

Interview Tips and Other Important Information

I. Preparing for an Interview

1. Preparation is essential. Be prepared for basic questions! In advance of the interview, prepare responses to all the interview questions listed below in Section II. In addition, do not be taken off-guard if you are asked a non-traditional interview question, e.g., What does your father do? Where did you grow up? etc.
2. Review and be familiar with your resume and writing sample (and any other materials you submitted to the judge). You should be able to talk in detail about every entry on your resume and your writing sample.
3. Research the Judge.
 - The Almanac of the Federal Judiciary (available on Westlaw—directory name=AFJ) provides biographical information about every federal judge.
 - Google the judge. Make sure you know if the judge has any current or recent high profile cases or has been in the press recently.
 - Review a few decisions by the judge on Lexis/Nexis or Westlaw (see page 60 of the *Judicial Clerkship Handbook* for instructions on how to search the Courtlink Strategic Profiles in Lexis/Nexis)
4. Talk to former clerks or other students who interviewed with the judge. Speak with attorneys and other people familiar with judges. (Check the appendix for email addresses of former clerks.)
5. Review evaluation forms from NYU students and alumni.
 - The interview evaluations are contained in a separate tab (called “Interview Evaluations”) under the “Clerkships” tab on CSM.
 - The clerkship evaluations are contained in a separate tab (called “Clerkship Evaluations”) under the “Clerkships” tab on CSM.
6. Prepare questions for the judge and the clerks.
 - You need at least two or three appropriate questions to ask the judge and his or her clerks.

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- You do not want to ask questions that are obvious and that you could learn by doing some research. For example, ask questions about allocation of work in chambers, the judge's relationship with clerks, etc.
7. Think about how you are going to close the interview. For example, close the interview by telling the judge how much you enjoyed meeting him or her and what a great privilege it would be to clerk for him or her.

II. Possible Interview Questions

1. Why do you want to clerk?
2. Why do you want to clerk for me? Why are you interested in this particular clerkship?
3. What do you hope to get out of a clerkship?
4. Where do you see yourself in five years? 10 years? 25 years?
5. Tell me about yourself.
6. Tell me about your writing sample.
7. How did you choose your note topic?
8. How would you describe your legal writing right now?
9. Why did you go to law school?
10. What is your favorite course in law school?
11. What do you do as an editor on your journal?
12. What is your assessment of the current Supreme Court and with what Justice's philosophy do you most identify? Who are your Supreme Court heroes?
13. What would you change about law school if you could?
14. What extracurricular activities were you involved with during high school, college, or law school?
15. Besides law, what is an issue that you care about?
16. Are you considering only district/circuit court clerkships?
17. Have you read any of my opinions? Which ones?

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18. How would you handle drafting an opinion with which you disagreed?
19. Where else have you applied? With whom are you interviewing?
20. Can I count on you to be an officer of the court and not an advocate?
21. What are your thoughts on stare decisis?
22. What accomplishment are you most proud of?
23. What qualities will make you a good clerk?
24. What has been your biggest failure?
25. What were your most and least favorite classes in law school?
26. What books are you currently reading or have you read recently?
27. What newspapers do you read?
28. Do you plan to settle in [state interviewing in]?

Judges may also ask about how you handled a specific situation in the past. These questions are intended to help the judge determine whether you have a certain quality he or she desires. The best answers to these questions highlight your specific strengths and include a description of the situation, your action(s), and the response. Below is a list of some common behavioral questions.

1. Describe a time when your own ethical boundaries were tested.
2. Tell us about a time when you received an assignment or directive that you did not fully understand.
3. Discuss how you have managed long-term or ongoing projects in the past.
4. Tell me about a time when you had multiple high-importance projects with overlapping deadlines.

III. JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP INTERVIEW FAQs

How are interviews scheduled?

Judges, their secretaries or clerks will generally call or email those applicants the judge wants to interview. Very often, the judge will ask to meet on a specific date; sometimes, however, there is some flexibility in choosing a date for the interview. It is wise to take the earliest interview available as some judges hire the first promising candidates they meet and simply cancel the remaining interviews. Be

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sure to check phone and email messages frequently while you are awaiting interviews and make sure that your outgoing messages are appropriate and professional.

How soon do judges start scheduling interviews and hiring?

It varies. Some judges review applications and schedule interviews as soon as they receive applications whereas other judges wait to schedule interviews. Once a judge begins interviewing, s/he may hire very quickly or may take her/his time.

What should I do if I receive a call for an interview?

Judges like applicants to respond promptly. You should return a call from a judge as soon as possible. **We would appreciate if you would report to our office any interviews you receive on the day that you receive the interview. Please email any interview information (including the name of the judge/court and the date of the interview) to james.nesbitt@nyu.edu.** This information will help us assist you throughout the application process. Once the interview is scheduled, email your faculty recommenders to let them know you will be interviewing; sometimes professors will be moved to call a judge on an applicant's behalf. If you are no longer interested in clerking for the judge, please decline the interview offer.

Can I use one interview as a reason to call other judges?

If you are traveling out of town for a clerkship interview, it is appropriate to call other judges you have applied to in that city (and possibly in convenient proximity to that city). If another judge is interested in interviewing you, s/he may agree to an interview to save you from making more than one trip to that area of the country. In addition, a judge may be motivated to speak to an applicant who has already secured an interview because of the implicit endorsement his/her colleague has given your application. For obvious reasons, this strategy *cannot* be employed for local judges.

How many interviews should I expect to receive?

The number of interviews students receive varies widely. Many students do not get any interviews, while others may get a handful. It is rare to find an applicant who gets more than five interviews. It is far more common to get one to three interviews.

What is the format of a clerkship interview and what are the judge's goals for it?

The format varies from judge to judge. In most cases, the judge will meet with the applicant alone; and the clerks will interview the applicant without the judge. The

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interview is not an inquisition. The judge generally wants to find out: 1) if you are the kind of person s/he would like to work with for a year; and 2) are you likely to accept an offer to clerk. The questions commonly revolve around your resume, writing sample, your law school experience, or current events. Most judges do not quiz applicants on legal issues, although this happens occasionally. Do not let the fact that you are talking with a judge intimidate you. Be outgoing and personable; let the judge know that you are very enthusiastic about the possibility of working with him/her. Most interviews do not last longer than two hours in total; however, this too can vary and one student had a seven-hour interview. Thus, if you are concerned about timing issues, you should inquire as to the approximate amount of time you should allot for the interview.

What should I do after the interview?

If you are still interested in clerking for a judge after the interview, you should send him or her a thank you note. In many cases, the judge will be making offers on an expedited basis so you will need to send your note by email. You should try to obtain an email address from a secretary or law clerk after your interview. (Some chambers will not be willing to give you the judge's individual email address but will give you a general chambers email address.) If you are excited about clerking for the judge, consider asking one of your recommenders to contact the judge on your behalf. Finally, please complete an interview evaluation form on CSM.

When do judges make offers?

Judges may make offers soon after the interview. Some students get offers on the spot; many hear from the judge within a day of the interview. Sometimes judges take weeks to make an offer. If you get an offer from one judge and s/he gives you time to consider the offer and you are waiting to hear from another judge whom you would prefer, you may call the judge's chambers to tell her/him that you have received an offer from another judge. This will sometimes prompt an offer. Some judges require you to accept an offer immediately so be cautious about trying to leverage offers.

How much time will I have to decide about an offer?

The time for a response varies from judge to judge. Some judges request an immediate response and most judges demand a quick response – often within 24 hours. Therefore, before the interview you should give careful thought to whether you want to work for this judge.

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Am I required to accept the first offer I receive?

Judges expect that any student who applies will accept their offer. Understandably, they may get upset if a student submits an application, takes the judge's time for an interview, and then declines the job offer. It goes without saying that it is best to avoid this situation. If you interview with a judge and determine you would not accept the position if offered, call the chambers immediately following the interview and politely withdraw your application. Remember, your conduct throughout this process not only affects your applications, but also may affect the chances of your classmates and future NYU applicants.

Am I responsible for the costs of traveling to clerkship interviews?

Yes. Generally, all travel costs are borne by the applicant. Some emergency travel loans are available from the Office of Student Financial Services. Please contact the Office of Student Financial Services for more information.

What should I do if I accept a clerkship offer?

Please email Jim Nesbitt at james.nesbitt@nyu.edu to inform him that you have accepted an offer. In addition, please inform your recommenders about your decision and thank them for their assistance. We recommend that you withdraw your OSCAR applications, but it is not necessary to send withdrawal letters to paper judges. Finally, if you have not done so already, please complete your interview evaluations.