### **Practice Your Interviewing Skills:**

Do a mock interview with a career advisor (Saremi Center for Career Development), professor, coach, friend, or family member. During this practice interview, wear the professional clothes you plan to wear in the interview, including shoes, so you'll feel comfortable in them.

Ask for feedback on your body language and responses. Were you sitting upright in the chair? Were there questions that you stumbled over? Did you exhibit any nervous habits?

If you're rehearsing alone, use a mock interview platform like **StandOut** to record and review your answers. You can create a custom interview using general questions, ones specifically designed for your major or for specific skills, or a combination thereof. You'll receive immediate feedback generated by AI. StandOut can be accessed through the AIC My Apps Dashboard or by [clicking here](#).



## Saremi Center for Career Development

### DURING THE INTERVIEW

#### **Make a Great First Impression:**

Greet each interviewer with eye contact, a firm handshake (neither hand-crushing nor limp), and a friendly smile. While this may vary slightly from one country or culture to the next, it is the generally accepted custom in the United States. First impressions matter, so stay confident and polite.

#### **Stay Cool Under Pressure:**

If you struggle while thinking of a response to a question during the interview, think PIE, which stands for “passionate, interested, and engaged.” This will help you to maintain your confidence, even if you're still gathering your thoughts, and demonstrate that you can remain calm and collected in a stressful situation.

#### **Prepare for Next Steps:**

Thank each interviewer for their time and ask for their business card. This will give you their contact information for follow-up. Before leaving, ask about the next steps in the hiring process and when you can expect to hear back.

### AFTER THE INTERVIEW

#### **Send a Thank-You Email:**

*Within 24 hours*, email a short and personalized thank-you note to each interviewer. Be sure to address them respectfully and use professional language. Use this simple four-point structure:

1. Thank them for their time.
2. Reaffirm your interest in the position, referencing something specific that was discussed during the interview.
3. Highlight how your skills/qualifications align with the job.
4. Express your eagerness for the next steps.

#### **Reflect & Improve:**

One of the best ways to evaluate your performance in an interview is to reflect on the experience promptly after the interview. Many people find it useful to write down a few thoughts about what went well (Good), what you could improve (Bad), and what you should avoid next time (Ugly). This GBU self-evaluation will help you improve your skills for future interviews!



## What to Wear for an Interview

Dressing appropriately for a job interview is an important part of making a positive first impression. Regardless of the employer's typical dress code, it's always best to err on the side of formality by wearing a suit if possible. If you don't have a suit, business casual attire can still help you look polished and professional. This guide outlines the essential items to consider when dressing for an interview and provides helpful resources if you're in need of professional attire. Remember, how you present yourself speaks volumes before you even say a word!

The **best recommendation is to wear a suit** for an interview (regardless of the daily dress code at the employer), if you own or can borrow one.

If you do not own a suit, then wear your best business casual attire. Generally speaking, **business casual attire** includes:

- Dress pants or khakis, with a belt
- Button-down shirt or modest blouse, tucked in
- Tie if you have one; only top button open if you don't wear a tie
- Knee-length dress or skirt
- Blazer, suit jacket, or dressy cardigan
- Clean and good-condition dress shoes
- Modest amount and type of jewelry

No matter what you wear, your clothes should always be clean, wrinkle-free, and well-fitting. Your appearance should be neat, well-groomed, and free of body odor. A *very light* application of cologne or perfume is acceptable, but do NOT overdo it. Also, never wear athletic shoes or sandals to an interview.

## Where to Find Professional Attire on a Budget

One great option is to shop at thrift stores and consignment shops to find gently used clothing at very affordable prices. Below are a few to consider.

- [Salvation Army Thrift Stores](#)
- [Goodwill Industries](#)
- [Savers](#)
- A Google search for "professional clothing consignment stores near Springfield, MA" produced [these results](#).

Below are some non-profit organizations that can outfit you for an interview for **free**:

- [Dress for Success Western Massachusetts](#)
- [Suit Up Springfield](#)

### **Dress for Success Western Massachusetts (for women's clothing)**

[Dress for Success Western Massachusetts](#) is a non-profit organization. Our mission is to help unemployed and underemployed women achieve economic independence by providing no-fee programs, development tools, and professional attire to thrive in work and in life.

Address

45 Lyman Street  
Springfield, MA 01103  
413-301-8506

Store Hours

Monday-Friday: 9:00 am – 2:00 pm



Women obtain what they need for an interview—from clothing to confidence—and can return once they find employment for the apparel and accessories needed to enter the workforce.

**Please call 413-301-8506 to schedule an appointment well in advance of your interview.**

### **Suit Up Springfield (for men's clothing)**

[Suit Up Springfield](#) is a community organization focused on providing the young men of Springfield professional attire. Our goal is to help each individual find a suit that will give them the confidence, knowledge, and tools to help them become a successful member of our community.

Address

139 State Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

Store Hours

Friday: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm  
Saturday: 10:00 am – 12:30 pm



If you need a suit to help you create a more professional impression and can't afford one, we will help you! **Please fill out the form if you would like to be considered for receiving a free suit from Suit Up Springfield:** <https://suitupspringfield.com/get-suits.html>

## Common Interview Questions

As you prepare to graduate and enter the professional world, one of the most critical steps in securing your first job is nailing the interview. Knowing what to expect can boost your confidence and help you make a strong impression. Interviews typically follow a predictable flow, beginning with introductory questions to break the ice and moving into deeper inquiries about your education, skills, and work experience. By preparing for common interview questions in categories like education, competency, and cultural fit, you'll be ready to highlight your strengths and show employers why you're the right candidate for the job.

Here's a list of **common interview questions** for college students getting ready to graduate, grouped into categories that follow the typical flow of a professional interview:

### 1. Introduction and Icebreakers

Questions to help break the ice and allow the interviewer to get to know you on a basic level:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose your major?
3. What motivates you?
4. How would your professors or classmates describe you?
5. What do you know about our company/organization?
6. Why are you interested in working for us?
7. How did you hear about this position?
8. What are your strengths?
9. What are your weaknesses?
10. What are your hobbies or interests outside of school?

### 2. Education and Academic Experience

Questions that focus on your educational background and how it relates to the position:

1. Can you explain a project you worked on during your degree program?
2. How did your college experience prepare you for this career?
3. Which course was the most challenging, and how did you overcome it?
4. Have you completed any internships? What did you learn from them?
5. How do you prioritize your academic work when faced with multiple deadlines?
6. Can you describe a time when you worked in a team during your coursework?
7. What research or independent study projects have you been involved in?
8. How do you think your academic achievements will translate to this position?
9. What skills have you developed through your major that are relevant to this job?
10. How do you stay current with trends in your field of study?



### **3. Skills and Behaviors**

Questions that assess specific skills and behaviors you've developed:

1. Tell me about a time when you demonstrated leadership.
2. Can you give an example of how you handle conflict or disagreement in a team setting?
3. Describe a situation where you had to manage multiple tasks at once.
4. How do you handle pressure and tight deadlines?
5. Have you ever had to learn a new skill quickly? How did you do it?
6. Can you describe a time when you had to solve a difficult problem?
7. How do you ensure that your work is accurate and meets high-quality standards?
8. Tell me about a goal you set for yourself and how you achieved it.
9. Give an example of how you've adapted to change.
10. How do you stay organized and manage your time?

### **4. Work Experience and Professionalism**

Questions that address any previous work, internships, or other professional experiences:

1. What was your role in your most recent internship or job?
2. Can you describe a time when you had to go above and beyond in a work setting?
3. How do you handle feedback or criticism from supervisors?
4. Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult colleague or client.
5. What are the most important lessons you've learned from your previous work experiences?
6. How do you balance work responsibilities with academic obligations?
7. What was a typical workday like in your internship?
8. Can you provide an example of how you delivered excellent customer service (if applicable)?
9. What professional skills have you developed outside of the classroom?
10. How would you contribute to a positive work environment in our company?

### **5. Cultural Fit**

Questions that focus on your work values and how you might fit into the company culture:

1. How do you handle feedback and constructive criticism?
2. What are your long-term career goals, and how does this position fit into them?
3. How do you contribute to a team environment?
4. What does success mean to you in this role?
5. How do you handle stress or pressure in the workplace?
6. How do you maintain a healthy work-life balance?
7. What does a positive work culture mean to you?
8. How do you like to be managed or supervised?
9. Why should we hire you?
10. How do you align with our company's mission and values?



Saremi Center for Career Development

## **6. Closing and Reflection**

Questions that are asked near the end of the interview to wrap things up and allow reflection:

1. Why do you think you're a good fit for this position?
2. If offered this job, what would your first 30 days look like?
3. Where do you see yourself in five years?
4. What are your salary expectations?
5. Are you considering other job offers at this time?
6. What would you need to be successful in this role?
7. Do you have any concerns about working in this industry or company?
8. What questions do you have for us?
9. Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?
10. When would you be available to start?

## CAR Method: Guide to Responding to Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral interview questions are designed to assess how you handle real-life situations and challenges in the workplace. These questions typically focus on past experiences to predict your future performance. Preparing thoughtful, structured responses using the **CAR Method** (Challenge, Action, Result) can help you demonstrate your critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills in these scenarios.

This is a clear and organized method for responding to behavioral interview questions, and it becomes simple once you grasp the concept. Here's a quick overview of how to use the CAR Method to structure your answers effectively.

1. **Challenge:** Begin by describing a specific challenge or goal you encountered in a previous job, project, or role. Choose an example that reflects a real situation and provide enough detail so the interviewer understands the context.

*Example: "While working as a team lead, we faced an unexpected delay in a project due to a vendor issue, putting us behind schedule by two weeks."*

2. **Action:** Next, explain the specific actions you took to address the challenge. Focus on your individual contributions, skills, and unique qualities that helped resolve the situation.

*Example: "I took the initiative to re-negotiate the timeline with the vendor, reorganized the team's workflow, and personally handled key communications to ensure we prioritized essential tasks."*

3. **Result:** Finally, describe the outcome of your actions. This should include any measurable successes, lessons learned, or new skills gained. Highlight how your efforts had a positive impact.

*Example: "As a result, we managed to complete the project only one day behind the original schedule, and our client praised our ability to adapt to the situation."*

By using the **CAR Method**, you ensure your answers are concise and impactful, while clearly demonstrating your skills and accomplishments. The method helps interviewers visualize you handling real-life situations successfully and makes you stand out as a well-prepared candidate.



## Saremi Center for Career Development

### Sample Behavioral Interview Questions:

These behavioral interview questions are designed to help you showcase a variety of important skills, such as problem-solving, leadership, communication, and adaptability. By asking for specific examples from your past experiences, interviewers can gain insight into how you handle real-world challenges, manage conflict, and make decisions under pressure. Answering these questions effectively allows you to demonstrate qualities like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and your ability to work both independently and in teams.

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Describe a time when you disagreed with a professor or team leader on how to accomplish a task.
4. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
5. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
6. Describe a time when you were disappointed in the outcome of a project.
7. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
8. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
9. Tell me about a time when someone was dishonest or misleading, and how you handled it.
10. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
11. Tell me about a time when you had to juggle multiple projects.
12. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do, and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
13. Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
14. Give me an example of when you had to assume leadership for a team.



## Saremi Center for Career Development

15. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
16. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
17. Tell me of a time when you postponed making a decision.
18. Tell me about a difficult decision you have made in the last year.
19. Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
20. Tell me about a time when you had to handle unexpected changes to a project or goal.
21. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
22. Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer.
23. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a supervisor.
24. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
25. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
26. Tell me about a time when you used creativity to overcome a dilemma.
27. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
28. Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
29. Tell me about a time when you tried something risky and failed.
30. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
31. Describe a time when you had to make a decision that others may not have agreed with.
32. Tell me about a big mistake you have made on the job and how you handled it.
33. Tell me about a time when you had to give difficult feedback to a peer or team member.
34. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
35. Tell me about a time when you worked well under pressure.

## Interview Thank-you Note

Sending a thank-you email after an interview is a professional and courteous way to show your appreciation and reinforce your interest in the job. Follow these steps to customize and use the provided thank-you email template. Send the email within 24 hours of your interview!

### 1. Fill in the Basics

- **Subject Line:** Update the subject line with the title of the position you interviewed for, e.g., "Thank You for the Interview – Marketing Specialist."
- **[INTERVIEWER]:** Replace with the name of the person who interviewed you.
- **[CANDIDATE]:** Insert your own name at the bottom of the email.

### 2. Personalize the Introduction

In the first paragraph, replace:

- **[DATE]** with the date of your interview.
- **[JOB TITLE]** with the title of the position you interviewed for.

### 3. Add Specific Details

Reflect on the interview and include specific details about what you learned or discussed that made an impression on you. Replace:

- **[STATE A FEW DETAILS YOU LEARNED DURING THE INTERVIEW]** with key takeaways from the interview, such as company goals, team dynamics, or projects that interest you.

### 4. Highlight Your Skills

In the third paragraph, list 3-4 of your most relevant skills, accomplishments, or personal qualities that align with the role. Make sure to:

- Tailor these to the job and company, focusing on what makes you a strong candidate.
- Replace **[KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 1]**, **[KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 2]**, etc., with your specific skills, such as:
  - Strong communication and collaboration skills from leading team projects.
  - Proven problem-solving abilities demonstrated in prior internships.
  - Leadership experience gained through extracurricular activities.

### 5. Express Enthusiasm

In the final paragraph, re-emphasize your interest in the role and the company. Replace:

- **[COMPANY]** with the name of the organization.

### 6. Proofread and Send

Double-check for any spelling or grammar errors. Make sure the email is polished and professional. Send the email within 24 hours of your interview to leave a positive and lasting impression.

By customizing this template, you'll create a personalized and professional thank-you email that reinforces your candidacy and helps you stand out to potential employers!





Saremi Center for Career Development

## Email Template

**Subject:** Thank You for the Interview – [JOB TITLE]

Dear [INTERVIEWER],

I want to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to interview for the [JOB TITLE] position on [DATE]. I truly appreciated the time you took to share more about the role and the direction of [COMPANY]. Our conversation confirmed my enthusiasm for this opportunity.

I was particularly interested to learn more about [STATE A FEW DETAILS YOU LEARNED DURING THE INTERVIEW], and I believe that my background, skills, and experiences align well with the needs of the position. Specifically, I can bring the following to [COMPANY or JOB TITLE]:

- [KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 1]
- [KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 2]
- [KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 3]
- [KEY SKILL / ACCOMPLISHMENT # 4]

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need any additional information from me. I look forward to the possibility of contributing to your team and am excited about the chance to grow with [COMPANY].

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[CANDIDATE]