
ACING THE INTERVIEW

Lauren Celano
CEO, Propel Careers
Lauren@propelcareers.com



Making Connections that Fuel Innovation!

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OUTLINE

- Preparing for the interview
 - Researching the organization and interviewers
 - Question to prepare for during the interview
- Advice during the interview
 - Interview Formats
 - Types of Interview Questions
 - Typical Responses
 - Questions candidates should ask the company
- Advice to follow up after the interview



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW



RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION/ DEPARTMENT

- Organization / Department website
- Press releases / Other news
- Conferences
- Publications
- Presentations
- Grants
- Intellectual property
- Industry Reports
- Through personal connections



LIFE SCIENCES REPORTS



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RESEARCH THE INTERVIEWERS

- Social Networks. i.e. LinkedIn, ResearchGate
- Public databases
- Search engine results
- Press releases
- Papers
- Presentations
- Through personal connections



SELF REFLECT

- Why do you want this role?
- What do you want to work for the organization or the specific lab?
- Why are your skills relevant to the organization, department, team?
- What are you looking for in a role? Or in an Organization, Culture, or Team?
- What kind of career trajectory do you want?
- What else is important to you?



PREPARE QUESTIONS FOR EACH INTERVIEWER

- Write each interviewer's name on a different piece of paper
- Write tailored questions for each interviewer on their page
- During the interview, write notes about the discussion on the specific interviewer's page
 - Useful to tailor post-interview follow up email / note



PRACTICE

- Run through scenarios so that you become more comfortable
- Receive unbiased feedback about your interview style
- What emotions trigger your confidence?
- What emotions make you more nervous?
- How you are branding yourself
 - who are you
 - how are you different from 1,000 's of other people?



ADVICE DURING THE INTERVIEW



Confidentiality Agreement

- Sometimes companies will have a candidate sign a CDA before the in-person interview
- This way, they can discuss confidential information



INTERVIEW FORMATS



INTERVIEW FORMATS

- Phone interviews
- Skype interviews
- One-on-one in-person interviews
- Panel interviews
- Tests
- Other Scenarios



PHONE INTERVIEW ADVICE

- Stand up
- Find a quiet place to talk
- Walk around as you talk
 - Maintain energy level
- Speak slowly
- Take notes during the call



SKYPE INTERVIEW ADVICE

- Dress professionally
- Put a blank wall behind you
 - No distractions
- Speak slowly
- Maintain eye contact



IN PERSON INTERVIEW ADVICE

- Maintain eye contact
- Speak slow and articulate
- Dress professionally
- Use a note pad for notes as well as a list of what you want to cover
 - your skills / relevancy to the job description
 - your interest in the role
 - questions tailored for each interviewer



PANEL / GROUP INTERVIEWS

- Multiple Interviewers
 - One asks a question, others note body language / responses
- Speak slow and articulate
- Maintain eye contact and poise
- Have a note pad for notes and a list of what you want to cover
 - your skills / relevancy to the job description
 - your interest in the role
 - questions tailored for each interviewer



TESTS

- Quantitative tests assess specific skills and competencies
 - i.e. disease knowledge, familiarity with a specific data analysis program, software program, or other systems/applications
- Timing of Tests
 - Before the interview, as a pre-screen
 - During the interview
 - Post-interview
- These tests are hard to prepare for
- Most companies will let candidates know before a test is given



OTHER TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- Lunch Interviews
- Dinner Interviews
- Interview with Board Members (Smaller companies)
- Informal Interviews (Coffee)



SPECIFIC INTERVIEWS

- Scientific (Academic or Industry) - Technical Presentation
- Consulting – Case Interview
- Role play Interview



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

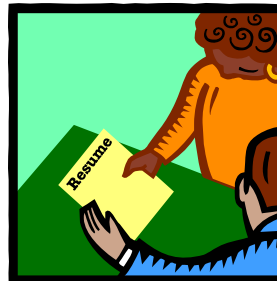


Who sees your Resume and Cover Letter

HR Person



Hiring Manager



Interviewers



Maybe



ANALYZE POSITION QUALIFICATIONS

- When reading through a position description, compare the qualifications with your background.

Qualifications

- The candidate must have a Ph. D. in Molecular Biology, Biochemistry, or a closely related field, preferably with oncology/immunology experience.
- Hands-on experience with molecular biology (including recombinant DNA construction , RNA quantification using RT-PCR, transfection, western blotting techniques, etc) and cell biology (such as maintenance of variety of cell lines).
- Experience with protein purification, enzymatic characterization and inhibition assays desirable.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- He or she should be highly motivated, productive and team oriented with demonstrated ability to work independently and to solve problems as they arise.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FROM JOB DESC

- Hands on experience with molecular biology, (including recombinant DNA construction, RNA quantification using RT-PCR, transfection, western blotting techniques, etc) and cell biology (such as maintenance of variety of cell lines
 - I have used __techniques to characterize a cell line and __techniques to understand a target protein
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
 - I present my research during weekly lab meetings, the annual department meeting, and have spoken at 2 international and 1 regional meetings
- Experience working in a productive and collaborative cross-functional manner
 - For my research, I work in a collaborative group which consists of a cell biologist, pharmacologist, chemist, and bioinformaticist.
- The confidence to be an independent thinker, self-directed, and to take a risk and make something new.
 - During my Ph.D., I identified a novel finding which expanded the focus of our lab to include the study of lung cancer development
- Experience and ability to document your work, write protocols, and SOPs
 - I have written SOP's for new techniques which I developed, as part of my research . I have also trained my colleagues on these techniques so they can use them as well.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Why are you interested in this role?
- What type of environment do you thrive in?
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Tell me more about your background...
- What applicable skills do you have that are relevant to this role?
- What are your career goals? (i.e. where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years)
- What biggest benefit would you bring to this group/department if you were to join us?
- What type of management style are you looking to work in?



WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN US?

Organizations / departments want to hear that you are passionate about the work they do and that you know about their history, goals, and expectations. Appealing responses include:

- “I want to work at your organization because you are the leader in leukemia research, a disease that I have a personal interest in.”
- “With my experience, I can help characterize the molecular pathway of this target protein”
- “I will be able to apply both my programming and wet lab experience to your research challenges”



TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND - INDUSTRY

Have your 30 second elevator pitch developed.... i.e.

“I am a (postdoctoral fellow) at (Harvard University) studying (neuroscience – specifically Alzheimer’s formation). I have a (strong molecular biology and cell biology) background. I have worked on (collaborative projects and enjoy team settings). I am looking for a (research role) in a (smaller biotech). I am very interested in this opportunity since I will be able to apply (my skills to understand specific disease progression) and (work in an entrepreneurial setting)”.



WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Organizations want to see passion and gain some insight into what makes you tick. They also want to see a genuine response. i.e.:

- “I am most proud of completing the Pan-Mass Challenge to raise money in my father’s memory.”

This individual was interviewing with an oncology focused organization and wanted to ensure their passion for cancer research came through.



PH.D. AND POSTDOC EXPERIENCE IS EXPERIENCE

Mention research done during your Ph.D. when interviewers ask about your experience.

- Mention techniques you used
- Problems you solved
- Lessons you have learned
- Collaborative projects you are involved with



WHY BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING?

- Interviewers want concrete examples of how your background is relevant to their needs.
- They pay attention to how you articulate your experiences, the lessons you learned, your communication, decision-making, and team work skills.



PREPARING FOR BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

- To prepare, write down specific examples for each question.
- Practice to refine the responses, so that they are concise, but detailed enough to provide the interviewer context.
- Most examples taken from your research experience,
 - In some cases, other experiences, charity work or activities (i.e. President of a local organization), are reasonable



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
 - A grant deadline was quickly approaching and I was responsible for obtaining data to support the grant application. To meet the deadline, I made a list of all study activities needed to be done and enlisted the help of lab mates to assist me to perform the studies and analyze the data to meet the deadline.
- Have you ever had too many things to do, and were you required to prioritize your tasks?
 - During my Ph.D. I performed two different research projects, each in collaboration with another lab. The research projects yielded promising results and the research quickly accelerated. During the 4th year of my Ph.D., I found myself overwhelmed by the amount of wet lab work needed as well as email communication regarding the high profile projects. To prioritize the tasks, I set up a bi-weekly call with each collaborating lab to talk about the research, the goals, the direction, and timelines. This helped me to prioritize the tasks associated with each project and manage the expectations better.



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Provide an example.
 - I typically deal with conflict through open communication. If conflict arises, I ask the person to present his/her perspective and I also ask him/her to allow me to explain my perspective too. After discussion and an appreciation for each other's perspective, I try to reach a compromise.
- How do you handle a challenge
 - One of my projects involved using a novel method and no one in the lab had experience with this research. To solve how to do this, I sought advice and guidance from outside sources. I read through papers with similar methods, contacted PI's, and spoke with KOL's for best practices. By taking advantage of the resources available to me, I perfected the technique. Now this is a model system that others use.
- What is your biggest weakness?
 - I admit to being a bit of a perfectionist. I take a great deal of pride in my work and am committed to producing the highest-quality work I can. Sometimes if I'm not careful, though, I can go a bit overboard. I've learned that it's not always possible or even practical to try and perfect your work-sometimes you have to decide what's important and ignore the rest in order to be productive. It's a question of trade-offs. I also pay a lot of attention to pacing my work, so that I don't get too caught up in perfecting every last detail.



OTHER BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

- Have you ever had to motivate others? Tell me about such an experience.
- Tell me about a time when you learned from a mistake?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your speaking and presentation skills to influence a group's opinion.
- Explain a situation when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.



INTERVIEW TIPS

- Wait for the interviewer to finish asking a question, then speak
- Listening is Key!
- Keep answers succinct (**~30 seconds – 1 minute**). This enables interviewers to ask you many questions to learn about your background.
- If you don't know the answer to something, say so, and say that you will follow up.
- **Then DO follow-up.**



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWERS



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW

- **Manager/Boss/PI/Professor**
 - How would you describe the department's culture?
 - What are the top three things that I could do upon joining the department to make it a better place?
 - What is your management style?
 - What type of people thrive here the most?
 - Can you describe a typical day or week?
 - What are the growth plans/strategy for the department/organization/lab over the next 1, 3, 5 years?
 - What excites you most about the department?
 - What is an area that the department needs to work on?



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW

- Colleagues
 - What is the culture of group?
 - What are the team dynamics?
 - What are the main areas I could help you with when I join?
 - What excites you most about the department?
 - Can you describe a typical day or week?
 - What growth opportunities exist?



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW

- Head of Department, Dean, or Executive Leadership
 - What are the organization's goals over the next 1, 3, 5 years?
 - What is the vision for the organization?
 - How will your work impact the organization?



DO'S AND DONT'S

- Focus on your skills and accomplishments
 - Don't focus on everything you don't know
- If you have not done something that the organization is looking for (i.e. a technique):
 - Find examples to show how you can learn this/
get up to speed



INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP



THANK YOU LETTER



- Send within 48 hrs.
- Write an email thanking the individuals that you met with for their time.
- Mention something that you talked about during your interview, so that it is customized.
- Do not send everyone the same email, since the interviewing team oftentimes compares follow-up emails.
- Optional: follow up with a hand written note – this will definitely help you to stand out.
- Show your interest again in the role and state your desire to be a part of the team.



USING LINKEDIN - ADVICE

- DO NOT LinkedIn to people right away post interview
- Wait to see how the interview process turns out



AT INTERVIEW END, THE INTERVIEWERS SHOULD KNOW

- You are serious in planning your career
- You are always prepared
- You are interested in the organization, department, and role, and you articulated why
- You want to make sure the organization, department, and role is a good fit for you.
- You will be an excellent hire from a culture/personality fit; not just a skill set fit
- You will be able to make an impact right away
- You are excited to join their team



Contact Details: Connect with Propel

Lauren Celano

Founder and CEO

Propel Careers

cell: 215-370-2285

email: Lauren@propelcareers.com

Twitter: [@Propel_Careers](https://twitter.com/Propel_Careers)

Facebook: [Propel Careers](#)

LinkedIn: [Propel Careers](#)

Web: www.propelcareers.com



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