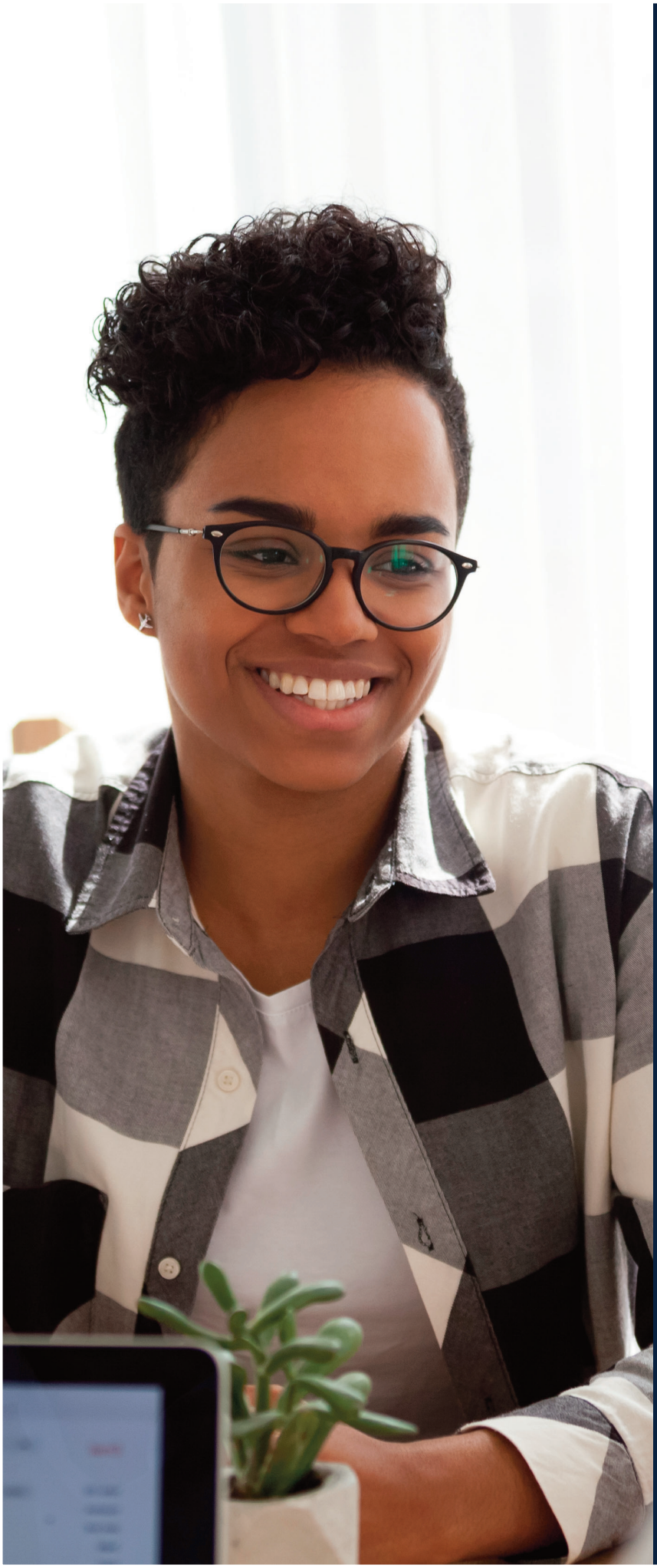

INTERVIEWING SUCCESSFULLY

A SELF-DIRECTED RESOURCE

FIRST EDITION

WORLD BANK GROUP

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Introduction

Successful interviewing requires the ability to clearly demonstrate you have the qualifications and qualities the interviewer and the organization want in the ideal candidate, as well as to determine if the candidate is a good fit for the organization and how you can add value. Preparation and practice is a key component to successful interviewing.

We recommend you to attend one or more of the interview workshops the WBG Career Advisory Services offers. Regarding the Interviewing Basics, we strongly recommend to also take our *E-learning course "Skills for Successful Interviewing".* There are also face-to-face courses on interviewing. A full list of our monthly seminars and E-learnings can be found at

https://careerdev

or you can schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor. This handbook is a self-directed resource to complement what you learn in a workshop, as well as, to help you prepare to meet with a Career Advisor for a more productive session.

Contacted for an Interview?

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

> **Respond promptly to show interest.** Express thanks for the opportunity and get specifics on logistics: address, special entry requirements, and the names of those with whom you will be interviewing. You will need these names so that you can research these individuals prior to your meeting.

> **Research the interviewers, the organization, and the sector/department/ division.** In addition to reading, talk with others who might have knowledge. Based on what you learned, prepare questions you can ask about the organization, department, and/or position. Show, through these questions, that you are knowledgable and that you have done your research.

> **Review the position announcement and the value you will bring.** Make a list of what is required and desired; then, make a comparable list of what you can bring to the organization to meet these requirements. Think about experience, strengths, education, and feedback others have given you about your work and about you as a person.

> Consider **relevant accomplishments** or projects you have undertaken. Review your résumé to remind you. Using STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, Results), prepare "mini-stories" that describe your accomplishments and demonstrate your ability to meet the position requirements.

> Two critical things that every interviewer wants and needs to know are **why you want this particular job** and what value you will bring. Think carefully about this. A desire to escape your current position or to get a promotion is not an appropriate response.

> **Prepare and practice a focused, two-minute overview** of your career (experiences, skills, technical qualifications, interests) as it relates to this position. Interviews often begin with a variation of the "Tell me about yourself" question.

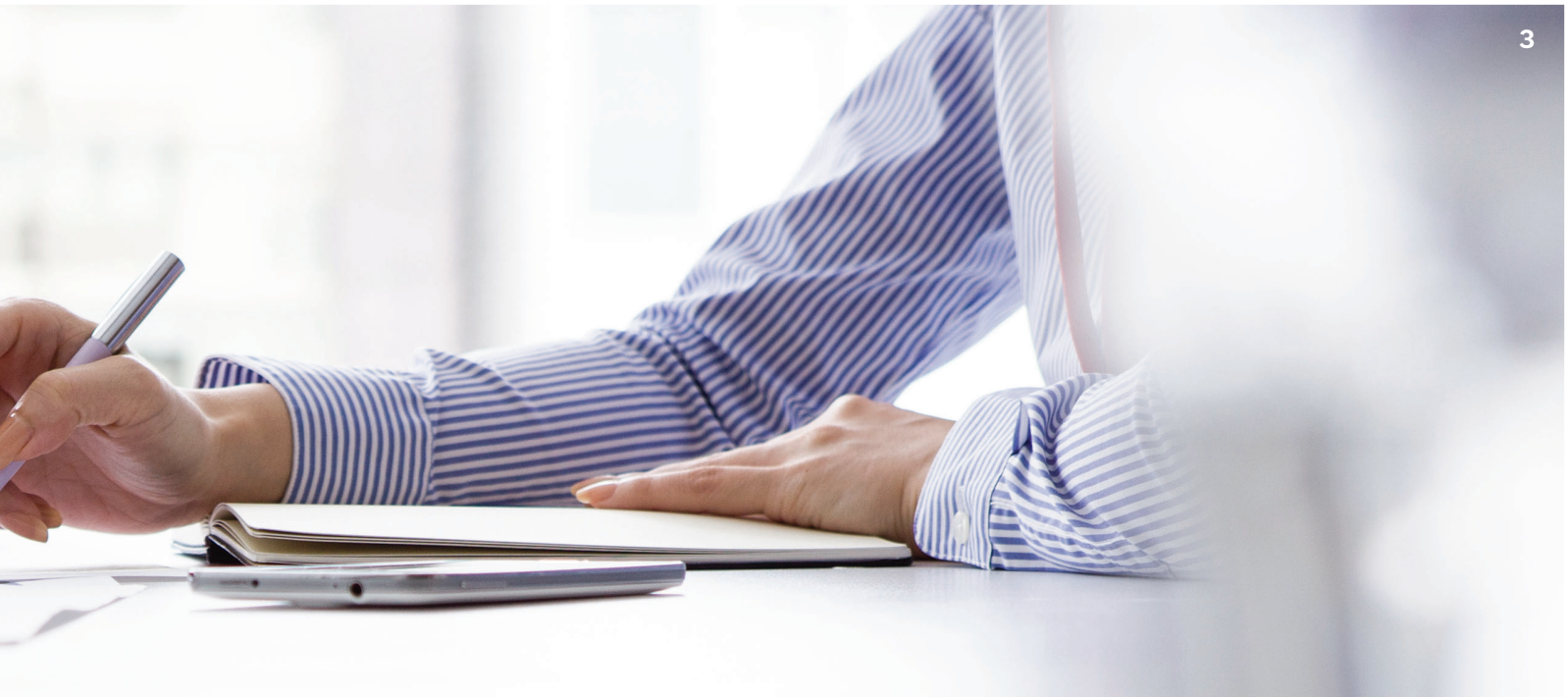
> **Develop and get completely comfortable with interview questions and formats.** Practice responses to any "sticky" interview questions that you are worried about being asked. Prepare for "typical" interview questions as well as behavioral questions where you will provide specific examples of things you have done that relate to the position. Consulting firms may use a case interview format; prepare accordingly.

Plan ahead:

> **Determine your interview outfit in advance** rather than the night before. Professional attire (e.g. suit) is expected for an interview.

> **Know the location and plan to arrive 15 minutes before the interview time.** Factor in traffic or possibly getting lost.

> **Pack your bag:** Prepare the materials you are taking with you (i.e. copies of your résumé, portfolio, writing samples or publications).



DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- **Be confident.** Think about this interview as an information exchange. You are trying to determine what needs exist that you can meet and the organization is trying to determine if you can do the job, want to do the job, and will be pleasant to work with as a colleague. As Amy Cuddy, social psychologist and researcher from Harvard, tells us (*Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are http://www.ted.com* — highly recommended): Breathe deeply, take up space, and stand tall. Show your confidence and you will feel confident.
- **Do what makes you calm.** Breathe deeply, read a motivational quote while waiting, visualize a positive experience about to happen and the after-interview feeling of success – whatever it takes to help you relax. Silence your cell phone.
- **On arrival, give a firm handshake to each person you meet and smile.** A smile is the first thing to go when one is nervous and yet, it's a critical factor in developing rapport.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

- **Within 24-48 hours, send an individualized thank you** letter/e-mail to each person who was in the interview with you. Customize each in case the letters land side-by-side or are compared. Consider the role each person plays and tailor your comments to this. Include a few ideas discussed as well as anything you forgot to mention. Stress why you believe you are uniquely qualified for this position.

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral interviewing

> is based on the premise that past performance predicts future performance.

> ask for examples in your past that demonstrate key competencies required for the position for which you are interviewing.

> can be entirely behavioral or a combination with other interview styles.

As a candidate, you can use behavioral interviewing techniques to your advantage if faced with a traditional interview format. By citing specific examples of past performance, you build credibility and demonstrate that you can meet the job requirements.

To prepare for a behavioral interview,

> review the job posting to identify the key competencies required.

> determine the specific non-technical requirements to be met by the person taking this position.

> make a list of specific examples of things you have accomplished in your experience that demonstrate the competencies required and needs to be met.

> identify 6-8 of these examples where you demonstrated key requirements and skills for the position.

> prepare a **brief** mini- story for all these examples (again using the STAR model as mentioned on page 2).

The behavioral interviewer can, and often will, drill down for more information by using follow-up questions. Practice telling these stories so that you can tell them clearly and concisely, without rambling.

Examples of behavioral questions (with competencies they are designed to assess):

1. Tell us about a time when you had to deal with a difficult client. What happened and were you successful? (conflict management, interpersonal strengths)
2. Could you give us an example of a time when you had to handle conflicting priorities? (multitasking, organizational and planning, and communication skills)
3. Tell us about a time when you had to manage a team of people who did not want to work together. (leadership and teambuilding skills)
4. Describe a decision you had to implement that was unpopular and how you did it. (engaging stakeholders and developing collaboration)
5. Give us an example of a time when you had to develop an innovative solution to streamline operations or improve product or service delivery (innovation)

The Interviews

Phone interviews are used as an initial screening mechanism to determine which candidates should be invited for in-person interviews. They are usually brief: 20-30 minutes.

If you are contacted and unprepared, ask if you can schedule a future convenient time and provide alternate dates/times rather than move into the interview unprepared.

Prepare as you would for an in-person interview, including doing some research about the positions, the business context and the specific requirements and prepare your examples and your mini-stories (see page 6).

If this is an initial screening interview by Human Resources, the interviewer may be more interested in covering details of your résumé. In this case, be prepared to discuss job transitions as to why you moved from one position to the next. Respond factually, positively, and with confidence.

Ensure you are away from all noise and distractions. Consider using a landline if you are at all concerned about cellphone reception.

Smile! A smile can be heard over the phone as confidence and warmth. When you smile and talk, your tone will be upbeat and positive.

Many prefer to stand up when talking or sit up straight vs. being relaxed in a chair. The intent is to send energy and reflect confidence. It is suggested that you also consider dressing professionally so that you feel as if you are in an actual interview.

> When the conversation is ending, thank the interviewer and ask if it would be possible to meet in person.

> Take notes on what you learned immediately after the conversation. Send a follow-up thank you e-mail within 24-48 hours to the interviewer, restating your interest in the position and summarizing what you uniquely will bring to the position.

Panel Interviews

A panel interview is a personal interview held with three or more people. In addition to all the basic recommendations mentioned on previous pages for interviews in general, keep in mind the following as tips for this specific situation:

If possible, **get the names of the panel members** in advance. This information will help you to feel more comfortable about meeting with them. Also, this enables you to send personalized thank-you notes to each panel member after the interview.

Bring extra copies of your résumé to share in the event that someone on the panel has not yet seen it or joins the panel at the last minute.

Make a strong first impression. As panel members are introduced to you, smile, make eye contact, and greet them using their names. When possible, shake each panel member's hand. Ask permission if you want to take notes but realize that it is distracting for a panel to watch a candidate write during an interview so use any note-taking sparingly. It is inadvisable to write down questions you are asked.

Share your attention with everyone on the panel. When answering questions, make initial eye contact with the person asking the question and then try to briefly look at each of the other panel members as you are talking and make a connection with the entire panel. As you end your answer, look at the person who asked the question to see if you need to provide more information.

Continue to engage all panel members. Use a panel member's name, when answering, and consider the panelist's organizational role as you respond. Also, show the relationships between an answer you are giving and a prior panelist's question, when appropriate, to keep panel members engaged. For example, "This actually ties into what Paul asked earlier about..."

Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question **and give yourself time to pause and reflect, if you need it**. It's better to think through an answer than to answer incorrectly or ramble.

Prepare for group dynamics. In a panel interview, there are different personalities and interviewing styles. You may be able to tell if someone is in doubt or not as open to your responses. Try to give a clear, confident response to this person. Try to establish rapport with as many as possible but also realize that you may not be able to satisfy all interviewers with your responses all the time.

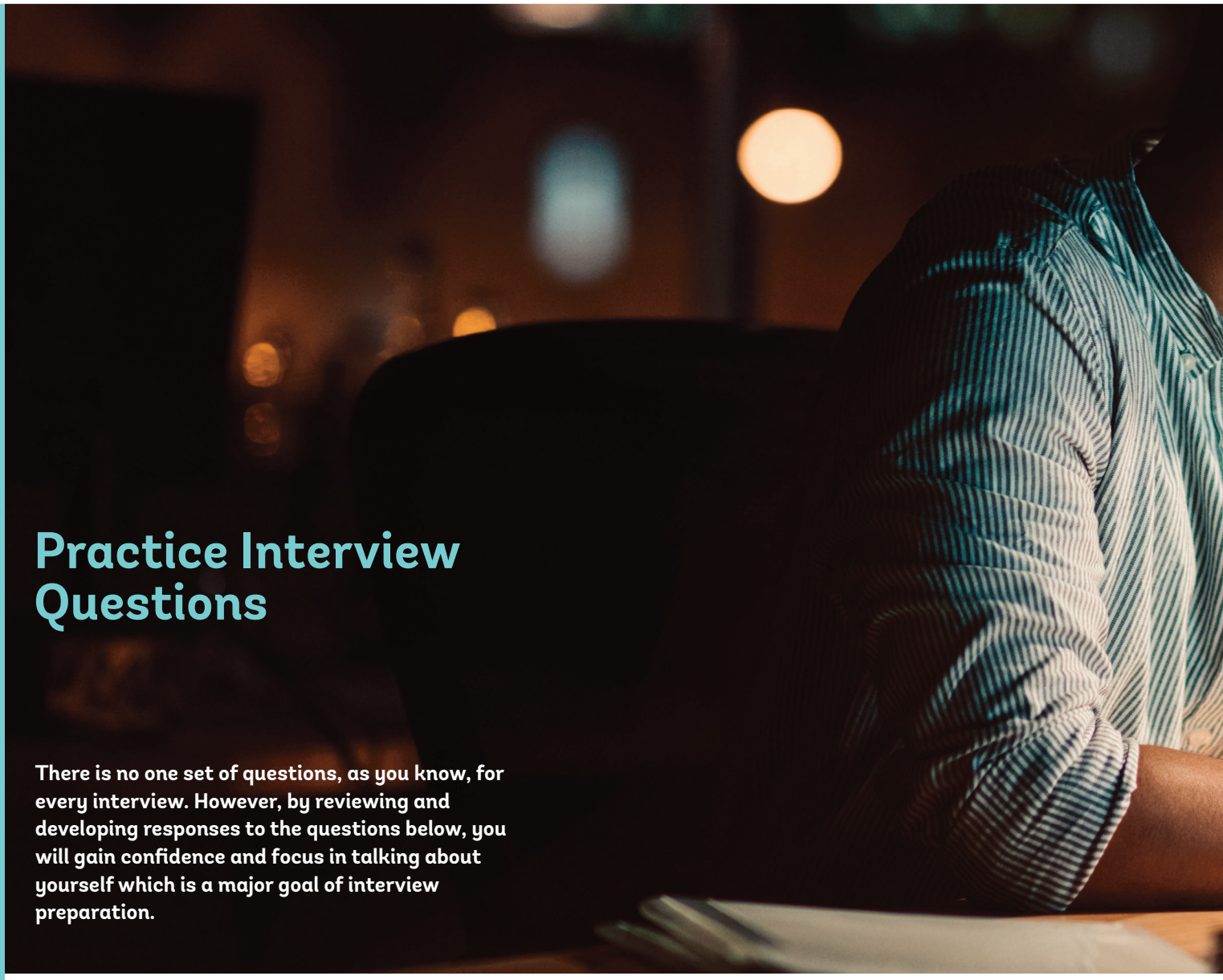
Prepare for interruptions. It is not uncommon to have someone enter late or have to leave early to catch another meeting. Stay calm and carry on.

Prepare for two questions asked simultaneously. In a panel interview, it is not uncommon for two questions to be asked at once, based on the fact that there are multiple people trying to get information. This can feel stressful. If asked more than one question at a time, answer one and then go back and ask for the other question to be repeated.

You may have to repeat a response. In a group interview, not everyone hears everything the same way. Do not be surprised or feel impatient if you are asked the same question twice or asked for further clarification on something you have already explained.

Questions from you are expected, so have questions ready to ask about the work or the group. These questions should reflect your research. If you can address these questions to different panel members, you will continue to keep panel members involved and interested in the interview (and in you).

Thank all panel participants. At the end of the interview, make eye contact with all and try to shake hands with each person. Follow the interview by sending an individualized thank-you letter/e-mail to each panel member. Customize each letter in case the letters land side-by-side or are compared. Consider the role each person plays and tailor your comments to this. Include a few ideas discussed as well as anything you forgot to mention. Stress why you believe you are uniquely qualified for this position.

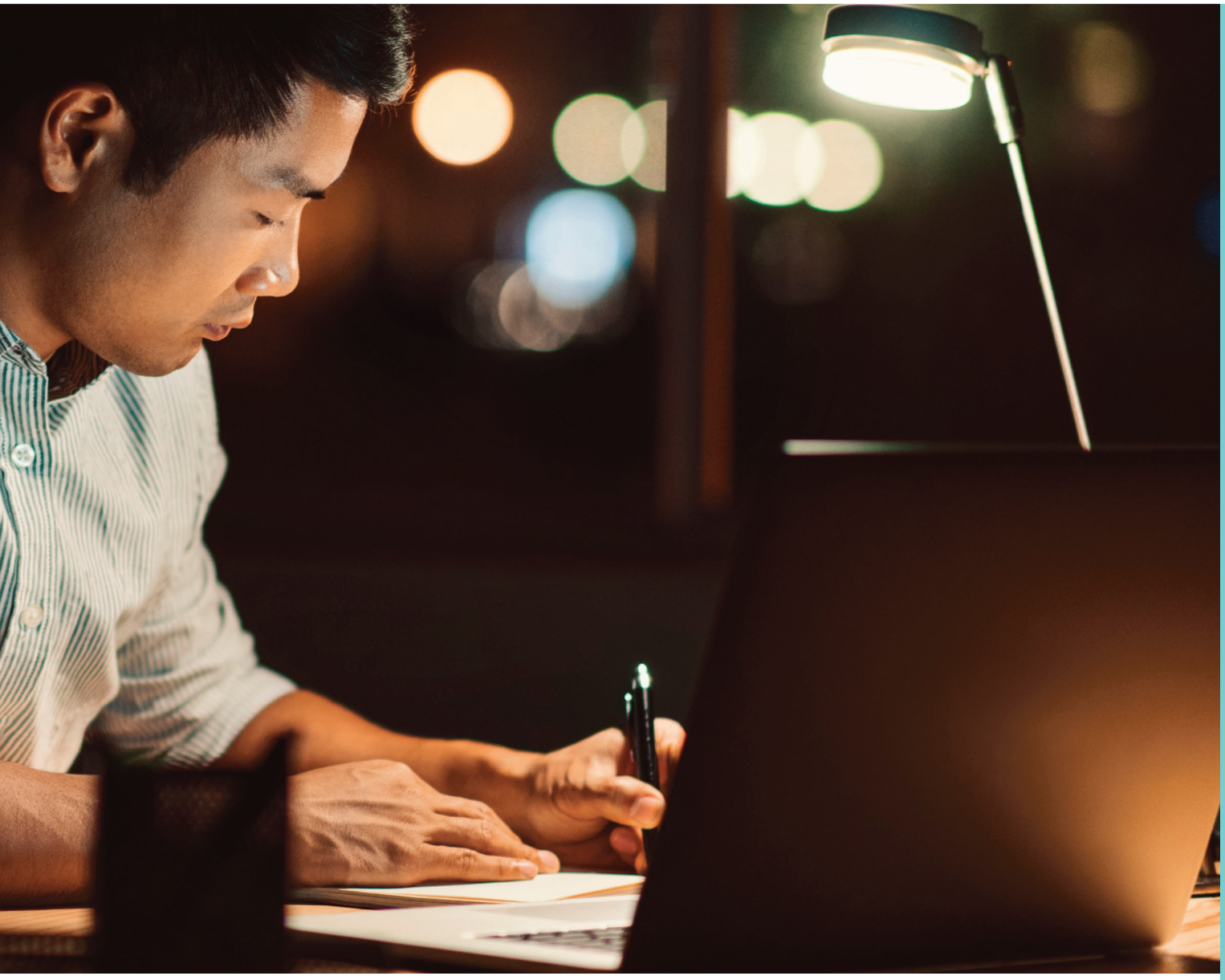


Practice Interview Questions

There is no one set of questions, as you know, for every interview. However, by reviewing and developing responses to the questions below, you will gain confidence and focus in talking about yourself which is a major goal of interview preparation.

Possible interview questions

1. Tell me about yourself (1-2 minute overview focusing on relevance to the position).
2. Why are you interested in this position/unit?
3. What do you know about us?
4. Why do you want to leave your current position?
5. This job, has as a key component, X. Give us an example of a time when you have had to… (a component or function of the job as detailed in the announcement).
6. In this position, you will have to… (key challenge of the job as detailed in the job announcement). Tell us about a time when you have had to. (key challenge).
7. What would you do if you found you were unable to. (stress factor you have been able to identify from the announcement)?
8. Tell us about a project when things did not go as planned.
9. Give us an example of a time when you had to work under pressure and tight deadlines. How did you handle it?
10. Describe a time when you had to face a conflict on a team and how you handled it.
11. Tell us about a difficult decision related to work that you had to make.
12. Give us an example of a time when you motivated others.
13. Would you say you are more of an individual or a team player?



14. No one is perfect. Where do you think you might still need to improve? (Think about one skill that can be improved through learning and that you have worked on/are working on.)
15. What would your current manager say about your performance?
16. What would your colleagues say about you?
17. What has been the most frustrating part of your current role?
18. What would you consider the most significant accomplishment in your career so far?
19. What do you think you can bring to this department/unit? (How can you add value?)

Possible questions to ask at the interview

Review the position's context and mission objectives. You can inquire about growth priorities, how innovation is encouraged, how client satisfaction is measured — in other words, questions developed from your research — as well as questions regarding the position.

1. What are the greatest challenges facing this position?
2. What would be the first issue that you would want me to address? *or* What would you like me to accomplish in the first 60-90 days?
3. How would you describe the ideal candidate for this position?
4. What are the key performance indicators for this role?
5. What are the reporting relationships in this position?

Post-interview Thank You Letter/ E-mail

- Send a thank you letter within 24-48 hours.
- If you send an e-mail to each member of an interview panel, customize and individualize each one as your e-mail may be read and compared by all members of the panel. An option is to send one e-mail to the panel chair, thanking the chair and the panel members.
- Focus on being concise and to-the-point. This is a short letter.

Dear X:

First paragraph (and possibly a second): Thank the interviewer(s) for taking the time to meet with you and restate your interest in the position. Try to recall something from the interview or comments/questions that were of interest or helpful to you. Highlight specific skills and experiences that will enable you to bring value to the organization. Here is also the place to mention anything you forgot to discuss in the interview or to elaborate on items discussed.

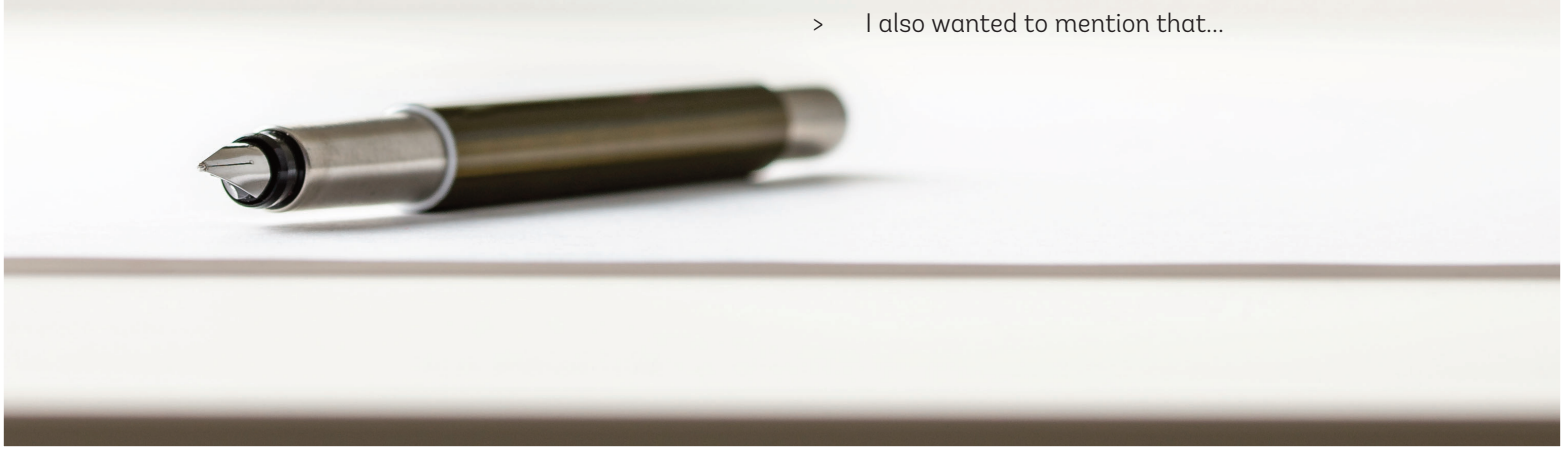
Second – third paragraph: Restate your appreciation for being considered and your belief in being able to make a strong contribution. Indicate that you are looking forward to hearing from him/her soon.

Sincerely (Best regards, etc.),

Your name, e-mail, and phone number

Useful phrases:

- I enjoyed meeting with you to discuss...
- I appreciate the importance of...
- From our discussion, I...
- I was impressed by...
- I am excited about this chance to...
- I believe I can... I feel confident that I can...
- After reflecting on our meeting...
- I also wanted to mention that...



SELF-DIRECTED RESOURCE

- ☑ Interviewing Successfully
- ☐ Creating a Strong Résumé
- ☐ Conduct and Effective Job Search

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