



*Muhlenberg*

# Interview Guide

## Muhlenberg College Career Center

Lower Level, Seegers Student Union  
484-664-3170  
careers@muhlenberg.edu  
[www.muhlenberg.edu/careercenter](http://www.muhlenberg.edu/careercenter)

Hours of Operation  
Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**C**ongratulations! If you are at the interview stage of the application, you have already been successful in convincing the employer to invest time in meeting you! Now your task is to convey to the interviewer that you have the skills and experience to do this job and that you will be a great fit for this organization. You will also use the interview to explore if this position and organization is a good match for you.

## Types of Interviews

**One-on-one:** Just you and one interviewer (the most common type of interview).

**Panel:** You are interviewed by more than one person at the same time.

**Group:** A group of candidates is interviewed by a panel or one interviewer.

**Meal:** You are interviewed while eating, usually over lunch.

**Working:** You are put to work and observed.

**Phone or Video:** Often used as a screening tool before inviting you to an on-site interview.

**On-Site or Second Round:** After you have made it through a screening interview, this is a more extended interview at the employer site that may include a series of different types of interviews, a site tour, and a meal.

### Phone Interview Tips

-Keep résumé in clear view so it's available when you need to answer questions.

-Silence all of your devices, turn off app notifications and group text threads so your call isn't interrupted.

-Clear the room of any distractions, turn off music, TV, close the door.

-Smile. It projects a positive image to the listener and changes the tone of your voice.

### Video Interview Tips

-Test your technology prior to your interview.

-Find a quiet, well lit space with no distractions or background noise. Check the area for distractions or clutter.

-Dress as you would dress for an in person interview.

-Talk to the camera, not the screen.

-Consider your background view – what will the interviewer see behind you?

**B**efore the interview it's important to prepare and practice. How do your strengths, interests, and values relate to the requirements of this position? How are your goals compatible with the objectives of this position and the mission of this organization? Will this position provide what you've identified as important (opportunity for work-life balance, training, advancement potential...)?

It takes 7 seconds for someone to form a first impression.

## Before You Interview: Know Yourself

- How do your strengths, interests, and values relate to the requirements of this position?
- How are your goals compatible with the objectives of this position and the mission of this organization?
- Will this position provide what you've identified as important (opportunity for work-life balance, training, advancement potential...)?

## Know the Organization

- Research the organization, position and interviewers.
- Use sites like Google news, LinkedIn, organization's website.
- Many organizations will have Twitter chats with recruiters to give you insight to the process.
- Maximize your personal & professional network, talk to alumni, family or friends who may work there.
- Attend information sessions, if offered.

## Practice

- Write down your answers to commonly asked interview questions.
- Say your answers out loud.
- Use InterviewStream (<https://muhlenbergcollege.interviewstream.com>) to record answers to questions. You can review your answers or send a link of your recorded interview to other people to provide feedback.
- Complete a mock interview at the Career Center.

## Prepare for the Day

- Dress appropriately: (see appendix).
- Men: dark, tailored suit, pressed collared shirt, dress socks, dress shoes, matching belt, tie.
- Women: skirt or pant suit, blouse, hosiery, heels less than 3", minimal makeup, perfume and jewelry.
- Bring a portfolio to neatly store notepad, pen, extra copies of your resume.
- Have at least 5 questions to ask each interviewer.
- Plan to arrive 15 minutes before interview; add extra time for potential travel issues and using the restroom if necessary.

## During the Interview

**Shake Hands:** Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake—not limp or bone crushing.

**Active Listening:** Project open body language by leaning forward slightly to communicate your interest.

**Posture:** Sit up straight throughout the interview.

**Gestures:** Avoid nervous giveaways such as tapping or shaking.

**Maintain Eye Contact:** Avoid a blank stare - it's OK if you break eye contact to think before answering.

**Facial Expression:** Stay relaxed with a friendly smile.

**Pace Yourself:** Take your time to answer questions.

**Relax:** Attempt to sit comfortably without appearing stiff.

**Grammar and Speech:** Work at using proper grammar; do not use nervous, “filler” words such as “you know,” “um,” “like,” and “yeah.”

**Tone of Voice:** Speak clearly with a warm, confident and relaxed tone; slow your words down to avoid nervous chatter and control your volume.

**Turn off your cell phone.**

**Do not chew gum.**

**Do not speak negatively about former bosses, professors, classmates.**

## After the Interview

- Ask for a business card from all of your interviewers to ensure you will have their contact information for thank you notes.
- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of your interview.

Dear [interviewer name],

Thank you very much for meeting with me yesterday. It was a pleasure to learn more about the team and [name of the role], and I'm very excited about the opportunity to join [organization name] and help [add in what you would be doing] with your team. I was impressed with [write about something you learned or noticed at the interview]. This [project, passion, philosophy (whatever you wrote that you learned)] aligns with my interests, training and experience.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please call or email me if I can provide additional information. I can be reached [email] or [phone].

Best regards,  
[Your name]

**M**any employers are trying to rate particular competencies in a candidate. When an interviewer gathers examples of behavior in an interview, he/she wants to get the complete story. An easy way to do this is to use the acronym STAR to describe a complete behavioral example. Responses to these questions should be framed with the STAR model in mind.

### SITUATION/TASK THAT YOU FACED

- Describe a situation...
- What were the circumstances surrounding...?

### ACTIONS THAT YOU TOOK

- What exactly did you do in the situation...?
- What was your specific role or what steps did you take in the situation...?

### RESULTS OR CHANGES CAUSED BY THESE ACTIONS

- What were the results...?
- What lesson(s) did you learn...?

## Behavior Based Competencies

- Communication- Oral & Written
- Interpersonal Skills
- Leadership
- Organizational Skills
- Problem Solving Ability
- Initiative
- Creativity
- Flexibility

### Tell me about a time when you demonstrated initiative.

During my internship with Wawa, we were asked to pick a problem and create a way to improve Wawa process. I noticed that our food vendors were not really pulling their weight — with the economic downturn and the price of gas especially, our sales are down right now, which often means decreased payroll — so it was critical that our vendors perform so we didn't have to waste our payroll hours doing their work. Initially I just wanted to change our vendor survey. The survey had 4 questions so I turned it into 10 questions that each fell under the categories of one of the initial 4 questions. I also changed the rating scale to a 1-5 and did a Likert scale rather than a simple red, yellow, green concept because I wanted to be better able to track improvement.

Additionally, I created a new vendor scorecard which would give them feedback for their weekly ratings in each area and a comment card to show them any specific dates we had problems with their products, like spoiled milk. I also created a new vendor expectations guide that was professional and consistent with the changes I made to the survey.

Finally, I created an idea for development, putting the survey on a hand-held scanning device so the Team Leader in charge of that area of the store could take the scanner around with her as she did the survey, increasing its accuracy. The survey would also show the vendors' scorecard history (last month, quarterly average, biannual average, and annual average) so we could determine whether or not the vendor was improving.

### S.T.A.R. METHOD

#### Situation/Task



#### Action



#### Result

*Average answer time: two minutes*

## Case or Technical Interview

These are common in finance, consulting, accounting, engineering, physics and computer science. They focus around discipline specific knowledge that you would have obtained through coursework, specific skills, or your own industry knowledge. Your preparation strategy should be focused on how to solve a problem – demonstrating your logical thinking rather than having the exact answer. Contact the Career Center to get help with case or technical interviews.

**A**ny questions that reveal your age, race, national origin, gender, religion, marital status and sexual orientation are off-limits.

If you're asked any questions related to these topics, you can:

- choose to answer
- decline to answer
- examine the intent behind the question and respond as it might apply to the job

## Illegal Question

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Where were you/your parents born?
- What is your "native tongue"?
- How old are you?
- When did you graduate?
- Are you married?
- Do you plan to have a family? When?
- How many kids do you have?
- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Please complete the following medical history.
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred.
- Do you need an accommodation to perform this job? (This question can be asked only after a job offer has been made.)
- Have you ever been arrested?
- If you've been in the military, were you honorably discharged?

## Legal Question

- Are you authorized to work in the US?
- What language(s) do you read/speak/ write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the job.)
- Are you over the age of 18?
- Would you be willing to relocate if necessary?
- Would you be able and willing to travel as needed for the job? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants.)
- Are you able to lift a 50-pound weight and carry it 100 yards, as that is part of the job?
- Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job.)
- Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?
- As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be required to undergo a medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results.)
- Have you ever been convicted of \_\_\_\_\_? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in questions.)
- In what branch of the Armed Forces did you serve?

**P**repare and bring at least five questions to ask your interviewer(s). Questions should be thoughtful to demonstrate your interest in the position and the organization. Avoid asking questions that can easily be answered by looking through the organization's website or in the position description. Also avoid asking questions that were answered during the course of your interview. Interviewers will invite you to ask questions toward the end of your interview. Here are samples of interview questions to ask:

## Questions to Ask the Interviewer

- Can you describe what a typical day would be like?
- What kind of training do you offer new employees?
- When and how are employees evaluated?
- What is the biggest challenge facing this organization right now?
- What do you appreciate most about working here?
- How would you describe the culture of this organization?

## Questions to Ask Peer Interviewers

- What advice would you give to a new hire on this team?
- What is it like to work for (the manager of the team)?
- How can I best contribute to this team?
- Why did you choose to work here?

## Questions to Ask Hiring Managers

- What is an example of a challenge your team has faced recently?  
(Tip: address the challenge in your thank you email.)
- What are some of the less tangible traits of successful people at this organization?
- Ask for clarification of the culture of the company, most specifically what it takes to be successful and rewarded there. What kind of behaviors do their star performers demonstrate, and why are these important (if not completely obvious)?
- Think about the most important facet of work for you – ask for examples of how this fits in with the corporate approach. For example, if professional development is highly important to you, ask what resources are available for someone in your position, what the organization defines 'professional development' to be – does it always have to be directly connected to your work or do they take a wider, holistic view?
- Drilling down the job itself, ask for clarification of the VP's expectations of you – what is it you need to do that will not only meet those expectations but, if the VP can articulate it, EXCEED them.

**Always ask** may I have your business card (for your follow up thank you email)? What are the next steps in the hiring process (gives you a timeline and clues for follow up actions)? **Never ask** about salary, vacation, benefits, raises until an offer has been extended to you.

## Interview Prep Sheet

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Time \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name of who I'm meeting \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>What I Love About the Position</b> <i>Specific things that make this company &amp; position a great fit for you</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>What Skills I Bring to the Position</b> <i>Your specific skills &amp; experiences that make you a great fit for this position</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges to Address</b> <i>Dip in GPA? Gap on your resume? Prepare answers to any questions the interview may have about you, your qualifications, etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>Accomplishments to Highlight</b> <i>Specific accomplishments from academics, extracurricular activities, work experience, etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Questions to Ask the Interviewer</b> <i>Specific questions about the company or roles that I could not answer by searching their website or the position description.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information to Remember</b> <i>Do you have any contacts at the company? Facts to mention?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

### Post Interview

<p><b>Send Thank You Notes to:</b> <i>Email within 24 hours.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dates to Follow Up</b> <i>Write down when your interviewer said you should hear about the next steps.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Things I loved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>Red Flags</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>