TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

General Types of Interviews

Phone/Video Interviews

Remote interviews are used to screen candidates in order to narrow the pool of applicants who will be invited for site-visit interviews. They are also used as a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.
Suggestions for preparing for phone or video interviews:

- Prepare as you would any other interview. Read the job description carefully, research the company, review your résumé and cover letter, and practice your response to typical interview questions.
- For a phone interview, consider dressing as you would for a face-to-face interview; doing so may help you project yourself more professionally and confidently. For a video interview, you must dress professionally.
- If you are using a cell phone, make sure that your phone battery is fully charged.
- Ensure that you have a quiet space and will not be interrupted for the duration of the interview.
- Have your notes, the job description, and your résumé and cover letter in front of you for quick reference. Make sure you have a pen and paper ready for taking notes. If the entire hiring committee is on the other end of a conference call, write down each person's name and title so you can refer to them later.
- Don't chew gum (or eat) during your interview; do keep a glass or bottle of water handy, in case your throat gets dry.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly. Your voice is all you have to form a positive impression over the phone.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listeners and will change the tone of your voice. Also, for a phone interview, consider standing during the interview: your voice will project more clearly.
- Use your interviewers' titles ("Mr.," "Ms.," "Dr.," and so forth (first name if they ask you to); don't interrupt.
- Taking a moment to collect your thoughts before answering a question is fine. Be complete yet concise.
- Your goal for *this* interview is to convince the panel that you are a good fit for the position and the organization.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewers for their time. Immediately after the interview assess your responses to help prepare for your next interview. Promptly follow-up with a thank-you message to *each* interviewer.

Technical Interviews

These interviews serve to 1) determine how well you know algorithms, programming, software processing, and the like, focusing on your broad set of technical skills, and 2) address your problem-solving skills. Interviewers are looking at your approach to sample problems and how you think through them to find a solution.
Suggestions to prepare for technical interviews:

1. Practice—a lot—talking through algorithm problems and writing code on a whiteboard (or, for phone interviews, on a Google doc or similar shared screen) as you think out loud. You can generally choose your favorite language to work in, but you must write actual code.
2. Ask your interviewer questions. Seeking clarification helps the interviewer see your problem-solving process. If you need a hint, it's OK; better to solve the problem with help than to not solve it at all.
3. Think through multiple possible approaches before you dive into writing code, so you don't get stuck in a wrong solution. But, conversely, don't spend all your time pondering possibilities without actually writing anything!
4. Test edge cases. Find a solution and try to break it. Find a brute-force solution, then make it more elegant and efficient.

Multiple Mini Interviews

Gaining traction among medical and veterinary schools, these interviews involve a number of short, independent assessments, typically in a timed circuit, to assess (among other things) candidates' personality traits, language and communication skills, interpersonal skills, and professionalism. Please make an appointment with a CLS adviser to prepare for this type of interview.

Case Interviews

These interviews are typically scenario-based, problem-solving activities used by consulting firms, financial services firms, and other industries to evaluate your problem-solving, analytical and communication skills, leadership, and creativity. If you are interviewing with a consulting firm, you'll likely get a case interview at some point. Don't panic! Case interviewing is not really about demonstrating your business knowledge or strategic savvy. Instead, it's about showing that you can think in a structured manner under pressure (something Grinnellians do all the time). Common case scenarios include:

- **Market Sizing:** Short and sweet. You're asked to tell how much of something exists in a certain situation. For example: *How many cups does Starbucks use in a year? Or How many golf balls would fit into a 747?*
- **Mini-Case:** Abbreviated case-related questions. For example: *We've developed a new cereal, but we've been told by our suppliers that it might not be ready on schedule. What's going on, and what should we do?*
- **Case:** Case interviews are standard for consulting internships and jobs; they are becoming more popular in other industries, including in marketing and finance. In these situations, you're asked to take a business situation and work over the course of 20–60 minutes to come up with an analysis and recommendations for how to resolve the issue(s) raised. Cases may be tackled individually or, more commonly, in small groups. Be prepared for the interviewer to be hostile and angry, just to see how you react under pressure.

Suggestions for preparing for case interviews:

1. Try answering this market-sizing question: *How many dog collars are sold each year in the USA?*
2. Check out the following websites, offering sample cases you can try:

   - **www.casequestions.com**
   - **www.consultingcase101.com/tag/kpmg/**
   - **www.mckinsey.com/careers/interviewing**

3. Take a look at a current edition of Marc P. Cosentino's *Case in Point: Complete Case Interview Preparation* (Burgee Press).

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviewing features a discussion of a candidate's actual experiences ("this happened, and here is how I responded, with this outcome") as opposed to hypotheticals ("I like to work hard"). The STAR framework may be used to evaluate your response to behavioral interview questions, so prep your answers ahead using STAR:

1. **Situation**: Briefly present what happened ("The annual report was due that evening, and the server crashed…").
2. **Task**: Clearly state your task in that situation ("I had to find a way to reboot the server…").
3. **Action**: Describe what you did ("I contacted the IT person who was on call and explained our critical need, and…").
4. **Result**: Detail what happened as a result and what you learned ("Once the server was rebooted, we were able to get the annual report done on time. I learned the importance of working efficiently with my colleagues so we would not be trying to finish important projects at the last minute.").

Suggestions to prepare for behavioral interviews

Brainstorm a list of three to four experiences and write brief descriptions of each. Take one or more experiences and write it out following the STAR framework. Make sure you have the most information under the "Action" category. Practice talking through your response aloud so the narrative seems natural and convincing. Aim for two minutes per STAR answer. Consider scenarios demonstrating:

- your leadership abilities
- your ability to get along with a difficult colleague or classmate
- your response to criticism from a supervisor or professor
- how you resolve a work or project crisis
- how you showed initiative that helped improve or complete a project

Other Interview Formats - *these may be a part of any interview*

- One-on-one: The "traditional" interview.
- Committee: Multiple people take turns asking questions to individual applicants. In an in-person interview, look the original questioner in the eye at the beginning and end of your answer, but look at other interviewers in between.
- Group: A small group of candidates interviews at the same time, often involving group tasks (as in case interviews). One goal is to show the interviewers how cooperative and supportive you can be—even among your "competitors."