# Finding an NP Position and Tips for Interviewing

## 12 Ways to Find an NP Position

1. Where you are precepting
2. Through your preceptor
3. At your place of employment
4. Networking, direct or indirect
5. Help-wanted ads in newspapers
6. Online resources, such as Monster.com, Indeed.com
7. Employment agencies
8. Professional associations
9. Job fairs
10. Career services
11. Direct mailings
12. Healthcare system’s or institution’s Human Resources website

## Interviewing Overview

An interview is a meeting between an employer and an applicant to discuss a potential job opportunity. You need to know how to effectively market yourself, communicate your skills and experience, and portray your personality as one that will fit with the culture of the organization. Being properly prepared and informed about the interviewing process can help you positively focus your energies and lead you to the right job opportunity. The Experiential Learning & Career Center can help you plan your interviewing strategy.

## Interviewing Tips

1. Learn as much as you can about the organization beforehand. Know what services they provide for the community and whether they are affiliated with any health system.
2. Do practice interviews with a career counselor, friends, and family member or with yourself in front of a mirror. Many career service offices offer workshops, mock interviews, and one-on-one coaching.
3. Videotape yourself and review it.
4. Think about how your experiences through work, classes, and activities can relate to the job you are seeking.
5. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to the interview and, if possible, visit the site in advance and time how long it takes to get there. Remember to consider potential traffic or road closures.
6. Plan your interview attire. Make sure your clothing is pressed, shoes are shined, and hair and nails are well groomed.
7. Bring extra copies of your CV and a list of references.
8. Speak slowly and clearly, and do not be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts when asked a question.
9. Be honest. Do not try to cover up mistakes. Instead, focus on what you learned from them.
10. Be assertive. Remember that the interview is a way for you to learn whether the job is right for you.
11. Be prepared to answer clinical hypotheticals, such as “Tell me how you would handle this situation.” or “A patient presents with X, Y, and Z. What would you do?”
12. Have a set of questions to ask those interviewing you, such as orientation, patient-scheduling patterns, and how much time is allocated for physicals versus sick visits.
13. Ask the interviewer for a business card and send a thank you note or email as soon as possible.

### Goals of the Interview

#### Goals of the Candidate (you):

* To communicate important information about yourself
* To obtain information about the position and organization
* To highlight your skills, abilities, personal qualities, and enthusiasm for the job
* To determine whether the position is suitable for you

#### Goals of the Interviewer:

* To gather information about you as a job candidate and as a whole person
* To effectively communicate information about the position and organization
* To assess if your qualifications match the job requirements
* To determine if you are a good fit for the position, department, or organization

### Preparation for the Interview

#### Research the Organization

Find out some basic information about the organization before you go for the interview. You will be in a better position to ask intelligent questions, and you will impress the interviewer with your initiative and knowledge of the organization.

#### Prepare and Anticipate Questions

* Analyze the job description, and match your experience, skills, interests, and abilities to the job. Review your resume and identify specific activities, work experiences, or classes that have allowed you to develop and demonstrate the skills, abilities, or specialized knowledge required for the position. Knowing what you have communicated on your resume is essential. Anticipate questions that may be asked of you in an interview and prepare your answers beforehand (as if you were studying for an exam). Be mindful of potential questions that might be considered more difficult or sensitive for you to answer. If you have limited experience, you should try to emphasize your strong points and other aspects. Also, prepare questions you would like to ask the employer. Knowing what you want to do as you start your career, connecting past success related to the job opening and mentioning them in your interview will impress the interviewer and identify you as a top candidate. Providing evidence of your skills, experience, and capabilities should distinguish you from others. Interviewers are also focusing on your personal qualities and character to ensure that you possess the enthusiasm and work ethic necessary for the position.

#### Be Prepared to Prove:

* Ability to work on teams
* Communication and interpersonal skills
* Experience with conflict resolution
* Strong work ethic
* Ability to set priorities and meet commitments
* Decision-making skills
* Integrity
* Practical experience

#### Practice Good Communication Skills

It is important that you use good communication skills during the interview. Try to:

* Present yourself in a positive and confident manner.
* Offer a firm handshake.
* Speak clearly and effectively.
* Listen attentively and maintain eye contact.
* Avoid the use of unnecessary verbal and nonverbal distractions.

#### Appearance and Punctuality

Dressing appropriately conveys a good first impression. If in doubt about what to wear, dress slightly more on the conservative side. Be on time for the interview (it’s advisable to arrive about 15 minutes before your appointment). This will allow you time to relax, review anticipated questions/answers, read organizational literature, and observe the work environment and interactions.

### Interview Questions

Following are some examples of questions you may be asked in traditional and behavioral interviews. There are a number of other potential questions. Visit the Experimental Learning and Career Center for additional resources.

* Why did you choose this career track?
* What college subjects (or jobs) did you like best/least and why?
* Tell me about yourself.
* What is one of your greatest strengths? …weaknesses?
* Which two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
* Why do you want to work here?
* What attributes do you have that will help you be successful in this position?
* Where would you like to be three years from now?
* How do you think a friend, professor, or supervisor who knows you well would describe you?
* In what type of work environment are you the most comfortable?
* Behavioral interview questions often are used to determine how you responded to a variety of specific situations and the results of your actions in each situation. The best predictor of future work performance is often past performance in a similar circumstance. Possible questions include:
  + Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity.
  + What did you do?
  + Can you tell me about a major risk that you took? What happened?
  + Can you recall an instance when you convinced your supervisor (or professor) of an idea or concept? How did you proceed? What was the result?

The people who interview you for a job typically will ask if you have any questions about the position or organization. Don’t pass up the opportunity to gather more information. This indicates that you are interested in the job and may help you decide if you actually want the position. Prepare questions that you would like to ask the employer. If your questions have been covered in the interview, you should let the interviewer know that you did have questions, but they have all been answered. It’s usually appropriate to ask if you may contact him/her if you think of any additional questions. Following are a few closing questions that may be appropriate to ask:

* How did the position become available? How did this job opening arise?
* Could you describe the ideal candidate for this position? What qualities (attributes) and skills would someone need in order to be successful in this position?
* Who else would I be working with in this department? How much contact would I have with people from other departments?
* How would you describe the work environment here?
* What opportunities do new employees have for training and professional development?
* I am very enthusiastic about pursuing this position with you. What would be the next step in the process?

**Remember**

Try to postpone questions about salary, benefits, and vacation time until the final stages of the selection process. If asked about salary requirements early in the interview say, for example, that you need more information about the position. If you feel obligated to respond more directly, give a broad salary range based on your research and knowledge of the position and industry.

**Also Remember**

If the interviewer asks you a question that seems to be inappropriate or illegal, try to respond to the interviewer’s apparent concern rather than the actual question itself.

**Strategies for Answering Interview Questions**

* Concentrate on the employer’s needs, not yours.
* Emphasize how you can help the company or organization achieve its goals.
* Describe accomplishments instead of simply reciting your past responsibilities.
* Explain how your specific skills will benefit the company or organization.
* Use strong, confident language.
* Don’t downplay your accomplishments or attribute them to luck.

## Summary

The job interview is a strategic conversation with a purpose. Your goal is to persuade the employer that you have the skills, background, and ability to do the job and that you can comfortably fit into the organization. At the same time, you also should be gathering information about the position, future career opportunities, and the organization to determine whether the job and work environment are a good match for you.

Keep in mind that an interview is not always an objective process in which the employer offers the job to the best candidate based on skills and experience alone. A candidate’s personality, confidence, enthusiasm, general outlook, and interpersonal/commination skills also can weigh heavily in the decision-making process. Always send a thank you letter, note, or e-mail to the interviewer(s) within a few days of the interview.