



Interviewing tips

Before the interviewing process

Make sure your ring tone, voice mail message and any other identifiers a recruiter might come in contact with are professional and polished. This includes social networking sites like facebook.

Some ways to practice for the interview

- **Start remembering everything.** On the Career Services website there is a clinical reflection guide to help you recall or track clinicals throughout your program.
- **Practice answers to sample questions.** You'll find sample questions on the back of this handout. You'll find them online. You'll find them in interviewing books. There will be no shortage of sample questions.
- **Brainstorm competencies/qualities a good nurse needs to have.** While sample questions are great, there's a good chance you're not going to get asked all of the questions you prepared for. Take a step back from the sample questions and generate a list of things a good nurse (nurse practitioner, etc.) needs to be able to do. Then, practice answering four questions related to each quality. Let's use teamwork as an example.
 - Why is teamwork important as a nurse?
 - Why is teamwork important for the NICU? (insert whatever type of unit or facility or specialty you're looking at)
 - When is a time you did this quality really well and what did you learn?
 - When is a time you didn't do so well and what did you learn?

Common nursing interview questions

- Why did you choose nursing?
- Why do you want to work here/why this type of position/in this community?
- What is your personal philosophy of nursing?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses and how do those relate to nursing/this position?
- What are your long or short term nursing career goals?
- What have been your favorite courses? Why?
- What types of patients are difficult for you to care for?
- What types of patients are your favorite?
- Describe your ideal nursing environment.
- How do you cope with challenging situations?
- Describe the relationship you see between managers and nurses.
- Tell me about a time where you had a difficult patient or physician.
- Tell me about your most challenging clinical experience.
- What gives you the most satisfaction as a nurse?
- What are some of the characteristics of a nurse you admire?
- What do you do for fun?

Behavioral interview questions

Behavioral questions often take the form of “tell me about a time when...” or “describe a situation when...” They are commonly used in all types of interviews because they give employers a chance to hear about your experiences and get a sense of how you might handle a similar situation in their work environment. The best strategy for answering behavioral questions is something called the **STAR** technique.

Situation/Task- briefly set the scene for the experience you’ll be sharing. Many people spend too much time on the “S/T”. As you practice, try to not bore the potential listener with unnecessary details.

Action- what happened as the situation unfolded. Include details about what you did, but also how, why, etc.

Response- this is often the most important part of the answer, but a lot of people run out of time or get off track before they get to the “R” because they spend too much time on the “S/T”. It’s great to hear about an event or situation that happened, but the real depth comes with the response or what you learned from situation. What did you accomplish? What lessons did you learn? What might you do differently in the future? Why was this an important event? Any reflection around these prompts shows the employers that you not only can recall past situations, but you can *learn* from them.

Don’t worry if you haven’t ever been in the situation about which they ask. Be honest (do not make up a story) and let them know you’re answering the question hypothetically.

Also don’t worry about trying to make every answer come from a clinical experience. Many of your answers may come from situations you’ve been in from your clinical work or externships or other health care experience. However, some answers might come from your involvement in a student organization, a GEC you took, or a job you once had unrelated to nursing. The quality of your answer and your ability to relate the situation to a strength you bring to this particular job is more important than where the situation happened.

During the interview

Bring something that can hold some extra resume, cover letters, reference lists, and/or recommendation letters (you never know when they might ask for one and then you’ll be prepared!) and something where you can write down any notes you might want to take or sample questions to ask. You don’t need to memorize your questions for the employer. Write them down beforehand and refer to your paper when it comes time to ask. Please see the “Sample Questions to Ask the Employer” handout for ideas.

If you ever get a question that you don’t understand, can’t answer, or aren’t sure if you’re getting at what the interviewer wants, don’t be afraid to speak up. You can simply say “is this answering your question?” or “I’m not sure what you mean by that question, can you please rephrase that?” There is no shame; better to speak up before starting down the path and botching an answer.

After the interview

Many people either feel really great about the interview right afterward or start replaying so-so answers back in their head and worrying. Either way, use this time when the interview is fresh in your mind to jot down some thoughts. What questions did you ace and feel confident about? What questions posed a challenge for you? Use these clues to help you prep for your next interview. Don’t worry too much about answers that could have been better. Everyone can always do better in an interview; the goal is to get to a place where you can best showcase your talents and fit for the position.

Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the interview. If you feel so inclined, you may earn extra points by sending a thank you card within 2 days of the interview. The format can be simple. Thank the interviewer for his or her time, restate your interest/excitement about the position, and remind the interviewer of the things you talked about that were your strong points for the role. The thank you note can be a great reminder for the interviewer of how well you fit in this particular job. The note or email doesn’t have to be extremely long, just long enough to address these things.