

Liberty University School of Law
Center for Career & Professional Development

Interviewing Tips

Your cover letter and resumé preparation has paid off, and you have been invited to interview with a prospective employer. The interview is obviously crucial. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when meeting with a potential employer.

1. Do your homework

- Find out exactly what type of interview it will be. Will it be one-on-one, or will you be in front of a panel?
- Find out where the office is located, where will you park, and which elevator you will take. Having a plan for all of these details will help you concentrate on the interview itself and what you are going to say, not where to park.
- Research the firm to which you are applying. Go to the website and find out if the organization has notable clients. Review the backgrounds and practice areas of the individual lawyers and determine the primary focus of the organization. If the website has a vision or mission statement posted, be sure you understand it and can communicate it in your own words. If you have this information and are able to use it subtly and appropriately during the interview, you will impress the interviewer(s).
- Go over the information on your resumé. If you referenced a research paper or a brief you wrote, be prepared to discuss the content of that document and the research involved.
- Find out which particular skills will be necessary for the position and be able to communicate how your experience has allowed you to develop those specific skills. Make a list of three to four skills and list examples of how you used each skill in your past education or experience.

2. Practice your interviewing before others who will be honest and candid

- Make a list of questions you think the interviewer(s) might ask and develop responses. For example: Where do you see yourself in five years? What is your greatest strength/weakness? What is most important to you when looking for a job?
- Make a list of questions you want to ask the interviewer. This is your chance to find out important information.

3. The Interview

- Make sure you are dressed appropriately for the interview. Stick with classic colors and styles. Be sure you are well groomed. Your attire should be neat and tailored. As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression; be sure to put your best foot forward.
- Read the newspaper the morning of the interview. Read some of every section, as it will help conversation during any down or casual times.

- Do not ask about salary and benefits at this time, as this information is only relevant if you are offered a job. Ask about the typical expectations and assignments for new professional staff. Do they work individually or in teams? What type of mentoring or feedback can you expect?
- Trained interviewers follow the 80/20 rule, allowing candidates to do 80% of the talking. However, many lawyers are not seasoned interviewers. If your interviewer is doing most of the talking, try to discuss diplomatically your accomplishments and the ways your skills, talents, and goals will benefit the organization. (Example: If a lawyer is rambling on about a recent trial victory, you might say, “That sounds fascinating, and you must have felt a great sense of accomplishment. I know how great I felt when I made the final four in the Moot Court Competition. I’m sure it will be even more rewarding when I have the opportunity to use the skills I have developed in the actual practice of law.”)
- Always ask: What are the next steps that the employer will be taking regarding the decision-making for filling this position? Is there any additional information you need to provide?

4. Post-Interview

- Always send a hand-written, personal thank-you note to the interviewer as soon as possible after the interview. Have someone look it over before you mail it.
- If a reasonable amount of time has elapsed since your interview, call the firm and ask the hiring personnel for an update.