INTERVIEW TIPS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

- Be confident!
  - Interviews are an investment of time and money for a company, and an invitation to interview means that the employer is serious about you as a candidate.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Prepare the basics
  - Ask: What does this company do?
    - Review the website past the home page and take notes on what stands out to you.
  - Ask: What would I do in this job?
    - Review the job description and take notes on what stands out to you.
  - Ask: Why did I apply? / Why am I a good fit?
    - Write down what appeals to you about the company and the job and what makes you a logical fit.

- Practice standard background interview questions
  - Tell me more about yourself. Why Tech? Why your major? Tell me more about X job or Y project on your resume? What are you involved in on campus?
    - Practice talking through your background and be able to talk about anything on your resume. Always stay positive in your answers.
  - Why should we hire you? Why our company?
    - Draw from preparation above.
  - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
    - When talking about strengths, give brief examples to back up each strength. When talking about weaknesses, stay professional and describe how you’re working to improve.
  - Other types of questions: Do you work best alone or as part of a team? What do you do when you don’t know the answer to something? Describe your process for completing tasks/projects? What are your career goals? What motivates you? What is your greatest accomplishment?

- Practice behavioral/situational interview questions
  - Tell me about a time when: You failed? Someone criticized your work? You had to work with someone difficult? You didn’t have what you needed for a project? You led a project?
    - These are all the same type of question, essentially asking how you handle challenges. 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.
    - If it helps, keep the STAR format in mind when you answer: S (Situation), T (Task/Challenge), A (Action), and R (Result). Focus on Action and Result since those components tell the most about you.
    - Draw examples from different areas when possible to show versatility, e.g. work, projects, classes, student orgs, extracurriculars, time abroad.
• Be ready for tricky interview questions
  o If you were an animal, what would you be? What is the angle between the hour and minute hand at 3:15pm? How would you explain a complicated concept, e.g. the internet, to a 5yr old?
    ▪ Don’t panic! These types of questions are asked because you can’t prepare for them. Interviewers are looking for your thought process more than a right answer. Break down the question, explain your thought process, and ask clarifying questions if needed.
    ▪ Don’t be afraid of silence with any question. It is okay to pause and think for a moment.

• Prepare for technical interviews
  o Technical questions vary based on the role and may not be asked for internships or entry-level positions. You can always ask – will this interview have a technical component? If so, is there a recommended way to prepare?
  o If they cannot 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 You should also be prepared to give examples of how you’ve learned/developed any technical skills listed on your resume.
  o Don’t panic! Talk through your thought process with each question and show your work if there is a written component. If you get stuck, ask questions, try to keep moving and work with the interviewer, and always remain positive.

• Prepare questions for the interviewer
  o Of course you should ask questions throughout an interview, but you should also prepare for what will probably be their last question: “Do you have any questions for me?”
  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 Tuesday like for you? What skills have been most helpful to you? What qualities have you seen make a successful engineer or intern at X company?)
  o Do NOT ask about salary or benefits, especially in the initial interview
  o End with a question about process if not already covered: What does the rest of the application process look like from here? When can I expect to hear back?

• Concluding the interview
  o End on a positive note by thanking them and reiterating your interest in the role. Ask for a business card or contact information to follow up.

PHONE, VIRTUAL, AND PRE-RECORDED VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Phone, Virtual, and Pre-Recorded Video Interviews
• Prepare for the content of the interview just like you would for an in-person interview (see above)
• Try to create the same environment as an in-person interview. Dress professionally, sit or stand at a desk or table, have good posture and smile, and limit distractions and interruptions.

Video/Pre-Recorded Interview Extra Tips
• Test lighting – try to get consistent lighting that highlights your face
• Test camera angle – prop up your laptop where you are looking directly into the camera
• Test background – try to have as professional and as non-distracting of a background as possible. It’s okay to be in your room, just ensure your room is neat and as professional as possible
Plug in your device to ensure a strong battery throughout the interview, and connect to ethernet if possible for strong internet connection.

If you are answering pre-recorded questions, ensure that you fully read the instructions in advance (e.g. do you have only one try or multiple tries?). Maintain your enthusiasm throughout the interview and be sure to give adequate detail in your answers. This can be hard because you have no cues from the interviewer, but be sure to trust your preparation and instincts.

**Phone Extra Tips**

- Ask to schedule a time if they catch you off guard
- Take advantage of the situation! You can have all your notes in front of you for these interviews.

**PRESENTING YOURSELF AT INTERVIEWS**

- Practice non-verbals before the interview
  - Do a mock interview at the EOC or UCC, record yourself answering questions, and/or practice with family/friends to work on phrasing and 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)
- Keep an open, relaxed stance with good posture
- Smile (especially when meeting people)
- Make eye contact and nod appropriately to indicate that you are listening
  - During a virtual interview, try to look into the camera to make eye contact
- Practice good personal hygiene, especially before in-person interviews (wear deodorant, brush your teeth, etc.)

**WHAT TO HAVE AT HAND**

- A portfolio or nice folder with a few copies of your resume
  - For virtual interviews, have your resume saved in an easily accessible location
- A notepad and pen
  - 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
- 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 within a couple days of the interview.
- **Tip:** When taking notes, use a different page for each interviewer. Write down your interviewer’s name and the specifics you talk about with them. This will make it easier to remember specifics for your thank you note to make it more personal.

Contact Career Services at [coe.careers@ttu.edu](mailto:coe.careers@ttu.edu) with any questions.