

The Interview Playbook

City University of New York
Hunter College
Urban Policy & Planning Department

Shokran Rahiminezhad, Fall 2025

Introduction to Interviewing

- Interviews are your chance to showcase your skills, experiences, and personality.
- They help employers assess your fit for a role and team.
- Preparation is key to confidence and success.

Informational vs. Job Interviews

Informational Interview:

- You ask the questions, goal is to learn and network.

Job Interview:

- Employer asks questions, goal is to evaluate you for a role.

Informational Interview Overview

- Purpose: To learn about a field, organization, or career path.
- Initiated by the student/applicant.
- Not about applying for a specific role.
- Ask thoughtful questions. Do not ask directly for a job.
- Follow up with gratitude and interest.

Job Interview Overview

- Purpose: To determine if you're a good fit for a specific position.
- Employer-led and more structured.
- Assess your experience, skills, and professionalism.
- Expect common interview questions and scenarios.
- Dress formally, prepare well, and follow up.

Before the Interview: Preparation

- Research the organization and the role.
- Review the job description and match your skills.
- Prepare answers to common questions.
- Prepare 2–3 thoughtful questions to ask them.
- Know the interview time, location, and interviewer name.
- Dress appropriately and plan your route/log in early.

Common Job Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work here?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time you solved a problem.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Why should we hire you?

What to Bring to a Job Interview

- Copies of your resume (printed if in-person).
- Notebook and pen.
- A list of questions to ask.
- Water (optional, discreet).
- Confidence, curiosity, and a smile!

During the Job Interview: Do's

- Arrive 10–15 minutes early (or log in early).
- Make eye contact and listen actively.
- Be specific, honest, and enthusiastic.
- Ask questions that show interest in the role/org.
- Use professional and clear language.

During the Job Interview: Don'ts

- Don't speak negatively about past jobs or people.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Don't overshare or go off-topic.
- Don't lie or exaggerate.
- Don't check your phone or multitask (especially remote).

After the Interview: Follow-Up

- Send a thank-you email within 24 hours.
- Mention something specific from your conversation.
- Reaffirm your interest in the position.
- Reflect on your performance for next time.
- Be patient — responses can take time.

Thank-You Email Example

Subject: Thank You – Interview for Policy Internship

Dear ...,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today about the Policy Internship. I appreciated learning more about your team's work on affordable housing and was inspired by your approach to community engagement.

I remain very enthusiastic about the opportunity to contribute and learn. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything else from me.

Sincerely,
Your name

Final Tips

- Practice aloud — with a friend or mentor.
- Be yourself: polite, curious, and confident.
- Prepare and research — it shows.
- Follow up and reflect after each interview.
- Keep applying — each interview helps you grow.