

2018 - 2019

INTERVIEWS MADE SIMPLE

A Reference Guide for Nursing Students and New Graduates



5 TIPS FOR INTERVIEW SUCCESS

1 DRESS PROFESSIONALLY.

For patient care tech interviews, a nice blouse/shirt and dress slacks for men and women. For RN and Summer Externship interviews—a business suit is recommended, with a solid color blouse/dress shirt. Men should wear neck tie, nice slacks and be neatly shaven. Minimal fragrance and jewelry.

2 **ARRIVE 10 MINUTES EARLY**—but prepare to wait—since priorities in healthcare change quickly. Do everything possible to avoid arriving late and plan ahead for parking challenges. If you are running late, call and let the manager know.

3 BRING YOUR RESUME.

Many examples can be found on Blackboard under Student Services/Career Services in the BSN folder.

4 **SMILE**, shake hands firmly, make eye contact, and introduce yourself when you meet the hiring manager. If this is a group or panel interview, make eye contact with all interviewers when you answer questions.

5 At end of interview, **THANK** all interviewers for their time, express continued interest in the position, and indicate that you look forward to hearing from them once they've made their decision. Follow up with a thank you email or note, re-stating your interest and what you have to offer.



6 COMMON TOPICS FOR INTERVIEWS & HOW TO HANDLE THEM

1 TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

This is a common “ice-breaker” to start the interview.

Don’t tell a long, personal history or mention where you were born, your age or marital status.

Instead, prepare a few sentences that summarize your most recent education and work experience. This can also be a very brief story explaining how you arrived at this point, and why you’re interested in the specific opening.

Good Example

“ I am a junior at Bon Secours Memorial College of Nursing. Before attending there, I graduated with a BS in Biology from VCU. I have worked in a veterinarian’s office for the past 3 years. I also volunteer with the American Red Cross once a month. ”

Good Example

“ I will graduate in May and I’ve been working as a Patient Care Tech on the Spine Unit at St. Mary’s for the past year. I’ve had many chances to interact with patients and the healthcare team, which has been great. I’ve also noticed the excellent teamwork among the nurses on that unit. ”

2 TELL ME ABOUT YOUR STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES.

Nurse managers need to know what you are good at and what may set you apart from other applicants. Everyone possesses strengths. Often, these are qualities about which friends or employers compliment you.

Strengths are things you do naturally well.

Some interviewers also ask about a weakness. Be honest about an area where you have struggled in the past, and how you have worked to improve it.

These questions reveal how well you know yourself.



TELL ME ABOUT YOUR STRENGTHS (CONT'D)

EXAMPLES OF STRENGTHS INCLUDE

- **Assertiveness**
Will you speak up and ask questions when you need to? Can you advocate for your patients?
- **Leadership**
Do you have a history of leadership? Those patterns often start early and continue throughout life. Give examples.
- **Listening**
You need to listen to directions, to patients, physicians, managers. Are you a quiet person, but a great listener?
- **Interpersonal Communication**
Are you effective in handling upset patients or anxious children? Do you have the ability to explain procedures, “read” what’s going on in a situation, provide patient discharge education, explain the purpose of procedures, medications, etc. (Some of these examples apply to RNs only). Give examples.
- **Flexibility**
Do you adapt to change easily? Give an example.
- **Time Management**
This is very important in busy healthcare settings. Give examples of how you manage your time.
- **Problem Solving**
Can you “think on your feet?” Can you analyze and solve problems? Give an example.
- **Teamwork**
This is essential in all healthcare roles. Give examples.
- **Detail Orientation**
Do you pay attention to the details? Are you accurate? Have you ‘caught’ errors before? Give examples.
- **Standards of Quality**
How do you show you care about doing things correctly? Have you ever made quality improvements? Explain.
- **Stress Management**
If you seem to handle stress better than most, say so. Give an example.



3 GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU HAVE WORKED ON A TEAM.

Teamwork is one of the most highly valued skills. Be sure to give examples of times when you worked effectively as a team member.

During the interview, the manager will be thinking...

"Can this person work with my team?"

DESCRIBE YOUR RELIABILITY.

4 This means that others can count on you.

Even if you are not asked directly, reliability is a concern in the back of the manager's mind. Try to find a way of telling the manager that if hired, they can count on you to be dependable and committed to doing a quality job.

“

Good Examples

I have had an excellent class attendance throughout nursing school. In my weekend job, I never call in sick and I am willing to work extra hours during our busy season.

...

Even while attending college full-time, I have worked 15 hours per week and my supervisor considers me to be highly reliable.

...

While working in Pediatrics, I only called out once due to the flu. Otherwise, I was among the most dependable techs/nurses in our unit.

”



5 WHY WOULD YOU BE THE BEST PERSON FOR THIS JOB?

This question can catch you off guard. A good response may be to highlight one of your strengths again... or an experience that sets you apart from others.



Good Examples

I have been told by past managers that I'm one of the hardest working employees in my unit. I've always had an excellent work ethic and it has resulted in good grades throughout college and a promotion last summer.

...

One of my strengths is my love of learning. I'm always eager to grow and develop my skills. If I am selected, I would look for ways to learn and improve my skills.

...

I have had the opportunity to work in healthcare for more than 5 years, starting as a CNA just out of high school. During that time, I've cared for patients of all ages with a wide variety of illnesses. I believe my experience and flexibility will help me succeed if I'm selected.

...

Having worked as a nurse in both med/surg and radiology areas, I have a broad range of experiences. In addition, I served on the Safety Committee for 2 years and the Quality Improvement Committee for a year... so I think my unique perspective on quality nursing will be valuable in this role.

...

My elderly grandparents lived with my family when I was young. Helping them as they grew older was just part of my childhood and adolescence. When my grandmother began receiving hospice care, I was right there helping whenever I could. That experience has made me very sensitive to the issues faced by both patients and families.





6 WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT THIS POSITION, OR OUR HOSPITAL?

Draw a connection between yourself and the job or organization. Be prepared to explain how your nursing interests align with the opening. Tell how your values are a good “match” for those of the organization. The organization’s web site (home page) is a good place to read about the organization’s values and mission.

Bon Secours Health System holds these values: Respect, Quality, Compassion, Justice, Integrity, Growth and Innovation.

“

Good Examples

I share your hospital's value of "quality". Whether I am bathing a patient or working as a unit secretary, I strive to do the very best job possible and always look for ways of improving.

...

I noticed on your web site that your hospital is a leader in cardiac surgery. I am very interested in working with cardiac patients as I progress in my career.

...

I'm most interested in working with trauma patients. As a Level 1 Trauma Center, I think this job will give me more opportunities to work with the types of patients I,m most interested in..

”






SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS

SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO TELL YOUR STORY

The Situational (or Behavioral) Interview is a common interview style. Questions prompt you to recall stories from the past, like “Think about a time when xyz happened. How did you handle it?” Give yourself a moment to think of the best possible answer—and then respond with a short story.

Examples

-  Think of a time when you had to handle a difficult patient (or customer, co-worker, etc.). Describe what happened and how you responded. What was the outcome?
-  Tell me about a time when two people were asking for your help at the very same moment. How did you handle it? How did you decide what to do?
-  Tell me about a time you’ve received constructive criticism from a manager or supervisor. What happened and how did you respond to it?

Tell a very short story in your response.

If you have never encountered the situation as described, say so, but offer your best explanation of how you *would* handle it if it occurred.



SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS (CONT'D)

WAYS TO PREPARE FOR SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS

- Analyze the job description or job posting, paying attention to the skills required.
- Read over your own resume and recall past jobs.
- Rehearse brief stories—think of at least two—one that describes your problem-solving skills, and one concerning your communication skills.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW PROMPTS INCLUDE:

“

Describe the biggest challenge you faced in your last job/clinical and how you handled it.

...

Tell me about a work or school situation where you had to demonstrate creative problem solving.

...

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

”



PEER OR PANEL INTERVIEWS

Peer (or Panel) Interviews involve a group of employees interviewing the job candidate. These are recommended as a best practice by many in the field of human resources and are common in healthcare. Here are specific suggestions:

- 1** Arrive 10 minutes early, but be prepared to wait. It sometimes takes longer than expected to gather a group together, even if they have this appointment on their calendar.
- 2** Smile and take a deep breath before entering the room. Everything you've done up to this point has prepared you.
- 3** When you are introduced, try to shake hands and introduce yourself if the space permits it and if the group seems receptive. If the room is crowded or no one makes a move in your direction, just smile and be seated. (You can always shake hands at the end when everyone rises for you to leave.)
- 4** It's OK to say that you're nervous. Most job candidates are nervous. The group will usually act friendlier and less threatening if you go ahead and just admit it. They don't want you to be nervous.

Typically, different group members will take turns asking questions. If the group has not interviewed together before, they can appear awkward with the process. Knowing this might keep you from thinking that you are giving bad answers.



As you respond to interview questions, make eye contact with all the group members. Don't just look at the person asking the question.

5 Give yourself a moment to think of the best answer before responding to the question. Ask for the question to be repeated if necessary.

6 If it is a multi-part question, answer it to the best of your ability and then say, "Did I answer that completely?" or "Did I cover everything you asked?"



QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE END OF YOUR INTERVIEW

At the end of every job interview, the interviewer will probably ask if you have any questions. Your questions may tell whether you would be a good fit. Consider asking 1-2 questions along these lines, if this information has not been given during the conversation.



From your perspective, what qualities are needed in order to be successful in this role?

...

By asking, you can determine if you'll be able to give what the job demands.



What advice do you have for a new Patient Care Tech/Nurse working on your unit?

...

This gives insight into what the manager feels is important.



Tell me how orientation/training takes place on your unit.



What has your experience been with hiring students from our college in the past?

...

This will give you an idea if others before you have been successful, or if you are going to be the first from your college to work there.



How can I advance if I am selected for a position in your department?

...

This reflects positively on you, because it implies that you intend to continue striving to improve. If you have not learned about the clinical "ladder" or certification in a specialty, the manager can explain this to you.



Will you be inviting candidates back for additional interviews?



Are there any shortcomings in my application or interview that I could address now?

...

This is a “bold question, but it shows you welcome critical feedback,” says Adam Grunwerg. “By giving them an opportunity to raise any concerns that might stand in the way of hiring you, you can address any weaknesses in your application that you were not aware of, increasing your chance of receiving a job offer.”

(adapted from Catherine Conlan, Monster.com)



Do you have concerns about hiring me, given my level of experience?

...

Again, it will let you know where you stand before the interview concludes. It’s also a chance to explain how you learn quickly, or that you would be willing to “shadow” for a few days first, to determine if you would be a good “fit” for the role.




To view video clips of interviews, see photos of interview suits, and print resume samples, visit:

- ▶ BlackBoard
- ▶ under “Student Services” and then
- ▶ “Career Services.”

The Office of Career Services offers support in many areas, including:

Career preparation, employment opportunities, interview practice, resume assistance, and graduate school research.

For more information, please contact:

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