



# The TOP 10 Mistakes: The Unwritten Rules of Interviewing for Industrial and Academic Jobs

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# WARNING



The stories you are about to  
hear are true;  
only the names have been  
changed to protect the  
innocent



# Getting your foot in the door

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- The MYTH of job postings
  - Many posted jobs are already taken
  - Some jobs are never posted
  - Good candidates make their own job postings
- Not as true on the academic side
  - Still helps to know someone on the inside
  - Even better if you have someone recommend you

# Use your Networks

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- Getting your resume looked at
  - No, it's not cheating!
  - Use email – but expect that you may not get a response
  - Social media is now becoming more useful
- On the academic side
  - Conferences are still the mainstay
  - Department seminars also a good place



# 15 Seconds per resume

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- Tailor your resume to the position you are applying for
- Make sure it's addressed to the right person/institution
- Double check your spelling
- Try to be specific rather than general
- DO NOT lie, pad, exaggerate

# Academic CVs are different

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- CVs are the norm
  - Consider focusing on areas of importance: research, teaching, service
- Will also need research statement and teaching statement
- Highlight your accomplishments; not just a laundry list



# The phone call interview

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- Preparing for the interview
  - Read up on the company
  - Read up on the department
  - Read up on your new colleagues/boss
- Asking questions
  - Be ready with questions
- Show enthusiasm!
  - Do you really want the job?
- Alert your roommates, spouse, children, ...

# Researching the institution

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- Check the Web
- Follow up on papers and reports written by the research staff/faculty
- Use your network
- A typical interview question is why did you apply to this position?



# I'd like you to give a presentation

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- Who's the audience?
  - You have to know the audience
  - Be flexible – you don't know who will actually be in the audience until the day of the talk
- What's the purpose of the talk?
  - High level overview
  - Technical project description
- How long should it be?
  - Different length talks have different purposes

Excerpted from <http://hpcrd.lbl.gov/~meza/talks/GivingTalks.pdf>

# What should you include in your talk ?

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- Why is this problem **important**?
  - Or - Why should I care?
- What was the outcome/product/....
  - Did you actually finish something?
- What was **your** contribution?
  - OK to use words like “we”, “the group”, “my advisor”, but they must be offset by words like “This is my main result”



# How long should your talk last?

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- 1 hour
- 50 minutes
- As long as people keep asking questions
- As long as it takes

*The single most important point is that you MUST finish on time.*

# The interview talk can make or break the interview

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- You need to be able to convey:
  - Technical competence
  - Critical thinking skills
  - Self-confidence
- Practice your talk ahead of time – a lot
- Prepare for questions, especially the really obvious ones,  $n=1$



# Technical competence is not enough

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- Technical competence is always highly valued, **BUT** not sufficient
- High level of creativity/curiosity
  - Much sought after – and rare
  - Critical thinking skills and follow-through
- High level of enthusiasm/passion
  - More important than you might think
  - Team dynamics increasingly important

# Questions and Answers

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- Prepare for questions
  - Think of interview as a final exam
  - Prepare for “easy” questions
- Need to learn how to handle many different types of questions
- You can also use this time to learn about the institution and how you fit into it





# Bad Answers to Good Questions

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## 5 Easy Ways to Not Get a Job Offer

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# What do you want to work on?

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- I'm very flexible
  - I don't know what I want to do
- Anything you want me to work on
  - I don't know what I want to do
- I don't know
  - I don't know what I want to do



# Why did you work on this problem?

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- Because my advisor told me to
  - I need to be told exactly what to do
- It looked kind of interesting
  - I can't prioritize tasks
- I wanted to graduate
  - I'm tired of school and I'm desperate for a job (funding ran out).

# Do **you** have any questions?

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- I can't think of any right now
  - It's all I can do to stay awake
- No, you've covered everything so well already
  - I wasn't paying any attention
- What does your company do again?
  - I know I should ask questions and I'm buying time until I can think of one



# Dinner conversation

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- So now you can relax, right ?
  - Think again, you're still on an interview
  - Follow your host/hostess lead
    - Again, show enthusiasm
- Is there life after work?
  - Now is a good time to ask those questions
  - Try to find out how you'll fit into the group
- Stay away from hot-button issues
  - Politics, religion, is  $P = NP$ ?

# After the interview

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- Thank you !
- Written note preferable to email



# Top 10 Mistakes

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- Not using your network
- Unprofessional resume/CV
- Not doing homework on the place you're applying to
- Not stating the importance of the problem you're studying
- Not stating your contribution to the research

# Top 10 Mistakes (continued)

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- Not finishing your talk on time
- Overrating technical skills versus other competencies
- Not asking questions during the interview
- Not viewing the social setting as part of the interview
- ?????



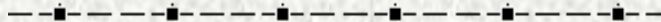
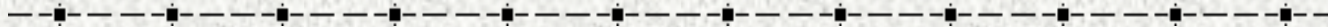
# Summary

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- Be prepared in all aspects of the job hunt
- Demonstrate follow-through and professionalism
- Show enthusiasm
- Have a game plan for what you want to say and practice it



# Thank You!





# Common Interview Questions

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- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/01/11/how-to-ace-the-50-most-common-interview-questions/>
- <http://www.careeronestop.org/ResumesInterviews/Interviews/SampleInterviewQuestions.aspx>

# Tell me about yourself ...

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- Highlight requirements
- Communication skills
- Why do you want this job?



# Some typical questions

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1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Where do you want to be in five years?
3. Why should I hire you?
4. What have you learned on your own?
5. What would you like to know about us?
6. How do you work under pressure?
7. What do you expect to accomplish here?
8. What kind of decisions do you find most difficult to make?
9. Give me an example of ...

# Off-the wall questions

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- If you were an animal, what would you be?
- If you are a part of a salad, what part are you?
- If you were on an 8-hour transatlantic flight, who would you want to sit next to you and what would you talk about?

60 Seconds & You're Hired!, Robin Ryan, Penguin, 2000



# Questions you might ask

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1. What would a normal working day be like?
2. Can you explain the position and the type of candidate you would like to hire?
3. What do you expect from the successful candidate in the first three months?
4. Who will the new employee report to?
5. Do you see any major changes within the company that will affect this position?
6. How often are performance reviews given?
7. Does the company provide any training or other educational opportunities for staff?