

HOW TO CONDUCT A MOCK INTERVIEW

Step 1: Greet the Client

Get to know the student. Determine the date of the interview, the type of interview (phone interview, screening interview, second round interview, etc.), the type of career or industry, and whether or not the student has anything specific that s/he would like for you to cover.

Step 2: Choose Interview Questions

Choose the appropriate interview handout. We have handouts available for general employment, medical school, academic job interviews, and Fulbright scholarship interviews. You may also choose or modify questions to suit the client's needs.

Step 3: Conduct the Mock Interview

As the interviewer:

Get into character. Be engaging but somewhat straight-faced. Avoiding saying "Wonderful!" or "How interesting!"

Simulate a defined beginning of the actual interview. Leave the room and enter as the mock employer.

Greet the interviewee. Shake hands, and ask for a copy of the client's resume. Start with, "Tell me about yourself."

Ask your questions. Whenever possible, try to keep the interview flowing like a conversation. Feel free to ask follow-up questions about a response given by your interviewee.

At the end of the interview, ask the interviewee, "Do you have any questions for me [the employer]?" You may not know the answers, but this will give the client a chance to think about what to ask. Stay in character and let the student know that the answers would be discussed in a real interview but that you will simply need to move on.

Conclude the interview. Thank the interviewee for his time and let him know that you will be contacting him regarding the next steps of the interview process.

As the OCT:

Take detailed notes. Notes will help you to provide detailed feedback. See the attached worksheet for tips.

Look for strengths as well as areas for improvement. Pay attention to both content and delivery.

"Tell me about yourself..." When asked, "Tell me about yourself," an interviewee should focus on autobiographical details that give the interviewer a sense of who s/he is and that also suggest her/his suitability for the job (the school, the scholarship, etc.).

Assess the effectiveness of the client's examples. The interviewee will be providing you with examples to support answers to questions. The STAR method (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult) can help students structure concise, effective responses. Students have a tendency to talk too much about the situation and omit the result. Instead, the student should touch briefly on all four areas.

Step 4: Discuss

What went well? What needs improvement? First, ask the client what s/he thinks. Go over your notes together.

Practice. After discussing how the mock interview went, pose troublesome questions to the client again so that s/he can practice new techniques.

Discourage memorization of answers to sample questions. It is better to prepare by thinking in terms of themes that you will highlight in the interview: Background, Skills & Abilities, Examples, etc.

Discuss how the student can prepare for the real interview. Refer the student to the Oral Communication Program's "Interviewing 101" handout for other advice. For example: Dress appropriately, ask for the employer's business card, send a thank-you note, etc.

Special Cases

Case Studies: Some students will want to practice case study interviews. While we do not offer thorough case study mock interviews, we can do our best to help the client with general interview preparation.

Phone Interviews: To simulate a phone interview, turn your chair backs to each other. Recognize an increased need to pay attention to volume (speak louder), speed (speak slower), conveying emotion (still smile; they will be able to tell), and using signposts ("In summary, that is my view about..."). Subtle body language ways of communicating will be lost.

Common Advice for Interviewees

Convey strong Knowledge of Self, Knowledge of Industry, and Knowledge of Company. Interviewees should know how to articulate their strengths, experience, and goals. They should be informed about industry standards and issues. They should have done research on the organization's mission, history, and people.

Don't use vague labels. Don't say, "I'm a perfectionist" or "I'm a people-person." Instead, interviewees should focus on specific examples and anecdotes that highlight their skills and make them stand out from other applicants.

For questions about weaknesses: If asked, "What are your weaknesses?" be honest, but put a positive spin on the response. For example: Don't say, "I'm always late." Say, "I tend to take on a lot of projects at once and sometimes I have trouble balancing everything. I recently bought a Palm Pilot to help me stay organized and on time, and it has been working really well to help me with time management." (This follows the STAR method.)

For questions about strengths: If asked, "What is your greatest accomplishment?" be honest and don't worry about sounding arrogant. A lot of people have trouble with talking about their strengths. Don't dilute your response to be humble and don't start with a shaky, "Well... I think my greatest strength might be..." If worried about sounding arrogant, remember that actual arrogant people probably wouldn't bother to be worried.

Be yourself! If you are trying to say what you think the employer wants to hear, you will probably be wrong! Focus on presenting your best self.