Interviewing Guide (employment)

Congratulations you’ve landed the interview. The purpose of the interview is for the hiring manager and various stakeholders to assess the proficiency of your skills and determine if their position and team dynamics will align with you career interests, experiences and personality.

This guide will walk you through:

- Crafting your answer to the “tell me about yourself” question
- What to do before the interview
- How to conduct yourself during the interview
- How to properly follow up

Interviewing Cycle – Candidate Perspective

Phone Screening

- A recruiter is typically the first person to call and conduct a phone screening. The recruiter will discuss your interest in the position, your skills to perform the job, commitment to the industry/profession, screen on location and may request your salary requirements. Beyond this, recruiters are evaluating your affect, preparedness, and communication skills.
  - Have a professional ring tone and voice message.
  - Be enthusiastic and smile when you speak. If you need more energy in your voice, stand up.
  - Make sure you are in a quiet spot.
  - Have your resume and other notes in front of you.
  - Ask for the next steps in the interview process and that you would like to be considered.
  - Research the salary range for the position and only discuss salary in a phone interview if they bring it up.

Virtual Interviews – try out the technology before your interview (test speakers, webcam, connection, and volume). Ensure you are in a quiet place with no interruptions. Be aware of the background behind you. Smile.

Panel Interviews – A panel interview has at least two, but usually more people interviewing a candidate at the same time. It can feel intimidating to have a panel interview, but it is valuable because it allows you to interact with many people at once. To that end, it requires your attention to involve each person in the conversation. Make eye contact and address each person by his or her name when possible throughout the interview.

Series Interviews – It is common for the employer to maximize your in-person interview by having you meet with several different people during the same day. Because you are meeting with various departments/groups of people, you will likely be asked the same questions repeatedly. The key is maintain professionalism and your composure.
**Group Interviews** - Typically, a group interview has multiple candidates in the interview room at the same time. The interviewers will be looking for professionalism and presence – who stands out and makes a positive and lasting impression, communication ability – who engages and speaks up but also has a diplomatic and tactful communication style.

**The Second Interview**

There Are Two Primary Reasons for the Second Interview:

1. Allows the organization to make a more in-depth assessment of the candidate prior to making a job offer. The organization is confident that the candidate invited to visit for a second interview has the skills and competence to do the job. The second interview becomes an opportunity to confirm that there is a good match between the candidate and the organization.

2. Allows the candidate an opportunity to see the organization and some of the employees first hand and make an informed decision.

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**Before the Interview**

Gain awareness of the types of interview questions you may experience, including:

- Pharmacy Interview or Clinical Interview Questions
- Standard Interview Questions
- Behavior Based Interview Questions “Describe a time when ...”
- Abstract Interview Questions

Interviewing is all about the preparation. The better prepared you are the more confident you will be and the stronger you will present yourself. As you prepare for your interview, review the three R’s - Research, Reflect and Rehearse.

**RESEARCH**

1. Research the company, department, culture and individual interviewer(s). This is a critical step! Understand the company’s mission, values, and pharmacy department structure. Next, prepare statements about your skills, strengths, and interest that align with the information you found in your research.

   a. (required) Prepare questions for the interviewer(s) in advance based on your research. Bring a notepad and a pen to jot down a few notes or items in which you want to follow up.
   b. (optional) Prepare your portfolio of documents to present in the interview. Yes, you have likely already submitted these documents, but you might have an extra team member interviewing you that you did not know was joining. Bring a few extra copies of your resume, reference sheet, and letters of recommendation, certificates, awards and transcripts.

2. Stay organized and write down the time/place of the interview and the name of the interviewer. Prepare driving directions to the company and familiarize yourself with the parking options. You don’t want any surprises when arriving at your interview. It goes without saying, but it is still the most common mistake, do not arrive late to your interview. Similarly do not show up more than 20 minutes early, stick to the schedule.
REFLECT

Identify the key qualities and skills your interviewer is looking for based upon the job ad. As an example, if patient interaction and communication are themes throughout the job ad, reflect on patient interactions and when you communicated effectively with a patient, your supervisor, or team.

Study your resume and align your experiences to these qualities and requirements. Select experiences that are as relevant as possible to the position.

Change the power dynamics of an interview by approaching the interview like a professional meeting between colleagues. Be confident in knowing all of the great work you have already done to get here.

REHEARSE

Rehearse your professional stories that describe your skills, experiences and accomplishments aligned to the position. Provide concrete examples (real situations you've encountered) that relate to the job for which you are interviewing. Answer each question thoroughly in a clear, concise and compelling manner. Expert Tip: answer the question first and then elaborate to tell the details of the “story”.

Have your “tell me about yourself” rehearsed and exude confidence. The first question is inevitably “tell me about yourself” or a similar variation of “why are you interested in this opportunity”. They want to know how you as a professional align to the position and why this position is a fit for you - See the SOAR worksheet on (page 5)

a. Discuss your career goals and how the position aligns and why you’re interested.

b. Support your career goals with specific qualifications, key strengths and attributes that build the story of why you are there.

c. Include professional, academic, co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences that relate to the role for which you’re interviewing.

Dress for success to make a positive first impression

d. Prepare your outfit the day before your interview.

e. Make sure it's clean, pressed, and ultimately that you feel like a million bucks.

f. When in doubt stay on the conservative side. You want employers to focus on the value you have to offer, not your huge hoop earrings or brightly colored and patterned tie.

g. Be aware of others’ sensitivity to smells. Go easy on the perfume and cologne.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gray, black, navy blue skirt or pant suite with a blouse.</td>
<td>Dark blue, dark grey or black business suite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you wear a skirt wear hosiery</td>
<td>Wear a tie that is conservative pattern and color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding a pop of color (blouse)</td>
<td>Dark or black leather shoes and dark socks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wear closed-toed black or navy shoes – no straps.</td>
<td>Trimmed or clean shave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Mentally prepare. Some people prefer quite meditative environments to focus their thoughts and energy and others prefer to practice power poses to build confidence, embody power and energy. Do what works for you, but give yourself the time to walk in knowing you are going to ace the interview.
During the Interview

Tips to Remember

- The interview starts when you walk in to the building. Smile and be friendly and courteous to all you meet.
- When meeting your interviewer, give a firm handshake, smile, make eye contact, and express your enthusiasm for being there.
- Settle in knowing that you've done the proper preparation, and be confident and proud of what you've accomplished to be at this position in your career.
- Turn off cell phone, do not let it be a distraction when interviewing.
- No chewing gum.
- Maintain good posture and eye contact.
- Never ask about benefits and salary - let the interviewer introduce those subjects.
- Before you leave the interview, thank the interviewer(s) for the opportunity and restate your interest in the position and ask what the next step in the process will be.
- Ask for a business card to prepare to send a thank you letter.
- Be honest about what you say when interviewing. Communicate facts.

Standard Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

What lead you to pursue a career in pharmacy?

What are some important traits of a pharmacist?

What are some of your top pharmacy abilities that you bring?

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

(NEW GRAD/INTERN) What has been your most rewarding experiences during IPPE/APPE/ working?

What do you believe is the biggest issue facing pharmacy today?

What is your greatest strength and how will it help you in this position?

Why are clinical services important in community pharmacy?

Why is Clinical Pharmacy important to the health care system?

What is your area for improvement?

Tell me three adjectives you think your coworker would use to describe you?

What was your favorite and least favorite rotation/work experience, and why?

What is your definition of pharmaceutical care?

Describe the most significant contribution you’ve made to a patient’s care over the last year.

If I were to ask your preceptor/supervisor to describe you, what would they say?

Describe your most memorable or favorite patient.
Tell me about a time when you had to collaborate with another health care professional.

[NEW GRAD/INTERN] What has been the most challenging aspect of pharmacy school?

What experience do you have providing guidance and education to patients?

What else do you want us to know about you?

**Tell Me About Yourself Answered in Three Easy Steps (about 60 seconds):**

**STEP 1: (Expression of gratitude and enthusiasm)**

(Smile) [Give an expression of gratitude and that you are excited to learn more about the opportunity]

**STEP 2: (Summary of your academic training and experiential preparation specifically aligned with the position)**

[Provide a brief overview of where you are today]

**STEP 3: (SOAR aligned with the position)**

**(S-strengths)** Identify your two to three most important strengths as it relates to the position.

I am ________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

**(O-opportunity)** Add a sentence that connects your strengths with an important opportunity in this specific area of pharmacy and builds the story of why you are there for that specific opportunity. Alternatively, write a sentence about the problem you solve and connect your strengths.

What makes me enthusiastic about _______ opportunity is ________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

**(A-aspirations)** Discuss your career and how the position aligns to your career interests.

Being selected for the _______________________ opportunity, will help me to ________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

**(R-results)** What are your accomplishments? What results have you produced in curricular, co-curricular, experiential and employment? Describe what makes you perform the way you did and achieve results.

Recently, I was involved with / completed ________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
EXAMPLE #1

STEP 1: (Expression of gratitude and enthusiasm)

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am excited to have the opportunity to learn more about your organization and the position.

STEP 2: (Summary of your academic training and experiential preparation specifically aligned with the position)

I am preparing to graduate from the University Of Colorado Skaggs School Of Pharmacy in May with my Doctorate of Pharmacy. I am licensed Pharmacist in Colorado and I have worked as a Pharmacy Intern in retail pharmacy for three years. I also have two years of experience as a Pharmacy Technician and love working in a structured business environment with pharmacy professionals and interacting with a variety of customers. Additionally, my academic strengths have been in XZY and which have shaped my specific interest in community pharmacy.

STEP 3: (SOAR aligned with the position)

I am a relator; I connect to people very easily and I have been told I make people feel welcome and included. This strength has really helped build relationships with customers at the pharmacy. (Strength)

It is exciting to have the opportunity to be involved in the pharmacy workflow, business management elements, and leading pharmacy interns and technician in effective pharmacy practices to safely provide customers with medications, and do it efficiently. (Opportunity)

I am looking forward to accepting a full-time position so I can immerse myself in the retail environment to practice MTM and begin my pharmacy career to bolster my leadership skills. (Aspirations)

I have developed a drug matrix on XYZ and a newsletter about XYZ that I send my Pharmacy Manager and team members at Albertsons Safeway monthly. My supervisor has commended me on my drug information knowledge and ability to communicate new information to the pharmacy team. (Result)

EXAMPLE #2

STEP 1: (Expression of gratitude and enthusiasm)

STEP 2: (Summary of your academic training and experiential preparation specifically aligned with the position)

I am a first year student at the University of Colorado Skaggs School Of Pharmacy and really enjoyed the challenges of my mechanisms of disease course, specifically XYZ.

I have worked in retail pharmacy for three years as a Pharmacy Technician, and prior to that I was a marketing analyst for a biotech company. Through these experiences, I became knowledgeable about business practices and information affecting the biotech industry and retail pharmacy organizations. These experiences along with my academic strengths in the biology and chemistry, shaped my specific interest in pharmacy.

STEP 3: (SOAR aligned with the position)

I am approachable, listen intently, and follow established policies. I ensure I have all of the information I need before acting on behalf of the patient and put in extra effort to make the patient feel at ease. It is also very important to me to have established processes, so if there is an opportunity to initiate a process I gladly take it on to help the pharmacy workflow and team function effectively. (Strength)

I am excited to learn about XYZ and provide XYZ to customers. (Opportunity)

My goal is to better understand the pharmacy services and find opportunity to develop leadership skills so that I can pursue a community residency program after graduation. (Aspirations)

Recently, I finished a topic presentation to my preceptor and team members at Albertsons on smoking cessation. (Result)
Behavioral Interview Questions – Answer using the STAR method:

Behavioral based interview questions are being asked of candidates more and more in today's interviews. They are designed to see how you, the candidate, have reacted to specific situations in the past – the belief is that ‘the best predictor of your future performance is your past performance’. To that end, you will need to respond with a very specific example. When answering this type of question, use the acronym STAR, or the other variations, to describe the: Situation Task Action Result. In other words, tell the interviewer a clear and concise story, include the background of the situation, the specific actions you took, and describe the outcome or end result.

You’ll also want to try and determine the employer’s motivation in asking the question. Typically, employers ask behavioral questions because they are evaluating on a specific skill or trait, such as leadership, communication, integrity, empathy, accountability, etc. **PRO TIP:** beyond evaluating the job ad and your research to look for traits frequently mentioned, analyze the position to envision the traits/skills needed to be successful in the role. Once you do this, you can reflect on examples when you demonstrated these.

**WALK THROUGH EXAMPLES**

- Tell me about a time when you had competing priorities and how you handled the situation?

  Why do you think the employer is asking this question? ANSWER: The employer wants to understand your organizational skills, time-management, and ability to make decisions.

- Tell me about a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully and you were able build morale.

  What trait do you think the employer is trying to evaluate? ANSWER: the employer is evaluating your interpersonal skills/relationships and conflict management.

  ❖ By identifying the employer’s motivation/intent and using the STAR method worksheet (page 6), you will give a relevant and thorough response.

**Team Building**

Tell me about a time when you disagreed how a specific problem was handled in a team environment and what you did?

Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully with the result of building teamwork and morale.

**Problem Solving and Decision Making**

Tell me about a time when your understanding of issues associated with a problem provided a foundation for generating a good solution.

Describe a recent situation where you solved a problem?

**Leadership**

Tell me about your leadership experiences and the specific role you played?

Give me an example of how you have used your own personal qualities and appeal to lead others.

Tell me a time when you positively impacted a patient’s healthcare?

Tell me a time when you did not perform well?
Give me an example when you had a difficult situation or encounter with a patient?

**Versatility/Adapting to Change**
- Describe a time when you were able to adapt to a person from a background or culture that was different from yours.
- Tell me about a specific experience you have had to overcome in which it was necessary for you to react quickly because of a change.

**Organization and Planning**
- Give me an example of any time management skill you have learned and applied at work. What resulted from use of the skill?

**Communication**
- Tell me about a situation when your active listening skills really paid off for you.

**Commitment to Task**
- Give me an example of a time when you had a sense of urgency about getting results.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work very hard to reach your goals and be specific about what you achieved.

**Alertness**
- Tell me about your experience in dealing with routine work. What kinds of problems did you have to overcome in order to concentrate on the details of the job?
- Tell me about a specific experience you have had to overcome in which it was necessary for you to react quickly because of a change in the physical environment.

**Policy and Procedures**
- Tell me about your experiences in documenting your work activities in a written form.
- Describe a time when you had to adopt a well-defined work routine. How long did the situation last? What was involved?

**Abstract Interview Questions**
The motivation for these questions is to see how you think on your feet and to gain insight into your personality. There is not a right or wrong answer.

- If you were stranded on a deserted island, what two drugs would you take with you?
- What drug would you choose to describe yourself and why?
- If you were an animal what animal would you be and why?

**Questions to Ask the Employer**

**For Human Resources**
1. What type of training program/orientation does a new employee receive?
2. What is the career growth for employees in similar positions who perform above expectations?
3. Why is this position open?
4. What are the working hours for this position?
5. How large is the department in which the opening exists?
6. Does your company encourage its employees to continue their education?
7. How often are performance reviews given to employees?
8. What benefits are available to employees?
9. May I have your business card?

For a Supervisor / Manager
1. What does a typical day or week look like for this position?
2. Can you explain the culture of the department?
3. What is your leadership style (i.e. interactions, feedback and guidance provided).
4. What would a new employee be expected to have accomplished in the first six months on the job?
5. What are some of the projects now ongoing in the department?
6. How much contact is there with management?
7. What are the greatest strengths of this department?
8. What do you enjoy most about your position or this company?

Follow Up After the Interview

- Contact your references to ask for their approval to use them as a reference. Describe the nature of the position and remind them of the experiences/projects you had while working with them (school, employment, or volunteer) as they will need to give examples of why they recommend you.
- If you already did the prior step, alert all of your reference contacts they might receive a call and include the specific company/person name they can expect to hear from.
- Send a thank you letter/email after you interview to each person you meet.
  - Tailor each note to the individual with a message specific from your conversation.
  - The message should address positive points from the interview and your skills to perform the job well. You want to express gratitude, be complementary of the experience or what you learned and ultimately you need to ask for the job.
  - It is fine to send an email, especially if you know they are making a decision quickly.
  - Remember, you are still being evaluated, so ensure grammar; spelling and details of the format are professional.
- Maintain professional interactions with the selection committee and the hiring manager, and maintain professionalism in all social media platforms. They will likely be checking your social media at this stage.
- Be patient with a response, but after one week of sending your thank you letter, if you were told you’d hear back and you haven’t, you can send an email to restate your availability and interest in the job. Grammar check every written interaction and maintain professionalism.
- Refine your salary and negotiating terms after you complete the interview, as you now have a full picture of the position, culture and expectations of the position. Be prepared if you receive a call to express your enthusiasm for the employment offer, request a day to review the offer, and move forward with the acceptance and/or negotiation.
- Once you have accepted a job offer, inform all other potential employers of your decision.
• Employers usually set a timeframe in which they want to hear back from you after they have offered you the position. Do not extend this timeframe further than what was given to you, as you will give the employer the impression you are not interested in the position, and they may withdraw their job offer.

THANK YOU FORMAT

Hello Dr. Last Name:

• First Paragraph – thank you for the time and be specific of the position title/day you interviewed. Express your enthusiasm for the position and what you appreciated from the interview.

• Second Paragraph – Highlight one or two positives from the interview that you learned and/or confirmed your fit with the program.

• Last Paragraph – Express your confidence in carrying out the expectations of the program and a call to action (i.e. to be the candidate selected or to continue in the interviewing process).

Sincerely,

First and Last Name

SAMPLE [PHARMACIST THANK YOU LETTER]

February 8, 2017

Dr. First and Last Name
Organization Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Dr. Last Name:

It was a pleasure meeting with you today [insert specific day or date]. Thank you for taking the time to discuss the [insert the specific job title and company]. After our discussion, I remain highly interested in the opportunity and appreciate [insert overall impression of position/program/company as it aligns with you].

I enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about X and X of [insert job title/company]. I especially enjoyed our discussion of [insert specific element of the interview/interviewer]. To work alongside [insert the pharmacy team or aspect of the team dynamics that appeals to you] would be a privilege.

I am confident in my training and dedication to [insert job title or pharmacy practice areas] and excited to advance my [insert the aspect of the position you will be contributing to]. I hope to be the candidate [alternative: Pharmacist] selected.

Sincerely,

Signature Block
SAMPLE [INTERN THANK YOU EMAIL]

Dear Dr. Last Name:

I want to extend my appreciation to you and the [insert company name] team for your time on Thursday [insert date]. I enjoyed my day learning more about the program and getting to know you and the [insert company team].

After learning more about XYZ elements of the position (add one or two specifics aspects of the interview that you learned or enjoyed), I am encouraged that the program will foster my deep interest in X.

I am confident that this position will help me to become a better student pharmacist to pursue my long-term goals, and I hope to be the one selected to assume the pharmacy intern position.

Sincerely,

Signature Block

Ace the interview!