



Radford
UNIVERSITY

Career and Talent
Development

Interviewing Career Guide

Radford Career and Talent Development



THE HIRING PROCESS

You are looking for a job or internship, and the employer is looking for the best candidate for the job. It's a process that takes time, and each step is an opportunity for the employer and the candidate to build a relationship, assess qualifications, and determine fit.

Here's an example of what the hiring process might look like:

Position Posted

- The company may post the position in-house and/or on external sites.

Screening & Interview Process

- The screening and interview process might include as many as four or five stages, including an initial screening followed by first round, second round, and final interviews.
- The interviews may be of any type, including phone, face-to-face, or digital/video interviews.
- The screening process may also include pre-employment assessment tests, such as skills, knowledge, or psychometric. These assessments help employers evaluate a candidate's ability to be successful in the position.

Background and Reference Check

- The company will check your references to confirm that you are a good fit for the role and company.

Offer Extended

- The employer will extend an offer, usually over the phone, and then a written offer.
- It's important to have a written offer in hand before negotiating your salary or accepting/declining the offer.
- Be sure to read the contract carefully and consider all of the parameters before signing.

GENERAL INTERVIEW ADVICE

PREPARE:

- Know what the employer needs. From your research, what does the company need employees in this position to be and do? How can you contribute to the company's success? See the next page for ideas about how to research a company.
- Anticipate what some of the interview questions will be. One way to do this is to schedule a visit with a Radford University Career Coach for a mock, or practice, interview.
- Another way to prepare is to use the Big Interview platform provided by RU. Big Interview lets you prepare your answers to some of the most common interview questions. You can also record yourself answering practice interview questions.

SHOW UP:

- Make a great first impression. Arrive promptly, be professionally dressed and be well-groomed. Show positive energy, smile, and project confidence. Give a firm (but not too firm) handshake, make good eye contact and have good posture.
- Leverage small talk to make a personal connection. It's easy to think that the interview starts when you formally sit down at the conference table, but this isn't true – you can use the transition time to chat and find things in common with your interviewers.

INTERVIEW STRONG:

- Show how you are a great match for the organization. Answer questions in a way that shows you have researched and understand the problems the company is trying to solve. Tell your story using concrete and compelling examples to illustrate your strengths and skills. Keep your answers concise.
- As the interview concludes, enthusiastically re-state your interest. It's okay to humbly yet confidently ask for the job! An example way to phrase this might be, "I've enjoyed my time with you and your team during the interview process, and I would be thrilled to join you as a _____ (state the title of the position). Thank you for your consideration."

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- Follow up. Send a thank you email within 24 hours. You then have the option of also mailing a thank you note.
- Keep the lines of communication open. If you have not heard from the hiring manager within a few weeks, you may respectfully make an inquiry about the next steps in the process. If you are not offered the position, write a thank you email to keep lines of communication open.

HOW TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ABOUT A COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION

Before you go to your job interview, you will want to know more about the company and who you might be working with. By researching the organization, you can know more about their alignment with your own values. You can also learn more about what the organization expects from the person who secures the open position. Most importantly, you can learn more about ways that you genuinely mesh with the company in terms of your skills, prior experience, and education – all talking points that you can use during your interview.

Here are some strategies for conducting employer-related research.

- 1. Start with their website.** One of the most valuable sections on a company's website is "About Us", which usually contains information about the organization's history, goals, mission, and values. You may also be able to find out more about the company's structure and the product(s) and/or service(s) they specialize in.
- 2. Also look at social media.** Press releases about the company's latest output often appear first on their social media accounts. You can find out more about their brand voice. By using LinkedIn, you can oftentimes find Radford alumni and read about their roles and experiences with the organization.
- 3. Search for corporate news.** Finding recent articles about an organization will inform you about the company's culture, vision, and current releases. These can all give you points of reference to use during your interview.
- 4. Look for employee reviews.** Websites like Glassdoor will tell you more about the corporate culture and give an "on the ground" perspective about what it's like to work there. Ideally, you can locate a review by someone with the same position title as the one you are seeking.
- 5. Look for information about the people who will be interviewing you.** If you happen to know who will be interviewing you, it's a good idea to find their LinkedIn profile. You may find that you have things in common with them that you can bring up either before or after the interview as small talk. It's a great way to make a

personal connection with your interviewer(s). You may also find information about the current projects that they are working on – this is another reference point for you during your interview.

- 6. Your research will serve you well at the end of the interview too.** Very often, the interviewer or interviewer team will leave a few minutes open at the end of the interview for your questions for them. Bringing your research results into your questions is a very powerful way to show them you are interested in the position.

Here are a few ways to frame questions for interviewers:

- “I read online about your recent release of (product, service). Congratulations. Please share more with me about how the responsibilities of the position that I’m applying for will be aligned with launching this product so that it is as successful as possible?”
- “I learned from my research that one of your projects in development is _____. What is that process like for your team/department/organization?”

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

With the introduction of new technologies, the types of interviews continue to evolve. Here are a few that you might encounter.

PHONE INQUIRY / INTERVIEW:

- This is frequently a starting point in the interview process, but don't be deceived – even if this is just a quick conversation, it is assuredly part of the interview process.

DIGITAL / VIDEO INTERVIEW:

- Consider this a screening and a first-round interview. You may be connecting with a live person or you may be responding and recording your answers to prompts from a virtual interviewer. It's important to be prepared with answers for the most commonly asked questions. Also, though the interview is virtual, it's still important to dress professionally.
- There are some additional considerations for a video interview, including:
 - Finding a suitable location that is free of distractions and looks professional.
 - Confirming the video interface you will be using and downloading the software.
 - Testing the audio and video on your device and the video interface.
 - Testing your internet or Wifi connection to ensure that it is strong.

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW:

- This is often a second-round interview and may or may not take place at the employer's site. It's important to step up your game and be prepared not only for the common questions but also for the knowledge/technical questions you may be asked as well as behavioral-based questions. Before the interview, research the organization to learn more about the specific skills and knowledge needed for the position.

PANEL AND CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS:

- Hires are not just about skills, they are also about "fit." As you progress further in the interview process, remember to keep both in mind, especially as you may be interviewed by the hiring manager, the supervisor for your area, and a peer. Be prepared for both the common questions and for a deeper dive into your specific experience. At this level of interview, the interviewers are also looking at how you will interact with their existing team.

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers use a variety of styles and types of questions throughout the interview process. Here are a few of the types of questions you might encounter.

STRUCTURED:

Examples:

- Why are you interested in this position?
- What is your greatest strength (or weakness)?
- Why should we hire you?

OPEN-ENDED:

Examples:

- Can you please tell me about yourself?
- Can you walk me through your resume?

BEHAVIORAL-BASED:

Examples:

- Tell me about a time when you worked well with a team. Why was it a positive experience?
- Can you give me an example of when you received negative feedback, and what did you do in response?

CASE STUDY:

Examples:

- This is a problem at our company. Can you walk me through how you would solve it?
- How would you start your own business in this field?

KNOWLEDGE / TECHNICAL:

Examples:

- Given your experience in _____, how might you address this problem?
- How would you create a marketing plan for our new product?

THE STAR METHOD OF ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to an interview question by discussing the specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esult of the situation you are describing. The STAR method works particularly well for behavioral-based questions but can be used throughout your interview, especially when you are being asked about a past event or experience.

S = Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

T = Task: What goal were you working toward?

A = Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.

R = Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

Helpful hints when crafting your answers:

- Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method.
- Always be as specific as possible.
- Oftentimes students must be prompted to include their results, so try to include that without being asked.
- Eliminate any examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.