You’ve got an interview: Now what?

**the PARK method**

- **P** the PROBLEM or situation ("What happened?")
- **A** the ACTIONS you took ("What did you do?")
- **R** the RESULTS or outcomes ("What was the result?")
- **K** the KNOWLEDGE you gained and applied ("What did you learn? How did you apply it?")

At right is typical behavioral interview question… and a possible response, using the PARK method.

**Q:** “Tell me about a time when you had to deal with conflict in a group.”

**A:** “Last semester I was part of a student advisory board to my academic department. We were developing a set of recommendations to improve faculty student communication. It was difficult to get the various members of the board to agree on which recommendations to choose, because everyone wanted theirs. I focused on helping us look for common elements between each recommendation. The result was that we ended up recommending a faculty-student retreat in which many of the more specific recommendations were used. Through this experience, I learned how important it is to really look at things from the perspective of each team member.”
**Interview Basics**

**What's the Point of an Interview?**

The purpose of an interview is to exchange information. The employer evaluates your ability to do the job. You look for a match between your interests and the work.

Be prepared with information about the company and the job, as well as with questions that you have developed. By taking these steps, you're ready to be an active participant in this exchange about your future.

**What's a Behavioral Interview?**

Behavioral interviewing assumes that your past experiences are good indicators of your future abilities. You'll be asked to tell stories about your past so that the employer can assess your skills and behavior. There may not be a right or wrong answer. There is only your answer that may reveal something about your qualities to the employer.

By thoroughly understanding the nature of the job and the organization, you can more accurately select examples from your life that have meaning to the employer.

“Tell me about a time . . . ”

Being able to talk about your experiences in such a way that employers can identify your skills is a challenge. One way to help organize your experiences is to use the PARK method. The PARK method helps you focus on the most relevant aspects of your experience for the employer in a structured way.

**Be Prepared!**

Being prepared for the interview is very important. The employer has already agreed to meet with you based on your resume and cover letter—you've made it this far. Now to be confident in your interview, you need to be prepared. The following things will help you:

- **Research.** Find out everything you can about the organization and the position. The interviewer will be able to tell if you've done your homework. The more you know, the more you'll be able to connect your experiences and skills to the needs of the employer. This will also help you to create a list of good questions to ask at the interview.

- **Make a List of Skills.** Before the interview, make a list of your skills and abilities. These are what will make you an asset to your future employer; use the list to put yourself in a positive frame of mind and help you "sell" yourself to the interviewer. Your portfolio and resume are great starting points for this list, since they both sum up your experience and interests.

- **Sample Questions.** Check out www.ReadyPrepInterview.com for common and specific questions related to the job titles you're interested in.

- **Practice!** The Career Services Network offers practice interviews throughout the year. Check MySpartanCareer for dates and times to sign up. Click on the "Jobs/View Postings" tab and search using the keyword "practice" to find available interviews. Some schedules may be limited to students in specific majors or colleges.

- You can also use InterviewStream to practice interviewing using a webcam! Seeing yourself in action is a great way to test your ability to answer common interview questions and get prompt feedback on your body language and speech patterns. After all, you're your own best critic! Find InterviewStream at CareerNetwork.msu.edu under the “Jobs + Internships” tab in the section on Interviewing.

**Interview Tips**

- Arrive early and appear relaxed and organized
- Seem interested and alert
- Connect your skills, background, or experience to the job
- Only say positive things about past employers or co-workers
- Ask questions that you don't know the answers to
- Realistically present your qualities
- Ask about salary and benefits after you have a solid job offer
- Allow for “quiet time” for the interviewer to think and take notes
Negotiating job offers

**conditions of a job offer**

Before you get a job offer, or as a condition of your offer, you will likely have to go through one or more of the following:

- Pre-employment testing can include drug/alcohol, agility, genetic, personality, honesty, skills, loyalty, and leadership tests.
- Background screening can include a credit check, criminal records investigation, driver’s license check, academic credentials verification, and reference checks.
- Reference checks can include academic, employment, and personal references.

While students and job applicants may think of these tests and investigations as an “invasion of privacy” or “offensive,” there is nothing illegal about employers seeking this information.

**happiness is a balance**

The most important question to ask yourself is: _Are you excited about this job and the salary? _If you are not happy, you will not be a great employee, and you aren’t likely to have a good experience with the organization. But it’s also important to balance your excitement and passion for the field you’re entering with a realistic expectation for financial rewards.

You don’t have to accept the first salary you’re offered. You have the ability to negotiate for better benefits, training, or pay.

Feel free to ask for time to adequately examine your total offer. Get all of the elements in writing, including benefit options, stock options, and wages.

**negotiation tools**

The strongest tools to negotiate with are salary information for your industry and the value of the unique skills that you bring to the table.

The industry’s economic climate and the location of your position will both have a major influence on your salary offer, even when compared to other candidates within the same company. New York City is not the same as Traverse City in cost of living. Use our online Career Research Tools (see page 10) to find salary and cost-of-living information.

for more information . . .

... about salary negotiation, benefits, and dealing with multiple job offers, as well as a salary calculator, check out resources for negotiating job offers at careernetwork.msu.edu.
On campus, we expect you to follow certain policies and practices, and to honor your commitments—and to do this with a high degree of integrity.

Keep in mind that your actions are not isolated and many constituencies will in some manner be affected by your decisions.

Performing with integrity means:
- Accepting responsibility for your actions, including your mistakes.
- Keeping your word and following through.
- Making principled decisions based on personal and professional ethics.
- Following the Golden Rule—treating others as you would like to be treated.
- Acting consistently and transparently in all your dealings.

Falsification of information

Students and alumni registering and submitting their resume and data are certifying that the information is truthful and accurate. Those found providing false information in any way risk becoming ineligible for on-campus interviewing and Career Network services.

Interview cancellation

You are expected to accept the responsibility for keeping every interview appointment scheduled. Canceling late or not showing up may result in becoming ineligible for on-campus interviewing. For these situations, you will be temporarily deactivated from MySpartanCareer (for the first incident) and will be required to follow a process to reinstate your access.

- Late cancellation. MySpartanCareer will only accept cancellations up to 4 days prior to a scheduled interview—including Saturday and Sunday. If you need to cancel an interview after that, you must contact the Career Center at which the interview is to occur.

- No-show. A “no-show” for an interview is professionally unacceptable and demonstrates a lack of respect and responsibility. Even in an emergency situation, you should contact and inform the Career Center.

Acceptance of job offer

If you’ve accepted a job offer, you should not continue to interview with employers. Notify employers whom you may have upcoming interviews with and withdraw your application.

Reneging

Reneging is accepting a job offer and then changing your mind in order to accept an offer with another employer.

Reneging can damage your reputation forever—and may make you ineligible for on-campus interviewing and Career Network services. The university does not sanction reneging on your part for any reason.