

INTERVIEW READY: FROM CAMPUS TO CAREER

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide will help prepare you to interview with prospective employers for a full-time position, internship, or co-op.



Georgia Tech
Career Center

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Interviewing

An interview gives you (the candidate) and the employer an opportunity to evaluate each other. While employers get the opportunity to further assess you as the candidate, and your skills and abilities, you as the candidate get the opportunity to speak with employer representatives.

You can obtain a clearer understanding of the position, the employer's mission and goals, and the working environment. This is your opportunity to prove to the interviewer that you are capable of doing the job they need to get done and showcase how you will add value to their organization if you are hired to work with them.

Formats

Phone Interview / Phone Screen

These are typically a 15- to 60-minute 1-on-1 conversations that will assess interest, clarify qualifications and skill level, and may occasionally discuss salary expectations.

Phone Interview Tips:

- ▷ Clarify expectations of the call (i.e., will you need to call in or will they call you?).
- ▷ Answer the phone professionally. Ex: "Hello, this is [first name last name]."
- ▷ Choose a quiet interview location free from distractions and disable notifications on your phone to minimize interruptions and background noise.
- ▷ Keep your resume and notes nearby.
- ▷ Sit up straight or stand during a phone interview to sound more confident and alert.
- ▷ Make sure your device is sufficiently charged.
- ▷ Speak clearly and directly into the phone and be mindful of your tone.
- ▷ Smile while speaking on the phone (your excitement will show on the call).
- ▷ Conduct your interview in a space with reliable cell service.
- ▷ Listen carefully and take notes when needed.



Pre-Recorded Interview

These are typically a 30- to 60-minute meeting composed of pre-determined questions with your recorded responses to prepared questions.

Pre-Recorded Interview Tips:

- ▷ Practice your virtual interviewing skills by recording yourself answering interview questions.
- ▷ As a student, you have access to Big Interview and its tools. For more information and to set up your account, click [here](#).
- ▷ Make virtual eye contact by looking at the camera. If you're using a laptop, try elevating the laptop by placing a book underneath it for lift.
- ▷ Be mindful of your background and minimize distracting noises.
- ▷ Wear headphones if needed to minimize background noise.

Virtual Interview

During the height of COVID-19, and even now, there are still quite a few companies that engage in some form of virtual interviewing. In some cases, companies may no longer conduct in-person interviews and host candidates virtually from the first interview to the final interview. Most companies will host a combination of in-person and virtual interviews.

Virtual Interview Tips:

- ▷ Read the interview instructions carefully and make sure you have access to the interviewing platform in advance.
- ▷ Update your software and check other relevant settings prior to the interview's start time.
- ▷ Keep your background uncluttered or use a professional digital background.
- ▷ Turn your cell phone on "silent" mode or power it off completely. Keep pets in a separate room and ask roommates for privacy if applicable.
- ▷ Adjust the camera on the device you are using to ensure the employer can see your professional attire, not just your face.
- ▷ Dress professionally from head to toe - you never know when you may need to stand up.
- ▷ Have a phone or another device as a back-up readily available in case of technical issues.
- ▷ Wear headphones if needed to minimize background noise.

PRO TIP

If you need a quiet space for a virtual or phone interview, the Career Center offers current Georgia Tech students the opportunity to reserve an interview room. For more information on how to reserve a room, please contact the Career Center:

Phone: (404) 894-3320

Email: careercenter@gatech.edu

In-Person Interview

In-person interviews typically occur in the later interviewing stages, however some companies may use this method for their first round, for all rounds, or for their only round. We are also seeing a rise in in-person interviews as the effects of COVID-19 begin to decrease. They can range from 30 minutes to a full day, which can include multiple interviews with multiple groups or individuals, activities, meals, and tours.

In-Person Interview Tips:

- ▷ Business professional attire is typical attire for many in-person interviews. However, depending on the industry/site, you may need special clothing (i.e., lab coat, closed toed shoes, flat shoes).
- ▷ Bring a padfolio with a few copies of your most up-to-date resume for this position, a notepad, and a pen.
- ▷ Arrive 10-15 minutes early to account for locating the address, parking, and to decompress before the start of the interview.
- ▷ Turn off your phone or place it on "do not disturb". Turn off any alarms that may go off during the time of your interview.
- ▷ Stay energized throughout the interview process, especially if your in-person interview day has multiple interviews.
- ▷ Note any observations of areas that you would not have known much about from reading online, such as the workspace set-up/floor plan and staff demographics.

Types of Interviews



Traditional

These are open-ended questions that do not require a specific example. This type of interview helps employers gather basic information about an applicant's background, interests, skills, and reasons for applying.

Behavioral

They are very common questions that are aimed to evaluate your potential by asking about historic performance and probing into various skill areas. These questions are best answered in a concise story, highlighting how you've used your skills, including both technical and essential skills. Questions are situation-based and often start with, "Tell me about a time when..." or a similar starting statement.

Technical

This type of interview is common for technical fields. They will test things like software or coding skills. This interview may also include a small challenge, brain teaser, or other quantitative reasoning. Following your response, you may be asked: What assumptions did you make? Did your results make sense?

Case

These are very common in the consulting field. In most cases, there is one case scenario for the whole interview. Going through these questions allows employers to probe your problem-solving skills, and how you handle yourself when faced with an uncertain path. They may have twists that will require you to change course and you will need to be able to explain your thought process. Getting the correct answer is not as important as your analysis of the problem.

With technical and case interviews, you will need to be able to articulate your thought process. These types of interviews evaluate your approach to problem-solving, your composure in the face of uncertainties, and your technical abilities. They often involve a pivot at some point via introduction of new information or a change that will require you to regroup. Again, you'll be evaluated on how well you navigate that, not just by the results you get. Don't be afraid to talk through your assumptions as you go. In the long run, it will be helpful to work through some practice questions. Find specific resources related to the type of interview you'll be facing and get comfortable with how to approach it.

Sample Questions

Traditional Questions

1. Tell us about yourself and what distinguishes you from other applicants.
2. Why do you want to work for ___?
3. What are you looking for in a new position?
4. Why are you interested in the positions you applied for?
5. Why should we hire you – what makes you unique?
6. What motivates you?
7. Describe your ideal work environment.
8. What is your greatest personal achievement?
9. What would your last supervisor say about your work performance?
10. What are your short-term/long-term career goals?

Tricky Questions

1. Teach me something I don't know in the next two minutes.
2. What is the biggest crisis you have ever dealt with?
3. How do you stay up to date with the latest tech?
4. How do you handle anger in the workplace?
5. What qualities do you desire for your ideal teammates?
6. Tell me about a time you failed.
7. What is your greatest weakness?

Behavioral Questions

1. Describe an experience in which you worked as a part of a team – what was your role, how did you contribute?
2. Give an example of a time you experienced conflict in the workplace and explain how it was resolved.
3. Tell me about a time when you had multiple projects that needed to be completed. How did you ensure that the work was completed on time?
4. Describe a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
5. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
6. Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond (ex: at work or at school).
7. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
8. Tell us about how you prioritize and deal with multiple tasks.
9. Tell us about a time you received difficult feedback. How did you receive and use this feedback?
10. Describe a time you were given vague instructions and how you dealt with them.

Responding to Tricky Questions

Some questions are meant to make you a little bit uncomfortable, as it's difficult to speak with grace about weaknesses or conflicts you've had.

Question	Response
1. What is your greatest weakness?	Focus on what you have been doing to improve this weakness.
2. Can you tell me about a time you had a disagreement with a colleague?	Discuss what you learned from the disagreement.
3. Tell me about a time you failed.	Focus on what you would do differently in the future.

In these situations, it is helpful to create a STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) story. For example, if the question is about your weaknesses as a professional, pick a weakness that is something that you have already learned from. Provide an adjusted illustration of what you would do differently or how you already changed your approach to mitigate the issue.

Situation: set the scene and provide necessary context and details for the example you plan to outline.

Task: describe the responsibility/responsibilities you had in this situation.

Action: outline and explain the steps you took to address the situation.

Result: share the outcome that occurred based on the actions that were taken.

Take it a step further and add an extra **R**. You don't have to do this every time there is a story involved, but if it is needed and brings the story full circle as it relates to the job you are applying for, this last piece is helpful.

Reflection: reflect on the situation you just outlined. What did you learn or what were your takeaways? Is there anything you would do differently moving forward?

OR

Relate: Tie your story back in and relate it to the job you are interviewing for. How has this experience made you more qualified for the job?

STAR Example

Question: “Tell me about a time where you have failed?”

Situation: “In my first year, I was enrolled in a first-year seminar class that aimed to inform me of various campus resources, their services, and overall success during my time at GT.”

Task: “In this class, each of us was required to complete a weekly assignment covering a different campus resource that outlined what we have learned and how we can utilize this resource as GT students.”

Action: “Since I was in my first year, I underestimated the amount of time I needed to set aside for regular studying and as midterms approached, I put this class on the back burner and did not complete assignments for a couple of weeks and my grade dropped.”

Result: “Because of this situation, while I did my best to bring my grade back up, those missing assignments brought my grade down.”

***Reflection:** “I realized I need to make immediate changes to how I managed my time and coordinated my study habits. I use reminder apps, calendars and task lists to organize my academics and involvement weekly. Because of these changes, I am getting ahead in many of my classes and have not missed any assignments”

***Relate:** “Since this experience, I have always stayed on top of my tasks. I prioritize my assignments based on deadlines and the amount of time I will need to dedicate. I recognize that time management and meeting deadlines is extremely important in this type of position, and I have since made a significant effort in changing this behavior so that I can be a high-quality candidate and future employee”

NOTE: While it is tempting to provide every single detail to move through your example, your goal is to paint a clear picture of the situation with concise information. Focus on what is relevant and important to the story and the questions you are answering.

Technical & Case Interviews

Sample technical questions:

1. What is your CAD system of choice? And why?
2. Explain the concept of shear force and bending moment.
3. If you had to choose, what are your top two programming languages and what do you like about them?
4. What is your preferred operating system to use while programming and why?
5. What is multiple inheritance? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

Sample case questions:

1. How many trees are in Central Park?
2. How much is this business worth? (Data inputs will be provided)
3. A windowless room has three light bulbs. You are outside the room with three switches, each controlling one of the light bulbs. If you can only enter the room one time, how can you determine which switch controls which light bulb?
4. What will a customer consider when buying a Toyota sedan?
5. Volvo claims it is the safest car in the world because fewer people die in a Volvo than in a car made by any other manufacturer in the world. What's wrong with this conclusion?



As a GT student, you have access to Firsthand, which is a multi-resource platform that houses industry-specific career guides, a job board, and more. For more information on case interviewing, this [case interview guide](#) from Firsthand may be helpful.

Additionally, many of the big firms have sample cases for you to practice. For example, there are some sample cases outlined [here](#) from the employer, EY.

The Career Center offers students the opportunity to schedule a mock interview to go over common questions, interview feedback, and practice for an upcoming interview. Schedule an appointment with a Career Educator, Career Development Advisor, or Career Peer Advisor on [CareerBuzz](#).

Before the Interview

1. Do your Research

Research the company and their interviewing styles (if this information is made publicly available). Look into the type of work they do, the clients they service, and the company mission and vision statements. Then, look at your resume and think about the value you can provide based on the skills and experiences you've had. The research you have conducted should be demonstrated in the interview in how you respond to a question by threading your knowledge of the company into your response or in other parts of a conversation.

Study the job description and what they are looking for. Additionally, look at their "required" and "preferred" qualifications and whether you meet them or need to progress in certain areas. Take note of areas where you may need to make improvements or progress. Your research can also inform any follow-up questions.

2. Create & Practice Answering Questions

Using the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities in the position's description, you can create a list of potential questions that the employer's representatives may ask you. For example, if the description states that applicants "must have the ability to work collaboratively in teams and across units," a good practice question for you to respond to could be "tell me about your experience with collaborating in your current role or in a previous role." Take that a step further and record yourself answering these practice questions.

As you complete more interviews, especially for similar positions in the same industry, you may find common trends in the types of question that employers ask you. Take note of these questions and keep them in your bank of questions for future practice.

PRO TIP

Create a T chart with the job description, your qualifications you possess, and any examples that demonstrate these skills.

3. Prepare Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Just like the company is interviewing you, you want to get a better understanding of their work as well, so it is essential to ask them questions. By doing this, you can get more information about the role, expectations, and the culture of the company directly from those that work there. You can also gain further insight into the work environment and see where you can directly support the organization. Follow-up questions will also convey your thoughtfulness about the organization.

During the Interview

1. Take Notes

If you are learning information that you were not aware of, and you believe it is important, ask if it is okay to take notes. If you have notes prepared, ask and see if it is okay to refer to them as needed during the interview. It is appropriate to refer to notes during the Q&A portion at the end of the interview or for any clarifying questions, however it is not appropriate to read verbatim as a means of response to an interview question or during a presentation.



2. Think About This

Keep in mind what the interviewer needs to know about you during the time that you have with them. Knowing that you have provided the employer with all of the necessary information that they need to know about you will increase your confidence. If you feel that you may not have fully addressed something, this could be a follow-up question you ask the interviewer at the end of the interview.

3. Wrapping Up

As the interview ends, it is important that you (the candidate) know how to get back in touch with the hiring manager or appropriate HR rep interviewer, the next steps in the application and hiring process, and the time frame for these next steps. This can also be part of your follow-up questions to the employer.

After the Interview

Closing out the interview is just as important as how you start. To leave a lasting impression, send a tailored thank-you note that summarizes your strengths and skills and reiterates your continued interest in the role and the company. This message should be brief, about 5 sentences at most. If there is a specific highlight from the interview that you would like to address, you can do so in this message.

“Thank You” Message Sample

Dear [Interviewer’s Name],

I want to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to interview for the [Position Title] role at [Company Name].

It was a pleasure to meet you and the rest of the interview panel, and I appreciate the time and effort you invested in getting to know me better. I would like to reiterate my strong interest in the position and my enthusiasm for the prospect of joining [Company Name], and conversation we had during the interview further reinforced my belief that my skills and experience align well with the requirements of the role.

Please feel free to reach out if there is any additional information or documentation that you require from my end. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to the possibility of working with you and the talented team at [Company Name].

Sincerely,

[Your Name] [Your Contact Information]

Varying Timelines

You may hear back from other companies at different times, and you may have to make decisions about one opportunity before you hear from others. You are encouraged to follow up with an employer to provide transparency about where you are in your job search so you know where employers stand in their hiring decisions, however it is important not to pester or bother employers incessantly. Allow a couple of weeks (or the amount time the employer provided you as their time frame) before following up with the company.



Extensions

If you need an extension before deciding about a position, while you may be hesitant, do not be scared to ask! This is a decision that impacts the trajectory of your working life and how you reach your career goals, and all factors surrounding the position (location, pay, benefits, responsibilities) should be seriously considered, regardless of whether or not the offer is for an internship, co-op, or a full-time job.

If you need additional assistance with starting or continuing this conversation, request an appointment with a Career Educator or a Career Development Advisor on [CareerBuzz](#).



Internship or Co-op Extension Requests Sample Message

Dear __,

I am very excited to consider the offer to join [Company Name]. I recently learned that the Georgia Tech Career Center has a policy around offer decision timelines, and I am hopeful that you may be able to match that date for my offer so that I can fully consider opportunities that are presented to me . Would it be possible to extend my deadline to [insert date]?

I appreciate your consideration and understanding as I finalize my decision.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Full-time Position Extension Requests

Sample Message

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to discuss the offer I received from [Company Name] for the [Position Title] role. First, I want to express my sincere gratitude for considering me as a candidate for this opportunity.

I am carefully evaluating the offer, taking into account the responsibilities, compensation, and overall fit with my career goals. However, I find myself in a situation where I require additional time to make an informed decision. Given the significance of this decision and my commitment to making the right choice, I kindly request an extension of the deadline to respond to the offer. I understand that your organization operates with its own timelines and requirements, but I assure you that this additional time will allow me to thoroughly weigh all my options and provide a definitive response.

If it is feasible, I would appreciate an extension to [date] to finalize my decision. This will allow me to carefully assess both offers and consider various factors, such as long-term career prospects, professional growth opportunities, and alignment with my personal and professional goals.

Please be assured that I am genuinely interested in joining [Company Name] and will do my utmost to respond promptly with my final decision once the extension has been granted. I am available to discuss any further details or concerns you may have regarding this matter.

Thank you for your understanding and flexibility in considering my request. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]



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