

Career Skills: Mock Interviews

PART ONE: Mentor Preparation

Interviewing is a skill that never stops developing, which unfortunately means that many students are scared to begin that journey. It is important to acknowledge to your mentee that it can be uncomfortable for many people to interview, and that it is totally normal to feel this way! However, interviewing is inevitably part of a student's application process, and by getting a head start on those skills, they will be vastly more prepared and at ease when under pressure of a true job interview.

Mock interviewing serves as a comfortable space for students to polish their responses to common interview questions and become familiar with interview etiquette. Typically, mock interviews are conducted as if it were a real interview, with all of the pleasantries, follow-up questions, and assessments involved. Your mentee should approach the activity as professionally as possible – though breaking character is normal! At first, your mentee might feel self-conscious, or you might want to provide real-time feedback or encouragement. It's perfectly alright to start there, but your goal as a mentor is to ease your student along to where they can run through an entire mock interview with ease.

One more note: part of the benefit of mock interviews is teaching the brain to associate an interview environment with feelings of being calm and in control, instead of the usual associations of anxiety and nervousness. As a mentor, the calmer and more patient you can be during the mock interview, the more your mentee will benefit from those feelings down the road.

You and your mentee will do a mock interview for a real job posting, then take some time to identify strengths and areas for improvement. This should take about 30 minutes total: the first 20 will be the mock interview, and the last 10 will be feedback. It's great that your student has you to practice with! By helping them feel more at ease now, they'll nail their interviews later.

PART TWO: Pair Activity

Any time you develop a skill, there are two aspects to seeing improvements: **practice** and **feedback**. Without feedback – seeing where you nailed it and where you, well, didn't – you'll be limited by your own perception of your performance. Think of how football players film themselves running drills during training. By playing back the film, they can pinpoint exactly what they need to do to grow from *pretty good* to *amazing*. You can take the same approach when developing your interview skills! In this case, you're the player and your mentor is the film.

First, go to [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) and pick a real job that you'd like to apply for. Go over the job description and

the company website for a few minutes with your mentor before getting started.

Use the **Interviewing Resource Guide** to pick 3 items from the list, “Questions to ask during your interview”. Your mentor should pick 5 questions to ask you from the “Common Interview Questions list”. Don’t tell each other in advance what you chose!

Set a timer for 15 minutes, then begin your interview as formally as possible. Include walking in and shaking hands, or if you’re talking virtually, say, “Just checking to make sure you can hear me clearly over Zoom”. Greet your mentor politely as if this is the first time you are meeting them. Let them begin the interview. Throughout the mock interview, use your professional skills and knowledge to answer as you would in a real interview. You got this!

Feedback

Once the mock interview is done, take a moment to breathe and relax. You did it! Then spend the next five minutes writing a list of things that you think you did well, and areas where you felt you could improve. Aim for 3-5 items on each side. Ask your mentor to do the same for you.

Take the next 10 minutes to share your lists and run back through some of your answers with adjustments based on your mentor’s feedback. Wrap up by deciding on two action items that you should practice before your next interview.