

How can I best prepare for the on-site interview?

Ashley Schuler, PharmD
PGY2 Critical Care Pharmacy Resident
Denver Health Medical Center
Denver, CO

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”

—Alexander Graham Bell

“You never have a second chance to make a good first impression.” Preparation is the key to any successful interview. Remember, you have already impressed the interviewer on paper, and now is your time to shine and sell yourself. Communication skills, including verbal, nonverbal, and written, are central to the interviewing process. In addition, be sure your curriculum vitae (CV) tells the story you intend and that you are prepared to discuss all of your experiences, particularly the unique ones.

Know Who You Are

It is important to take time to reflect on questions commonly asked in interviews. Preparing 1- to 2-minute responses ahead of time will relieve some anxiety and help you feel more confident if, but likely when, the interviewer asks one of the questions below.

- Why are you interested in this position?
- What experiences motivated you to apply for this position?
- What do you love about pharmacy, and where do you feel you can contribute most to the profession?
- What has been your most rewarding health care/pharmacy practice experience?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you feel you can contribute to the growth and advancement of the health care system/company?
- Can you tell me about a time when you had to resolve a conflict and how you handled the situation?
- Why should we hire you?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years (short/long-term goals)?
- How will this position help you achieve your short- and/or long-term goals?
- What are some key attributes you would like the hiring committee to know about you?

Create a know/tell list. Make a list of everything you want to tell the employer and everything you want to know about them during the interview. This will help you develop goals for the interview and strategically plan answers to questions. Situational questions can be difficult, so it's best to be prepared with an example from your past to illustrate main points. To help with answering these types of questions, reflect on your life and the events that led you to where you are today. What have you learned over time, and how can you relate past experiences to the position? Practice your responses

with a friend to ensure that your dialogue is conversational. Don't memorize your responses and sound rehearsed. Be honest, and don't embellish skills or try to pretend to have any skills/abilities that you do not have. Keep your responses short and to the point, but informational. Bring your enthusiasm, and let your personality shine.

Know Who They Are

Do your homework ahead of time. Research the position/company by visiting the Web site. Try to get an idea of the organizational mission/vision/values, organizational structure, patient care initiatives, and department/company goals. Review your agenda and who you will be meeting. Research the credentials and accomplishments of the individuals you will be interviewing with, and when possible, ask friends/current colleagues for more information that may help you. Know where you are going and arrive early. Having extra time will always help curb some nervous energy.

Know if You and They Are a Good Fit

Keep in mind that you are interviewing the program as well to see if the position is a good fit for you and your career goals. Prepare a list of questions ahead of time. This shows enthusiasm, interest, and motivation for the position. Your questions should help you better understand your roles and responsibilities and should not be ones easily answered from the Web site. It is fine to ask the same question to several people. This will help you determine whether there is consistency in the responses. Anticipate what the interviewer wants to know about you, and realize that it is very similar to what you are looking to be able to answer, such as:

- Can you do the job? (ability/skills)
- Will you do the job? (motivation/dedication)
- Are you teachable?
- Do you fit into the organizational structure/culture?
- Will you work well with others?
- Is the environment one you feel you can grow and develop in over time?
- Do you have a passion for your work? (interest in position)

Bring your confidence, passion, and enthusiasm to any interview. Know the kind of impression you want to make and how you want to be remembered.

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

- Benjamin Franklin

Nicole S. Culhane, Pharm.D., FCCP, BCPS
Assistant Dean, Experiential Education
Professor, Clinical and Administrative Sciences
School of Pharmacy
Notre Dame of Maryland University
Baltimore, MD