GRADTalk

- Public speaking skills
- Presentation practice
- Networking skills
- Interview practice

Make an advising appointment on Grad Gargoyle: gradgargoyle.uchicago.edu
Workshop Overview:

I: Three Fundamental Principles

II: Common Questions & Strategies

III: Q&A
Part I: Three Fundamental Principles for Interviewing
1) Be positive; emphasize what you bring to the table, not what you lack
Be positive about:

- Past employers and colleagues
- Your reasons for pursuing a new position
- The skills that you have
- If asked about a skill or experience you don’t have, be ready to talk about your plans for developing that skill
2) Focus on the big picture
Focus on the big picture

Before any interview, think about the following questions:

• At the end of the interview, what are the 5 or 6 things you want the interviewer(s) to remember about you?

• What are specific examples from your experience that you can use to highlight those 5 or 6 most significant things?

• How will you demonstrate not only your skills and experiences, but how those skills and experiences relate to and connect with the position you’re applying for?
Focus on the big picture

Reinforce your take-away message

What is the big picture answer in 2 to 3 sentences?

What are 2 or 3 specific examples that highlight and support your take-away message?

Reinforce the take-away message
3) Be selective and concise
Knowing when and how to end

Strategies for ending an answer:

• Provide a 1 to 2 sentence conclusion that restates the question and includes your take-away message. Use your vocal tone to cue you’re finished: slow down, use more emphasis, avoid lowering your volume or a questioning “upswing.”

• Offer to elaborate on your answer if you have more to say but want to move on to the next question:

• “Those are some of the ways I’ve demonstrated leadership in my past work experience. I’m happy to go into more detail if you’d like.”
Questions?
Part II: Common Questions and Strategies
1) Tell me about yourself

Three-part structure:

• Situate yourself: What are you doing now and/or what is your most recent career milestone?
• Highlight 2 to 3 of your most relevant experiences and/or skills for the position
• Briefly mention one reason you’re interested in the position
My name is Joe Smith. I went to College at Oxford University. After college I worked at a small business in their IT department. After that job, I worked for a large hospital as part of their data analysis team. Then I decided to get a Master’s degree in Data Analytics at the University of Chicago. Right now I’m looking for a job in data analytics after I graduate in the summer.
Tell me about yourself (better example):

I’d be happy to. I’m currently a Master’s student in Data Analytics at the University of Chicago. I’ve developed my skills in data analysis over several years working at both small businesses and a large hospital, where I helped the hospital to develop an improved system for patient referrals. I have expertise in programming languages and statistical methods and I enjoy working in teams. I’m interested in this position because I want to apply my skills in data analysis to help County Hospital improve their patient services.
The Question
“What is one of your weaknesses?”

Interviewer’s Motivations
- Are you able to reflect critically about yourself?
- Do you take steps to identify areas for improvement?

Potential Risks
- Highlighting a weakness that affects a core skill for the position
- Presenting a weakness as an absolute, rather than an area for growth and improvement
- Not ending on a positive note
Common Interview Questions

Strategies

• Situate your weakness as something you’ve noticed in the past and made steps to improve
• Use “softeners”: “I had a tendency to...” “In the past I’ve noticed that I wanted to improve...”
• Keep your answer short and details minimal
• End on a positive note: indicate your happiness with the progress/growth you’ve made
Common Interview Questions

Tell me about a time when you had to...

...work with a difficult co-worker.

...persuade someone to see your point of view.

...use teamwork to solve a problem.

...explain a difficult concept to someone.
Create a list of at least three qualities and characteristics that you think are important for the job.

Prepare a story for each one of those qualities and characteristics. Your stories should be specific and draw on a range of your experiences.

Reflect on each story and ask yourself: What other kinds of questions can this story potentially address?
Prepare at least three stories that begin with a negative but end with a positive:

• Overcoming a challenge
• Dealing with a difficult co-worker or teamwork situation
• Making a mistake and then needing to fix a problem, or learning something from your mistake
• Persuading someone who disagrees with you
Common Interview Questions

The STAR Method

**Situation:** Describe the situation you were in. It must be a specific situation, not a general one.

**Task:** What was your goal in this situation?

**Action:** What action did you take to accomplish this goal?

**Result:** What was the result of the action you took to accomplish this goal?
Do you have questions for us?

Always prepare at least four questions to ask the interviewer.

What are good questions?
- Questions that show your curiosity to learn more about specific aspects of the position and the company
- Questions that build on what you already know about the company

What are less effective questions?
- Questions that have a yes/no answer.
- Questions that are negative or critical.
Follow-Up

Within a day of the interview, send an email to each person who interviewed you. Thank them for the opportunity to interview and mention one detail about the interview. Re-emphasize your interest in the position.
Practicing Effectively

1) Practice out loud; record yourself or get feedback from a partner

2) Don’t just practice sample questions; practice stories you want to tell about yourself

3) Practice as if it were the interview
Questions?
For appointments
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