The BEST link for interview preparation and practice is found in Optimal Resume. Go to the interviewing section, choose your interview type, and practice answering the frequently asked questions. It’s an excellent way to prepare and practice for the interview.
http://www.willamette.edu/dept/careers/vcc/resume/index.html

6 Steps to Interviewing

1. Prospect:
Seek out the right companies. Read their company information. Ask questions about the company from people who work there or know it well. This is also a job search step

2. Approach
What is the best way to contact them? Networking is almost ALWAYS the best method of learning and connecting. What about 1st impressions? Dress appropriately

3. Present
Every good sales rep has a 3-minute presentation rehearsed and ready to go. It is up to YOU to be sure the employer hears what is important about you. If they don’t ask the right questions, be prepared to introduce information they should know.

Know your body language. Get a Mock Interview. Practice with a coach

4. Overcome Objections
How do you explain your “weaknesses?” Here’s a good approach:
   1. Choose a skill and explain the flip side. Often a weakness is simply an overused skill.
   2. Explain what you do to ensure the weakness does not interfere
Example: “Because I am a divergent/creative person (a skill) I am interested in many things. So in order to avoid getting sidetracked from my task at hand (your weakness) I keep a daily log of tasks and prioritize them (how you compensate). See my pocket calendar here – I keep a running list of tasks to accomplish.”
   The above is much better than just naming your weakness (like saying “I am absent-minded”).

Try to anticipate potential weaknesses (lack of experience, youthfulness, etc.) and work on explaining how these will not impair your work with that organization.

5. Close
Have a list of 5-10 questions you want to ask the employer (see sample list at the end of this document). They always ask you if you have questions, so be ready. If you want to work for them, tell them you are very interested and are excited about the possibilities. What is the next step?

6. Follow-up
ALWAYS write a thank-you. Get the names and addresses of all interviewers and send them a note. Email, written, phone, carrier-pigeon, whatever.

**Interviewing Readiness Checklist**

- Have you done your homework on the organization?
  - read the web page thoroughly
  - asked others about it
  - read recent articles, publications, etc.

- Practice! Practice! Practice!…role play with a friend or call the Career Center to schedule a mock interview.

- Be prepared to discuss any weakness that may hinder your candidacy. (review sample questions)

- Do you have appropriate interview clothing?

- Bring extra copies of your resume with you.

- Have you traveled to the interview location prior to your interview?

  - to avoid being late, travel to your interview location the day before to be sure of the address/directions. If you're at the company location, use the time to observe the environment. Is this a place where you'd like to work?

- Do you know what you are worth?

Watch this video! A top-ranked short video on key elements of interviewing [http://careertv.com/video.php?mediaid=0m5z326md5PSswHhnT1nMw](http://careertv.com/video.php?mediaid=0m5z326md5PSswHhnT1nMw)
Winning Interviewing Techniques

Types of Interviews

Behavioral
The employer makes assumptions about your future performance based on past behaviors and attitudes. They will ask you for details about your activities.

These interviews require you to offer concrete, specific examples to reveal skills. We recommend that you use the "STAR" framework to structure your responses in a specific, concise way:

- What was the **SITUATION**? Situation – details: what, where, when, etc.
- What was your **TASK**? Task – the job you got done: goal/objective
- What **ACTION** did you take? Action – SKILLS you used
- What was the **RESULT**? Result – how it worked out

**Example** Behavioral Questions:
- Tell me about a time when you exhibited teamwork.
- Give me an example of a time you confronted a challenge and how you dealt with it.
- Why isn't your GPA higher?
(They are looking for concrete examples that validate your skills)

**Non-Example**: “Briefly explain the theory of ____.” (they are looking for content/knowledge skills, not actions you took in a specific situation)

Behavioral Question Example:

**Interviewer**: What is your greatest strength?

**Interviewee**:

STEP 1. **Situation** “One of my greatest strengths is persistence.” (state the point up front). “**For example**, last year my study team was given a challenge by the professor to write about an unusual theory. Two of the study group students talked it over, presented it to the group and explained the resources they used to research the problem. But they could not find a good solution.

STEP 2. **Task** So I offered to help get this solved or exhaust all resources I could find within the one week deadline.

STEP 3. **Action**. I **initiated** (skill word) 10 phone calls to other students and campus researchers at another university who worked in that discipline. It took me six days, two meetings and several emails, but I finally **discovered** (skill word)
a professor at Western was familiar with the theory. I negotiated (skill word) a meeting with him to understand the solution so that I could share the procedure with my classmates. I persisted (original skill you claimed) with this problem until I could get an appropriate answer for the group.

STEP 4. Result. As a result of my persistence, we were the only study group that had an adequate response to the challenge problem.”

Sample Interview Questions

Behavioral

1. What goals have you set for yourself and how are you planning to achieve them?
2. Who or what has had the greatest influence in the development of your career interest?
3. Describe a situation in which you had to persuade someone to see things your way.
4. What were the biggest challenges/problems you encountered in college? How did you handle them?
5. Tell me about a class in which you were part of a study group. What role did you play in the group meetings?
6. What was the toughest academic decision you have had to make? How did you make that decision?
7. What kind of work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
8. Describe a time when a team member came to you for help. What was the situation? How did you respond?
9. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with someone whose personality was different from yours.
10. Have you ever been in a situation where someone regarded you as a threat? Describe the situation and tell how you handled this.
11. Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
12. Give me a time where you had to carry out a directive you did not agree with.
13. How are you conducting your job search and how will you go about making your decision?

14. What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you handle them?

15. Tell me about an accomplishment of which you are especially proud.

16. What is the most important lesson you have learned in or out of school?

17. Describe a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.

18. Describe a time when you saw a problem and took action to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do so.

19. Give me examples to convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of situations, people, and environments.

20. What makes you the best person for this job?

21. Tell me about a leadership role you had in an extracurricular activity. How did you lead?

22. Tell me about your most successful presentation and what made it so.

23. Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on a customer. How did you go about doing so?

24. Tell me about a meeting where you provided technical expertise. How did you ensure that everyone understood?

25. Describe a time when you took a risk that you later regretted.
What Students and Recruiters Said About Preparing For The Interview

We asked students what advice they would give to next year’s applicants going through interviews. Here’s their comments.

**Student Comments**

1. Read the job description very carefully and emphasize the *skills* that the company is looking for.

2. Send Thank-You email within 24 hours after the interview and follow up with a mailed one.

3. Bring handouts and a sample of your senior project. Bring two copies, one for you to use as a visual aid and another for the interviewer to keep and take notes with. Give examples where you took a leadership role in your project and show the interviewer that you took responsibility for your project and helped guide its course.

4. Bring business cards. It may seem silly or something you are not used to, but it’s an extension of your initial greeting. It does not have to be anything special or expensive.

5. Be on time. I wasn’t always on time. Some interviewers were running late and did not care. Others did care and I think it made a bad impression. If you are late, do not dwell on it and jump right into the interview.

6. Know with whom you are interviewing with and why they are there. What you do during the interview and how you follow-up is different depending on whether you are talking to a potential boss or a recruiter. Recruiters are looking for solid candidates that they can pitch to their managers they can tell when someone is confident about what they are talking about. More importantly, the way you talk tells the recruiter whether or not you are someone who is trusted and respected by your colleagues and faculty. If the recruiter is a possible boss, emphasize how you and your skills/experience fit into the bigger picture of the team. Show that you are a team player but are capable of individual achievement. Demonstrate creativity and show how you added to your projects.

7. Follow-up on the interview. Drop an e-mail, send a quick card, or even better send them something you talked about during your interview—a reprint, preprint, etc. Just keep it short. Don’t be a robot in your correspondences; this may be the 5th time you sent a thank you note but make them feel like its’ the only one you sent.
8. Ask questions that show you care about where you will work. A new hire right out of school is a serious investment for the company hiring you. Likewise, where you decide to go after graduating is a serious investment in your future. Ask questions that are insightful and allow the interviewer to offer their opinion. Yes or no questions will ruin the rhythm of the interview and leave you stuck. “Which products do you think are the future for your company?”, What does your company do best and what new areas are they exploring?”, What are the mechanisms for career movement within your company?”, are all questions that illicit a conversation rather than a response.

9. Look professional, act professional, be professional. Make the interviewer think you have been out of college for some time by wearing nice clothes (one suit is all you need, no one will know you have the same outfit on for every interview). If you dress casual, they think you are not interested in the company, or don’t have respect for them. Part of being a professional means being courteous to the interview. Don’t be afraid to justify your points or statements but at the same time don’t alienate the interviewer.

10. Be able to describe your experience and research to anyone in any length of time. Prepare one-sentence statement, 5-minute discussions and whole interview discussions on your expertise.

11. Do not let the fact that you may be interviewing for a job that has nothing to do with your degree phase you. Emphasize your leadership, collaboration, teamwork, and people skills. Problem solving is very transferable. Did you work with a team on your project? If you did, how did it work out and what role did you play? If not, why not (it’s not necessarily a bad thing but you have to have good reason for why you worked in a vacuum).

12. Have an answer for everything. Simple enough. You need to be able to answer questions that have nothing to do with specific educational details. What did you learn and why is that important? What are your future career goals? How do you fit in with that particular company? These questions probe your personal traits and whether you understand how you fit into the big picture. It would be better if you could answer these questions in your interview without even being asked. For example, while talking about your thesis you could say I discovered that the catalyst my findings were important because it will make a program more effective. In telling about your research you answered what you learned, why it was important, and how it fits within the bigger picture of the organization’s mission.

13. If the interview is a regular season game, the second, on-site interview is the playoffs. You’ve got to step up your game and get ready for specific questions. Some on-sites are “get to know you” interviews. They already have an idea that you would be a good fit and want to make sure. More often though, you’ve got your foot in the door and this is your opportunity to keep it wide open.
14. You are on 24-7. Assume you are on the interview the minute you step in the room or on the facility. I knew someone who flew to Washington for an interview. He happened to be sitting next to the head of the department he was interviewing with. Their conversation went something like this “boss-Are you visiting Seattle? “friend—yes, I’m there for an interview. “Boss-Oh yeah, what kind of position? “friend—I’m a chemist, I’m there to interview with a biotech company. “Boss-Huh, you like being a chemist?” After a few more rounds they found out they were interviewer and interviewee. Planes, hotel lobby, offices, dinner, are all fair game. Keep your game up. You may be interviewing in their offices from 7 AM to 5 PM, so be prepared to talk all day as well.

15. Prepare to tell a complete story about who you are and why you want to contribute to their team that is accessible to your audience. Fine tune and customize your talk all day as well.
Recruiters’ Comments

We asked employers what advice they would give to next year’s applicants going through interviews. Here are their comments.

1. What specific accomplishments has the student made?
2. What interest do they have in our company?
3. What are their 5 years career goals?
4. What is the greatest challenge they faced in their education?
5. Provide candidates with a list of typical interview questions.
6. List of questions for the interviewer/employer so that the candidate can determine if it is a right fit.
7. Encourage a candidate to answer a question to the best of their ability, rather than I don’t know.
8. A candidate should demonstrate flexibility as far as work schedules and locations.
9. A candidate should always demonstrate the desire to learn by giving examples of assimilating new information quickly from classes, seminar, etc.
10. A candidate should show and demonstrate attention to details, mostly related to skills and projects, but can easily be seen resume, attire, and presentation.
11. Non-verbal communication is extremely important.
12. Candidates need to bring examples of their work or portfolios if they have them.
13. It is important for candidates to attend seminar (information session).
14. A candidate should demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the company.
15. A candidate needs to show enthusiasm and curiosity.
16. Questions need to be answered in a precise and honest fashion.
17. A CLEAR IDEA OF WHAT YOUR OWN GOALS ARE (THIS IS A STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTION).
18. It is important for candidates to be prepared for the time constraint – Practice research presentation.

19. Show interest! If you are serious about the company you are interviewing with, you should learn some basics about the company prior to the interview (sites, products, etc.) and you should have questions about the company that you want answered.

20. Be energetic. Employers are looking for people excited by what they do and who enjoy sharing their work/experiences.

21. Be honest/frank about your employment interests (location, type of work).

22. Think of examples that you can point to for the common qualities that companies are looking for like creativity, initiative, leadership, good interpersonal relationship skills, and communication skills. Often interviewers are surprised by the fact that many students have not even considered these types of questions in advance of the interview.

23. Familiarize themselves with the company via an annual report or web site prior to the interview.

24. Be prepared to discuss their experience, but not plan on giving the interviewer a 45 minutes seminar.

25. Focus on a couple of key problems solved that highlight creativity, problem solving, teamwork and initiative.

26. Present yourself in a way which highlights how their skill set will fit the company’s needs.

27. Be enthusiastic and show true interest in joining the company.

28. Be honest with yourself in being selective in which companies they choose to set-up interviews.

29. Bring an up-to-date resume.

30. For scientists, 15-20 minute verbal presentation – “Chalk Talk” – Practice

31. Bring Questions

32. Attendance of information sessions. Nothing is worse than taking a portion of the interview period to recap what has already been presented.
33. Show enthusiasm and energy. Not only are we looking for value-added employees, we are also looking for people we would enjoy having as a future colleague; it is important not to underestimate impact the tenor of has on our evaluation of “plays nice with others”.

34. Ask poignant questions. This is an extension of #3 above; if you are really interested in pursuing a career with our company, then show it. This may involve some homework and research on the company, its culture, its location, etc.

35. Stick to the agenda outlined by the interviewer. If one is not provided at the start of the interview, ask the interviewer how he or she would like to conduct the interview, timing, etc.

36. Make the thesis summary understandable to a broad audience. Bring along extra slides for more detailed discussions, depending upon the questions.

37. Read up on the company

38. Please ask questions!

Top oddball questions of 2009

Watch this video! Excellent short video on key elements of interviewing
http://careertv.com/video.php?mediaid=0m5z326md5PSSwHhnTlnMw