

American Chemical Society

ACS
Chemistry for Life

Acing the Interview

ACS Career Pathways Series

American Chemical Society

ACS
Chemistry for Life

"Tell Me about Yourself..."

Pairs activity

American Chemical Society

ACS
Chemistry for Life

The Two Sides of the Interview Process

<i>For the Employer</i>	<i>For the Employee</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical competence? • Scientific fit? • Desire and motivation? • Fit with corporate culture? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview of job responsibilities? • Career path and potential? • Match with culture, supervisor, and co-workers?

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society

ACS
Chemistry for Life

Overview

The High-Level Interview Process

- The screening interview
- The preliminary interview
- The on-site interview

*Rating Process -
Getting to know you*

American Chemical Society



The Screening Interview

- Who: Often someone from HR (not the hiring manager)
- How: On-campus, clearinghouse, phone
- Purpose: Eliminate all but the top 10 to 15% of candidates
- Format:
 - From 30 minutes (B.S. and M.S.) to 60 minutes (Ph.D.)
 - Clarify resume information
 - Discuss research summary
 - Make preliminary assessment of skills and capabilities

American Chemical Society



The Preliminary Interview

- Who: The hiring manager
- How: Typically phone
- Purpose: Qualify for invitation to on-site interview
- Tips for telephone interview:
 - Be totally focused on the conversation
 - Show enthusiasm
 - Stand, smile
 - Have appropriate version of resumé handy
 - Reschedule, if inconvenient
 - Avoid using a cell phone
 - Get call back number

American Chemical Society



The On-Site Interview

- Who: Hiring manager, department head, HR, search committee
- How: Visit to campus or company facility
- Purpose: Determine suitability for job offer
- Typical format:
 - Introductions
 - Research seminar
 - Series of interviews (often in the behavioral interview format)
 - Facilities tour
 - Project discussions
 - Debrief and wrap-up

American Chemical Society



Acing the Interview: Agenda

- Preparing for the interview
- Outshining the competition
- Managing your job decisions

American Chemical Society



ACING THE INTERVIEW: AGENDA

- Preparing for the interview
 - Identifying critical performance factors for the position
 - Doing due diligence on the organization



CRITICAL PERFORMANCE FACTORS: SOME EXAMPLES

- Master of sub-field
- Problem solver
- Innovator
- Risk taker
- Collaborator
- Pursuer of excellence
- Leader
- Business acumen (for industry)
- Political acumen

Can we get a better list?



READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Small group activity



DOING DUE DILIGENCE

Academe

gov't

Industry

- Industry
 - Trends, issues, challenges
 - Industry structure, main competitors
 - Industry statistics
- Company
 - Strategy (what the company counts on to win vs its competitors)
 - Structure (how it is organized)
 - Main product lines
 - Profitability profiles and stock price trends
 - Main challenges in the marketplace

American Chemical Society

ACS
University of Life
Chemistry for Life

Doing the Due Diligence

Small group activity

American Chemical Society

ACS
University of Life
Chemistry for Life

Acing the Interview: Agenda

- Outshining the competition: the interview process
 - Overview of the on-site interview
 - The Behavioral Interview format
 - Handling difficult questions
 - The Research Talk

American Chemical Society

ACS
University of Life
Chemistry for Life

The On-Site Interview (Review)

- Who: Hiring manager, department head, HR, search committee
- How: Visit to campus or company facility
- Purpose: Determine suitability for job offer
- Typical format:
 - Introductions
 - Research seminar
 - Series of interviews (often in the behavioral interview format)
 - Facilities tour
 - Project discussions
 - Debrief and wrap-up

1-2 days

American Chemical Society

ACS
University of Life
Chemistry for Life

The Behavioral Interview

- The most commonly used interview format in business
- The principle: the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior
- Provides a standardized format that different interviewers can use to compare notes:
 - Among themselves
 - To compare one candidate with another

Interviewers "Tell me about a Time..."

The Structure of the Behavioral Interview



~~Question (C-A-R)~~

ANSWER

- **Context:** Candidate describes a job-related context or situation similar to the one in question
- **Action:** Candidate describes what he or she did in that situation.
- **Result:** Candidate describes what happened as a result of his or her action.

American Chemical Society

How the Behavioral Interview Generally Works



- Interviewers often meet in advance to decide who will ask what questions.
- The interviewer will ask the question in a behavioral format ("Tell me about a time when...")
- As the candidate answers, the interviewer calibrates responses against a behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS).
- After the series of interviews, interviewers compare notes and consolidate evaluations.

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society



The Behavioral Question: An Example

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (Example)



Competency	1	2	3	4	5
Problem solving	Unable to formulate a problem or identify causes	Able to identify causes, but not solutions	able to develop but not implement solutions to problems	Able to develop and implement solutions to problems	Able to develop and implement solutions to unusual problems
Business acumen	Shows little grasp of how a business operates	Demonstrates basic grasp of how a business makes money	Demonstrates understanding of components of profit and loss	Understands the roles and responsibilities of different functional areas	Understands higher-level business processes (e.g. funding, etc.)

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society ACS
Quantity for Life

Anticipate Their Questions

- Identify your math strengths and prepare a behavioral example for each. *Most significant accomplishments*
- Identify your main weaknesses or gaps and prepare an answer for each.
- Be able to describe how your skills would advance their objectives or help them meet their challenges
- Practice your responses aloud

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society ACS
Quantity for Life

Practicing a Behavioral Interview

Answering based questions

Part 3 activity

American Chemical Society ACS
Quantity for Life

Prepare Your Own Questions

Industry Questions	Academic Questions
--------------------	--------------------

- How does your company differ from its competitors? Why do customers choose this company?
- What can you tell me about the corporate culture of this organization? What are the key qualities it takes to succeed here?
- Can you tell me about how this group is structured? Who reports to whom?
- What does the company count on to win? How does this work group contribute to that objective?

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society ACS
Quantity for Life

Some Difficult Questions

- "Tell me about yourself."
- "Are you married? Do you have any kids?"
- "What kind of salary package are you looking for?"
- "Why do you think you're the best person for this job?"
- "What would you say was your greatest weakness?"
- "Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or team member? How was that resolved?"

American Chemical Society

Handling Difficult Questions



- Prepare an answer ~~for each of the previous~~.
- Take a breath and think ~~for a second~~ before you answer.
- Ask for clarification, ~~if appropriate~~, or restate the question.
- Support your assertions with evidence, stories, and examples (get specific).
- In the middle of your response, check to see that you're answering the question.
- Always tell the truth (it's easier to keep track of).

American Chemical Society

Your Research Talk



- Key means of judging technical competence
- Provides information on:
 - Communication skills
 - Drive, motivation, and determination
- Interpersonal skills (poise, sense of humor)
- Critical to job offer (difficult to recover from a poor seminar)

American Chemical Society

Practicing Answering Tough Questions

Pairs activity

American Chemical Society




Format for a Research Talk



- Concise statement of the problem
- Background material
- Description of your approach
 - Experimental design
 - Techniques used and reasons for choices
- Major findings
- Conclusions
- Future work
- Acknowledgments

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society




Handling Difficult Questions

- Prepare an answer ~~for each of the previous~~.
- Take a breath and think ~~for a second~~ before you answer.
- Ask for clarification, ~~if appropriate~~, or restate the question.
- Support your assertions with evidence, stories, and examples (get specific).
- In the middle of your response, check to see that you're answering the question.
- Always tell the truth (it's easier to keep track of).

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society



Practicing Answering Tough Questions

Pairs activity

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society



Your Research Talk

- Key means of judging technical competence
- Provides information on:
 - Communication skills
 - Drive, motivation, and determination
- Interpersonal skills (poise, sense of humor)
- Critical to job offer (difficult to recover from a poor seminar)

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society



Format for a Research Talk

- Concise statement of the problem
- Background material
- Description of your approach
 - Experimental design
 - Techniques used and reasons for choices
- Major findings
- Conclusions
- Future work
- Acknowledgments

American Chemical Society

Tips for Your Research Talk



- Teach them about your area of research
- Tailor your seminar to them
- Don't bluff when you don't know the answer to a question
- Know the literature in your sub-field and be aware of recent breakthroughs
- Stay within the time limit

*Ask for logistics ahead of time
bring backup*

32

American Chemical Society

Acing the Interview: Agenda



- Managing your job decisions

American Chemical Society

Visit Follow Ups



- Stay on the company's radar screen:
 - Follow-up phone calls
 - Personalized thank you notes
- Ask when a decision will be made
- Call back on agreed-upon day
- Tell your network of your progress

33

American Chemical Society

Managing Your Job Decisions




- Be clear about what you need or want
- Assemble your job search data
- Analyze each job offer
- Rank your alternatives
- Make your decision
- Conclude the process professionally

35

American Chemical Society

American Chemical Society




Make Your Decision

- Evaluate your options carefully; talk them over with those directly affected by your decision.
- Make your best decision.
- Telephone your chosen employer to accept the job offer, and follow up in writing.
- Promptly call the other employers to inform them that you have accepted elsewhere.
- Terminate plans for any remaining interviews.

40


American Chemical Society



Acing the Interview: Review

- Preparing for the interview
- Outshining the competition
- Managing your job decisions

American Chemical Society




Conclude the Process Professionally

- Inform your network and thank them
- If a student or post-doc,
 - Review remaining obligations with your advisor and negotiate date for completion
 - Tell new employer your expected starting date, keep him or her informed of your progress
 - Complete and file thesis before leaving
- Take a vacation, relocate and move in before starting new job

41

American Chemical Society



Practicing the Interview

Pair activity

*make interview
Deno.*