

COLLEGE OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

INTERVIEW GUIDE

If you made it to the interview, you already made it farther than most candidates. Pat yourself on the back, celebrate the step and start preparing with this three-step guide.



KNOW THE FORMAT

No matter the format, preparation matters. Ditch the sweatpants, even if you're doing a phone interview. It will put you in the right mindset.



PRACTICE ANSWERS

“Give me an example of...” or

“Tell me about a time...”

Behavioral-based questions are common. Answer them with the STAR method.

- **Situation:** Provide context for the example. What was the setting or situation?
- **Task:** Help the interviewer understand your goal. What specific problem or task needed to be addressed/achieved?
- **Action:** What did you do? What specific skills/tools did you use to address the task?
- **Result:** What was the outcome of the task and actions taken? What did you learn? What would you do differently in the future?

DO THE RESEARCH

- Learn their mission statement, values and goals.
- Articulate why you're the best candidate.
- Learn about their clients or the services and products they provide.
- Re-read the job posting and identify essential qualities for a successful candidate.
- Note experiences where you developed skills.
- Write down questions you anticipate.

What can't they ask you during the interview?

Gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/family status, citizenship/nationality/ language, age and religion.

Learn more at z.umn.edu/illegal-interview-qs

Can you tell us about yourself?

This will likely be the first question. Tell your story with confidence. It will spark future questions.

- **Present** — Where are you now? What skills do you have that are relevant?
- **Past** — What experiences prepared you for this position?
- **Future** — Why are you interested in and excited for the opportunity?



QUICK TIPS



Map the route and arrive 10-15 min early.



Eliminate distractions.



Request accommodations at interview offer.



Be prepared to take notes.



Pause before you answer.



Send a thank you email or letter.



DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Organizations have expectations about employee attire. Research the company or ask the recruiter about their specific expectations for your attire. Dress appropriately for your interview, even if it is a phone or virtual.

- Business professional: blazers or pant/skirt suit
- Business casual: slacks, khakis, skirts, button down or collared shirts, blouses, sweaters
- Clothes: clean and wrinkle free | Shoes: comfortable | Cologne/perfume: pass

ALWAYS HAVE A QUESTION (OR A FEW)

When the employer asks, “Do you have questions for us?” You should always say, “Yes.”

- How does your organization/program demonstrate a commitment to racial equity and social justice?
- Will you tell me about your office culture?
- What is the timeline for next steps?
- What can I expect for the first six weeks in this role?
- What do you like most/least about your job/program?



AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

- Thank interviewers for their time.
- Reaffirm your interest in the position.
- Ask the best way to follow up.

WITHIN 24-48 HOURS

- Send a quick note — either email or handwritten to your interviewers.
- Mention something unique about the conversation, express gratitude for their time and interest in position.

GET SUPPORT

- Schedule a mock interview with a CBS Career Coach at cbsss.appointments.umn.edu.
- Using a webcam, record responses to questions and review them umn.interviewstream.com.
- Practice in front of the mirror or with a friend/family member.