

INTERVIEWING TIPS

Career Services | 918.495.6912 | careers@oru.edu | orugoldenhire.com



ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY
Career Services

How to Interview Successfully

- **Don't Be Nervous**

Especially the first few times you interview, and maybe a little every time, you can expect at least a bit of nerves. It's important that you don't over compensate for this nervousness by trying to be too relaxed. If you are too relaxed can come across aloof, while if you are a bit nervous this can be translated into interest in the position. If you are nervous to the point of shaking, sweating, staring, stuttering, or focusing on your own shoes the interviewer is not going to be able to see what fantastic strengths you have to offer. This can lead to the interviewer feeling sorry for you. The key is not making sure you are not nervous, but rather making sure you work toward being more self-confident.

- **Be More Confident:**

- **Do your homework, know the job and company.** Make sure you understand what the company does and what the job is about so you can convincingly describe why you're interested in the position. You will inevitably be asked to talk about this. You will also be asked to talk about the information you put on your resume, so make sure you review your resume and can easily speak about everything you included in it, even the job you had four years ago! Having an extra copy in front of you may help keep you focused, particularly since you will probably have multiple versions of your resume for various job opportunities.
- **Know what you are looking for in your first job/employer.** Before your interview, think about what you're looking for in your first job, and what you're seeking in an employer. Make sure you prepare your questions in advance and bring them to the interview. As you're talking with the interviewer, try to ascertain if that organization and opportunity fits your aspirations. Remember, you're probably going to be working in that organization for at least a couple of years - is the position likely to sustain your interest? Do you like the people you've met? Do you understand the rewards and challenges of the position? Are they acceptable to you?
- **Relate your past experience and education, list the most important areas first.** Think about the experiences you've had that you want the interviewer to know about. Which accomplishments are you most proud of? What unique and interesting things have you done? How have you contributed to the organizations you've been a part of? Recall these kinds of experiences you've had, practice telling these stories aloud, and you will sound more polished and prepared in your interview.

- **Value yourself.** Recalling your accomplishments should give you confidence. It's okay to be proud of what you've done. What you have done in the past was valued by your former employers/educators, and that experience has value for the future. Understand this and go into the interview with a good feeling, it will absolutely show.

- **Evaluate the Interviewer**

If you approach an interview like a puppy in the dog pound with the mindset "I hope they pick me," that attitude is going to make you more nervous. Instead, remember that you are evaluating them as much as they are evaluating you.

- **How to set the interview tone**

First impressions count and set the tone for the rest of the interview.

- When your interviewer comes into the waiting room and calls your name, walk toward them with confidence, make eye contact, smile, extend your hand for a firm handshake and say, "Hello, I'm (insert your name here)."
- If your interviewer makes small talk with you on the way back to the interview room, participate fully – don't just give yes or no answers. It's okay for you to make small talk too – ask them if they are having a good day, etc.
- Interviewers are humans too, and they like to know you're interested in them. So it's usually okay to ask your interviewer questions about their own experiences with the company, about their role in the organization, and such. Of course you have to take cues from your interviewer - just like with other humans, some are friendlier than others, and you have to work with what you get.

- **Be somewhat bold**

- **On-Campus Interview Specifics.** If you're a normally shy person, it may help you to remember that ORU is your turf. Treat them like you would treat a guest to your home, with the same warmth and graciousness. They will respond positively to this attitude and it will help you build rapport.
- **Off-Campus Interview Specifics.** If it's in their office, remember that you are a guest in their house. You are in an environment where the interviewer is completely at home and likely feels at least a little bit of power over the whole situation. Make yourself as comfortable, yet still alert as you can, and move on from there.

- **Focus on the Interviewer.** Another technique shy people can use to increase confidence is to focus your attention outside of yourself. If your focus is on that little voice in your head that's shouting, "Don't blow this!" you're going to be nervous. You can focus on the interviewer instead - think about the first impression they make on you. What do you notice about them? You can also focus on the opportunity to learn more about the company and the position. Think about how you're looking forward to getting good information from the recruiter. When you're focused on the other person you will come across as enthusiastic and you will seem more interesting and confident too.
- **Follow-Up, Follow-up, Follow-up**
Don't be shy or worried that recruiters are too busy to want to hear from you. They can't gauge your level of interest or readiness to follow through unless you show them.
- **Acquire the Offer**
All interviews should have one common goal – getting the job offer. No matter the company, position, or even if you decide within the first two minutes of the interview that the job is not right for you, you should leave each interview with the interviewer saying 'Wow, I want to hire this person to work for us.'

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviews are based on the premise that **your past behavior is the most reliable indicator of your future response** in a similar situation. Utilized by most firms, behavioral-style questions shy away from hypotheticals like "How would you deal with an angry customer?" or "How would you communicate to your boss that you disagree?" Instead, they ask you to draw on your actual life experiences – "When you've had to juggle numerous projects at once, how did you ensure that nothing slipped through the cracks?" or "Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone you didn't like or agree with."

Don't Just Try for the "Right" Answer. These questions are all about determining what your temperament is. Most organizations have a clear sense of their organizational culture and the kinds of people who will succeed in a given type of job in that environment. They ask behavioral questions to help determine whether or not you're a good fit, which often indicates that you are already qualified on a skill-set level, at least the skills you listed on your resume.

What is a company looking for? Information you can gain from an organization's website, published & other web-based resources, and, especially, opportunities to talk with current employees and representatives at career expos can tell you a lot about how a potential employer views itself, its culture, and the qualities it looks for in a new hire.

Prepare Stories with a Purpose. The first time you try to use a past experience to illustrate some aspect of your personality, it's not likely to flow very easily or smoothly. You want to go into an interview having thought ahead of time about how you might draw on your past experiences to answer the kinds of behavioral questions commonly asked. Always keep in mind the point of the story. You don't want to sound overly scripted, but you want to walk into the interview having practiced using your past to communicate to your audience the value you have to offer them in the future.

Common Behavioral Style Interview Questions

1. Describe a time you were given a task with specific instructions and you chose not to follow those instructions.
2. What have you done to prepare for this interview?
3. How do you typically handle criticism?
4. Describe a situation where you feel you were unfairly criticized. What did you do?
5. What have you learned from your previous boss?
6. Tell me about a project you initiated and carried out.
7. How do you respond to failure? Cite an example.
8. When you are supervising people, how do you motivate them?
9. What's your favorite website?
10. Name someone you look up to who is not a parent.
11. How would you handle an unethical situation at work?
12. How do you measure personal success?
13. Talk about a time you had to ask for help.
14. What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
15. What are three words that describe you?
16. What is your communication style?
17. What is your greatest weakness?
18. What is your greatest strength?

In answering interview questions remember it is important that you:

- Look the interviewers straight in the eye as you speak, you don't have to stare them down, but let them know you are taking charge of giving them the answer they requested.
- Avoid using filler words such as: "um", "well", "ah", "oh, uh". Don't stretch these out into filler sentences either "Um, let me see now." "Oh, uh, I'm not sure, hmmm."
- Become comfortable with a bit of silence. After the interviewer asks you a question, it's ok for there to be several seconds of silence as you formulate your answer. Filler words in place of

this silence only serves to show the interviewer that you are still nervous, and possibly that you are unable to “think on your feet”, and may not have well-developed communication skills. Use silence after a question is asked to your advantage. The interviewer is likely more comfortable than you are, particularly if its at their office so don’t feel obligated to fill the “awkward” silence to help them feel better in a situation they are already in control of and most likely very accustomed to.

- Always give an example from your personal experience. Use one event or story per question with specific examples to show that you are paying attention, interested, able to communicate, and can respond at a collegiate level.
- You may not have a large repertoire of experiences to draw on. It is acceptable to use the same event to illustrate more than one point, especially if you can do so without repeating yourself in each answer.
- Use the SPARE method, which is to describe the:
 - S - Situation
 - P - Problem
 - A - Action
 - R - Result
 - E - Experience, what was learned?
- Listen and respond to the question, don’t start an answer to quickly assuming you know what the question is. If you don't understand it, ask them to repeat or clarify the question.
- Try to have a good time. Be yourself.
- You're not expected to be perfect. Don't be afraid to relate experiences that did not have an optimal outcome. Use them to show that you have the ability to overcome obstacles, learn from your mistakes, and apply that knowledge the next time around.
- Be proud of your experiences. Tell what you gained from them. Remember that in your past experiences you were paid for adding value to a company, even in the smallest of tasks, relate to your interview your understanding of how each job added value and served a purpose in the whole mission of the company.

Top Interviewing Musts

1. **Research the company**
2. **Be clear on the position you are applying**

3. **Market yourself**
4. **Prepare questions for the interviewer**
5. **Dress-Up** As a general rule of thumb, wear a pressed suit and shirt and polished shoes.
6. **Don't 'wing' the interview**
7. **Be genuine** Be yourself and be honest!
8. **Listen, Listen, Listen**
9. **Provide details to your answers, talk through your thought process**
10. **Be enthusiastic** Don't be afraid to display your passion for the job/industry and to show confidence!