



**WORKFORCE CENTERS**

— of South Central Kansas —

In partnership with  **KANSASWORKS**

# A Guide to Your Mock Interview



Wichita Workforce Center

150 N. Main

Wichita, KS 67202

[workforce-ks.com](http://workforce-ks.com)

**KANSASWORKS.com**

316-771-6800

# Overview

## Mock Interview Guidelines

Developing interviewing skills is the key to conducting a successful job search. No matter how qualified you are for a position, if you don't interview well, it is highly unlikely that you will be hired. Practicing will allow you to test out your skills and can make the job search process much easier and more productive.

In order to make the most effective use of your mock interview session, attend an Interview Workshop. The facilitator will review interviewing techniques, handling difficult questions, attire, and proper protocol after the interview.

## What is a mock interview?

- A mock interview is a simulation interview.
- Although your mock interviewer is well experienced in conducting the interview, he/she may be unable to answer specific questions about your field.

## Purpose:

- To simulate actual interview conditions in order to provide a more successful interview experience.
- To provide feedback that will aid you in assessing current strengths and weaknesses in regard to your interviewing skills.
- To help you with the interview process: developing confidence and enhancing skills.

## Registration/Preparation:

- Email the following to the Workforce Professional who scheduled your mock interview at least 48 hours before your scheduled appointment:
  - A link to a job posting of your choice (Preferably one you have recently applied for)
  - A copy of your completed resume
  - And the completed Top 10 Interview Questions Worksheet
- Review the tips and suggestions highlighted throughout this guide book.
- Business/Professional dress is required.
- On the day of your interview **arrive 10-15 minutes** prior to your scheduled interview and check in at the front desk.

## No-Show Policy:

Workforce Center staff members feel strongly about missed mock interviews. Cancellations must be made **24 business hours** in advance of the interview appointment. **If you fail to cancel one day prior to the interview, or simply do not show up, you may not be able schedule another mock interview.** Situations regarding the no-show policy should be directed to Kat Johnson, 316-771-6617.

## **Videotape:**

Your mock interviewer will record your interview and feedback session onto a **DVD** disk. The interviewer will notify you when your DVD is ready to be picked up at the center.

## **What to Expect: From Start to Finish**

- Your mock interview experience begins the moment that your interviewer comes to greet you in the waiting area of the Workforce Center. You should start with a firm handshake and appropriate greeting of the interviewer.
- You and your interviewer will go into an interview room where you will meet the rest of the interview panel. The mock interview itself will last approximately 30 - 45 minutes, with a feedback session where the interview will be discussed and critiqued for approximately 15 - 30 minutes.
- At the end of your mock interview you will have the opportunity to talk with the interview panel about any particular questions or concerns you have about the interviewing process. Furthermore, you will receive from your interviewer honest and helpful feedback.

## **You will be evaluated on the following...**

- ✍ **Appearance:** Dress appropriately for the interview.
- ✍ **Greeting/Introduction:** We recommend that you stand to greet your interviewer with a handshake. Also, make good eye contact with the interviewer, smile, and be professional. Once you are led into the interview room, greet the rest of the panel with a handshake and a smile.
- ✍ **Body Language:** During the interview, be aware of your eye contact, subtle use of hands while speaking, good posture, etc.
- ✍ **Attitude:** Your attitude toward work and working with others is crucial in the hiring process. Be sure to convey an attitude that is enthusiastic, sincere, and genuine.
- ✍ **Responses to the Interview Questions:** Do your research and practice, practice, practice! Know your goals and be able to express them to the interviewer.
- ✍ **Oral Communication:** Speak clearly and concisely. Try to think out your response before answering a question.
- ✍ **Preparation:** Prepare questions for your interviewer and research the position and/or company/organization/agency for which you are interviewing.



## Know the Facts!

Be sure you are fully prepared for interviews by completing the worksheets on **pages 4, 5, and 6!** They will help you understand yourself and the employer!

### Prepare yourself

- Interviews can be a very intimidating task if you are unprepared.
- Preparation and practice are key ingredients to a successful interview!
- You must be able to talk about yourself with confidence.
- Exploring and understanding yourself allows you to answer interview questions as effectively as possible.
- It is vital to understand your attributes and personality so that you can convey those positive qualities to the interviewer.
- **A worksheet is provided in order to help identify different aspects of your character (see page 4).** When answering the questions be sure to also analyze the information on your resume and ask others who know you well.

### Know the Employer

- Do your homework! Be prepared for an interviewer to ask questions about his/her organization.
- Researching the company/organization/agency shows genuine interest in the career opportunity and it allows you to gain valuable information as well.
- By learning about the company/organization/agency you are able to see if it is a place where you would like to find employment.
- Also, this time spent will help generate questions to ask the employer during the interview process.
- The Internet will have a lot of information to offer and is a good place to start your research.
- **A worksheet is provided with questions to begin your company research (see pages 5 and 6).**
- The questions will prepare you for possible questions that employers may ask.



## **Prepare yourself**

1. Personality traits or skills I have that are job related:

2. Examples of experiences I have had that demonstrate the above traits/skills:

3. List 3-5 accomplishments that would be of interest to the person interviewing me:

4. What are the 3 most important things I want the interviewer to know about me?

5. What concerns might an employer have about me and what will alleviate those concerns?

## **Know the Employer**

1. How long has the organization been in operation?

2. Where is the organization located? Are there other locations?

3. Is it a public or private organization?

4. Has the organization been in the news lately? For what reason(s)?

5. What are the services/products/programs this organization provides?

6. Who are its competitors?

7. How is it doing relative to its competitors?

8. What are the organization's short-term goals? Long-term goals?

9. What else is the organization known for (e.g., community involvement, supportive of families, relaxed atmosphere, etc.)?

10. What challenges/difficulties does this organization face? How can I help solve them?

# Behavior Based Interviewing

## What exactly is behavior based interviewing?

Behavioral based interviewing is a style of interviewing that many companies and organizations use in the hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is this: ***The most accurate predictor of future performance is past behavior in a similar situation.*** It provides a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions than other interviewing methods. Traditional interviewing may ask you to respond to general statements like, “tell me about yourself.” The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

## The “SAR” Technique is a good approach to responding to Behavior Based Questions

- **S-Situation (Describe the situation.)**
- **A-Action (What did you do?)**
- **R-Result (What happened?)**

### Important Points:

- In the interview, your response needs to be specific and detailed. Tell about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Tell briefly about the situation, the task at hand, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome.
- The interviewee tells a story for a few minutes; typically the interviewer will pick apart the story to try to get at the specific behavior(s). The interviewer can probe further for more depth or detail such as “What were you thinking at the point?” or “Tell me more about your meeting with that person,” or “Lead me through your decision process.”
- Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and make sure you answer the question completely.
- Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations where you have demonstrated the behaviors desired by a given company/organization/agency. **A worksheet is provided with questions to begin writing down your responses (see page 9).**
- Prepare success stories. The stories should represent your skills, qualities, and characteristics. Always give examples of your strengths and successes.
- Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years. Demonstration of the desired behaviors may be given in many ways. Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, team involvement, community service, and work experience. In addition, you may use examples of which you may be especially proud of, such as: winning a marathon race, exhibiting paintings in an art show, running for student government, etc.



# Top 10 Interview Questions

## Non-Behavioral Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.

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2. What are your weaknesses?

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3. Why do you want to leave your current employer?

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**Behavioral Questions:**

- 4. Give me a specific example of when you had to start a task without being asked.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 5. Tell me about a time you successfully worked with a difficult coworker to complete a task.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Provide a specific example of a time you had to juggle multiple projects simultaneously.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Tell me about a time you had to switch from one project to another without warning.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Describe a time when you succeeded at work because of your ability to communicate.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Give me an example of a time when you caught a coworker doing something illegal.

**Situation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Results:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Describe an instance where you made a significant mistake.

**Situation:**

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**Action:**

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**Results:**

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# Other Possible Interview Questions

## Education

- ✓ Why did you choose your major?
- ✓ Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
- ✓ Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
- ✓ In which campus activities did you participate?
- ✓ In what ways do your college education and work experience relate to this job?
- ✓ Do you plan to return to school for further education?

## Experience

- ✓ What job related skills have you developed?
- ✓ What did you enjoy the most/least about your last employment?
- ✓ Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
- ✓ How do you define leadership? In what capacity have you served as a leader?
- ✓ How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

## Personal

- ✓ What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
- ✓ Can you name some weaknesses? How are you working to improve them?
- ✓ Define success.
- ✓ Have you had a time that you failed at something? What did you learn from that failure?
- ✓ Of which three accomplishments are you most proud?
- ✓ Who are your role models? Why?
- ✓ What motivates you most in a job?
- ✓ Tell me about yourself.
- ✓ Describe your ideal job.
- ✓ Where do you want to be in five years?

## In the Workplace

- ✓ Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
- ✓ What do you look for in a supervisor?
- ✓ Would you be successful working with a team?
- ✓ Are you able to work on multiple assignments at a time?
- ✓ What can your supervisor expect from you?

## 10 Questions You Should Ask in an Interview

At some point during the interview, the interviewer may ask if you have any questions. Based on your research, you will most likely have areas about which you would like more information. You should have several questions in mind to ask, but also listen during the interview for points about which you may need more information. Asking pertinent questions shows that you have prepared for the interview and are knowledgeable, interested and evaluating the employer.

The following list will help you generate ideas to prepare your own list of questions. It is also appropriate to have the questions written down in a pad folio and at your fingertips during the actual interview:

1. What are some of the qualifications you expect the ideal candidate for this position to have?
2. What characteristics do the individuals who are successful in this position possess?
3. Could you describe the normal daily routine for this position?
4. Is there a training period? What does it involve? Are there opportunities for professional development?
5. How would my performance be evaluated? How often? By whom?
6. I've been told that I work very well as a team member. What are some of the ways your company encourages teamwork?
7. We all know how important job satisfaction is to everyone. I want to be happy in any role. Is the company committed to promotion from within, whenever possible?
8. I love your published mission and values. How are these reflected in day-to-day life at the company? Can you share some examples with me?
9. If your son, daughter or a friend was looking for a job, would you recommend working for this company? Why?
10. What do you think distinguishes this company from its competitors, both from a public and employee perspective?
11. How often do you speak with your C-level officers? When you do, what do they normally ask you? Do they ask for your opinion?
12. How does the company demonstrate a sense of pride in its employees? Can you help me understand what it looks for in return?
13. Are there paid, ongoing learning opportunities offered at my level of job responsibility? What obligations do I have if I elect to take advantage of them?
14. What does the company expect in the way of personal and professional growth for a person hired into this position?
15. Does the company value a difference in work and personal time, or does it blur the responsibilities between the two?

## 10 Questions You Should Never Ask During an Interview

1. What does your company do?
2. Do you do background checks?
3. Do you do drug testing?
4. Do you have any other jobs available?
5. Can you guarantee me I will have a job next year?
6. Can you tell me what public transportation is nearby?
7. Is my spouse/child/my medical condition covered by insurance?
8. How many breaks do I get daily? Where's the break room?
9. How many warnings do you give before someone is fired?
10. How soon can I transfer to another position? Or when can I advance?



## Interview Tips and Suggestions

- Have a positive attitude. Keep all of your answers as positive as possible.
- Pay attention to your non-verbal communication (i.e. eye contact, voice projection, posture, nervous habits).
- Express your qualifications. Come up with a list of six to eight adjectives that you use to describe yourself. Think of examples that demonstrate these adjectives. When you are asked to tell the employer about yourself, use these adjectives and examples to do just that.
- The first few minutes of the interview are the most important. It is at this time that you really want to sell yourself and get the interviewer interested in you. That is why it is important to package yourself and your qualifications. Having a set agenda of what you want to get across during the interview will help (i.e. education, background, experience, strengths, goals, accomplishments, challenges)
- Always try to relate what you are saying and how it can benefit the company/organization/agency with which you are interviewing. It is important to be familiar with the employer prior to the interview so you can know what type of person they seek, as well as what the position requires.
- If you get stuck on a question, it is okay to pause. Often, you can simply say, "That's a very good question; let me take a minute to think about that." Although a short pause is okay, try to avoid a lengthy one. Employers can tell if you are just buying time to make something up.
- It is important to end the interview on a positive note, either reiterating your interest in the position or telling the recruiter you look forward to hearing from him/her soon. Don't forget to thank the employer for his/her time and interest.
- In addition to knowing information about the company/organization/agency, always have questions prepared to ask the interviewer.
- Grades may be a topic. If your grades are low, be prepared to have an explanation.

# Don't Leave Home Without Reading This Advice!

## Dos and Don'ts

- DO answer questions honestly, thoroughly, and sincerely. If you don't know the answers indicate that.
- DO NOT try to tell the interviewer what you think he/she wants to hear.
- DO be careful about saying negative things about past experiences (i.e. insult a company that you interned with).
- DO NOT display a negative or arrogant attitude.
- DO be polite, tactful, and sincere - eye contact is also important.
- DO dress neatly and appropriately (conservative, not trendy).
- DO NOT be late unless there is an emergency; be sure to notify your contact if you are going to be late.
- DO practice the questions suggested in this guide.
- DO have a small portfolio to keep pens, extra copies of resumes, and a reference sheet.

## **Checklist:**

- ✓ Confirm the date, time, and location for your interview.
- ✓ Review the company's or graduate school's website and any other literature you've obtained.
- ✓ Generate quality questions to ask based on what you've read and heard- don't just ask questions for the sake of asking them (make them count!)
- ✓ Avoid me questions; (i.e. pay, benefits, and advancement) for the first interview. There is plenty of time to ask these types of questions when offered the position.
- ✓ Review your resume again to make sure everything is accurate and that you're prepared to answer any questions pertaining to it.
- ✓ If for any reason you must cancel your interview, contact the employer promptly. Don't be a "no-show."
- ✓ Make sure your clothes are ironed, your hair is neat, and your shoes are polished!