

# ***MichiganTech***

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## ***Mock Interview Program***

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewers:** We've provided some sample questions below, although feel free to use your own questions. The evaluation sheet provided outlines how a company representative may evaluate the student's interview performance. You may want to use that criteria to provide positive feedback at the end of the interview.

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Please tell me about yourself.

How did you go about selecting your major?

What has been your favorite class? What class have you disliked the most? Why?

Talk about your greatest strength and greatest weakness.

Tell me about a mistake you've made and how did you try to fix it?

Tell me about the most challenging thing you've ever done.

What are two recent accomplishments, one personal, and one academic or professional, you are proud of?

Do you prefer working with teams or alone? Why?

I would like to know about two qualities you like and dislike in a coworker.

What three words best describe you?

Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate who was not doing their share of the work and how did you handle the situation.

Give me an example of a time where you have shown initiative, where you went about and beyond what was expected.

How would a previous employer describe you?

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

How well do you work under pressure?

Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?

Talk about a time when you had to manage several tasks at the same time that will convince me that you are capable of multi-tasking.

How do you determine or evaluate success?

How has your education prepared you for your career?

What do you do in your spare time?

How have you influenced productivity and results in your previous work experience?

Have you ever had difficulty with your professor or boss? How did you resolve the situation?

What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

Describe a contribution you have made to a project on which you've worked.

Describe your most rewarding non-academic college experience.

Tell me a time when you took the lead on a team. How did it go? (did you meet your project objective and how well did the team work together under your leadership)

Can you describe a time when your work was criticized? How did you handle it?

Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback.

What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years and how did you come to that decision?

How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with the team?

Give examples of ideas you've had or implemented.

What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?

Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual, and how you deal with it. What was the outcome? How did you feel about it?

Who has impacted you most in your career path and how?

What experience do you have in this field?

Do you consider yourself successful and why?

What have you learned from mistakes on the job?

Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.

Tell me about the most fun you have had on the job.

What are you passionate about?

Give an example of when the team you worked with worked well together, and one where your team didn't work well together.

Describe a time when your workload was heavy and how you handled it.

**Sample Questions that are company specific and don't apply to a Mock Interview, but ones students should be prepared to answer:**

What can you tell us about our company?

What interests you about this job?

What can you tell me about our company & what interests you about our products or services?

What do you know about our competitors?

Why did you decide to seek a position in this company?

What do you see yourself doing in 5 years?

Are there any questions you would like to ask?

# Mock Interview Evaluation

Please consider using this form as a guide to provide evaluation and feedback to the student's Mock Interview performance.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Skill Area	<b>Rating</b> 1-Needs Improvement 3-Average 5-Highly Accomplished	Evaluation/Feedback
Prepared (portfolio, copies of resume, pen, on-time)		
Firm handshake, smile, and dressed for success		
Posture and eye contact		
Gave <b>numerous detailed examples</b> from past experience, including leadership & teamwork		
Recognizes/confident in personal and technical strengths		
Reasons for interest in the field		
Attitude: enthusiasm, positive, respectful, friendly, etc.		
Confident communication skills		
Knowledge of the organization and how he/she can match employers needs		
Asked intelligent, informed questions of the interviewer		

# The Behavior Interview

In the vast majority of times, your interview will be of the **Behavioral** type. You will be asked questions about how you've "behaved" or acted in the past.

## ***Interviewers believe that past Behavior = Future Behavior***

...and there is plenty of research out there to support that theory. So, you'll be asked to tell stories about your past behavior in terms of problems you've solved, goals you've achieved, challenges you've overcome, conflicts you've resolved, teamwork and leadership experiences, etc.

Behavioral type questions are easy because they are all about you, but, at the same time, they can be hard, because the answers are way back in your memory. So...you might want to write answers for typical interview questions BEFORE your interview using the outline below. This will ensure your own personal background and experience are at the forefront of your memory, which will allow you to answer questions eloquently and confidently.

Use this format and tell your detailed story in about 2-3 minutes.

### ***1. Introduction (create an initial picture, so your following actions can be better appreciated):***

- Where
- What
- When
- Why
- Who

### **2. Tell about (address the question asked):**

- A **problem** you had to solve
- A **goal** you were striving for
- A **challenge** you had to overcome
- A **conflict** you had to resolve
- An example of **teamwork** or **leadership** experience

### **3. Tell what you did (the action you took) to solve your problem, meet your goal, overcome your challenge, etc:**

- Action
- Action
- Action
- Action
- Action

### **4. Talk about the **Results** – good or bad. Sometimes poor results or mistakes are our greatest lessons**

***Please remember...winning answers have lots of details.***

**YOUR PERSONAL INFOMERCIAL** Being prepared to deliver a personal “sound bite” or infomercial at a moment’s notice is critical to your job search. You will use this valuable tool in a variety of settings, including:

- In job interviews in response to the question “tell me about yourself”
- At job fairs
- To network with individuals or in groups
- During informational interviews
- Informal, spontaneous social settings

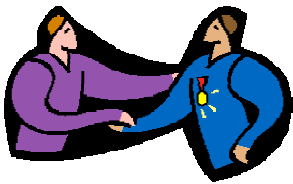


Different situations call for different messages, the length of your commercial may vary from **15 to 90 seconds**. However, it’s best to start with the longer **90-second** version, which is about 225 words in length. Your message needs to be **brief and believable**. For a job seeker with work experience, a well designed introduction will showcase past experience, traits, skills, accomplishments. A student or recent graduate may lead off with their education. The message may also include your current situation, such as you are graduating next semester or your employer is leaving the community.

In an interview, try to **highlight those elements of your experience that shows how closely you “fit” to the organization and position**. Conclude with a strong closing statement of how all this led you specifically to this interview. "With my prior experience and your commitment to \_\_\_\_\_, I felt that we would be an ideal match." Remember to keep it **short and sweet**. If the listener wants more detail they’ll ask for it. Although you’ll want to be sure that your presentation comes across as fresh and not “canned,” it’s important that you regularly rehearse and **practice your delivery. Don’t memorize, but do rehearse.**

Your message needs to be **flexible and tailored to the needs of the listener**. You’ll need to be able to expand your message when the opportunity warrants it, or shorten it when it’s more appropriate.

**Follow the “3W” Format to create a WIN-WIN-WIN 90-Second Infomercial:**



**WHO Am I: (50 – 60 seconds)** Start with recent education if you are a student or new graduate. Give a brief snapshot of your work history, expertise/skills/accomplishments relevant to the type of position that you are targeting or being interviewed for.

**WHY am I seeking employment (Optional – 10 seconds)** Why you are looking for work, i.e. plant closing, position eliminated, co-op/internship is ending or graduating in the near future.

**WHAT I am targeting (30 seconds)** Your target industry, position, function or role. During a job interview, why you are interested in this specific position and what value you can bring to the role.

**SAMPLE PERSONAL INFOMERCIALS:**

1. I’ll be graduating in May with an Associate’s degree in Applied Business from ABC Community College. I recently completed a six month internship with Acme Graphics where I assisted customers in developing promotional materials for their businesses. I’m very skilled at listening to customer needs and coming up with unique ways of tapping into potential markets. I’m looking for an entry-level position in promotional marketing where I can build upon my education and experience to implement creative ways to market products.
2. I am very interested in Database Management. In my coursework at XXXX, we examined how systems such as XXX can greatly improve an organization’s efficiency. I later put this to good use as an intern with Acme Widgets where I designed and ran queries for several clients. I am eager to apply and build on these experiences, and would be pleased to do so at your organization.
3. My name is Chris Cool. I’m eager to use my nursing education as part of a (name your area of interest) team. when I graduate in May from ABC Community College. As a patient care assistant I’ve helped create a patient education class and led sessions for members of the Student Nurses’ Association. I have also helped train new patient care assistants and facilitate workshops for community teens. I want to apply my skills and experience in a hospital (or whatever your preference) setting.
4. I will be graduating in May from ABC Community College with an Associate’s of Applied Science in XXXX Technology. While going to school I have worked on a wide variety of construction projects involving scheduling and estimating. Employers have told me I am hard working and dependable. I am looking for an entry level position where I can apply my classroom and hands-on knowledge.

# Preparing Your Elevator Speech

An 'elevator speech' is a term taken from the early days of the internet explosion when web development companies needed venture capital. Finance firms were swamped with applications for money and the companies that won the cash were often those with a simple pitch. The best were those that could explain a business proposition to the occupants of an elevator in the time it took them to ride to their floor. In other words, an elevator speech that worked was able to describe and sell an idea in 30 seconds or less. Today, an 'elevator speech' can be any kind of short speech that sells an idea, promotes your business or markets you as an individual.

An elevator speech is as essential as a business card. You need to be able to say who you are, what you do, what you are interested in doing and how you can be a resource to your listeners. If you don't have an elevator speech, people won't know what you really do.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE-** Before writing any part of your elevator speech, research your audience. You will be much more likely to succeed if your elevator speech is clearly targeted at the individuals you are speaking to. Having a 'generic' elevator pitch is almost certain to fail.

**KNOW YOURSELF -** Before you can convince anyone of your proposition you need to know exactly what it is. You need to define precisely what you are offering, what problems you can solve and what benefits you bring to a prospective contact or employers

Answer the following questions:

1. What are your key strengths?
2. What adjectives come to mind to describe you?
3. What is it you are trying to 'sell' or let others know about you?
4. Why are you interested in the company or industry the person represents?

**OUTLINE YOUR TALK -** start an outline of your material using bullet points. You don't need to add any detail at this stage; simply write a few notes to help remind you of what you really want to say. They don't need to be complete sentences.

You can use the following questions to start your outline:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I offer?
3. What problem is solved?
4. What are the main contributions I can make?
5. What should the listener do as a result of hearing this?

**FINALIZE YOUR SPEECH -** Now that you have your outline of your material, you can finalize the speech. The key to doing this is to expand on the notes you made by writing out each section in full.

To help you do this, follow these guidelines:

1. Take each note you made and write a sentence about it.
2. Take each of the sentences and connect them together with additional phrases to make them flow.
3. Go through what you have written and change any long words or jargon into everyday language.
4. Go back through the re-written material and cut out unnecessary words.
5. Finalize your speech by making sure it is no more than 90 words long.



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## Answering Questions About Your Weaknesses

By **ARLENE S. HIRSCH**  
From *CareerJournal.com*

Every successful professional has weaknesses as well as strengths. The key is ensuring that your weaknesses don't become career-enders. Potential employers will try to discern your shortcomings to ensure they don't hamstring their company. Your challenge is to convince them that you don't bring lethal liabilities.

One way to learn a candidate's weaknesses is simply to ask directly during interviews, "What are your weaknesses?" While job hunters lament this question, employers are determined to continue asking it because the responses typically are so illuminating.

### Seven Response Strategies

To make sure this question doesn't trip you up, here are possible strategies that you -- as an interviewee -- can use to frame an effective response. Remember that context is as important as content. Whenever you cite a weakness, be sure to remind employers of your strengths. Be honest about your shortcomings, but never cite anything that might genuinely interfere with your ability to do the available job -- and do it well. The key is to present your weaknesses in a way that demonstrates your real strengths and character.

#### Strategy 1: Cite a weakness that, under the right circumstances, can prove to be an asset.

Conventional wisdom suggests that you respond by stating a weakness that really could be perceived as a positive, such as: "I'm a workaholic. I spend a lot of time at work making sure that I do my job right."

As you can probably guess, employers usually see right through this type of response because it's both dishonest and self-serving. A better answer is to mention something that may be perceived as a weakness but, in the proper context, constitutes a genuine strength. For example, empathy -- the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings -- is a good quality when trying to understand an enemy. But an empathic manager may be viewed erroneously as "weak" or "soft." A candidate who offers empathy as a perceived weakness (but knows it's a strength) can then cite a time when he or she used empathy to gain competitive intelligence.

The "strength as weakness" strategy works well if you: show the value of using the particular trait in a given context; demonstrate that you know how and when to use it most effectively; and explain how you might be able to use it to help your future employer.

Saying, for instance, that you're a perfectionist would work if you can cite times when this trait is a strength instead of a weakness. An example might be when proofreading or editing, since perfectionism can guarantee error-proof copy. On the other hand, a perfectionist chief executive officer might micromanage his top managers and paralyze the organization. Knowing the requirements of the job and the organizational culture can help you decide whether a potential employer will



view your perceived weakness as a potential strength.

### **Strategy 2: Cite a corrected weakness.**

Another strategy is to cite a weakness that you're working to correct. Always provide concrete examples of what you're doing to fix the problem, the progress that you've made, and how these improvements will help an employer.

An international executive felt his career had suffered because he wasn't fluent in Spanish. After losing a job during a corporate reorganization, he decided to combine work with pleasure by signing up for a language-immersion program in Chile. Six weeks later, he felt he had learned enough Spanish to be more effective in his next job. During one interview, he asked the interviewer if she would like to conduct the interview in Spanish so he could demonstrate his proficiency directly.

In another scenario, a marketing executive who had lacked expertise in customer-relationship management related how she had used her unemployment to take seminars and courses in the field and was eager to apply her new knowledge in her next job.

### **Strategy 3: Cite a lesson learned.**

Similar to the corrected-weakness strategy, the lesson-learned approach acknowledges real missteps and mistakes within the context of a lesson learned. If you can demonstrate what you learned from your mistake, potential employers will be reassured of two things: first, that you can learn from your mistakes; and two, that you won't make this kind of mistake again. It's also smart to link how this newfound understanding will benefit a new employer.

An assistant manager who was having a personality conflict with her boss complained to her boss's boss about her manager. After that, she was demoted to a sales-clerk position. Reflecting on the experience, she could talk about the importance of "managing upward" and, with 20-20 hindsight, how she would handle the same problem now.

### **Strategy 4: Cite a learning objective.**

After reviewing the job description, you may discover that part of the job requires more skill and experience than you now have. Rather than assuming the potential employer won't notice this weakness, develop a strategy to compensate for it.

For example, a candidate for an employee-benefits specialist position knew that she had experience in five of the six technical areas that the employer required. Before she interviewed, she researched certification programs that were available through professional groups. Her goal was to learn the language and expertise the skill required and also how long it would take her to get "up to speed" in that area. When she cited this weakness, she could then address what she needed to do to learn it and in what time frame.

### **Strategy 5: Cite an unrelated skill deficit.**

You may know of professional weaknesses or deficits that, while troubling, don't interfere with your ability to perform well in a specific job. The fact that you aren't a great public speaker won't hurt you much in an administrative role. Your less-than-perfect writing skills may not be a deal-killer if the job requires mostly telephone communication. Obviously, the key is knowing the job description and career path well enough to understand what's necessary to be successful. Clearly, you don't want to identify a weakness that would genuinely affect your ability to do the work.

### **Strategy 6: Deflect.**

If you don't feel comfortable answering the question, you can try to deflect it by saying that, while you obviously have weaknesses, you aren't aware of anything that would interfere with your ability to do the job. If the interviewer persists, you can turn this into an opportunity to discuss what's important to you. You might say, for example, that you work best with managers who trust and give you a lot of feedback. Or you might say that you tend to perform best in a fast-paced

environment with clear deadlines. Although you aren't specifically citing a weakness, you are implying that you work better under certain conditions.

You also can use humor to deflect the question, as demonstrated by one general manager. When asked about his weaknesses, he liked to reply: "Ask my parole officer." Of course, this joke works only if you don't have any felony convictions.

### Strategy 7: Address the unspoken question.

Interviewers who ask the weakness question may be more interested in how you approach the question than in the specific weakness you cite. If you want to have a more honest and direct conversation, you can begin by acknowledging the concern and asking if the interviewer is wondering if you're hiding a fatal flaw that should be uncovered. You also can review your qualifications and ask if there's a *specific* concern that you could address in greater depth. This allows you to tailor your responses to any potential reservations or resistance. It also levels the playing field by changing the dynamics of the interview.

Before using this strategy, assess whether you think the interviewer will respond well to your directness. While some might find it refreshing, being this direct may be intimidating to someone who prefers to hide behind an interviewing script.

Although there's a performance element to interviewing, you aren't an actor who needs to perform for an audience. You're engaged in a conversation designed to determine whether you can work together effectively. Towards that end, you can do your part to make the interviewer more of an active participant than a passive observer and critic of your performance.

In the end, it isn't your mistakes and weaknesses that matter most, it's whether you're aware of your weakness, understand its potential impact on others and are willing to work to improve yourself. Your ability to handle this question confidently and effectively can send a powerful message to potential employers about your real strengths.

-- Ms. Hirsch is a career counselor in Chicago, who has written several books on career issues, including "How to Be Happy at Work" (Jist Publishing, 2003).

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