

## LEGAL INTERVIEWING IN A NUTSHELL CHECKLIST

This checklist serves as a reminder of how to:

**PREPARE** before, **PERFORM** during, and **PROCEED** after an interview.

### **PREPARE:**

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. In order to prepare, you need to:

- Research
  - Know the position, employer, and interviewer.
- Reflect on how your skills and experiences match the requirements of the job
  - Know yourself – resume, cover letter, and writing sample.
  - Note your skills, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and accomplishments
- Review frequently asked types of questions.
  - About the employer
    - Public interest/service employers (non-profit organizations and government agencies will ask about your commitment to their mission).
    - Private sector employers (law firms will ask about your experience and interest in a practice area).
    - All employers want to know why you are interested in them.
  - About you
    - Your education, schools, grades, papers, work experience (paid and unpaid)
    - Gaps in chronology
    - Behavioral questions – to elicit information about past performance to predict future performance
  - From you
    - Ask what you want to know but could not find answers to through basic research.
    - Demonstrate insight into the employer’s work and needs.
- Rehearse - **MOCK INTERVIEWS**
  - In the Career Center – you may schedule a mock interview with a career counselor to help prepare. The first half of the appointment is interview mode and the second half is reserved for feedback on your performance. Schedule an appointment in CORE or by calling the Career Center at 202-994-7340.
  - Mock Interview Program – every year, the Career Center sponsors a summer mock interview program during which rising 2L students meet with local employers to conduct mock interviews.

- As you prepare, make notes in the Interview Preparation Organizer, which you can find on the Career Center's website ([www.gwlawcareers.org](http://www.gwlawcareers.org)).

### **PERFORM:**

Now that you have adequately prepared, it is time to show the employer that you are the person for the position.

- Sell your experience and skills.
  - Answer questions directly.
  - Refer to skills and experience specifically with examples.
    - NOT THAT – “I am an excellent writer.”
    - BUT THIS – “I recently wrote a memo analyzing \_\_\_\_\_, which required me to \_\_\_\_\_ and examine \_\_\_\_\_. I very much enjoyed this writing assignment and received excellent feedback.”
- Show active listening.
  - Listen to the interviewer and pay attention – do not simply focus on what you are going to say next.
  - Pause to compose your answer – rely on your preparation.
  - Be sure to answer the question asked!
  - Listen for compound questions and make sure you address each question asked.
- Stay engaged.
  - Ask questions – this is a conversation, so you do not have to wait until the end of the interview to ask a question.
  - Questions prepared in advance provide another chance to demonstrate why you are the perfect candidate.
  - Questions that arise from the interview demonstrate that you were paying attention.
  - Do not ask anything that implies that you are more concerned about your needs than the employer's.
- Steer clear of common mistakes.
  - Making the interviewer do all of the work
  - Ignoring cues from the interviewer
  - Not having a good reason for your interest in the employer
  - Being negative about previous jobs, employers, or people
  - Asking obvious questions
  - Providing general canned responses such as “I love the law” or “I want to help people”

### **PROCEED:**

Even though your interview performance is over, you should follow up with these additional steps to complete the process:

- Take inventory

- How did you do? How could you improve the performance next time?
- What did you think of the employer and the job?
- Summarize what you discussed with each interviewer.
- Thank the employer
  - Email thank-you notes within 24 hours (preferably on the same day.) Email everyone you met if it is a smaller employer. For larger employers, send the thank-you note to the recruiter and/or hiring partner and ask them to send your thanks to the other people with whom you met with (by name).
  - Thank the interviewer for her time and reiterate your interest in the position.
  - Thank-you notes are not necessary for OCI screening interviews (although they are not considered inappropriate), but you should send them after any callback interview.
- Touch base and follow up
  - Wait 2-3 weeks (unless the interviewer tells you to follow up more quickly).
  - Ideally a substantive follow up!
    - Mention a new grade, paper or other substantive update.
    - Inquire whether additional information is needed.
  - Be sensitive to the employer's timeline.