



# Interviewing Guide

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## I. ATTITUDE IS ESSENTIAL

The key element to successful interviewing is not your experience, your grades, what classes you have taken or are taking, your extracurricular activities, or any other basic job criteria. Those factors were your ticket into the interview. A key element to successful interviewing can be summed up in one word: *attitude*. If you want top consideration, you need to present a highly positive attitude. You also need to be prepared – more on that later.

## II. WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

Hiring attorneys are seeking interested, motivated candidates – persons who have carefully considered their career paths and thoroughly researched the employers with whom they interview. Here are a few responses from hiring attorneys who responded to a survey conducted by the National Association for Law Placement regarding what they look for in interviews:

- *“We want to learn how interested they are in our firm and why they are interested.”*
- *“In the first interview we try to size up the candidate as a person. Is he or she easy to talk to? Confident but not cocky, at ease, with good communication skills?”*
- *“The academic factor has been determined before the interview. Fit is what we try to determine during the interview.”*
- *“A sense of motivation is the primary quality we are seeking.”*
- *“We try to assess maturity and a sense of responsibility during an interview.”*
- *“Verbal and nonverbal communication skills and the ability to analyze and articulate issues are measures of a candidate’s ability to relate to colleagues and clients.”*
- *“Ultimately, an interview is an opportunity to examine whether the candidate has something which sets him or her apart from the hundreds of other people we see during the interview season.”*

Employers are looking beyond your résumé, so it is important that you are confident, relaxed, personable, and self-aware. Interviewers will be asking themselves: How do you handle yourself? Are you poised? Can you easily field questions? Can you carry the conversation with ease, without constantly being prodded? You need to present yourself as bright, mature, energetic, and enthusiastic. Attempt to establish a rapport with the interviewer so that after you leave, he/she remembers some specific details about you other than what you provided on paper.

## III. INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Preparation is crucial to a good interview. The more you prepare for each interview, the greater the likelihood that you will positively impress the interviewers.

Three tasks are essential to interview preparation: (1) self-assessment, (2) research into the interviewer(s), the organization, and office with which you are interviewing, and (3) practice.

### A. Self-Assessment.

Employers are impressed with individuals who show thoughtfulness in their approach to setting and obtaining professional goals. There are four key areas that you should be able to address clearly and concisely:

Three tasks are essential to interview preparation: (1) self-assessment, (2) research into the interviewer(s), the organization, and office with which you are interviewing, and (3) practice.

1. Your motivation(s) for pursuing a law degree;
2. Your motivation(s) for pursuing a position with the specific employer with which you are interviewing;
3. Your strengths/skills/qualities and experience, particularly those relevant to the position for which you are interviewing; and
4. Your immediate and longer-term career interests and goals in relation to the employer that you are interviewing with.

Through self-assessment you should become aware of and be able to articulate the following information about yourself:

- Interests/motivations
- Relevant experience
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Skills/qualities
- Values
- Accomplishments/successes
- Short-term and long-term career goals and plans to achieve them
- Work style and work environment preferences
- Geographic considerations

Accordingly, in preparation for interviewing, ask yourself the following:

- What are my accomplishments and what are the skills/qualities that those accomplishments demonstrate?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses, especially as they relate to position for which I'm interviewing?
- What do I enjoy doing the most? Why?
- What are my career goals, both immediate and longer term, and how will the position for which I am interviewing help me to achieve those goals?
- What values are important to me?
- To what type of work am I drawn? Why?
- At what do I feel most competent? Why?

Self-assessment also should enable you to come up with points about yourself that you want to make in an interview, regardless of whether that information is elicited by the interviewer(s) directly. If you are having difficulty identifying things that you want employers to know about you, make a list of your strengths and qualities. To assist you in this regard, identify your accomplishments and ask, "What does each accomplishment illustrate about me?" The answers should be placed on your list of strengths/qualities (see *Appendix E* in this Guide for a list of examples of relevant strengths). Self-assessment is an on-going process that changes with time and experience. The conclusions you arrive at early in your law school career should become more refined and focused as you progress through your education and professional formation.

## **B. Research.**

Researching the employer *and*, if possible, the interviewer(s) prior to an interview is incredibly important. Employers consistently rank lack of knowledge of the organization as a primary reason for not extending an offer. Research will enable you to:

- Avoid foolish comments (e.g., telling an employer you are interested in a specialty that the employer does not practice or referring to a company as a law firm)
- Learn more about why you want (or do not want) to work for the employer
- Exude self-confidence
- Show enthusiasm
- Provide responsive answers
- Ask intelligent questions
- Engage in meaningful discussion
- Impress the interviewer(s)

When interviewing, take advantage of opportunities during the conversation to showcase your research and knowledge. For example, instead of simply asking about the employer's summer program, you might instead phrase a question similar to the following which highlights your research, albeit in an understated manner: "I understand that your company is really committed to giving law students rich experiences and that last summer all of the law clerks traveled abroad on company business. Is travel something you anticipate being part of the program this summer as well?"

Employers want to know that you are attracted to them for specific reasons, rather than simply because they are recruiting at Marquette, are located in a particular city, or have a position open. You should be able to demonstrate familiarity with both the employer and the position for which you are interviewing.

1. Internet Resources.

Depending on the employer in which you are interested and the type of information you are seeking, there are potentially numerous websites containing solid information. For a discussion of some of the more useful and prominent online resources for information about legal employers, please see the handout titled [Online Research Resources](#) available in the Career Planning Handbook and online at <https://law.marquette.edu/assets/career-planning/pdf/Online-Research-Resources.pdf>. Employer web pages also are a tremendous source of information and should be thoroughly explored first when available. There are a variety of other websites that should be visited depending on the type(s) of positions you are targeting, and we encourage you to speak with a member of the CPC professional staff to identify the online resources that best fit your job search needs.

2. Human Resources.

Individuals familiar with an employer are excellent sources of information. Good resources may include an MULS student or alum who works for -- or has worked for -- the employer, a fellow student who interviewed with the employer, attorneys who handled cases where the employer was involved either as opposing counsel or as a client, and/or a member of the CPC staff. These individuals can provide inside information, which is often the best information. Inside information enables you to prepare for questions you might be asked in an interview and to develop questions to ask the interviewer(s).

3. Other Resources.

The CPC maintains a collection of "Employment Critique Forms," forms containing feedback by Marquette students over the years based on their experiences with employers. In addition, the CPC's Resource Library contains directories, books, periodicals, and other publications containing a wealth of employer-related information.

### **C. Practice.**

Interviewing is not an innate talent; it is a learned skill that improves with practice. As with many activities, practicing is the best way to improve your interviewing skills. The more you practice, the more relaxed and confident you will be during the interview, both absolute necessities if you are to make a good impression on the interviewer. Practice to identify and shape your stories, not to memorize your responses. In an interview you want to have a conversation, not offer a presentation.

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You should make every effort to take advantage of mock interviews and interview preparation sessions offered by the Career Planning Center. A mock interview can be invaluable, particularly if you have never had a legal interview. A mock enables you to practice posing and answering questions, address self-assessment related issues, and obtain feedback on everything from your responses and demeanor to your clothing, all of which will assist you in identifying and improving weak areas.

## **IV. THE INTERVIEW**

Generally, every interview has three phases: greeting, discussion, and closing.

### **A. Greeting.**

Do not discount the importance of the greeting. Frequently, the greeting will establish a rapport that sets the tone for the entire interview. Use a firm handshake (if appropriate in context), make good eye contact, and be pleasant and positive. Greetings are important during virtual interviews, too. Be engaged from the moment the interview is live.

### **B. Discussion.**

During the discussion phase of the interview, you and the employer will exchange information in an effort to assess fit. Your ultimate goals are to convince the employer that your qualities and skills match the values and needs of the organization and that your interest in the specific opportunity is sincere. Give the interviewer reasons to want to hire you. Preparation and presentation are the keys to realizing these goals.

#### **1. Presentation.**

At the most basic level, interviews allow employers to learn more about your skills and experience than is evident from your résumé. More important, the interview is an opportunity for the employer to get to know you as an individual. Personality fit with the organization often is the critical factor in hiring decisions. Accordingly, how you present yourself commonly plays a vital role in the determination of whether you reach the next stage of the hiring process, including receiving an offer.

Be personable, confident (but not overconfident), engaging, and enthusiastic. Make good eye contact and play an active role in the conversation. Ask relevant questions and listen attentively. Show enthusiasm for the position, the employer, and the person with whom you are interviewing. Ideally, the discussion phase should be a conversation rather than a mechanical question-response,

question-response. Thus, it is to your advantage to be relaxed. Also, try to avoid being overly self-deprecating, which can be perceived as a lack of self-confidence.

## 2. Interview Questions.

There is no way to list all the possible questions you might be asked in an interview. Every interviewer is different, and it is impossible to predict the exact questions you will be asked. If you devote a reasonable effort to preparing for the interview and you are comfortable addressing your interests/motivations and qualifications, you should be confident responding to most questions. Similarly, keep in mind that there is no “right” answer, so you should not try to come up with responses you think the employer is looking for. Attempting to “get into the head” of the interviewer more than likely will generate anxiety for you and ultimately negatively impact your performance.

A list of sample legal interview questions is provided in *Appendix A* in this Guide. Notice that there are many ways to frame questions seeking the same information. Don’t try to memorize answers to potential questions. The more you rely upon memorization, the less natural and more anxious you will appear.

## 3. Addressing Weak Areas of Your Résumé.

Be prepared to address weak areas of your résumé such as gaps between jobs or schooling, sudden changes in career direction, bad grades (*e.g.*, “Why is your GPA not on your résumé?”), and lackluster experience. Leave it to the interviewer to broach potential weak areas -- *do NOT bring these issues up on your own*. If/when the topic arises, do NOT be apologetic, defensive, or deflect responsibility. The best strategy is to answer the questions concisely and directly, ideally explaining other experiences that undercut the weakness or how you are going about remedying the weakness, and then move on to more positive areas of your candidacy.

Lower grades may attract an interviewer’s attention. Be prepared to discuss your academic performance. This is one response you do not want to leave to chance, so practice a brief, positive statement regarding your grades. Do not offer excuses. Do not place blame on exam format and/or professors. If there were

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exceptional circumstances surrounding your performance, and they are appropriate to discuss in an interview, share these. For example: “I was very disappointed in my first semester grades. I felt I had a good grasp of the material and was diligent in studying. Unfortunately, I had my appendix removed two days before exams began, and it impacted my performance.” Acknowledge that your grades are not what you had hoped for, but then quickly focus on why you feel the grades are not an accurate reflection of your abilities and why you are a great candidate anyway. If you did poorly your first semester but have improved, focus on the improvement. Employers are aware that the transition to law school is not always easy and slow academic starts are common. If your overall grade point average is mediocre, but you have done well in courses relevant to the employer’s practice, emphasize that aspect of your academic record.

#### 4. Addressing Your Strengths and Weaknesses.

You can almost guarantee that you will be asked a question about your strengths, which may be followed by an inquiry about your weaknesses. Self-assessment prior to the interview is critical for good responses to such questions.

a. **Strengths.** Your strengths should be directly job-related, transferable skills, *i.e.*, skills or qualities that an employer values that you have acquired and/or developed previously that you can transfer and use for the employer's benefit. A few examples of relevant skills/strengths are listed in *Appendix E*. Regardless of what you choose to provide as a strength, avoid sounding arrogant and be certain that you have *specific examples* that support your claim to possessing the skills/qualities presented. For example, working two jobs as a server to pay your way through college illustrates a strong work ethic, the ability to juggle multiple responsibilities, the ability to efficiently manage time, and good interpersonal skills.

b. **Weaknesses.** Questions regarding weaknesses are a bit trickier. One way to respond is to *highlight a past negative that you have corrected*. For example: "Meeting deadlines. I never used to be able to do it. I took several time management courses, and now I haven't missed any deadlines in law school." This is only effective if you can provide specific information about how you made the correction. Another way to handle this question is to present a weakness the interviewer has already brought up or is known to the employer based on your résumé or transcript (*e.g.*, lack of experience, poor grades), being certain to explain what you have done (or what you are doing) to remedy it. You can also point to lack of job experience as a weakness since the fact that you are looking for a job should ameliorate it. Obviously, you should avoid citing as a weakness anything that clearly will negatively impact your ability to function as a lawyer or law clerk (*e.g.*, writing and research skills, ability to work under pressure, analytical skills, time management skills).

#### 5. Why DID You Choose to Go to Law School?

One of the questions most commonly posed by interviewers for legal positions is, "Why did you go to law school?" Your response speaks volumes about your motivations and professional goals. You have made an enormous commitment of time, money, energy, and effort to attend law school. Thus, the underlying assumption is that you put considerable thought into the decision to pursue a law degree. Your answer should not be superficial. For instance, responding to the question with only, "I've always wanted to be a lawyer" or "I find law to be interesting" tells the interviewer little about you or your motivation. *Why* have you always wanted to be a lawyer? *Why* do you find law interesting? The interviewer is unlikely to ask follow-up questions, so in preparing for the interview you need to craft a response that is as complete as possible. Avoid entirely (i) citing a television show or movie as fueling your desire to attend law school, (ii) suggesting that you chose law school as a default option, or (iii) providing an answer that suggests a weak motivation (*e.g.*, "My parents wanted me to." "I have always been good at arguing.").

#### 6. The Interviewer is *Not* Your Advocate.

If there is information that you feel the interviewer should know about you that you believe will enhance your candidacy, do not wait for her/him/them to ask the perfect question that will provide you with the opportunity to bring out this information. The interviewer is not your advocate. Accordingly, the question might never come. Be prepared to take it upon yourself to work your key points into the conversation. Do this naturally through transitions in your responses or, for example, when you are asked, "Do you have any questions?"



## 7. Questions to Ask the Interviewer(s).

Interviewing for a position is a two-way street. The employer seeks to find the best-qualified candidate, and your goal is to find an employer who provides the best opportunity for your professional growth. Thoughtful and pertinent questions convey genuine interest in a position, so take advantage of the opportunity to ask questions. Do not underestimate the importance of asking the interviewer good questions. In some instances, a significant portion of the interview, e.g., 50 percent, may be given to you to ask questions.

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The best questions are those that are *personalized to the interviewer* and those that *show off your research of the employer and the interviewer*. A list of sample questions you might consider asking is provided in *Appendix D*. Use the example questions for ideas and personalize them to your individual circumstances. Note that it is *inappropriate* to ask questions about salary or benefits in initial interviews. Ideally, you should avoid discussing compensation until you have an offer; however, be prepared to address compensation earlier if the employer presses the issue. For more information, see the CPC's Salary Negotiations web page at <https://law.marquette.edu/career-planning/salary-negotiations>.

Avoid asking questions only after the interviewer has invited you to do so at the end of the interview. The goal of the interview is to achieve a conversation and sprinkling questions throughout the interview creates this dynamic. Do remember that while you have your own agenda in getting your questions answered, sharing your strengths, and showcasing your employer research, you should not hijack the interview. Let the interviewer direct it. When an interviewer asks if you have any last questions, know that you always do. Even if you feel your questions have been exhausted, you can and should ask a final question of the interviewer.

### C. **Closing.**

Close with energy. Re-emphasize your interest in the employer. It is also appropriate to ask when you can anticipate hearing from them regarding your candidacy and whom to call if you have additional questions. After the interview, write down the names of the people with whom you met and any information about the organization or the position that you had not known before – *do NOT take notes during the interview*. This will aid you in drafting personalized thank you letters to each interviewer, preparing for a follow-up interview, and making a decision if you are offered the position.

Do NOT take notes during the interview.

## V. BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Some legal employers utilize behavioral interview questions to identify strong candidates. The goal of employers using behavioral interviewing is to elicit from candidates specific examples of past experiences that demonstrate attributes that are predetermined to be important. For example, a law firm may decide that leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills are characteristics necessary for success in the organization. The employer will then develop interview questions designed to explore

whether you excel in these areas. You will recognize behavioral interview questions if they start with, “Give me an example of a time when...”; “Describe for me a situation in which...”; and “Tell me about a time when...” See *Appendix B* in this Guide for sample behavioral interview questions.

Corporate legal departments and, to a lesser degree, larger law firms are most likely to be deliberate in their use of behavioral interviewing. Even if the interviewer or employer is not using behavioral interviewing techniques, as the interviewee, you still benefit from offering specific examples of your accomplishments. Anytime you present detailed stories of achievement in an interview, you are much more likely to distinguish yourself positively from other candidates.

When answering questions in behavioral interviews you want to structure your responses in terms of identifying a **Situation or Task**, your **Actions**, and the positive **Results**. Thus, the acronym STAR is sometimes used when discussing behavioral interview responses.

It is very important for you to talk in terms of specifics if your résumé is not impressive on-it’s-face, *e.g.*, you do not have legal experience or other applicable prior professional experience. Most first-year and many second-year law students find themselves in this situation. By framing answers in terms of situations, actions, and outcomes, you connect dots between past and future that interviewers could not connect based on the four corners of your résumé. For example, if the sum total of your work history is the customer service desk at Walmart, identify a situation from the job that highlights a notable attribute. You could start a response by saying, “I developed my ability to make quick decisions based on sound judgment while working in customer service. For example, I had a situation with a customer...” By focusing on a situation, your actions, and the resulting success, you are providing the employer a reason to hire you, and the former position and employer become incidental. What matters is that you have already proven you have the requisite skills to be an effective law clerk.

We encourage you to speak with a member of the CPC staff regarding interview tips, strategies, and preparation generally.

## VI. PROSECUTOR AND DEFENDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews for prosecutor and defender positions tend to be somewhat different than interviews with private sector employers (*e.g.*, law firms, companies). First, a great deal of emphasis is placed on your demonstrated interest in and commitment to the type of work they do and, in the case of public defenders, the clients with whom they work. These employers are seeking individuals who understand and embrace their mission and the constituents served. Thus, for instance, you should be aware and have an understanding of the proper role of a prosecutor or defender, *e.g.*, a candidate for a position in a district attorney’s office might be asked, “*How should a district attorney’s office and the police department relate to one another?*” Second, sometimes these interviews have a more confrontational feel to them. The employer may be testing your ability to respond in a hostile environment/adversarial situation. Third, unlike traditional legal interviews, legal hypotheticals often play a prominent role in prosecutor or defender interviews. See *Appendix C* in this Guide for examples of interview questions for prosecutor and defender interviews.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on your demonstrated interest in and commitment to the type of work they do and, in the case of public defenders, the clients with whom they work.

Hypothetical questions presented in government interviews generally deal with one or more of the following:

- Ethics
- Legal knowledge
- Opening/closing arguments
- Fact patterns

For example, in an interview for a position with a district attorney's office, you might be given a hypothetical fact pattern to take into the next room where you are to prepare rebuttal to potential defense arguments. Often, how you deliver your response to a hypothetical is more important than whether the response is right or wrong. The interviewer wants to see how well you justify your response and how persuasive you are.

In addition, a prosecutor or defender office might seek to test the oral presentation skills of candidates by asking that they prepare and present a five-minute story about a topic of their choosing (fiction or non-fiction) to demonstrate the candidate's ability to present a set of facts in a compelling and descriptive way.

## VII. WHAT TO BRING TO THE INTERVIEW

When the interview is *at the offices of the employer*, bring extra copies of your résumé, and copies of your transcript, writing sample, and list of references. Bring these documents even if you provided them to the employer prior to the interview. They can be carried in a slim attaché case, portfolio, or carry-all (*not* a book bag or backpack). For on-campus interviews at Eckstein Hall, only bring documents if you have been requested to do so by the employer.

## VIII. WHAT TO WEAR

When determining what to wear to an interview, your default should be dressing like a lawyer who is on his/her/their way to argue before the United States Supreme Court. While many firms and companies have gone to business casual dress policies on a year-round basis, you should err on the side of being more formally dressed than your interviewer. Not all office attire rises to the level of interview attire. Interview attire is not altered based on the interview being in person or virtual. Dress professionally regardless of the interview format. You do not need to forego being fashionable during interview season. Just make choices that on the continuum remain on the far end of daytime professional.

**Pant suit standards:** Pant suits are coordinating coats/jackets and pants. This means the coats and pants are of the same fabric. When opting for a pant suit, wear a solid or subtle pinstriped navy, dark gray, or black color. Sports jackets/blazers that do not coordinate with the pants are not suits. The unmatched jacket/blazer and pants are considered business attire, **not interview attire**. Traditional interview suits are generally single-breasted suits. Single-breasted coats are always in style, so opt for single-breasted rather than double-breasted when investing in a first suit. The fabric should be high quality so that it does not wrinkle. The fit of the suit is important. If you are not able to get a good fit from an off-the-rack purchase, invest in having the suit tailored.

**Skirt suit/Dress suit standards:** Skirt suits and dress suits are coordinating coats/jackets and skirts or sheath dresses. This means that the coats/jackets and skirt or sheath dress are of the same fabric. When opting for a skirt suit or dress suit, wear a solid or subtle pinstriped navy, dark gray, or black color. Jackets/blazers that do not coordinate with the skirt/dress are not suits. The unmatched jacket and skirt/dress are considered business attire, **not interview attire**. When wearing a skirt or dress suit, be attentive to the length of the skirt/dress. Assess the appropriateness of the skirt/dress length while standing and sitting.

**Shirt Options:** You have options for shirts that can be worn with pant, skirt, and dress suits. A white, collared, cotton, button-down shirt is a traditional option. Other options include a shell or blouse. If

you elect a color or patterned shirt or blouse for an interview, it is best to stick with subtle patterns and light colors over bold choices. Bold colors and prints are better for workday attire rather than interview attire. Do not wear a black shirt for an interview.

**Shoes, Belts, Socks, and Ties:** Shoes should be polished and scuff free. If wearing a heel, select a heel height that allows you to walk comfortably. Sky-high stilettos are not recommended in interview settings. Sandals and open-toed shoes are not interview appropriate either. Choose a closed-toe shoe. For interviews, traditional black and brown leather hues are good options. Generally, the color of the shoes should coordinate with the color of the belt if you are wearing one. Socks should be dress socks, not sports socks. In recent years, colored and patterned socks are trendy and are fine to wear. Ties should be silk and of a color and pattern that are professional and do not distract from you as a person.

**Accessories, tattoos & more:** Hair, makeup, and jewelry should be business-day appropriate. If you are wondering about a certain look, such as facial hair, hair length, tattoos, and/or piercings, research people who work for the organization/law firm by viewing the photographs of the attorneys on the employer's website or on LinkedIn. Often the profile pictures will provide insight as to the standards of appearance/attire expected by the organization. If you choose to wear a scent, make certain it will not overpower the space during an in-person interview. Facial piercings are often removed for interviews and tattoos are often covered during interviews. Consider the employer with whom you are interviewing when making decisions about visibility of nose, lip, and eyebrow piercings and tattoos.

## IX. INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

### A. Thank You Letters.

It is appropriate to send thank you letters following a job interview, ideally within 24 hours of the interview. Refer to the [Guide to Thank You Correspondence](#) available in your *Career Planning Handbook* and online at <http://law.marquette.edu/assets/career-planning/pdf/Thank-You-Guide.pdf> for guidance in writing a thank you letter.

### B. Follow-Up Calls.

If the interviewers have not already provided the information, you may ask them when they plan to contact students for call backs or offers, and whether you can contact them if you have not heard anything by a certain time. If the interviewers tell you it is okay to contact them (or someone else in their office), and you have not received a response by the deadline, wait a few days and then call.

## X. CALL-BACK INTERVIEWS

Interviews that take place at the employer's office for selected students *following* the initial screening interview are commonly known as "call-back interviews." Generally, you are scheduled to meet with numerous attorneys over several hours. Lunch and/or dinner may be part of the schedule.

The focus at this stage is "fit"; specifically, how well you fit with the attorneys and with the employer's work environment. Accordingly, employers often have you meet with a cross-section of attorneys, from new associates to partners who have been with their firm for decades. The idea is to get feedback from a variety of individuals regarding your candidacy and to give you a feel for the attorneys you might be working with and the general atmosphere of the organization. While you still likely will be asked traditional screening interview questions, often the emphasis is placed on how you interact with the employer's attorneys and other staff. Conversations might be entirely informal, having little or nothing to do with law school, the practice of law or, seemingly, your candidacy. In this light, the best advice for call-back interviews is to be *relaxed, confident, engaging, and enthusiastic*. A good idea is to request from the

employer in advance a list identifying the attorneys with whom you will be meeting, so you can research those individuals beforehand.

## XI. VIDEO/VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Employer expectations for candidates' professionalism and preparedness remain high during video/virtual interviews, so you should approach your general interview preparations as you would for an in-person interview. The following are some best-practice tips for video-based and/or virtual job interviews.

### A. Before the Interview.

#### 1. Equipment Check.

- Confirm which platform the interviewing employer is using and make certain you have the software downloaded and/or an account set up as the system may require. Most employers seem to be using either Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, or GoToMeetings, but there are myriad platforms being utilized.
- Prior to interviewing, test the platform being used so that you can identify any technical glitches in advance of your interview. Doing so also allows you to acclimate to the program's features, such as controlling volume and screen orientation if you are interviewing on a platform that is new to you.
- It is best to use a laptop or desktop rather than a phone or tablet for video interviews. The stationary feature of a laptop/desktop will serve you better in a video interview than a handheld device.
- Make certain your device is fully charged, or even better, plugged in to a power source.
- Confirm you have a strong Wi-Fi connection in the space from which you will be participating in interviews. If you are interviewing from your home and you have multiple individuals in your home using Wi-Fi, try to schedule interviews at times that roommates/family members do not also have mandatory streaming events like classes and work meetings that may impact Wi-Fi reliability.
- Have a back-up device at the ready. Anticipate connection issues and be prepared to reconnect to the meeting through a secondary device.

#### 2. Location, Location, Location.

- Students may reserve the CPC interview rooms for virtual/video interviews. Rooms are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. You may check availability of the rooms by contacting the CPC.
- If you are not interviewing in a room in Eckstein, you should select a space in your home or elsewhere where you will have uninterrupted privacy throughout your interview session. You should not interview in a public space or in a car. Roommates, family members, and pets should be issued a "no fly zone" mandate during your interviews. This includes asking roommates/family to refrain from playing loud music or having a movie or TV program playing in the distance that can be heard by employers during your interview.
- Set up your device and sit down in front of the screen and assess your backdrop. You are inviting interviewers into your personal space when interviewing from home...be thoughtful as to what they will see and learn about you. (A nice piece of artwork—excellent; a tower of empty White Claw cans—not quite right.) If selecting a virtual background, refrain from selecting virtual backgrounds that show you on a beach, etc. during an interview. Professional options for Marquette Law School virtual backgrounds

can be found here: <https://law.marquette.edu/marquette-lawyers/social-media-backgrounds>

3. Attire and Appearance.

- Dress and present yourself for your video interviews exactly as you would for in-person interviews. Wear a suit and be attentive to your overall grooming. Best practices such as removing facial piercings, covering tattoos, etc., remain. Review Section VIII (pp. 9-10) of this Interviewing Guide for guidance on appearance and attire.
- Appearance includes considering how you look on camera in terms of the angle of the camera and your proximity to it. The camera should be at eye level or close to eye level. This may require you to place your laptop on top of something. You also need to consider how close you are to the camera. If you are too close your face will be distorted.
- Consider your option of headphones if wearing them during an interview. Some of the larger headphones with attached microphones establish the appearance you are ready to game rather than impress an interviewer. Smaller, more discrete headphones can enhance your professional look. Quality audio is important, so the advice is not to avoid headphones, simply consider how they look as you select which set to use.
- It is worth repeating in the “appearance” points that the appearance of the physical space around you is also open to employer evaluation and judgment. If interviewing from home, make certain the area is tidy and that you are not inviting an interviewer into a part of your living space they would prefer not to be in.

4. Double-check Interview Times. Always confirm your interview time, especially if you are interviewing with an employer that is based in a different time zone.

**B. During the Interview.**

1. Look at the Camera.

- You will not appear to be looking at the interviewer if you watch only the screen; make certain to look at your camera as well. Consider placing a sticker near the camera to remind yourself where you should look.
- DO NOT look at other screens or devices at any time during your interview. Interviewers have noted it is obvious when students are looking at an email, notification, or message that arrives on their computer or another device during the interview. Best practice is to turn off all notifications and other devices during interviews. Client meetings are occurring in virtual spaces, so the ability to remain focused and engaged is a skill being evaluated in interviews.

2. Avoid Distracting Noises.

- Turn off notifications on any devices near you during an interview so that the interview is not disrupted by notifications of arriving emails and messages.
- If you have any documents in front of you (e.g., a printed list of questions, a resume), be careful to not move them around as the crackling of moving papers will be caught by the microphone and will be distracting to the interviewer.
- Do not keyboard or otherwise take notes during an interview. The clicking keyboard and/or writing of notes will be interpreted as you being disinterested and/or disengaged as you will be notably distracted from the conversation.
- If wearing noise canceling headphones, know that while you will not hear the background noise from roommates/family members/pets, the interviewer may be able to hear these distractions.

3. Disconnect. Make certain you are completely disconnected from the interview before you walk away from your computer or otherwise transition out of interview mode.

**C. After the Interview.**

1. Express Gratitude. Send a thank you to every interviewer with whom you meet. A well-written thank you denotes your professionalism. Thank yous must be error-free, professional, thoughtful, and personalized. We encourage you to review the CPC's [Guide to Thank You Correspondence](#), which is available online at <https://law.marquette.edu/assets/career-planning/pdf/Thank-You-Guide.pdf> and in the Career Planning Handbook.

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How would you describe yourself as a person?
3. What three words best describe you and why?
4. If I were to call [previous/current employer] and ask about you, what do you think they would tell me?
5. How would your best friend describe you?
6. How would your harshest critic describe you?
7. What is the last book you read?
8. When you're not in school, what types of activities do you enjoy?
9. What do you think it takes to be a successful lawyer?
10. What qualities do you possess that will make you a successful lawyer/advocate?
11. How do you define success?
12. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
13. Describe your most rewarding experience.
14. What is the worst decision you have ever made (other than personal)?
15. What is the most unpopular decision you have ever made?
16. What was the worst job you ever had? What made it bad?
17. What is your greatest strength/weakness?
18. Why should we hire you?
19. What can you do for us, and what have you done that proves that?
20. If you couldn't be a lawyer, what would you do? Why?
21. What are you passionate about?
22. How do you respond to criticism?
23. What do you think is the difference between confidence and arrogance?
24. Do you prefer to collaborate or work alone?
25. What do you expect from a supervisor?
26. What did you do in school when you got a lower grade than you thought you deserved?
27. Describe your work experiences. What did you like/dislike about them?
28. How do you manage stress?
29. What skills did you develop in your previous positions?
30. How is your experience relevant to our work?
31. How do you handle conflict with peers?
32. Tell me about a research project you've enjoyed.
33. What do you think is a basic quality of legal writing that differentiates it from other kinds of writing?
34. What is your writing style?
35. Are you motivated by going up against deadlines or do you prefer to set early deadlines to avoid pressure?
36. Why did you choose to pursue a law degree? Have your goals changed since then?
37. Why did you choose to attend Marquette Law School?
38. Where do you see yourself on a continuum in terms of your interest in "the law" or "being a lawyer?"
39. How has law school been better, worse, or different from what you expected?
40. What law school courses have you enjoyed the most/least? Why?
41. Who is your favorite professor? Why?
42. How did you choose your college?
43. Why did you choose your undergraduate major?



44. What do you want to be doing in 5/10 years?
45. What are your short-term/long-term goals? How are you planning on achieving those goals?
46. What do you hope to accomplish with your law degree?
47. What are you looking for in an employer?
48. What would make you want to come to work versus have to come to work?
49. What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
50. Describe what would be an ideal work environment for you.
51. What factors will be the most important in your decision to select one employer over others?
52. How will you know in the first three months of working for an employer if you've made the right choice?
53. What do you consider to be reasonable hours to work in a week?
54. If you joined us, what would sustain your motivation and commitment if you found you had to put in really long hours?
55. What ties do you have to this geographic area?
56. Where else are you interviewing?
57. Why do you want to work for us?
58. What concerns do you have about joining us?
59. What do you hope this job is not?
60. How did you learn about us?
61. Is there anything that is not on your résumé that you would like to tell us about that you think would help us make a decision regarding your candidacy?
62. Do you have any special skills or knowledge not already disclosed that you think would make you an asset to this office?
63. Assume you are a first-year associate with this firm. How would you handle a situation in which the partner is unavailable, and the client needs an immediate answer to a question?
64. What is the hardest format of exam questions for you to answer, and why do you think that is the case?
65. In law school, how do you approach a problem for which there appears to be no definitive answer?
66. What would you do if you were given two urgent projects to complete with the same deadline and you did not believe you could get them both done on time?
67. What would you do if a client was asking you to argue or pursue an endpoint that (in your view) had very little chance of success?
68. Have you ever served in a mentoring relationship or been on the receiving end of such a relationship? What are the qualities of a good mentor?
69. What steps would you take to inspire exiting firm clients to have confidence in you?
70. Describe how you would go about building new client relationships.
71. Are you comfortable with public speaking? If no, what steps could you take to increase your comfort level?
72. What have been your favorite case to study in school and why?

## APPENDIX B

### Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Describe a time in your academic or professional life when you had to hear some tough feedback or criticism, and how you responded.
2. Give an example of a time you were working in a group and the group lost focus/came off the rails. What did you do to get it back on track?
3. Describe a stressful situation you have experienced and tell me how you responded to it.
4. Describe a major problem you encountered on a past job and how you handled it.
5. What was your most difficult decision in the last 6 months? What process did you undertake in making that decision?
6. Tell me about a situation in which your personal obligations and business/school commitments conflicted. How did you resolve the conflict?
7. Have you been on a committee or had a work-related situation in which you were asked to accomplish a task with insufficient guidance? If so, how did you proceed?
8. Describe an obstacle or challenge that you have overcome and how you did it.
9. Tell me about a mistake you have made in your school or professional life and how you addressed it.
10. Give an example of a time when you successfully persuaded someone to change her/his mind.
11. Give an example of a time when you identified and successfully pursued a very specific goal.
12. Tell me about a time that you faced a disorganized situation and how you addressed it.
13. Give an example of a time when you have been proud of your resourcefulness and creativity.
14. Have you ever been part of a team that was poorly led? What do you think could have been done better?
15. Have you ever worked with others in a volunteer effort to improve or serve your community? If so, please describe.
16. Have you ever served as a peacemaker/bridge-builder between others in conflict? If so, explain.
17. Give me an example of a situation in which you have demonstrated leadership ability.
18. Describe a situation where you had to earn the trust of others.

## APPENDIX C

### Sample Interview Questions for Prosecutor and Defender Interviews

#### Prosecutor Interview Questions

1. While reviewing a petty theft report, your supervisor comes by and says to you, "I know this person. I know him to be a good, honest person. I don't want you to file this case." What do you do?
2. Do you think that the people who are arrested for crimes should be required to provide samples of their DNA to be entered into a DNA database? Why or why not?
3. How would you handle a situation in which you felt another prosecutor was acting unethically?
4. How should a district attorney's office and the police department relate to one another?
5. Most criminal cases resolve through plea agreements. What factors do you think are most important for a prosecutor to consider in negotiating a plea agreement?
6. What do you believe is the role of a defense attorney in a criminal case?
7. Police can stop and detain a person if they have reasonable suspicion to do so. How would you define reasonable suspicion? Do you think the standard is too low or too high?
8. What challenges do you feel that you, personally, will face when balancing racial equity with criminal justice?
9. In what circumstances do you believe prison is an appropriate sentence?
10. Do you think police should be required to read Miranda warnings to suspects who are in custody? Why or why not?
11. How will you work with victims and witnesses who may not want to participate in the prosecution of criminal cases?
12. Do you think a prosecutor should be concerned about potential collateral consequences a defendant may suffer following a conviction, such as deportation, loss of a job, expulsion from school, or loss of housing? Why or why not?

#### Defender Interview Questions

1. In your opinion, what is the difference between a prosecutor and public defender?
2. What do you do in a situation where your client contacts your supervisor and tells her/him that you are not competent and/or not prepared?
3. A client tells you he is guilty of the crime but wants to go to trial. What are the challenges involved in this situation and how would you address those challenges?
4. During a conversation with a client, you realize that you missed a deadline to file a motion for substitution of judge that you had told your client you would file. How would you handle this situation?
5. Your client makes a statement to police without any Miranda warning. The state offers a deal to your client. Your client wants to fight the statement because he was never read his rights. How do you handle the situation?
6. Are there any types of cases that you will not handle? Why?
7. How would you handle a situation where your client's family members continue to call you about the case?
8. You and your client want to subpoena four witnesses, all with similar testimony, but your process server is only able to serve three witnesses. Your client and the process server believe that the fourth witness will be a very compelling witness. What do you do?
9. This job brings you into contact with people from backgrounds different from your own. Describe an experience - working or living or studying/learning - with people from backgrounds different from yours. What did you learn from the experience?

10. You are scheduled to work with a new prosecutor in misdemeanor court who is just out of law school and unfamiliar with the routine of daily practice, including the rigors of the judge assigned to her courtroom. What are the opportunities involved in this situation? How would you address those opportunities?
11. You are asked to cover intake court for another attorney at the last minute. You have not had a chance to meet with any of the clients who will be making their initial appearances, but you have the bail information sheets to make your arguments. Delaying the proceedings for you to re-interview the clients is not an option. When the court calls the first case, the client emerges from the holding cell and is directed by the bailiff toward the podium where you are standing. What are the challenges involved in this situation and how would you address them?

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Questions to Ask Interviewers

The below questions are generic examples that should be used as ideas for questions you might ask. You should always *personalize* the questions you ask to the interviewers and employers. If there is relevant information about the employer in the news, inquire about it, *e.g.*, a new office, added practice areas.

1. Do you enjoy your work overall?
2. What do you like about your job?
3. Tell me a little about how you came to work here.
4. On what kinds of cases/issues are you currently working?
5. What's the most interesting case you've worked on?
6. Did you clerk here? If yes, what did you enjoy most about the experience?
7. If you were to stay for 20 years, why would you stay?
8. How would you describe the organization's general character?
9. If you could change anything about your job, what would it be?
10. How long were you at the firm before you had significant client contact?
11. What do you find most challenging about being a lawyer?
12. What do you find to be the most rewarding aspect of your work?
13. What are your expectations for the person hired into this position?
14. Are there practice specialties your firm/organization does not focus on that you would like to develop?
15. What kind of person is your organization looking for to fill this position?
16. What skills and attributes are required to do this type of work well?
17. Thinking about previous law clerks who excelled, what characteristics did they seem to have in common?
18. How much direction/autonomy is there in this position?
19. What kind of training do attorneys receive?
20. What will a typical day be like for me?
21. Will I get feedback on my work?
22. How often will my performance be evaluated? How will I be evaluated?
23. Can you share with me some examples of projects your last law clerk was given?
24. Do you typically give law clerks work, and if yes, what do you look for in their work?
25. How will I receive work? Is the expectation that I take initiative to ask for projects or are they assigned?
26. Can you share with me the organization's formal feedback process?
27. Do you have benchmarks for young attorneys to meet in their early years of practice?
28. What was it about my résumé that got me this interview?
29. Do you encourage participation in community or professional activities?
30. What kind of turnover has there been among staff attorneys?
31. How has the practice changed over the last 5 years? (For experienced attorneys.)
32. What do you see as your greatest challenges for the coming year?
33. How would you describe the work atmosphere here?
34. When do you plan on contacting students for call-back interviews/offers? Can I contact you (or someone else at your office) if I haven't heard either way by that time?

## APPENDIX E

### Examples of Relevant Strengths

- Analytical skills
- Diligence
- Legal research skills
- Legal writing skills
- Hard working/work ethic
- Time management
- Problem-solving skills
- Conflict resolution
- Negotiation skills
- Ability to work effectively under pressure
- Stress management
- Communication skills (both oral and written)
- Listening skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-awareness
- Assertiveness
- Decisiveness
- Enthusiasm
- Ability to think on your feet
- Ability to empathize
- Relationship building skills
- Energetic
- Organizational skills
- Ability to work on own initiative
- Ability to juggle multiple responsibilities
- Leadership skills
- Patience
- Resourcefulness
- Creativity
- Determination
- Oral advocacy skills
- Counseling skills
- Detail-orientation
- Integrity
- Teamwork skills
- Management skills
- Quick learner
- Tenacity
- Sense of humor
- Client development skills
- Ability to work autonomously
- Discipline
- Maturity
- Dedication
- Perseverance

## APPENDIX F

### Interviewing DOs and DON'Ts

- ✓ DO your homework. Collect as much information about the employer and the position as possible before the interview. Find out with whom you will be meeting, and if possible, identify that person's area of expertise. If you appear to know nothing about the position you are seeking or the organization you hope will employ you, your chances of success are slim.
- ✓ DO be punctual. Plan to arrive 15 minutes ahead of time so you have an opportunity to focus your thoughts. There is almost no excuse for being late that will shake the poor initial impression of the interviewer that tardiness creates.
- ✓ DO relax. When you prepare yourself thoroughly before the interview, you can enter the interview confident and calm. You are far more likely to impress the interviewer with a candid and thoughtful response rather than with a "canned" statement that sounds memorized or trite. Your questions and responses should be based on your research and derived from your genuine interest in the employer.
- ✓ DO show enthusiasm.
- ✓ DO pay special attention to your grooming.
- ✓ DO dress appropriately for the position you are seeking.
- ✓ DO pay attention to your choice of footwear.
- ✓ DO look the interviewer in the eye.
- ✓ DO be able to discuss every entry on your résumé in a way that connects to the employer.
- ✓ DO be prepared to discuss any obvious weaknesses, such as grades, lack of experience, absence of leadership positions, etc.
- ✗ DON'T speak negatively about a former employer or school. Your focus should be on how you have learned and grown from past experiences, rather than about any personal dissatisfaction with the past. Most interviewers think that if you were unhappy in your past position, the chances are good that you will be unhappy in your next one.
- ✗ DON'T dominate the interview. Assertiveness and decisiveness are admirable qualities to convey, but arrogance and self-absorption are not. Try to strike a balance between providing thorough information for the interviewer to evaluate you on and having a pleasant conversation.
- ✗ DON'T interrupt the interviewer.
- ✗ DON'T go overboard when it comes to fragrance.
- ✗ DON'T mistake arrogance for self-confidence.

- ✘ DON'T be defensive or apologetic.
- ✘ DON'T bring up compensation before the interviewer does. If you are genuinely interested in the position, you will demonstrate that with relevant questions about opportunities for advancement and responsibility.
- ✘ DON'T bring up personal issues or crises. The interviewer will not want to hear excuses for problem areas in your résumé or background, but instead will want to see that you have thought through how to handle both the question and the situation itself. Focus on the positive.
- ✘ DON'T blame poor performance on others.