Preparing for Internship Interviews

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Successful Interviewing

- Obtaining a high ranking for an internship position requires successfully negotiating the interview.
- What should I expect during these interviews?
- How should I prepare to maximize the chances of success?
Internship Interviews

• The very fact that you have been invited to the interview is a favorable sign.

• Indicates that you are seen as capable, bright, and probably a good match for the specific program.

• Your job is to show that you will fit in, both interpersonally and because of your specific interests and strengths.
Preparing for the Interview: Before You Get There

1. Review your own skills, application, and CV.

2. Review information about the internship program, interests and research of staff, and the local area.

3. Review your travel arrangements. Give yourself plenty of time. Have contact information of program handy in case of weather or other delays.

4. Prepare clothing to dress comfortably and conservatively.
First Impressions Count

1. Arrive on time.

2. Follow the schedule you received. Look organized.

3. Treat everyone you meet as important. Assume that anything you say could be shared later.

4. Act interested in and ask questions of the people interviewing you.

5. Act energetic. Be a good sport.
Interviewing Don’ts

1. Don’t gossip about anyone. Assume everyone is best friends with everyone else, both locally and nationally.

2. Don’t complain, make negative comments, criticize.

3. Don’t be judgmental or too opinionated. You never know what the interviewer thinks or feels.
So Many Questions!!

What do you want to do during internship?
What research would you want to pursue here?
What is the status of your dissertation?
What are your interests outside of psychology?
What is your primary theoretical orientation?
How do you like our city?
Why should we select you as an intern?
What are the strengths of your graduate program?
What’s your favorite movie?
Do you have any children?
Five main areas of preparation

• Your application
• The internship program
• Your doctoral program

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• Chit-chat
• Foul balls
1. Review your own application

• Review how you described yourself in your application.

• The person you described is the person whom the interviewers are expecting to meet.

• Prepare to provide any updates from the time you submitted your application.
2. Review the internship program

- Review information for the specific internship program, track, and rotations of interest to you.
- Prepare broadly: You may be evaluated for 2-3 major and 2-3 minor rotations for the internship year.
- Remain flexible: Changes may occur after a brochure is published.
3. Review the PsyD program

- This may seem like you’re being asked to look **backward** at a time you wish to look **forward**.
- However, interviewers want to know about your foundational and professional development.
- Avoid pitfalls and score points by understanding the **underlying theme:**

  *In what ways have your doctoral program, faculty, and fellow students prepared you to be a competent and responsible intern?*
3. PsyD program (cont’d)

- **Crystal ball:** Responses forecast how you will likely come to describe *their* internship program, faculty, and fellow interns.
- It is **not** a wise choice to speak poorly of your doctoral program during the interview.
- **Tone:** Always be honest *and* gracious. And, wherever possible, be self-reflective.
- Use this preparation to score “match” points!
4. Prepare for chit-chat

- Be positive! Say your flight was nice, you easily found parking, the city and its people are lovely.
- Now is not the time to be critical, not even honestly so. A cranky applicant is predicted to be a cranky intern.
- You can appear savvy and sophisticated by asking good questions and making intelligent observations.
- Try to guide chit-chat from the purely social gently back to more relevant discussions of the internship, the facility, and the local area.
Good questions for your interviewers

• The professional community in the area.
• Where interns typically come from.
• Any changes in the facility or the program for the coming year.
• How well the interns are integrated into their clinical teams.
• Career paths of those who completed their internship.
5. Foul ball!

General rule: Interviewers should only ask questions directly relevant to:
• the applicant's qualifications
• the internship position and duties

Gut instinct: Would this same basic question be asked of all applicants?

From: Questions During Interviews, Revisited by Mona Koppel Mitnick, Esq.
What is fair for an interviewer to ask?

Fair questions focus on your:

• education
• training and experience in specific areas of psychology
• past practice and placements
• language proficiency (if directly relevant to the requirements of the position)
• career interests and goals
• professional memberships
What is not OK?

Improper questions focus on areas in which you have some interest in protecting your privacy:

• physical or mental health
• marital, familial, or other close personal relationships
• religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation

It is generally inappropriate - and possibly illegal – for an interviewer to ask such questions, unless they directly relate to the internship.
Basic exceptions

• Government agencies (including state universities) may ask for proof of U.S. citizenship and/or explanation of any criminal record.
• Some questions may become permissible after the intern is hired: proof of age, marital, or parental/relationship status for taxes and insurance; photographs for ID cards.
Follow-up to self-disclosures

If *you* raised the issue first, however, impermissible questions may become OK for follow-up:

- **You** mention family responsibilities and ask about work hours.
- **You** mention religion and request adjustments in work hours.
- **You** mention your physical limitations and ask about the demands of the position.

Remember, the interview begins with your application, so anything you mentioned in your written materials is part of the interview and OK for follow-up.
After the interview: APPIC Communication Policies

• Programs vary greatly with regard to communication with applicants, particularly after completion of interviews.

• If you have questions, you are welcome to contact the program directly.

• There is no "quiet period." Applicants and programs are welcome to contact each other at any time throughout the process.
A pressure-free environment in which to make ranking decisions

What APPIC policies prohibit is the communication, solicitation, acceptance, or use of ranking-related information.

- It is **NOT** acceptable for a program to ask an applicant, "How do we rank?" or for an applicant to inquire about how they are ranked by a program.

- It is **NOT** acceptable for a program to tell an applicant how he/she is going to be ranked or for an applicant to say things like, "Your program is my top choice."
Acceptable interest and enthusiasm

Program staff may say:
• “We’re impressed with your credentials.”
• “You seem like a great fit with our program.”

An applicant may say:
• “Your program seems like an excellent fit for my interests.”
• “I'm very excited about the possibility of working here.”
Unacceptable comments

Program staff may NOT say:
• “You’re our top candidate.”
• “We’re looking forward to having you here next year.”

An applicant may NOT say:
• “Your program is my top choice.”
• “Your program is the best fit for me.”
Good luck with your interviews!

Internship applicants describe a high percentage of their interviews as very pleasant, professional, and positive.

If you feel that you’ve been treated unfairly, please seek consultation with faculty advisors regarding how best to proceed.

Enjoy the experience of meeting new people and learning about psychological practice in different settings.