

# Types of Interviewers – How to Prepare

Interview preparation is one of the many services offered by the Career Services Office. Submitting impressive application materials is not enough to secure a job; students and alumni must be well prepared for the interview. There are many different interviewing styles, so candidates should be familiar with each interviewer personality.

The CSO has compiled our best strategies and advice for dealing with some of the most common interviewing styles used by interviewers:

**The Seasoned Interviewer**

**The Resume Reviewer**

**The "What Would You Like to Know?" Interviewer**

**The On-the-Attack Interviewer**

**The Interviewer with Lots to Say**

**Note:** Not all interviewers will fit in these categories, and some interviewers may use more than one of these styles. For more interviewing tips, click [here](#).

## THE SEASONED INTERVIEWER

The **seasoned interviewer** has conducted many interviews and is trained on effective interviewing strategies. He or she will have a set of questions prepared that are meant to get at specific issues important to the employer. A trained interviewer may ask, "**Where do you see yourself in five years?**" "**What do you think makes a good attorney?**" or "**What type of practice are you interested in?**" The trained interviewer is looking to see if your answers match a career at his or her office and to see that you have a realistic understanding of what the job will actually be like.

The seasoned interviewer is also likely to ask behavioral questions, such as, "**Tell me about a time you faced a challenge at work. How did you overcome it?**" or "**Give me an example of a time you went above and beyond the scope of your duties.**" To prepare for these types of questions, you want to think about experiences from your previous jobs or extracurricular activities, where you overcame challenges, corrected mistakes, or went above and beyond to get a job done.

Most seasoned interviewers will leave time at the end of the interview for you to ask questions. The interviewer will be evaluating the questions you ask just as much as he or she will analyze the answers you have given. Be sure to have office-specific questions ready. If you only ask generic questions ("Tell me about your summer associate program."), the interviewer may get the impression that you are not specifically interested in his or her firm. Adding more details to the question shows that you took the time to research the employer and indicates that you are interested in working for a particular office.

Example: "I saw on your NALP profile that your office has a mid-summer evaluation for summer associates. Can you provide me more details about this?"

**PROS:** The interviewer has a plan and will ask many questions. If you have prepared thoroughly, you will be able to respond to the questions with thoughtful answers about your work and school experiences and with your insights on why you are a great fit.

**CONS:** Being unprepared can leave you feeling less confident and long-winded.

Practice both your answers and your questions out loud to make sure that your responses are fluid. The counselors are available to conduct mock interviews. Additionally, you also have access to [InterviewStream](#).

**SUMMARY:** Prepare answers to questions about your career goals, interests, why you went to law school, how your past experiences suit you for the opening, and how you have overcome challenges in the past. Remember to provide the interviewer with answers specific to his or her office.

## **THE RESUME REVIEWER**

The **resume reviewer** may appear to be unprepared to interview you and will review your application materials during the interview. This interviewer will go over your resume asking you questions about each item (e.g., "**Tell me about your time at Fowler Law School,**" "**Why did you attend UCLA as an undergrad?**" "**Tell me about working as a research assistant to the dean this summer,**" and "**Tell me about your job before coming to law school.**").

**PROS:** Questions are not overly difficult and allow you to talk about the highlights from each part of your resume. Before your interview, you should review your resume line-by-line to make sure that you have something substantive to say about each experience. With your interests, make sure you can speak about them thoroughly. For example, do not list that you like to read novels if you have not read any books lately.

If the bulk of your work experience prior to law school was not legal (e.g., sales associate, cashier, resident advisor, tour guide), you will need to think of ways that you can relate those experiences to this job, such as customer service, attention to detail, managing other employees, delegating tasks, and team work.

**CONS:** Reviewing your whole resume may use up the entire interview time, and you may not be able to ask questions or connect with the interviewer. Nevertheless, make sure that you have some questions prepared that will allow you to turn the interview into a conversation and not just a Q&A session. For example, after talking about your time as an extern for a bankruptcy judge last summer, you can mention your interest in the firm's bankruptcy practice.

**SUMMARY:** Prepare detailed explanations and answers to questions on every item on your resume. Make sure to prepare questions that will allow the interviewer to discuss the office and not just your past experiences.

## **THE "WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW?" INTERVIEWER**

The "**what would you like to know?**" interviewer starts the interview with "**What can I tell you about the office?**" and continues to ask "**What else would you like to know?**" after every answer.

This interview style may indicate that the interviewer is unprepared, uninspired, or wants to see how you run the interview, thinking this will show how serious you are about the office and the position. Be prepared to control the interview.

**PROS:** This style gives you the opportunity to show your interest in the position and highlight how good you would be for the role. A well-prepared candidate can impress the interviewer by showing that he or she is comfortable with this amount of control.

Make sure that you have researched the employer thoroughly (e.g., NALP profile, firm's website, recent news stories). You should also connect with other students and alumni who have worked at the employer; this can be done by reaching out to the CSO to find connections or doing a search on LinkedIn. Based on this research, come up with questions for the interviewer.

Example 1: "I noticed that your company recently defeated a class action lawsuit. Would a law clerk be able to work on this type of case?"

Example 2: "On your website, it mentions that associates are able to join committees. Can you tell me more about these opportunities and other ways associates are involved in the development of your firm?"

Example 3: "I recently met with Juan L. Fowler and learned more about his summer with your law firm. He was very impressed by how the attorneys mentor summer associates and take an interest in their future. How would you describe your firm's culture?"

In addition to these specific questions, have general questions prepared in case the interviewer does not provide lengthy responses. You can find employer-specific questions [here](#).

Another strategy is asking about the individual experience of the interviewer instead of the employer as a whole. For instance, ask how the interviewer entered this legal field, what made him a good candidate for the job, or what attracted her to the employer. It is also wise to ask what a typical day is like for the interviewer and for someone in the role for which you have applied. Many interviewers enjoy sharing their experiences, so this is a good way to begin a comfortable conversation.

**CONS:** Even if you prepare many questions, the focus of the interviewer can easily stay on the firm and not on your accomplishments or your fit for the firm. To prevent this, you should also prepare a few questions that will point the interviewer to your resume, which will hopefully break up the routine and encourage the interviewer to ask you a few questions about you. **Note:** Be sure to bring an extra copy of your resume for the interviewer.

Example 1: "As you can see from my resume, I spent this summer in-house, where I had the opportunity to do some work on trademark infringement and intellectual property. That experience really piqued my interest in IP. Can you tell me about the firm's IP practice?"

The next logical step for the interviewer would be to ask "**What else did you do while at this employer?**" or "**How did you enjoy your summer in-house?**"

Example 2: "As you can see on my resume, I worked for the OCDA this summer. My supervisor knew I was interested in consumer fraud, so he recommended that I contact your firm because of your excellent reputation in the area. How much of your practice relates to this practice area?"

Anticipate follow-up questions about what working for the DA was like and what made you interested in this particular topic.

**SUMMARY:** Prepare lots of questions about the employer that indicate your interest in the office and reveal that you have done your research. Ask more general questions about the position, daily life of the employee, and what sets the employer apart. Other questions that will make the interviewer reflect on your resume will make this a more individualized interview experience.

## **THE ON-THE-ATTACK INTERVIEWER**

The **on-the-attack interviewer** is one who takes a forceful tone with an interviewee to see how he or she responds. The interviewer may highlight flaws, such as a low grade on your transcript or class ranking, and ask, "**What happened here?**" or will point out that the firm's practice is largely civil litigation, when all of your work experience is mostly criminal defense, and ask, "**Why are you applying to this office?**" If there are no clear weaknesses in your application materials, the interviewer may ask "**Do you think you should be a lawyer?**" or "**Do you think that students coming straight from undergrad are qualified?**"

These questions are used to see how you react to tough questioning. Even under this pressure, do your best to be calm and objective. If you do have a weak points on your resume, transcript, or any other application material, be prepared to talk about it and explain that you have taken strides to improve (e.g., time management on exams, asking for additional instruction for legal research and writing, etc.).

**PROS:** This may be an uncomfortable interview, but it can be an opportunity to explain how you have improved in areas and how that will benefit you in this position. Be your own advocate; turn a negative into a positive. Stay professional under pressure. In the legal field, you will face difficult personalities, including partners, opposing counsel, clients, and judges. Remaining calm under interview pressure shows how you will handle similar situations in practice.

**CONS:** Students not expecting this type of interview can be caught off guard and easily be offended. Being rattled will affect your interview performance, even if the interviewer changes his or her style with later questions. To prevent this from happening, make sure that you are able to show how you have improved upon your weaknesses (e.g., attended MCLEs and networking events in the practice area of the law firm) and overcome obstacles to success. Remember that the interviewer is not trying to personally offend or attack you. Do your best to impress the interviewer with your professionalism instead of also going on the attack.

**SUMMARY:** Anticipate questions about weaknesses on your resume. Recognize the weaknesses in your application and create clear, detailed answers about how you have improved and why you are qualified for the position.

## **THE INTERVIEWER WITH LOTS TO SAY**

The **interviewer with lots to say** conducts the interview casually. He or she may talk about how you have the same alma mater, hail from the same hometown, or like the same sports team. Before you know it, the interview is over, and you have not talked about the job opening. Keep in mind though that this is not always a problem.

**PROS:** The candidate may enjoy this type of interview because it is casual. The interviewer appears to be interested in who you are as a person rather than an employee.

**CONS:** Because of the type of questions being asked, the candidate is not able to show the interviewer what sets him or her apart from other interviewees. If the employer has to decide whether or not you will receive a callback, there may be questions about your qualifications. To prevent this speculation, make sure you explain to the interviewer why you would do a great job in this position in addition to answering the more informal questions. When preparing for the interview, make sure you have a short list of bullet points that you can provide the employer about what kind of worker you are and why you would be a good fit. This can be about your previous work experience, leadership roles in law school, or the courses you have taken that relate to the firm's main practice area. When you highlight these points, they should not sound forced or rehearsed. Maintain the flow of the interview and try to give examples based on the topic being discussed.

**SUMMARY:** Review your application materials and make sure you can highlight key points about your experiences and qualifications without ruining the flow of the interview.