

# Mock Interview Day

## Common & Difficult Interview Questions

Interviews may begin with "Tell me about yourself." Be prepared to say something interesting.

- What sets you apart from others? (Be specific: foreign language, project team, leadership experience)
- What do you know about our organization? Why are you interested in working here?
- What is your favorite activity on campus? What is your favorite and least favorite part of that activity/job?
- Tell us about a time when you used your skills related to this job to solve a real life problem.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Give an example of a project where you worked in a group. What was your role? Did you encounter any difficulties?
- What was your favorite class? Least favorite?
- What will you bring to the team/organization?
- What do you want from this position?
- In a group situation, when there is negative tension between members and you're the leader, what do you do?
- Talk about an event when you disagreed with an authority figure and what you did to resolve the issue.
- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
- Name a time in which you've failed. What did you do to overcome your failure?
- What are you most proud of?
- Why did you decide to study (your major)? Why did you choose Cornell?
- Describe a time when you gave up personal goals for the good of a team.
- What was the most difficult decision you ever made and why?
- What would you value in an employer?
- Do you work best on your own or in a group? Give examples.
- Do you like constant feedback or can you work without it?

## Business

### Background/personal Information:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you know when you have achieved success?
- How do you measure your level of success/achievement?
- What do you know about our company? Why is it of interest to you? (Make sure you do your research ahead of time so that you are prepared for the actual interview.)

### Organizational Skills: Ability to plan tasks/Ability to delegate

- Tell me about a big project you had to plan for school or work.
- What steps were involved?
- What was the outcome?
- Ability to set priorities
- Describe a situation when you had several things to do in a limited time.
- What led up to the situation?
- How did you handle it?
- What was the outcome?
- What kinds of situations have you been in that required project planning?
- Tell me about a time when you didn't achieve your objective.
- Tell me about a time you were in charge but needed others to help.
- What were the circumstances?
- How did you assign work?
- What happened?
- Tell me about a time when you have felt pulled in all directions and how you handled it.

### Interpersonal Skills: Client relations/Being a team player

- Tell me about a time you've had to deal with the public. Who was involved? What did you do?
- How did they respond?
- Do you enjoy working with a variety of people?
- How do you establish working relationships with new people?
- Give an example of how you have effectively worked in a team situation.
- Give an example of how you have effectively worked on your own.
- Describe your work habits in a team situation.
- Give an example of a time when you were not a productive team member.

- What do you expect of others in a team environment?
- What type of people do you see yourself working with?
- What motivated you?

#### Technical Skills: Problem Solving/Ability to apply knowledge

- Describe a complex problem you have solved/haven't solved.
- What steps did you take to tackle it?
- What were the results?
- Tell me about a time when you used creativity to solve a problem.
- Are you able to function in a fast-paced working environment?
- Is multi-tasking something you struggle with, or embrace?

#### Growing With the Job: Taking initiative

- Tell me when you had to take charge and get a job done or resolve a problem.
- Tell me when you had to learn something new in a short time.
- Do you tend to set goals for yourself? Describe some important goals you have achieved.

#### Communication skills: Ability to communicate/Ability to listen/ Commitment

- Tell me about a time someone misunderstood something you said or wrote.
- How did you make yourself clear?
- What was the outcome?
- Describe your leadership style.
- How would your co-workers/classmates describe you?
- Are you comfortable speaking in large-group situations?

#### Expectations:

- What do you expect of a company?
- What do you want to achieve in your first year on the job?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?

#### Conclusion:

- Describe yourself in one word. Why that word?
- How would you want me to remember you?
- Why do you want to work for us? What can you offer us that other students in your field can't?
- Do you have any questions for me?

## Computer Information/IT

- Have you worked with building and maintaining networks? In which area of networking do you consider yourself most competent and why?
- Give two examples of things you've done on the job or in school that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- What is the most difficult task you have performed or learned about with group policy with a Windows Server?
- What are three characteristics of a good manager?
- Tell us about a time when you took responsibility for an error/mistake and were held accountable.
- What do you know about our company and why are you interested in working/interning with us?
- What has been your most challenging course in college? Why?
- What has been your most challenging project on the job? Why?
- What is the extent of your web application development experience?
- What makes you a good IT professional?
- What specific automated tools have you used to recover deleted files?
- When solving a problem, tell me about the steps you go through to ensure your decisions are correct / effective.
- Which do you prefer, Windows, Mac, or Linux and why?
- What accomplishments, in school or where you were most recently employed, are you most proud of?
- What are your best qualities when looking at your job experience?

### Questions About Co-Workers and Supervisors

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a co-worker who wasn't doing his/her fair share of the work. What did you do and what was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you took the time to share a co-worker's or supervisor's achievements with another?
- Tell me about a time that you didn't work well with a supervisor. What was the outcome and how would you have changed the outcome?
- Have you worked with someone you didn't like? If so, how did you handle it?  
Tell me about a time that you helped someone.
- Tell me about a time that you misjudged a person.
- How do you get along with older (younger) co-workers?

### Questions About Your Abilities

- Tell me about a time that you worked conveying technical information to a nontechnical audience.
- Tell me about a time that you worked with data, interpreting data, and presenting data.
- Why do you think you will be successful at this job?
- Tell me about a time that you participated in a team, what was your role?

### Questions About Yourself

- What would you do differently if you could start your working life over?
- How do you balance life and work?
- What is your preferred way to communicate?

### Questions About Working well with people

- Have you ever had difficulty working with a manager?
- How do you feel working in a team environment?

# Engineering

## Sample General Interview Questions

Practicing answers to typical interview questions will increase confidence and potential for a successful interview. In addition, employers seek candidates who ask well informed questions based on research of the organization and career field.

### Interview questions

#### *Personal and career objectives*

- How would you describe yourself?
- Why did you choose to study at Cornell? Why did you major in (your major)?
- What is the greatest personal challenge you have faced in college? How did you handle it?
- What are your goals for the next three (or five, or ten) years?
- What do you like to do in your leisure time?
- Who are your role models?
- What is your definition of success? Of failure?

#### *Abilities and achievements*

- What organizational techniques do you use to accomplish your academic and social goals?
- What were your past leadership roles and what did you learn from them?
- Have you had to sell your idea to others who had differing points of view? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you successfully balanced several competing priorities.
- Describe a frustrating experience or conflict and how you handled it. What happened then? What was the final result? (behavior-based sequence)
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?

#### *Work experiences*

- Did you work while going to school? What positions did you hold?
- What is the best job you ever had? Why?
- What did you enjoy most or like least about your last employment?
- Have you ever quit a job? Why?
- What has been your experience with working in a team?
- In what extracurricular activities are you involved? Why did you choose those activities?

#### *Knowledge of the organization*

- Why do you want to work for our organization?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- Do you prefer a large or small organization? Why?
- What qualities do you seek in a supervisor?
- How do you feel about working in a structured/unstructured environment?
- How do you feel about overtime/traveling/relocating?
- What are your salary requirements? How did you determine that?

## Sample questions to ask employers

### *During the initial interview*

- What are the major tasks and responsibilities?
- What are the priorities over the next year?
- Where does this position (or department) fit into the organization and its objectives?
- Could you show me an organizational chart?
- What does it take to succeed here? Can you give me some examples?
- How is success measured in this position and in this organization?
- What kind of orientation or training is provided?
- How much travel is required? How often is overtime required?
- Does this position function mainly alone or in a team setting?
- What is the greatest challenge currently facing this department or organization?
- What are the major strengths/weaknesses of this work group?
- How is this organization different from its competitors?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?
- What is this organization's management philosophy?
- Tell me about your own experience with this organization. What do you enjoy most/least about working here?

### *During subsequent interviews*

- What is the history of this position, and what changes do you anticipate?
- How are geographical location assignments and transfers determined?
- How much decision-making autonomy would I have? What is the growth potential for this position a few years from now?
- What percentage of employees take advantage of the educational tuition assistance program? (Ask only if you know such a program exists.)
- What kind of staff will be available to me or to this department?
- Assuming that you received resumes from many qualified applicants, what qualifications from my resume did you find of interest, resulting in this opportunity to interview for the position? (Ask at the end of an on-site visit.)

### *At any point during the interview process*

- What is the next step in the interview process? What is your time frame?
- What can I do to further demonstrate my interest in this position?
- Can you describe some aspects of living in this community?

## **Behavioral Interview Questions**

Behavioral questions ask you to discuss a situation that you encountered in the past to help employers predict how you may conduct yourself in the future. Your answer to these questions should have 3 parts:

1. Describe the situation
2. Describe what you did
3. Tell the outcome

You may also want to add what you learned or what you would do differently. Examples can be drawn from work, personal, volunteer, student organizations, or classroom experiences.

Below is just a sample of behavioral questions that you may be asked. To prepare for these types of questions, review your entire resume and consider instances that you are proud of, that were difficult, or that you have learned from.

- **Technical Mastery**
  - When thinking about the continuum between theory and practice, where in the continuum would you like to be working, and why?
  - Tell me about a time when you had to apply some of the theory you have learned.
- **Leadership**
  - Tell me about a time when you accomplished something significant that wouldn't have happened if you hadn't been there to make it happen.
  - Describe a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, muster support, and achieve excellent results.
- **Initiative & Follow Through**
  - Tell me about a goal you set that took a long time to achieve or that you're still working towards.
  - Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your desired objectives.
- **Thinking & Problem Solving**
  - Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and develop a plan which produced good results.
  - If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?
- **Creativity & Innovation**
  - Tell me about a time you implemented a new approach to a problem.
  - Describe a time when you came up with new ideas which were key to the success of some activity or project.
- **Working Effectively with Others**
  - Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get desired results.
  - Can you give me an example that would show you've been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, even though they might have differing points of view?
- **Communication**
  - Tell me about a situation when you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
  - Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully.
- **Priority Setting**
  - Tell me about a time when you had to balance many competing priorities and did so successfully.
  - Describe a time when you had to pick out the most important tasks in an activity and make sure that they got done.

# Liberal Arts

## Common Interview Questions

1. What experience do you have that relates to this position? Describe how your skills and education match the job requirements.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. Tell me about yourself.
4. Why do you want to work for this organization? Why are you interested in this position?
5. Tell me about a project or challenge that didn't go well, and how you handled it.

## Behavioral Questions

1. Tell me about a time you solved a difficult problem that could have had significant impact.
2. Describe the most difficult decision you've made in the last 6 months.
3. Tell me about a time you took initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn't really your responsibility
4. Describe an important goal you have achieved, and how you achieved it. Tell me about set-backs you experienced.
5. Describe a time when you had difficulty communicating your thoughts clearly to an individual or group.
6. Tell me about a time you voiced a concern or disagreement to a coworker, supervisor, or professor.
7. Tell me about a situation in which you had to collaborate with several people to achieve a goal.
8. Describe your most disappointing experience. How did you cope with it? What did you do to move beyond it?
9. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that required coping skills.
10. Give me a specific example of a time when you convinced your supervisor or professor of an idea. How did you accomplish this and what was the result?
11. Tell me about a time when you took on a leadership role.
12. Tell me about a time you provided excellent customer service.

## Other Question Types

1. How do you work under pressure or stress?
2. What do you consider your greatest achievement?
3. Tell me about a mistake you made and what you learned from it.
4. What does diversity mean to you?
5. What do you like best about our company/organization?
6. What do you think would be most challenging about this position? Most rewarding?
7. What five adjectives best describe you?
8. Why did you choose the major you did?
9. Give me an example of a time you worked on a team and what role you played.
10. Give me an example of a time you set a goal at work or in school. How did you accomplish your goal? Were you satisfied with the outcome?
11. Tell me about a situation where you had to resolve a conflict with another person.
12. What did you like most about your previous job? Least?
13. Describe your work style. What work environment best suits you?



# Nursing

## Standard Nursing Interview Questions

- How would you describe your skills as a team player?
- How will you deal with difficult doctors?
- How will you deal with difficult patients and/or their families?
- How will you handle unexpected circumstances, such as being short staffed and having to perform a treatment you have not done before?

## More Nursing Related Questions:

- What type of nursing experience do you have?
- Where did you get your training and what certifications do you have?
- How long has it been since you worked in (ER, OR, ICU, or particular specialty area)?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Why did you choose (ER, OR, ICU, LTC, FNP, or other specialty area of nursing)?
- Why do you want to work in our hospital and/or community?
- Tell me about a time in which you had to handle an irate physician, co-worker, or patient. How did you handle it and what were the results?
  
- Describe a difficult decision you've made and the process you went through to reach that decision.
  
- Why makes you right for this job?
- What nursing organizations do you belong to?

## In-Depth questions

You're sure the instructions you've received from management are a mistake, not in the company's best interests. What do you do to warn management of your concerns, and how do you deal with your instructions, until you can get them modified?

Your supervisor has told you to drop everything, and concentrate on something you don't think is important, or even necessary. Do you put up with it, or try to get your more important work done, and deal with this matter afterwards?

You're getting distracted by extra work and meetings, and it's generating a backlog of work for you. How do you cope with it?

You get two difficult clients at the same time, both demanding your attention. What do you do?

Your database crashes, and you have to work on some sort of improvised system for receipts, while also collecting the data. What do you do?

## Standard Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your experience.
- What is your most important accomplishment to date?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Why did you choose this career?
- When did you decide on this career?
- What goals do you have in your career?
- How do you plan to achieve these goals?
- How do you personally define success?
- Describe a situation in which you were successful.
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
- If you had to live your life over again, what one thing would you change?
- Would you rather work with information or with people?
- Are you a team player?

## Additional in-depth questions

Describe a stressful clinical situation and how you handled it.

- Describe an encounter with an angry or frustrated patient and family member and how you handled it.
- Describe the most challenging patient experience you've had. Explain why.
- Tell me about a time when your performance did not meet your expectations.
- Give me an example of how you handled rapid or unexpected change.
- Tell me about a time when you had to build motivation or team spirit with members of a work group.
- Tell me about a time when you received difficult (or less than positive) feedback from your supervisor. How did you respond to the feedback? What changes did you implement as a result?
- Define pro-active and give me an example of a time when you behaved this way.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to work with someone with whom you were uncomfortable. Describe the working relationship that developed and your influence on this relationship.
- Recall a situation or relationship which suffered from poor communication. What happened and how did you resolve it?
- What personal qualities do you feel are important to be successful in this position? Which of these qualities do you possess? Give an example of how these qualities have helped you in your present position.
- What is your definition of leadership, and why do you feel it is important? How have you demonstrated leadership? Tell me about a situation in which you should have shown more leadership than you did.
- Give me an example of when you had to make a quick decision. What were the results?
- What are the motivating factors for your personal happiness? For satisfaction in the workplace?
- Tell me about an important goal you set for yourself and how you were successful in achieving it.
- Describe how you demonstrate professionalism in your activities. What behaviors and characteristics contribute to that image?
- Describe a situation where you persuaded an individual or group to follow your course of action rather than their previously stated position.
- What was the hardest job you held, and what did you do to get through it?

# Physical Therapist/Assistant

Physical Therapy Interview questions:

- How well do you work in groups? What is an example of when you took charge of a group?
- Give an example of a time when a conflict arose in a group and how did you handle it?
- When is a time you had a lot on your plate and how did you handle it?
- What have you learned from your clinical experience?
- Where do you see yourself ending up? Where did you see yourself in 5 years?
- What is something people tell you that you need to work on?
- Who is someone that has influenced your life or choice of this profession?
- What opportunities have you had to observe an Occupational/Physical Therapist?
- What qualities do you see in yourself that relate to you as a professional?
- What is your definition of a professional?
- What aspects of your life experiences do you think makes you a good candidate for Occupational/Physical Therapy school?
- There are many specializations in Occupational/Physical Therapy, which specializations are you more interested in and why?
- What is the most difficult decision you've had to make and how did you arrive at your decision?
- When is a time that you had to overcome a challenge?
- What is your greatest accomplishment (personal and/or academic)?
- Explain why some of your prerequisite grades were a little bit lower than your other grades?
- What is something positive that has resulted from managed care?
- Describe your method of learning. How does this fit with the Occupational/Physical Therapy program?
- How would you choose who would receive life-saving care, such as dialysis, first?
- Tell us about your experience in your PT/PTA program.
- Why did you choose to pursue PT instead of another health profession such as a doctor or nurse?
- As a PT, what duties would you assign a PT assistant that you wouldn't an aide?