

Mastering the Job Interview: Common Questions & Smart Strategies

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Happy to answer questions about publishing too!



Asking a committee member whether he is ready for the job market, the grad student suffocates in the hesitant silence.

Some FAQs about Job Interviews

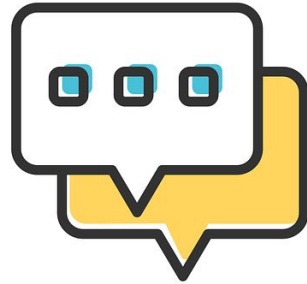
1. What makes a “good interview”?
2. How should I prepare for an interview?
3. How much detail should I give in my answers?
When should I stop talking?
4. What kinds of questions should *I* ask *them*?
5. What kinds of questions should be avoided in
the U.S.?
6. Should I follow up after the interview? With
whom?

Big Caveat:
Get multiple
opinions!



Attempting to write the first draft of his cover letter, the grad student is paralyzed.

1. What makes a “good interview”?



Jot down in the chat something that you think makes a “good interview”



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1. What makes a “good interview”?

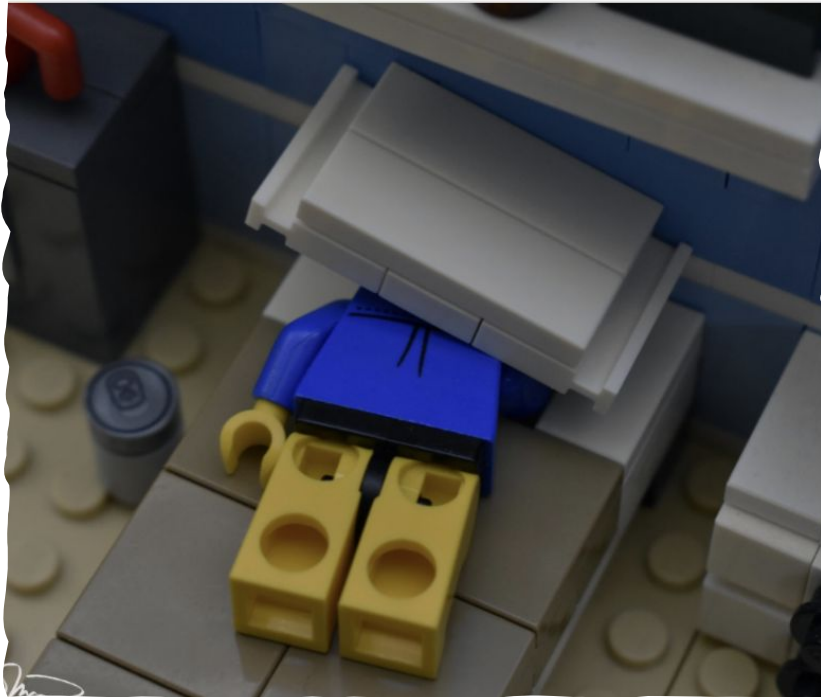
In a good interview, the interviewee is...

- prepared
- knowledgeable of the program
- ready to show how their background/experience/strengths fit with the position
- confident



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2. How should I prepare for an interview?



- Review the job ad
- Review the employer's website, including information about the specific program/unit – know their mission, strengths, etc.
- Know who will interview you
- Practice! (Do a mock interview if at all possible)
- Have notes on hand
- Have questions ready (more on this later)

3. How much detail should I give in my answers? When should I stop talking?

- Always be sure you answer the questions, at least in broad strokes, first
- Give an example, if relevant
- Be ready to go into more depth
 - “I can share another example if we have time” or “Can I share more details?” or “I’m not sure if there is time to say more about that, but I’m happy to.”



Watching a senior professor’s “brief question” turn into an interminable monologue, the grad student wishes his head would explode.

4. What kinds of questions should I ask *them*?

General (first-round interviews):

- Can you tell me more about _____? (the students, the kinds of projects people are working on, the campus/workplace, the kinds of courses I would be teaching)
- I've read/heard about your _____ and would love to know more about it. (new initiative, new lab, Center for ..., Certificate in ...)
- What are the courses you would imagine this person teaching in the first few years?
- Are there opportunities to _____? (develop new courses, contribute to X, engage in community outreach, ...)
- Can you tell me about your timeline? (last question)



4. What kinds of questions should I ask *them*?

Second-round/finalist Interviews:

- What kind of support is available for _____? (conferences, research, professional development, developing new courses, community outreach, ...)
- What are some opportunities for cross-unit collaboration?
- How has the program/organization/unit been affected by the pandemic?
- What kinds of changes do you imagine the program/organization going through in the next 5-10 years?
- What are the processes for promotion? (ask multiple people!)
- What are the best parts of working here?



ing safe in his apartment, the grad student seizes the
tunity to socially distance himself from pants.

5. What kinds of questions should be avoided in the U.S.?



Logging on to a videoconferencing session, the grad student squeezes himself into the one remotely clean corner of his apartment.



What if an employer asks ...

- if you have children?
- what country you are from?
- when you will finish (or defend) your dissertation/thesis?

5. What kinds of questions should be avoided in the U.S.?



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Should you ask...

- what the salary is (in the first round)?
- if you need to have the PhD (or MA) in hand by the start date?
- if there are opportunities to contribute to a particular program or initiative at the institution?



Hoping to get a phone call for a job interview, the grad student sinks deeper and deeper into despondency with every passing hour.

6. Should I follow up after the interview? With whom?

Remember:

(a) they are already interested in you, and
(b) everyone wants the interview to go well.

You got this!

