



MSU Law Career Services Office

Interview Guide

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

RESEARCH

- Become familiar with the employer's website, including news, information about practice areas, number of attorneys, etc.
- Note the geographic locations, educational institutions, activities and practice areas of the attorneys with whom you are interviewing
- Look for connections with the employer or attorneys at the organization
- Use Google, the employer's website, Martindale-Hubbell, LexisNexis, LinkedIn, Vault, etc.

NOTE: Your research will be helpful in your preparation, but utilize the information wisely. Don't come across too aggressively by showcasing all of your research.

PREPARATION

- Clean up your social media presence
- Create a professional voicemail greeting and ensure the voicemail mailbox is never full
- Use your MSU email address or another professional-sounding email address (e.g., not beachbum@yahoo.com) and create an email signature with pertinent information (e.g., class level and law school)
- Gather as much information about the interview as possible (e.g., with whom you will be interviewing, where the interview will take place, length and format of the interview, etc.)
- Prepare your attire/grooming:
 - Dress conservatively in business or courtroom attire
 - Avoid showy or distracting accessories, including bulky bags
 - Apply perfume, cologne, and scented lotion conservatively
- Bring a portfolio with a notepad and a pen:
 - Include additional copies of your application materials (e.g., updated resume, writing samples, unofficial transcript, and a list of references)
 - Write the name of the people with whom you will be interviewing on the notepad
- From your research, prepare a list of three to four open-ended questions to ask during the interview
- Notify your references when you have an interview for a job so they are aware they may be contacted
- Know your resume and writing samples; be prepared to answer specific questions
- Prepare responses to commonly-asked questions

NOTE: Practice your skills by scheduling a mock interview with the Career Services Office.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Turn off your cell phone or do not bring it to the interview
- Be respectful, humble and gracious; everybody you see will be evaluating you
- Smile, make eye contact, and give a firm handshake
- Be professional in your greetings to everyone you meet (e.g., “Nice to meet you, [Mr./Ms. Last Name]”).
- Be enthusiastic with your demeanor during the interview
- Exude confidence through body language (good posture, no fidgeting, hair out of face, avoid distracting hand gestures)
- Demonstrate strong communication skills by giving short, articulate, and organized answers
 - Use appropriate voice projection and tone
 - Avoid verbal tics, such as “um,” “ok,” “you know,” and “like”
- Answer difficult questions (e.g., GPA, geographic location, professional weaknesses/limitations) with composure and confidence by focusing on positive aspects
- Take advantage of opportunities to build rapport with the interviewer(s)
- Take note of the names of everyone you meet or ask for business cards

NOTE: Do not initiate conversations about salary or benefits at the initial interviewing stage.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a short thank you note to the interviewer(s) within 24 hours of the interview (via email or a handwritten note)
 - Keep the note short and double-check spelling and punctuation
 - After a panel interview, send personalized thank you notes to each participant, thanking each person for his or her time. Alternatively, you may compose a collective thank you note to the entire panel.
 - Certain circumstances, specifically phone and video interviews, may make composing individualized thank you notes difficult. Instead, write one thank you note addressed to the collective group or your primary interviewer, referencing the other participants.
- If you receive an offer for a second interview:
 - Reflect on your initial interview and any challenging questions you faced
 - Typically second interviews are with multiple people
 - Do more research into the employees in case you might be meeting with them

- If you receive a job offer:
 - See information in the CASE Resource Library regarding salary negotiations
 - Confirm the critical, final details of the offer (start date, salary, benefits) in writing
 - Consider ways to acclimate to the new job before your start date (e.g., brush up on Westlaw or Lexis, observe a relevant hearing, review local court rules, etc.)
 - Inform and thank your references or recommenders
- If you don't receive an offer:
 - Request feedback from the interviewer(s) to continuously improve your interviewing skills
 - Indicate if you would like to be considered for future positions
 - Remain gracious; you will likely interact with these employers again in your career
 - Inform and thank your recommenders and let them know you are still seeking employment

NOTE: Treat every interaction and experience like an interview for your next position.