Interviewing

First Things First:

- Be confident!
  - Remember that an invitation to interview means that the employer is serious about hiring you
  - Remember that your goals are the same as the interviewer’s goals. They want to find a great fit and you want to be a great fit.
- Always be yourself
  - Present the best version of yourself, not someone else. If you only say what the interviewer wants to hear, you might end up with a job that’s not a good fit.
- Remember: You are also interviewing the company
  - The goal of any job interview is to find a mutual good fit for you and the employer.
- Always ask if you can take notes – this will help you remember key details and provide an opportunity to break eye contact naturally while writing.

How to Prepare:

- Know the company and the job and why you applied
  - Ask: What does this company do? Review the website past the home page.
  - Ask: Why did I apply? Write down what appeals to you about the company and the job.
- Prepare several examples (~3-5) describing times when you faced a challenge and worked to overcome it as an individual or as part of a team.
  - Do NOT put others down in your examples. Draw examples from different areas when possible to show versatility, e.g. work, projects, classes, student orgs, extracurriculars. These examples can be used for multiple types of questions, including behavioral and situational questions.
- Practice standard interview questions
  - Be ready for small talk before the interview: weather, your trip, sports, etc.
  - Tell me more about yourself? Practice talking through your background. Anything on your resume is fair game for the interviewer, so know your resume well.
  - Tell me about a time when…? Draw from prepared examples.
  - Why should we hire you? Draw from preparation above.
  - What are your career goals? Think about how this job would help you reach your goals, but don’t indicate that this job is just a stepping stone to something else.
  - What are your strengths and weaknesses? Be honest, but present the best version of yourself. When talking about weaknesses, stay professional and describe how you’re working to improve.
- Practice tricky interview questions
  - If you were an animal, what would you be?
  - How would you figure out how many stop signs are in St. Louis?
  - Don’t panic! Interviewers are looking for your thought process and how you work under pressure more than a right answer. Talk through your thought process and ask questions if needed.
  - Don’t be afraid of silence with any question. It’s okay to pause and think or buy yourself a few seconds by saying, “That’s a great question…”
• Prepare for technical interviews
  o You can always ask – will this interview have a technical component? If so, is there a recommended way to prepare?
  o If they can’t give detail, check the job description: what type of technical skills are listed as required for the job? Be prepared to talk about/demonstrate your skill level with each.
  o Don’t panic! Talk through your thought process with each question and show your work. If you get stuck, ask questions, try to keep moving and work with the interviewer, and remain positive.
• Of course you should ask questions throughout an interview, but you should also prepare in case the interviewer asks an open-ended question like, “Do you have any questions for me?”
  o Prepare 3-5 questions
  o Do NOT ask about salary or benefits
  o Assuming you fully understand the role at this point, ask about personal experience at the company (e.g. What is your favorite part of working here? What is a typical day like for you? What skills have been most helpful to you? You can even show off your research: I saw X project in the news – has your team worked on that?)
  o End with a question about process if not already covered: What does the rest of the application process look like from here?
• Concluding the interview
  o End on a positive note by thanking them and reiterating your interest in the role. Ask for a card if they have one to follow up.

Phone and Skype Interviews:

• Ask to schedule a time if they catch you off guard on the phone
• Prepare like you would for an in-person interview.
• Try to create the same environment as an in-person interview (dress professionally, sit at a desk or table, have good posture and smile, limit distractions and interruptions, ensure good cell service/internet connection. For Skype, test background and lighting in advance). Even if it’s a phone call, you will feel more confident and come across that way if you are acting like you would in an in-person interview.
• Take advantage of the situation! You can have all your notes in front of you for these interviews.

Presenting yourself at an in-person interview:

• Practice non-verbals before the interview
  o Do a mock interview at the UCC or EOC, record yourself answering questions, or practice with family/friends to catch habitual movements and filler words
• Get plenty of sleep and arrive early to the interview
• Dress comfortably but professionally (default dress code is a suit or similar unless directed otherwise)
• Firm handshake
• Open, relaxed stance with good posture
• Smile (especially when meeting people)
• Make eye contact and nod appropriately to indicate that you’re listening. Remember that you can use taking notes as an excuse to break eye contact naturally.
• Practice good personal hygiene before the interview (shower, brush your teeth, etc.)
• Turn off your cell phone or leave it behind
What to bring:

- A portfolio or nice folder
- A few copies of your resume
- A notepad and pen
- Anything else the employer specifically requests

Following up:

- Send your interviewers a thank you email or connection request on LinkedIn with a thank you note
- Tip: When taking notes, use a different page for each interviewer. Write down your interviewer’s name and the specifics you talk about with him/her. This will make it easier to remember specifics for your thank you note to make it more personal.

Contact the EOC at coe.careers@ttu.edu with any questions.