

# You've got an interview! Now what?

## the **PARK** method

- P** the PROBLEM or situation
- A** the ACTIONS you took
- R** the RESULTS or outcomes
- K** the KNOWLEDGE you gained or applied ("What did you learn?")

OR

## the **STAR** technique

- S** the SITUATION or setting
- T** the TASK (your goals)
- A** your ACTIONS taken
- R** the RESULTS or your actions (plus what you LEARNED)

**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 had each developed recommendations to improve faculty-student communication. It was difficult to get the board members to agree on which recommendations to choose, because everyone argued for their own."

✓ "My goal was to reach a group consensus."

✓ "I focused on helping us look for common elements between each recommendation. Using Post-It notes, I had each member break down their recommendation into smaller parts for easier comparisons."

✓ "The result was a faculty-student retreat where most of our recommendations were used."

✓ "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 how well your interests/skills are a match with the work/organization.

### what's a behavioral interview?

Behavioral interview questions assume 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 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.

## virtual interviews!

### phone interviews

- ▶ It's common for first interviews to take place over the phone. This approach can help an organization pre-screen candidates quickly and without much expense. A successful phone interview can lead to an in-person interview. Tips to help you succeed:
  - Set up in a quiet space with a great phone connection
  - Smile when talking to sound enthusiastic and confident
  - Have your notes in front of you to help with succinct responses
  - Try to avoid "yes" or "no" answers and have a list of questions ready if time allows

## 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

be a right or wrong answer. Your responses may reveal something about your qualities to the employer.

## "Tell me about a time when you . . ."

Being able to briefly talk about your experiences in a way that helps employers identify your skills and qualities is a challenge. You can **organize your experience stories by using the P.A.R.K. or S.T.A.R. methods** described on page 68. Both methods will help you focus on relevant aspects of your experience and give structure to your story for the employer.

- ▶ **Sample questions.** Check out [www.ReadyPrepInterview.com](http://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](http://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](http://CareerNetwork.msu.edu)

### video interviews

- ▶ Some employers are using **Skype and FaceTime** for cost-effective interviewing. Prepare like you would for a phone interview, and then take it a few steps further!
  - Double-check your audio, video, and internet connection
  - Make sure you have good lighting (and a distraction-free background)
  - Dress for success – your video image should be from the waist up
  - Remember to smile and look at the interviewer(s) as if you are in the room together

- ▶ 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