

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

✓ 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.

✓ 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

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.

▶ **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 **Handshake** for dates and times to sign up or to request practice 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.

Get more interview resources, including a list of sample interview questions, at CareerNetwork.msu.edu

- ▶ Ask about salary and benefits *after* you have a solid job offer
- ▶ Allow for "quiet time" for the interviewer to think and take notes