

Library Work-Study Interview Questions

- 1) Tell us about your work experience, both paid and volunteer.
- 2) What skills from your educational and work background do you think will transfer to your duties in the library?
- 3) Why are you interested in working in the Library?
- 4) What computer software do you have experience using?
- 5) How much time have you spent in the Library and which of its resources have you used?
- 6) Give an example of when you worked on a project which required attention to detail?
- 7) Describe what you would do if you had completed all of your assigned duties and had extra time before your shift ended.
- 8) How will you balance the demands of being a student, working in the Library, and meeting personal responsibilities?
- 9) Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your self?
- 10) Do you have any questions for us?
- 11) What is your availability?

- a. Why do you want to work for the FA Office? What positive contributions would you bring to this position? What challenges or professional growth needs would you see for yourself?
- b. This is a lead position that assists with directing the work of awarding and delivering financial aid resources to students. Describe any previous experience you have had coordinating or leading, and what experience/training you have had in awarding financial aid?
- c. Give an example of a highly emotional situation where you had to deal with an angry or upset student, and how you went about getting it resolved.
- d. Describe your experience in advising and assisting students, staff, financial aid participants and the public regarding *non-routine* financial aid policies, procedures and activities.
- e. Please describe how you handle and track multiple priorities and responsibilities to ensure that projects or tasks are completed in a timely manner.
- f. Recall a time from your work experience when your supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation?
- g. What efforts have you made towards your own professional growth, and what are your long-term, professional plans and goals?
- h. This position involves a higher level of specialized technical skills and mathematical computation duties. Please describe any work experience and/or education/training that you've had that have prepared you for these aspects of the position.
- i. Please describe your experience with your current/last supervisor. How would the person describe you and your work?
- j. How would you describe your relationship with co-workers and/or clients with whom you have worked? How would they describe you?
- k. Give an example from past experience when you were expected to perform in accordance with a policy or procedure, even when it was difficult and not convenient. What did you do?
- l. Give some examples of how you have adjusted your approaches to meet the needs of students representing different ages, disabilities and cultural backgrounds.

- m. This position requires that the person have thorough and current knowledge of state and federal financial aid regulations. Please tell us about your knowledge of Washington State and federal financial aid programs and their administration. Additionally, identify for us some more current changes in the administration of federal financial aid that pose challenges for financial aid administration at colleges such as BTC.
- n. How do you view the role of the Financial Aid Office with respect to other Student Services Offices (such as Registration, Admissions, Testing, Counseling, Diversity Support Services) and the Business Office? Describe some key points or examples, and within those, tell us what your definition of quality control is.
- o. Tell us about your experience with federal department of education FA software programs; experience with Washington State FA software programs; have you handle situations where you encountered unfamiliar software/technology.
- p. This position is very much a “hands-on” position which involves dealing with constant interruptions, including assisting the financial aid staff with difficult students. Please explain how you have dealt with interruptions and difficult clients in the past.
- q. What types of Title IV financial aid have you worked with? What other types of aid have you worked with that you feel would be an advantage to BTC students?
- r. In your experience, what assets does a Financial Aid Office need in order to provide excellent service to the students? Describe an outstanding financial aid office.
- s. Please describe your leadership style, including how you would provide training, evaluation and supervision for your staff.
- t. Please describe your approach to making professional judgment decisions regarding the following issues: Unusual circumstances; budget adjustments; emergency funding requests; awarding of BTC discretionary funds; and independency overrides. What would you have your front line staff tell students regarding these issues?
- u. Describe a process or system that you improved so students would be better served.
- v. This position will require you to lead and direct a group of your peers. How do you plan to handle this?
- w. What has been your experience in implementing new software? How would you approach any resistance staff may have in using it?
- x. How soon could you learn this job well enough to become productive and valuable to us?

Sample Cook/Food Service Questions

Please share how your background, including your experience and training, relates to this position.

Describe your experience preparing and cooking vegetables, fruits, meats, soups, and sauces?

Describe your experience adjusting recipes to volume of demand.

Describe your experience checking foodstuffs for spoilage or deterioration.

Describe your experience doing kitchen clean-up work.

Describe your experience stocking food/supplies in a food storage room.

Describe your experience assigning work to, checking work of, and instructing other workers.

Describe your experience as a cook.

Describe your experience interpreting and applying written and oral directions or procedures related to commercial food preparation and cleanup.

What type of management style or supervision do you prefer to work under?

What does this position offer you that may help you toward your career goals?

Describe a difficult time you have had dealing with an employee, customer, or co-worker. Why was it difficult? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?

Please describe your experience working with college and/or commercial kitchens.

When you are not busy with customers, what would you do with your time?

What are the major sanitation hazards in a typical commercial kitchen?

Where should raw meat be stored in the refrigerator?

How would you share information about a student's performance with the instructor?

One of the duties of the Cook position involves guiding or directing the day-to-day Food Service staff and helping the chef/manager evaluate the performance of the students/staff. Tell us about any experience you have had being a supervisor or lead.

How would you handle the following situation? You have two assistants in the kitchen and you are on a tight schedule. One of the assistants receives a minor cut with a knife during food preparation. What would you do?

What formal culinary training have you had?

What is the proper set up for meats and vegetables?

If you are not chosen for this position, would you like to be considered for other temporary help?

How would you define guest satisfaction?

Give an example of one thing that is important in building repeat-customer business.

Attendance is very important. What would your last supervisor or manager say about your attendance or punctuality? How many times would he or she say you were absent or late this year?

What were your responsibilities for ordering or maintaining supplies? How did you keep track of that responsibility?

In past jobs, when did you find it important to disagree with your boss? How did you approach him or her and what was the result?

Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with a difficult or demanding customer. How did you handle this?

Tell me about a time when you knew that your customer might not get what he or she needed on time. How did you handle this?

Describe a process or system that you improved so customers would be better served.

Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.

Has there been a situation in the workplace where you have observed a potential safety risk that no one else seemed to consider? If so, how did you rectify the situation?

Safety questions related to workplace....

Interviewing Questions

For Clerical Positions

Adapted from
333 Interviewing Questions
by the Council on Education Management.
Published by Borgman Associates, 1993.

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And Remember...

When asking any type of question, your—and the applicant's—best guide is a thorough job description that accurately reflects the requirements of the position. Clearly state such factors as amount and type of supervision, essential functions, qualifications, and job duties to help focus your questions. An accurate job description also allows the applicant, in turn, to ask you informed, precise questions about the nature of the position.

Prioritizing Work

What system for prioritizing your work do you think works best?

Give me an example of a time when you had to juggle several things at once. How often did this type of thing happen? How did you handle it?

Have you ever had a situation when several people gave you assignments due around the same time? How did you decide what order to do them? Was that a successful approach to take?

Business Writing/Editing

When typing, what kinds of mistakes can you catch quickly and correct for the original writer?

When typing a document, which things do you feel comfortable changing without needing to check with the one who has assigned you the work? Which do you feel necessary to ask about before changing or rewriting?

What type of letters, memos, etc., can you set-up or write “from scratch.”

How much writing have you done from incomplete instructions or notes? Give me some examples, please.

What formats or form letters have you had experience working with?

Career Goals

What are some of the positive things about working in the clerical field?

How are you keeping up with the changes in software, technology, etc.?

What are your ultimate career goals? How are you going about reaching them?

What does “service” mean to you in this field?

What keeps you challenged, as a clerical or administrative support person? Is it enough?

Handling Clerical Pressure

Give me a recent example of a situation you have faced when the “pressure was on” and tell me what happened as a result and how you handled it.

How often have you had to deal with others’ frustrations? Give me an example of how you handled an upset person.

What is the busiest recent work situation you have worked under? How did you like it compared to other work situations? When did it become too busy? How did you cope?

How tight are the deadlines you have faced? Give me an example of a tight deadline you’ve faced recently.

In past work situations, when have you felt most overwhelmed by work pressures? How did you react?

Have you ever had a situation when someone was pressuring you for his or her work to be completed? How did you handle it?

Independence and Initiative

How have you organized your typical workday?

Give me an example of a complex assignment you have accomplished on your own. How did you get it started? Why did you set it up that way?

What amount of supervision do you feel most comfortable working under? Why?

What have you done when you have had “down” time at work?

How much training and guidance did you receive in past jobs?

What sort of directions do you want from a supervisor? Do you like detailed instructions or would you rather just know the highlights? Do you want them in writing?

What is a creative idea or change you’ve successfully put to work in a recent assignment?

Internal Relations

Give me an example of the kind of thing you have had to keep confidential. When was it most difficult to keep that confidence?

Which sort of manager (tenant, co-worker) do you find hardest to work with? What did they do that bothered you?

Give me an example of a recent conflict situation with a co-worker that you were involved in. What was your part in it?

Organization

How did you change a system or procedures you worked under in your last job?

What were your responsibilities for ordering supplies? How did you keep track of that responsibility?

What have you done that has organized others?

One of our biggest problems has always been keeping track of _____. What suggestions do you have for improving this?

What is the most technical assignment you have had to organize? What part of it was easiest/most difficult for you?

Attention to Detail

Walk me through how you set up and complete an assignment. What were the most important trouble spots you anticipated?

Have you had assignments that had many tiny details? Give me an example.

Do you enjoy proofreading or correcting other's work? Why or why not?

Assertiveness

Have you had to "speak up" recently to your boss or others who gave you work when it wasn't comfortable to do so?

Have you had people who gave you assignments without complete instructions? How did you handle it? Please give a recent example.

Have you ever had a situation when you found mistakes on an assignment someone else gave you (to type, process, etc.)? What did you do about it?

Illegal Questions

Federal, state, and municipal laws, as well as University policy, define a number of factors “irrelevant to employment” that may not be used to disqualify someone from consideration for a position. Accordingly, there are questions that managers may not ask in a job interview. In some cases, however, a question may be phrased in such a way that it falls within the law.

Interviewers should not ask about an applicant’s:

- Arrest Record
- Military Discharge Status
- Gender / Marital Status
- Maiden Name
- Number / Ages of Children
- Number of Preschool Children
- Spouse’s Name / Education / Income
- Birth Control / Family Plans
- Lawsuits / Legal Complaints
- Home / Car Ownership Status
- Form of Transportation to Work
- Loans / Credit Cards
- Bankruptcy / Wage Garnishing
- Insurance Claims
- Judgments
- Citizenship / National Origin
- Place of Birth
- Other Languages Spoken (unless related to position)
- English Proficiency (unless related to position)
- Disability / Handicap / Illness
- Hospitalizations / Medications / Treatments
- Workers’ Compensation Claims
- Weight
- Age / Date of High School Graduation
- Religion
- Church Affiliation
- Social Organizations

Questions Not to Ask:

- What kind of childcare arrangements do you have?
- Does your spouse expect you to be home to cook dinner?
- What will you do if your children get sick?
- How do you get to work?
- How many children do you have?
- Does your spouse live with you or contribute to your support?
- Do you own a home?
- Do you own a car?
- Do you have any debts?
- Do you have any loans?
- Do you plan to get married?
- Do you plan to have children?
- What birth control do you use?
- Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children?
- Is your spouse likely to be transferred?
- Is your spouse from this area?

- Would a [race / ethnicity] supervisor create any difficulties for you?
- How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
- Are you a militant?
- Do you get along well with other women (or men)?
- Will it bother you if others swear?
- What language does your mother / father speak?
- Were you born in this country?
- Do you have people in the “old country?”
- That’s an unusual name—what nationality are you?
- Can you provide a photograph of yourself?
- How old are you?

Adapted from *Interview Guide for Supervisors, 5th Edition*

In some cases, the position might have certain requirements that would seem to require the employer to ask about one of these sensitive topics. For example, some positions require the employee to drive his or her own car or lift or carry a certain amount of weight. In these cases, be careful how you phrase the question; you may obtain this information within the bounds of the Americans With Disabilities Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and other non-discrimination statutes.

Use the job description to ask the applicant about stated requirements of the job, such as overnight travel or fluency in a foreign language. Do not ask explicit questions about any of the “Factors Irrelevant to Employment,” such as the applicant’s disability status, national origin, ethnicity, or family situation. If a candidate mentions any of these factors, such as religion, ethnicity, or family plans, tell him or her that the law prohibits you from discussing such subjects in an employment interview.

For example:

You may ask...

- This position requires moving 45-pound boxes. Would you be able to perform the essential functions of this position, with or without a reasonable accommodation?
- This position requires fluency in Spanish. Are you fluent?
- This position requires overnight trips to several conferences. Does overnight or weekend travel present a problem for you?

You may not ask...

- Can you think of any reasonable accommodations you would need to perform these tasks?
- What languages do you speak at home?
- What are your childcare arrangements?

Adapted from “How to Avoid Improper Interview Questions”
<http://www.laborlaws.com>

Use the job description to define which functions of the job are truly essential, which may be performed in an alternate—but equally effective—way, and which tasks may be reassigned to an

employee without a disability. You may not ask explicit questions about an applicant's disability, only about his or her ability to perform job-related functions.

Appendix B: Additional Competency-based Behavioral Interview Questions

Ethical Practice

- Describe a time when you came across questionable business practices. How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever faced a significant ethical problem at work? How did you handle it?
- Describe a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you deal with this situation, and what was the outcome?
- Have you worked in a situation in which an employee, vendor or supplier had a conflict of interest? How did you handle this?
- Describe a time when you had an opportunity to personally profit from your employer's product.
- Tell me about an ethical situation you have encountered and the part you took in resolving it.
- Describe the most difficult employee relations situation you have had to handle. What did you do to try to resolve it, and why?

Leadership and Navigation

- What are some of the most important steps you've used in making business-related decisions?
- Give a specific example of a decision you made that was not effective. Why do you think it was not effective, and what did you do when this realization was made?
- Describe a time when you had to make a very important and difficult decision that affected everyone in your department.
- Recount a time when you were not the authority but had to make a decision about the team's next step(s).
- Can you tell me about a time during your previous employment when, unsolicited, you suggested a better way to perform a process?



- Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you kept from getting bored when dealing with routine tasks. Give me an example of a time you were able to take the lead in changing a policy for your department and for the organization.
- Give me an example of a time when you needed to help other employees learn a new skill set. What did you do?
- Have you ever been in a position in which you had to lead a group of peers? How did you handle it? Tell me about problems you had and how you handled them.
- Have you ever managed a situation in which the people or units reporting to you were in different locations? Tell me how this worked.
- Tell me about your experience working with a board of directors. What approach and philosophy did you follow in working with boards?
- Tell me about a time when you organized, managed and motivated others on a complex task from beginning to end.
- Give me an example of how you have motivated your employees.
- Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What would you change (or will you change) when faced with a similar situation?
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult boss, co-worker or customer. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you inherited a process that wasn't working and you had limited time to fix it.
- Have you ever had to champion an unpopular change? What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
- Have you ever had to persuade a peer or superior to accept an idea that you knew he or she would not like? Tell me about the resistance you met and how you overcame it.
- Have you ever had to persuade a group to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result, and how did you feel about it?
- Have you ever had to persuade an executive (or other superior) to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result, and how did you feel about it?
- Describe an occasion when you recommended a change to procedure. What did you learn from that experience? How did you apply that learning in other situations?
- What was the most challenging employee performance issue you've had to deal with, and how did you handle it?
- Explain, step by step, how you have handled an employee who had performance problems.
- Describe a time when you needed to discipline an employee who reported directly to you.
- What coaching or mentoring experience have you had? With groups or one-on-one? How did you determine the appropriate way to coach or mentor, and what were the results?



Business Acumen

- Tell me about a time you used your knowledge of the organization to get an idea approved.
- Tell me about a time you used financial data to support a successful project.
- Tell me about a time when you used industry data to support a successful project.
- Tell me about a time when you used economic environment data to support a successful project.
What have you done in your previous positions at other companies that made a significant difference to the business and for which you believe you will be remembered?
- Recall an occasion when you had to explain your department's losses.
- Have you ever been over budget? Why? How did you handle this?
- Recount a time when you had to prioritize bill or invoice payment.
- If you could pick a stock to add to this company's portfolio, which one would it be? Why?
- Describe a tough financial analysis problem you were able to solve and how you solved it.
- Walk me through a financial statement (pick one).

Consultation

- Tell me about a long-term project that you were responsible for that required you to communicate with numerous people and departments.
- Think of a specific project that you've completed. Were you successful in achieving the desired results?
- What was the most interesting or challenging technical proposal you've ever written?
- Tell me about the most challenging project you managed.
- Have you had a nonproductive team member on your project team? What happened, and how did you handle this situation?
- What did you bring to the last team on which you were a member? Describe how your strengths improved the team.
- What was the last big project you worked on? How did you start this project? What obstacles did you overcome? Were the deadlines met? Why or why not? What would you have done differently?
- Tell me about a project you worked on and how it helped the organization meet its business goals.
- What have you done to help your human resource department become a strategic partner?

Critical Evaluation

- Describe for me a decision you made that would normally have been made by your supervisor. What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you needed to use the principles of logic to solve a problem.



- Have you ever solved a problem that others around you could not solve? Tell me about it.
- What was one of the toughest problems you ever solved? What process did you go through to solve it?
- Tell me about a time when you had a work problem and didn't know what to do.
- Tell me about a time when you solved one problem but created others.
- Tell me about a time when a work problem was more than it at first appeared to be.
- How have you approached solving a problem that initially seemed insurmountable?
- What have you done when faced with an obstacle to an important project? Give me an example.
- How do you analyze different options to determine which is the best alternative?
- Describe for me how your prior positions required you to be proficient in the analysis of technical reports.
Give an example of when you used analytical techniques to design solutions to solve problems.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to engage in future planning.
- Tell me about a time when you participated in developing your departmental or organizational business strategy. What was your role? How did you approach it?
- Tell me about a time when you identified a need for a new approach or product to meet a market need.
- Tell of how your job (at a current or former employer) was directly related to a strategic goal.
- The last time that you experienced a technical problem during your workday, to whom did you go for help? Why did you choose this person?
- Tell me about a time when you used your technical knowledge to solve a problem that appeared to be unsolvable.
- Describe a technical report that you had to complete. What did the report entail? What was the purpose? Who was the audience?
- Describe a time when you had to share data electronically.

Communication

- Give some examples of how and when you were the spokesperson for your current (or most recent) company.
- Give an example of how you carefully considered your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influenced your communication?
- Describe a time you used your communications skills to negotiate with an angry person.
- Have you ever given a presentation to a group? How did you prepare for it? What would you do differently?
- Describe a time when you were able to overcome a communications barrier(s).
- Tell me about a time when effective listening skills helped you in a problematic situation.
- Tell me about a time when you thought someone wasn't listening to you. What did you do? □
Recount an occasion when you were greeted with a greeting that was not normal for you. How'd you respond?



Global and Cultural Effectiveness

- On your last expatriate assignment, what did you do to ensure that your adjustment into the new environment went smoothly?
- Tell me about a time when working in a different country you had to adapt to the culture. What adaptations did you have to make? How did you go about it?
- Describe a situation in which you have had to work in a multicultural environment and the challenges you had. How did you approach the situation, and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you worked in a remote location or situation that was totally foreign.
- Talk about a time when you worked abroad.
- What has been the most challenging aspect of being in a diverse working environment? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?
- Tell me about a time you had to alter your work style to meet a diversity need or challenge.
- How have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of diversity of others? What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?
- Describe a time when you included someone in your team or on a project because you felt he or she would bring a different perspective.

Relationship Management

- Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a difficult time you have had dealing with an employee or customer. Why was it difficult? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you were instrumental in creating or improving a good relationship with another department within your company.
- Recall an occasion when you had to work with people from different divisions to accomplish a single goal.
- Recount an occasion when you were able to connect individuals from different backgrounds or cultures in a unified organizational effort.
- Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.
- Tell me about a time when you asked for feedback on your customer service skills from your manager or co-worker and then used that response to improve your work.
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult guest- or client-relations problem. What was the outcome? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you knew that your customer might not get what he or she needed on time. How did you handle this?



- Tell me about a time when you had to say "no" to a customer because his or her request was against company policy.
- Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with a difficult or demanding customer. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a situation in which you "lost it" or did not do your best with a customer. What did you do about this?
- Describe a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations.
- Describe a time when you lost a customer. What would you do differently?
- Tell me about a time when a team project failed.
- Tell me about a time when you needed to work as part of a team to satisfy a client or resolve an issue.
- Tell me about a time you worked on a cross-functional team. Were there different challenges compared to a departmental-task team?
- When groups work together, conflict often erupts. Tell me about a time that conflict occurred in one of your workgroups and what you did about it.
- Tell me about a time you pitched in to help a team member finish a project even though it "wasn't your job." What was the result?
- Tell me about a situation in which political power plays affected team dynamics. How did you or the team overcome this situation, and how could the situation have been avoided? Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?
- Tell me the role you play within workgroups and why.
- Tell me about the most effective contribution you have made as part of a task group or special project team.
- Have you ever worked on a virtual team? If so, tell me about this experience. What were the team dynamics? Was the team successful? If not, what do you perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of this type of team? What would you do differently? How would you suggest creating team cohesiveness in a virtual setting?

Other Organizational Competencies

Time Management

- Have you worked under time constraints before? Give us an example.
- Was there a time when you struggled to meet a deadline? Tell us about it.
- Describe a time you identified a barrier to your (or to others') productivity and what you did about it.
- When you have a lot of work to do or multiple priorities, how do you get it all done? Give me an example.
- Give an example of how you stay organized when juggling multiple tasks.



Thoroughness

- What means have you used to focus on detail and to keep from making mistakes?
- When there's a decision for a new critical process, what means do you use to communicate step-by-step processes to ensure other people understand and will complete the process correctly?
- Tell me the steps you take to monitor the quality of your work in your current job.
- How do you decide when something is "good enough" or when it needs to be as close as possible to perfection? When have you had to make this determination? Explain.
- Describe a time when you failed to satisfy a client or customer due to some minor neglect. What did you do to correct it?

Flexibility

- Give an example of a time when you were trying to meet a deadline and you were interrupted and did not make the deadline. How did you respond?
- Give an example of a time when you had to quickly change project priorities. How did you do it?
- Recount a time when you accommodated someone beyond your comfort level, though you didn't have to.
- How have you reacted when you found yourself stalled in an inefficient process?
- Tell me about a time when significant changes took place in your job. What did you do to adjust to the change(s)?

Learning Orientation

- Describe a time when you took a new job that required a much different set of skills from what you had. How did you go about acquiring the needed skills?
- Have you had an occasion when a prior strength actually turned out to be a weakness in another setting? How did you cope?
- Throughout your career have you learned more about your profession through course work or through on-the-job experience? Explain.
- What area of your last job was most challenging for you? Why was this specific part of the position difficult? Is this still challenging? Why or why not?
- Tell me about a time when you volunteered for an assignment to expand your knowledge and skills.
- Tell of a time when you had to educate yourself about a topic to make a presentation.

Stress Management

- Tell me about a work "nightmare" you were involved in. How did you approach the situation, and what was the outcome?
- Have you ever been caught unaware by a problem or obstacle that you had not foreseen? What happened?

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Attendance/Punctuality

When do you feel it is necessary to work overtime? Please give me an example from a recent job.

What would your last supervisor or manager say about your attendance or punctuality? How many times would he or she say you were absent or late this year?

Flexibility

Please give me an example of a time when management would not allow you to take a necessary action, even though you felt it was necessary to do so. (A change in work procedures, for example)

Have you worked in an organization that changed its policies or procedures frequently? How did you deal with that?

Give me an example of a time when you were given tasks to accomplish without advance warning.

Have you ever had to make a decision before you had all the data you wanted? Give me an example. What did you do?

Has a policy or directive come down with which you really disagreed? What was it? What did you do?

How much stability would you like in terms of a fixed job description? How much have you had at other organizations?

Independence / Level of Supervision

Give me an example of a complex assignment you have accomplished on your own. How did you get started? Why did you set it up that way?

What amount of supervision do you feel most comfortable working under? Why?

What have you done when you have had time when your work has slowed down? Please be specific.

How much training and guidance did you receive in past jobs?

What sort of directions do you want from a supervisor or someone who delegates work to you? Do you like detailed instructions, or would you rather just know the highlights? Do you want them in writing?

If you were a manager, how much freedom would you give your employees to do things their way? In which areas or situations should an employee simply follow procedures and guidelines and not try it his or her own way?

How much information do you need to get started on a new project or assignment?

When have you had to produce results without sufficient guidelines or information? What did you do?

Organization

How did you change the system or procedures you worked under in your last job?

What were your responsibilities for ordering or maintaining supplies? How did you keep track of that responsibility?

What have you done that has organized others? Your boss, for example.

One of our biggest problems has always been keeping track of _____. What suggestions or ideas do you have for improving this?

Give me an example of a recent time when you had to reorganize things to meet a tight deadline. How did you arrange your schedule and work to accomplish it?

Should there be some text here? Tell me what the original document said and we can work with it from there.

What is the most technical assignment you have had to organize? What part of it was easiest for you? Which part was most difficult?

Career Ambitions

What are you looking for in a job that you haven't had before? What would make you want to stay in the job?

Describe the ideal workday for you. How would you spend your time during the day?

Ideally, what would an organization provide for you in terms of income progression over the next two to three years?

Give me an example of when you have "outgrown" previous jobs and knew it was time to move on. How did you know it was time?

What do you consider your three greatest achievements and why?

How have your past jobs prepared you for this one?

In what areas would you like to develop further? How do you see this job allowing you to develop in those ways?

Creativity and Innovation

Which do you prefer to work with – a set, planned day or a day you create for yourself? Why?

Please tell me a great idea you have seen in your field recently. Why was it unique?

If you could change one thing about the efficiency at your current job, what would it be?

What is the most creative thing you have done in a past job? How did it occur?

Dependability

If we hired you, what could we count on you for without fail?

How do you know you're doing a good job?

Give me an example of a time when your manager or others in your company placed excessive demands on you. What did they want? What did you do?

What is an example of something you've done that showed excellent performance? Be specific.

What did you expect of yourself in your last job? In what ways did it differ from what your manager expected of you?

What were your three most important tangible contributions to your company?

What do you think an employee owes his or her company?

What results were you expected to accomplish in your last job? How were they measured?

Goal Orientation

Please describe how you set and measure your work goals.

Have you ever been held accountable for reaching a goal that you knew wasn't possible to attain? What did you do?

Describe which job and which manager got the most out of your potential. What made that situation so productive?

Have you ever suggested ideas that were not accepted by management? What did you do then?

Of your recent jobs, which one required the fastest actions or decisions? How did you feel in those situations? Please describe one.

How do you monitor the progress of assignments and projects?

Initiative

What ideas have you sold to your management? Why? What happened?

Give me an example of something you recommended that was not adopted? Why? What could you have done differently?

What ways have you found to make your job easier or more interesting?

Give me an example of a project you were responsible for starting. What did you do? How did it work out?

What is a creative idea or change you've successfully put to work in a recent assignment?

Problem Solving/Analytical Skills

Have you ever been assigned several important projects at roughly the same time? How did you go about setting priorities for your time?

Give me an example of a difficult decision you had to make at your last job? How did you solve it? Follow up: Why did you choose that method rather than another solution?

What kinds of problems do you feel you are uniquely qualified to solve? Give me an example of how you have demonstrated this.

Please describe your current approach to searching for employment.

What information or technical support has helped you succeed on the job (for example, standardized forms, procedures, goals, delivery date, etc.)? Which have you created on your own to make things more efficient?

What has been a stubborn or recurring problem which you would have liked to solve in your current job—but haven't yet?

What process do you follow in solving problems?

Interpersonal Communication Skills

What sorts of things do you feel are important for an employee to share with a manager and vice versa?

Give me an example of the kind of co-worker, manager or customer with whom you find it difficult to communicate and why.

In past jobs, when did you find it important to disagree with your boss? How did you approach him or her and what was the result?

What kind of performance feedback do you want and how often would you like to get it?

Name one recent success you've had in dealing with a vendor, customer, etc. How did you accomplish it?

How do you persuade others to get what you want?

Can you describe the person or people you got along with best at your last job?

What has characterized your least successful relationships at work? What did you do to try to create a better relationship?

What role do you usually take in a group meeting or discussion? What are the advantages and disadvantages of that approach?

What does the "open door" policy mean to you? Do you think it works?

Ability to Learn

Give me an example of a situation at your previous employer when others knew more than you. How did you close the gap?

How do you keep up with the changes in technology in your field?

If you could acquire one skill or bit of job knowledge, what would it be? What do you need to acquire it? How can we help?

What is the soonest you have been able to learn something new for a job?

Which courses gave you trouble in school? Which came easily?

What would you expect from us to get you oriented or trained?

How soon could you learn this job well enough to become productive and valuable to us?

Motivation

What has made you feel excited about coming to work? When have you felt “down” or unfulfilled by a job?

In all of your jobs, which gave you the most meaningful experiences? Why?

What do you need from an organization to feel motivated?

Why did you choose this profession? What rewards does it give you? Why do you stay in it?

What should a manager do to motivate others? Why does it sometimes fail?

When has your morale been the highest at work? Why?

What is your definition of success? Follow-up: How are you measuring up? How will you go about achieving that goal?

Cooperation

What did you do to support your co-workers in your last job? Please give me a specific example of a time when you helped or supported a co-worker.

Give me an example of a time you had to take the lead with your work group to get a task done. How did you get cooperation?

Which problems do you feel are appropriate to bring to your manager? Give me an example of how you usually approach a manager with a problem.

Would you rather work on a team or on your own?

What do you require from a boss?

What is a “pet peeve” you have had about an organization or an environment you’ve worked in?

Organization, Attention To Detail, and Time Usage

Walk me through how you set up and completed a job specific assignment. What were the most important trouble spots you anticipated?

Have you had assignments that had many tiny details (e.g., processing statistics, categorizing material, setting up forms)? Give me an example.

Do you enjoy proofreading or correcting other’s work? Why (or why not?)

How do you feel a meeting should be organized to be most effective? Give me an example of one you’ve attended that worked well?

Would you rather formulate a plan or carry it out? Why? Give me an example of a plan you have implemented.

What is the most irritating part of your current job – the part you might wish you could delegate to someone else? Why?

Have you ever had an experience when you were responsible for coordinating several small tasks to accomplish a large job? Please give me an example.

Do you typically write memos to others or do you usually deliver messages on the phone or in person?

Describe how you handled the details of your last major project.

Describe a way you have improved a system or task at your last/present job?

How do you decide what you should work on next?

Stress

In your last job, when did you feel pressured? Why?

In a past job, what was most likely to create stress for you? For example, a tough deadline? Juggling priorities? Meeting others' expectations? Why?

Give me an example of what an organization/management should do to cushion or prevent the effects of stress from a job.

What happens to your work when you feel pressured? How do you know stress is affecting your work?

What do you think would be the most stressful aspect of this job for you? Why?

Have you ever had a key person you depended on quit during an important job? What did you do? How did you feel about it?

What have you found to be the most effective way to avoid "burn out"? How did you discover it?

Conflict

Give me an example of a recent situation when you disagreed with someone on the job. What were your options for settling it? Why did you choose the option you did?

What kinds of disagreements are you able to handle easily? Which have you been involved in which were upsetting or difficult for you?

When you've been criticized at work, how did you react? Who has criticized your work in a way you found comfortable? When have you felt over-criticized?

Illegal Questions

Federal, state, and municipal laws, as well as University policy, define a number of factors “irrelevant to employment” that may not be used to disqualify someone from consideration for a position. Accordingly, there are questions that managers may not ask in a job interview. In some cases, however, a question may be phrased in such a way that it falls within the law.

Interviewers should not ask about an applicant’s:

- Arrest Record
- Military Discharge Status
- Gender / Marital Status
- Maiden Name
- Number / Ages of Children
- Number of Preschool Children
- Spouse’s Name / Education / Income
- Birth Control / Family Plans
- Lawsuits / Legal Complaints
- Home / Car Ownership Status
- Form of Transportation to Work
- Loans / Credit Cards
- Bankruptcy / Wage Garnishing
- Insurance Claims
- Judgments
- Citizenship / National Origin
- Place of Birth
- Other Languages Spoken (unless related to position)
- English Proficiency (unless related to position)
- Disability / Handicap / Illness
- Hospitalizations / Medications / Treatments
- Workers’ Compensation Claims
- Weight
- Age / Date of High School Graduation
- Religion
- Church Affiliation
- Social Organizations

Questions Not to Ask:

- What kind of childcare arrangements do you have?
- Does your spouse expect you to be home to cook dinner?
- What will you do if your children get sick?
- How do you get to work?
- How many children do you have?
- Does your spouse live with you or contribute to your support?
- Do you own a home?
- Do you own a car?
- Do you have any debts?
- Do you have any loans?
- Do you plan to get married?
- Do you plan to have children?
- What birth control do you use?
- Are you likely to quit if you get married or have children?
- Is your spouse likely to be transferred?
- Is your spouse from this area?

- Would a [race / ethnicity] supervisor create any difficulties for you?
- How do you feel about having to work with members of a different race?
- Are you a militant?
- Do you get along well with other women (or men)?
- Will it bother you if others swear?
- What language does your mother / father speak?
- Were you born in this country?
- Do you have people in the “old country?”
- That’s an unusual name—what nationality are you?
- Can you provide a photograph of yourself?
- How old are you?

Adapted from *Interview Guide for Supervisors, 5th Edition*

In some cases, the position might have certain requirements that would seem to require the employer to ask about one of these sensitive topics. For example, some positions require the employee to drive his or her own car or lift or carry a certain amount of weight. In these cases, be careful how you phrase the question; you may obtain this information within the bounds of the Americans With Disabilities Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and other non-discrimination statutes.

Use the job description to ask the applicant about stated requirements of the job, such as overnight travel or fluency in a foreign language. Do not ask explicit questions about any of the factors “irrelevant to employment,” such as the applicant’s disability status, national origin, ethnicity, or family situation. If a candidate mentions any of these factors, such as religion, ethnicity, or family plans, tell him or her that the law prohibits you from discussing such subjects in an employment interview.

For example:

You may ask...

- This position requires moving 45-pound boxes. Would you be able to perform the essential functions of this position, with or without a reasonable accommodation?
- This position requires fluency in Spanish. Are you fluent?
- This position requires overnight trips to several conferences. Does overnight or weekend travel present a problem for you?

You may not ask...

- Can you think of any reasonable accommodations you would need to perform these tasks?
- What languages do you speak at home?
- What are your childcare arrangements?

Adapted from “How to Avoid Improper Interview Questions”
<http://www.laborlaws.com>

Use the job description to define which functions of the job are truly essential, which may be performed in an alternate—but equally effective—way, and which tasks may be reassigned to an

employee without a disability. You may not ask explicit questions about an applicant's disability, only about his or her ability to perform job-related functions.