Interviewing
Overview

Types of interviews:
- Informational Interview
- Mock Interview
- First Interview
- Second or Call-Back Interview

Informational interviews
Informational interviews are conducted with employers before the actual cover letter and resume are sent out. They are an important tool for networking and creating professional contacts in order to pursue your career after law school.

First interviews
The first interview is probably the most daunting for a law student. The purpose of the first interview is to help the interviewer determine whether or not there is a good fit between you and the employer, and for the interviewee to acquire the information necessary to determine whether you would like to work there.

Preparing for the Interview

Know yourself
You need to do some self-examination when preparing for an interview. What do you have to offer that is relevant to the position specifically or employer in general? As you do this analysis, remember that interviewers will be evaluating you first, by whether you have the requisite skills and abilities to do the job and second, by whether you are the right kind of person (a good “fit”) with the firm. Traits that interviewers are usually looking for are intelligence, analytical skills, maturity, motivation, communication skills, professionalism, honesty and commitment. Review your resume on a regular basis. Most of the questions you will be asked will be about the information contained on your resume. The more familiar you are with that information, the better your answers will be.

Research the employer
One factor that helps generate an employer’s interest in you is your demonstrated interest in the employer. Prior to an interview, you should thoroughly research the employer. Researching employers can be done quickly and easily on the Internet, and through Westlaw and Lexis. Some general information you can learn is: the size of the organization, practice areas, clients represented, and the firm’s philosophy or mission statement. Similar information may be obtained about corporations or public interest and government agencies. Demonstrating a genuine interest in an employer will make you stand out from the pack of interviewees who are simply looking for any job.

Research the interviewer
Researching the interviewer may not always be possible and is not as critical as researching the employer. However, obtaining information about your interviewer can give you an advantage. Some potentially helpful information such as their position, number of years with the firm, practice area, law and undergraduate schools attended, recent cases they were involved with, and general news about them can often be learned from the firm’s web site or other promotional material, from www.martindale.com, Lexis, and Westlaw. Knowing some of these details about your interviewer can help facilitate conversation.

The Protocol of Interviewing

Professional, conservative dress
Dress and appearance alone won’t secure a position, but an unprofessional, inappropriate or slovenly appearance can ensure that you will not get the job.
Arrive early
Above all else, never arrive late. Give yourself appropriate time to arrive in a timely fashion with consideration to things such as traffic and other unexpected circumstances. Arriving early will also give you time to compose yourself or duck into the restrooms to make sure some of your lunch isn’t stuck between your teeth. You can also use this extra time to review your resume.

Always be prepared
Bring several extra copies of your resume, transcript, writing samples, and a printed list of references. You should bring these items even for call-back interviews. Although you should not take notes during the interview, you will likely receive information that you will want to remember following the interview (i.e. interviewer's name, points of conversation to mention in a thank you note). Bring a pen and a small notebook for this purpose.

Opening amenities
Generally, wait for the interviewer to offer a handshake and then give a firm handshake. Do not use an interviewer’s first name unless she or he insists. Wait for the interviewer to sit before taking a seat.

Body language
Be aware of the signals you are sending through your body language. Nail biting, fidgeting with your hair, avoiding eye contact and other nervous mannerisms all detract from your presentation. You should sit up straight. Being relaxed shows confidence, but do not get too comfortable. You do not want to appear as though you are bored or uninterested. Positive body language includes a firm handshake, sustained eye contact, good posture, and voice quality. Also, be aware of the interviewer's body language. It can tell you a great deal about what is of interest to the interviewer, if he or she is bored, or dislikes an answer, etc.

Control
Interview protocol dictates that the interviewer is in charge of the interview. His or her lead must be followed. Although the interviewer controls the flow of conversation, the interviewee controls the content by the way in which she or he responds to the questions. Be aware of the interviewer's body language.

Ending the interview
The interviewer is responsible for ending the interview so you don’t have to worry about the time. At the end, be sure to make good eye contact and shake hands firmly. If the interviewer has not informed you of the next step in the hiring process or timing when you will hear back, you should inquire about this information before you leave the interview. Also, remember to ask for the interviewer's business card. This is useful for writing your thank-you and for follow up interviews.

Rules of Engagement
DO:
- Know your resume and yourself. If you don’t, none of these other rules will help!
- Listen carefully to each question and assume it is purposeful, no matter how innocuous it sounds. If a question seems ambiguous, ask for clarification
- Give concise answers to specific questions
- Take a few seconds to organize your thoughts before answering a question
- Prepare for negative questions. If you know that some aspect of your academic or professional history (i.e. poor grades, gaps on your work history) will likely be questioned, prepare a short answer that puts things in the best light. Do not dwell on negatives in an attempt to explain them
- Present yourself in an honest, forthright manner
- Try to get some idea of what the interviewer perceives as the necessary qualifications for the position early in the interview. Pay attention to the language used to describe these and utilize that language in presenting your background
• Make sure the interviewer knows that you are committed to moving to the area where the job is located. This is especially true if you don’t have a reason to move to that area, i.e. you have no family or ties to the area
• Make sure you show a commitment to the employer you are interviewing with, i.e. make sure the employer knows that you want to be climbing the partner track (if it’s a firm) at their firm (not just any firm)

DON’T:
• Arrive late
• Show up unprepared
• Fail to show enthusiasm
• Use negative body language
• Forget to talk about your strong points
• Mistake arrogance for self-confidence
• Mention more negatives than positives
• Assume you can or cannot get a job
• Take honesty to the point of foolhardiness
• Be defensive or apologetic
• Be intimidated by power
• Be overwhelmed by what you consider to be your Achilles’ heel
• Let your guard down around young associates
• Talk down to administrative assistants such as secretaries or receptionists
• Express regret about your life and the choices made
• Express ambivalence about the job for which you are interviewing
• Be vague or not respond to the question
• Be afraid to exude confidence about yourself and your accomplishments

Sample Interview Questions
General questions
• What is your favorite (or least favorite) law school class and why?
• What appeals to you about our firm or organization?
• How do you handle pressure?
• How do you handle long hours and unpredictable work schedules?
• What area of practice would you like to go into?
• How do you like law school?
• What is your greatest success/failure?
• What two or three accomplishments have given you the greatest satisfaction?
• What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
• Do you have any questions for us? (Important! Prepare a few thoughtful questions about information you could not uncover during your research).

Resume-related questions
• What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in your career?
• Tell me about your journal article, clinic experience, moot court topic, etc.
• What makes you a good fit for us? (discuss skills relevant to the position)

Background questions
• How would you describe yourself? How would a friend/professor describe you?
• What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?

Experience questions
• Tell me about a difficult problem and how you solved it.
• What are your long- and short-term goals?
How did you like your summer internship (or job or externship) – what did you learn from it?

School specific questions
- Why did you choose this school?
- What other schools did you get into?
- Why did you go to school in city x when you wanted to work for us in city y?

Tough questions
- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your weaknesses?
- What are your strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? In 10 years?
- Are your grades indicative of your ability? – Or – Why aren’t your grades better?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why did you go to law school?
- Why do you want to work in this city?
- Who else are you interviewing with?
- How are you doing in your present job search?
- What kinds of positions are you looking for?
- Why didn’t you get an offer following your externship?
- If you got an offer following your externship, why didn’t accept it?
- What’s the biggest mistake you ever made?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
- In what way do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- Have you ever failed at something? What did you learn from it?
- What makes you stand out among your peers?
- How well do you work independently? With others? Which do you prefer?
- Who is your favorite author?
- What is your favorite book?
- Who do you admire most and why?
- If you could be anyone in the world, alive or dead, who would you be and why?

Interview Questions You Should Ask
The questions you ask the interviewer are just as important – perhaps more important – to whether you’ll get an offer. If you ask questions intelligently, you’ll accomplish three important things: you’ll gather information about the firm, you’ll forge a personal rapport with the interviewer, and you’ll show off your research on the firm.
- What do you see as the key qualifications for success in this position?
- Describe a typical day for someone in this position.
- What is the review procedure and who will perform the review?
- How is your job different from what you expected it to be?
- What is the most interesting case you’ve worked on?
- What is it about my resume that got me this interview?
- How long were you at the firm before you had significant client contact?
- Did you start off in your current practice area? If not, why did you switch?
- What do you find most challenging about being a lawyer?
- How are assignments given out?
- How are reviews of assignments completed?
- Are summer associates rotated within the firm?
Post-Interview Follow-Up
Immediately after the interview, pull out your notebook and jot down anything about the interaction that you want to retain (including the interviewer's name). This could be information about the organization or the interviewer or a question you handled poorly and want to amend for next time. Spend some time evaluating your own performance. What did you do right? What could you have done better? Write it down now while the impressions are fresh. Thank you notes should also be sent as soon as possible following an interview – preferably within 24 hours.

If the interviewer specified a time by which you would hear from the organization and you do not hear by that time, or you have not heard anything two weeks after the interview, it is appropriate to call or e-mail the interviewer in order to inquire as to the status of the decision. This shows interest and enthusiasm on your part and is not viewed negatively.