

Career Prep Guide



The ingredients to your “smoothie”
of career success!

How to Use This Guide

Think of your career preparation like making a **fruit smoothie** - each ingredient matters, and together they make something good for you! The topics in this guide are the **ingredients** - on their own, each section gives you useful tips and strategies; blended together, they fuel your plans and set you up for success.

You don't have to "drink it all" at once. Start at the beginning and go step-by-step, or jump to the parts that fit where you are now. And don't miss the QR code on the back - it takes you to more resources, templates, and tools to help you be career ready!

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Online Presence



Before diving deeper into how to apply for internships or jobs, make sure that your digital self is as organized and presentable as you would like to be in your interview.

Social Media

Make sure that your entire online presence shows the values you would want a stranger to see about you. This includes professional websites, like LinkedIn and Handshake, as well as personal ones, like Facebook, Instagram, and others.

File Structures

During the job-searching process, as well as during most jobs and life in general, you will deal with a lot of important documents that you need to keep track of. To make sure that you always have what you need at hand, store your files in a format that makes it easy to find what you need, when you need it.

For example, create a folder for your career-related documents with subfolders for each employer. Use clear folder names so you can quickly find the right documents.

Document Names

The document name of your resume makes an impression and sets the tone even before a recruiter is looking at what is on it. This is your first chance to show your professionalism, attention to detail, and computer proficiency.

Avoid things like this:

resume doe final v.3 (4) (copy) 

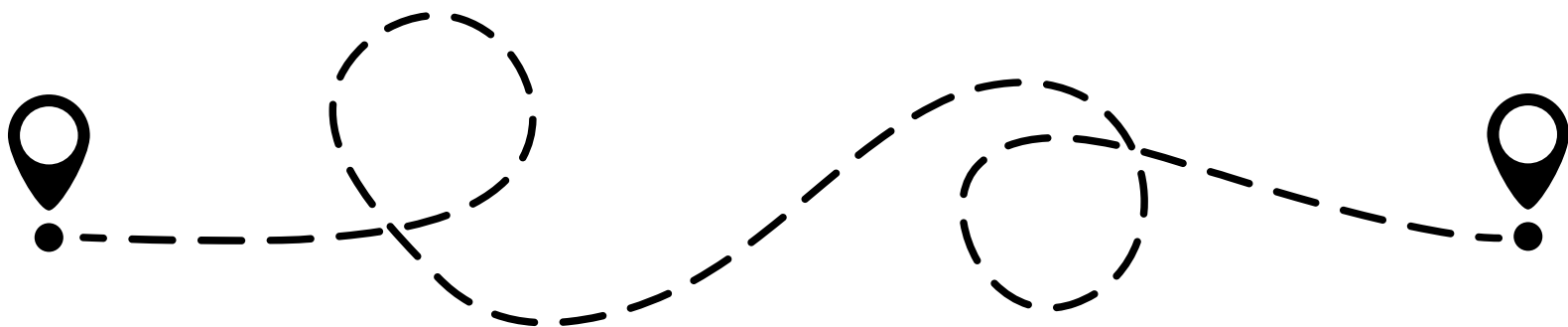
Instead, utilize an easily identifiable, searchable format like this:

FirstName-LastName_DocumentName_JobTitle
Example: Jane-Doe_Resume_MarketingInternship 

Things to keep in mind:

- Avoid spaces, full stops, and special characters within the document name.
- Use hyphens (-) instead of spaces, and underscores (_) to connect related parts.
- Only use sans-serif fonts, like Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Aptos, and similar.
- Make sure to “save as” your document as a PDF, instead of “print” as a PDF.





Getting Started

The application process is more than just submitting your resume and hoping for a response. Make sure that you are prepared and go through all the steps.

1

Before you start working on your application, take the time to **make a list of all the employers you might be interested in**. For each company, make sure you answer the following questions for your own understanding and best possible fit:

Why do you want to work for **this organization**?

Why do you want to work in **this role**?

Why do you want to work in **this sector/industry**?



Many students land internships and jobs because of connections, not just the applications they submit.

Networking is important!

See if you have a connection with someone at the company.

Check with your friends, family, a current or previous boss, or someone who also went to UW-Parkside. ←

See if the employer is attending a career fair or networking event on campus by looking on Handshake or checking with the Advising & Career Services. ←

Look on LinkedIn under the company name, filter and search for alumni from UW-Parkside, and reach out to connect with them and start a conversation. ←

2

3

Look at the job postings of the organizations that you are interested in

by going to Handshake or their careers webpage, and save the ones you like. Based on your list, sort them by:

- Application close date
- Your interest in the company/role
- How many connections you have with the company

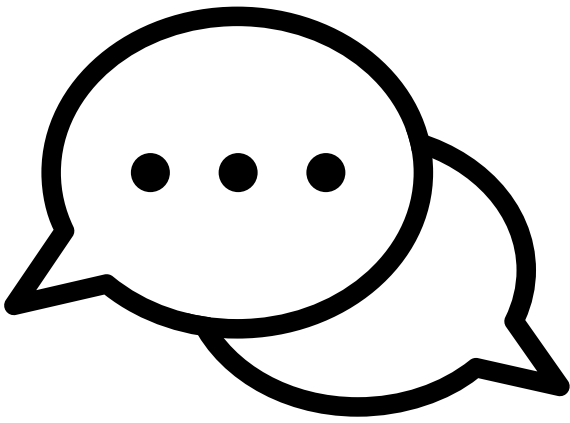
This is also a good time to start preparing your resume based on the job postings.

If you have a direct contact, reach out to them either over email, LinkedIn, or phone, and quickly mention your interest in the job and ask for their insight. Make sure that the focus is on their expertise, not yourself. While this can be in-person, most of the time this will happen through a phone call or text.



4





The Informational Meeting

The informational meeting happens either during the quick call mentioned on the previous page, or if you do not have a direct contact, it can be a conversation at a career fair or recruiting event on campus.

3

Stages of an Informational Meeting

Small Talk

- Gentle warm-up to the conversation
- Examples:
 - How is your day going so far?
 - Do you have any plans for the weekend?
 - What brought you to this company?
 - What do you like about working here?

Questions & Answers

- Ask the questions you prepared in advance.
- Examples:
 - What do you know about the role that your company is hiring for?
 - What industry trends are you seeing that are impacting your company?
 - What advice do you have for me?

Next Steps

- Ideally, they offer to connect you to a hiring manager.
 - If they don't bring it up, don't mention it at this time.
- Respectfully end the conversation.
- Examples:
 - Thank you for chatting with me today!
 - Is it alright if I follow up with you at a later date?

If this is at a career fair or professional networking event, make sure you're dressed appropriately.

Tips

Send a thank-you note later that day, briefly referencing the points you discussed.

Follow up! If they put you in touch with a hiring manager, share an update with them after a few weeks.



Jane Doe

JaneDoe@gmail.com

linkedin.com/in/JaneDoe

900 Wood Rd
Kenosha, WI 53144
(262) 595-2345

SUMMARY

Upcoming Biology graduate pursuing an entry-level position in Human Resources after an internship with the local city council sparked my interest in employee support and internal communication. Looking to build practical HR experience in a collaborative setting with opportunity for long-term growth.

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin – Parkside

Kenosha, WI

B.S. Biological Sciences, Minor in Psychology

Sep 2022 – May 2026

- Current GPA of 3.5, inclusion on Dean's List.
- Vice-President of the Parkside Student Government.
- Member of the Psychology and Sociology Student Organizations.

WORK EXPERIENCE

City of Kenosha Council Office

Kenosha, WI

City Council Intern

May 2024 – May 2025

Earth Day Volunteer

Apr 2024 – Apr 2024

- Supported council staff with administrative tasks, constituent services, and research on local policy issues to aid council decision-making.
- Assisted in organizing public events, including coordinating logistics and collaborating with multiple city departments and community stakeholders.
- Contributed to citywide Earth Day initiatives by leading volunteer groups in cleanup efforts and engaging with residents to promote environmental awareness.

UW-Parkside Library

Kenosha, WI

Library Assistant

Jan 2023 – Apr 2024

- Began by shelving materials and assisting students with locating academic resources; later entrusted with managing the circulation desk during high-traffic periods.
- Helped onboard and train new student assistants in library systems and university policies, serving as a peer mentor.
- Collaborated with library staff to coordinate study space bookings and supported outreach for student research workshops.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

Shalom Center

Kenosha, WI

Food Distribution Volunteer

Sep 2023 – present

- Assisted in organizing and distributing food supplies to over 100 individuals weekly, ensuring accuracy and efficiency in service.
- Took initiative to streamline food packing and distribution workflows, improving service speed and reducing errors.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Languages: English (native); Spanish (fluent).

Software: MS-Office; Workday; R; ArcGIS; FlowJo; Prism; ImageJ.

Certificates: Community Engagement Certificate; aPHR (Associate Professional in Human Resources) from HRCI; certified Heartsaver First Aid CPR AED from the AHA.



Your Resume

Your resume is a one-page document showcasing the things about you that are most relevant to the position you're applying for, and nothing else.

Header

The header showcases an overview of your general information, and includes your name, a professional email address, a URL to your professional web profile (like LinkedIn), geographic region (usually your address), and phone number.

Summary or Objective

This is optional and should only provide a brief explanation (1-2 sentences) if you apply for a role unrelated to your major or if you have limited work experience.

Education

List the full name of your degree and university, as well as your GPA and any honors. Consider the awards, certifications, on-campus activities, and student organizations that best showcase your skills.

Work Experience

Instead of simply listing responsibilities, focus instead on the actual outcomes of your work and how you achieved them, ideally emphasizing any transferable skills. A good format is **Action Verb → Task → Outcome**.

Volunteer Activity or Additional Experience

This section should be formatted similarly to the Work Experience section, but highlighting unpaid, volunteer, or similar activities you do in your free time.

Additional Information or Skills

This section is for items that do not need a detailed explanation, such as: languages, certifications, organizations/affiliations, special skills, your visa status, willingness to relocate, and more. Pick and choose depending on what the job posting is asking for.



Jane Doe

JaneDoe@gmail.com

linkedin.com/in/JaneDoe

900 Wood Rd
Kenosha, WI 53144

(262) 595-2345

October 4th, 2025

Summit Solutions Group

4500 Innovation Drive

Kenosha, WI 53144

Dear Alex Morgan:

I am writing to express my enthusiasm for the Human Resources Assistant position at Summit Solutions Group. With a strong foundation in communication, problem-solving, and team coordination, I am eager to bring my passion for employee support and organizational development to your HR team. After experiencing firsthand how meaningful internal communication and public service can be during my internship with the City of Kenosha Council Office, I knew Human Resources was where I wanted to build my career.

During my year-long internship, I supported council staff with administrative tasks, assisted constituents, and coordinated public events involving multiple city departments. One particular project involved helping to organize a community outreach event, where I was entrusted with managing volunteer teams and ensuring clear communication across stakeholders. This hands-on experience not only strengthened my organizational and interpersonal skills but also revealed how much I enjoy roles that connect people and processes to create a positive work environment.

I am drawn to Summit Solutions Group because of your commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture. I'm excited about the opportunity to contribute to your HR initiatives while continuing to develop my professional skills in a collaborative setting. With my academic background in Biology and Psychology, coupled with practical experience in administrative support and volunteer leadership, I am prepared to take on the challenges of an HR role and grow within your organization.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my experience and enthusiasm can support your HR team's goals.

Sincerely,



Your Cover Letter

Your cover letter is separate from your resume and should not be used to restate the same information. Not all employers require cover letters, but a good cover letter can make a difference in the final hiring decisions.

Header

The header should match the header that you used on your resume.

Opener

Lead with the formal “Dear”, followed by the lead hiring person’s name, or, if unknown, “[Company] Hiring Team”. Close with a colon or comma.

Introduction Paragraph

Mention the position you are interested in, the connection you have at the company or how you learned of the position, and your confidence in being able to add value to the company. End with a brief summary of the key points you’ll address in the following paragraphs.

Support Paragraphs

Ideally you discuss three topics, with each topic spanning one paragraph. Mention a skill that you possess, prove that you possess the skill with a story from your past, and then mention how that skill will be beneficial to a responsibility or project related to the role you are applying for. Use these paragraphs to be specific and let your unique experiences shine through.

Closing Paragraph

Quickly restate that you’re confident about being a great fit and include a proposal for them to reach out to you for an interview or follow-up conversation.

Closing Line

End the letter with “Sincerely,” and your full name two lines below that.

LinkedIn Profile Checklist



Whether you're trying to network, search for a job, or build your professional brand, having a built out LinkedIn profile is a great way to start. Use this checklist to put your best professional foot forward.

Header

- ☐ **Profile Photo:** Upload a recent photo with good lighting and minimal background distractions. It doesn't have to be taken with a professional camera (any smart phone will do!). We offer free professional headshots at Career Launch!
- ☐ **Background Photo:** An easy way to add personality to your profile. Consider a photo that shows off your geography (e.g. UW campus) or one that's tied to your academic or professional identity (e.g. an English major using a photo of book stacks).
- ☐ **Headline:** The default headline is your most recent job title, but you can get creative with it! Use this 120-character space to stand out and introduce yourself. Consider starting with what you're studying and applying for, like "Sociology Student at UW seeking public policy internships".
- ☐ **Custom URL:** On the right side of the page, click "Edit public profile and URL", and then click the pencil icon under "Edit your custom URL". Choose something that helps people find you quickly and is short enough to put on your resume (e.g. your email, UW NetID, name, etc).

About

- ☐ **Summary:** A brief introduction to your LinkedIn profile where you can show off your professional self and even throw in some personality. Let viewers know...
 1. What are you **passionate about**? Start with your academics. What are you studying and why?
 2. What are you **skilled at**? Write about your favorite past experiences, including the skills you built from them.
 3. What are you **looking for**? Jobs, internships, making connections, exploring new fields, etc?



LinkedIn Profile Checklist



The button labeled **“Add profile section”** will serve as your one-stop-shop for accessing all of the available sections as we go through the rest of this guide!

Experience

- ☐ **Current & Past Positions:** Include all of the current and past roles. Don't worry about whether it was a paid or unpaid! Think beyond jobs and internships to include student organization involvement, research, athletics, etc.
- ☐ **Descriptions:** Adding a description is important for letting viewers know what you did, learned, or accomplished in each position. A good starting point is to copy details from your resume, but you can also write new content as either bullet points or a few short sentences for each position.

Education

- ☐ **Schools:** Include all college information, including the university name, your degree (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, Science, etc.), field of study (e.g. Chemistry, Psychology, etc), and expected graduation date (include both the month and year).
- ☐ **Description:** It's optional to include a description, but it's a great place to list any minors you're pursuing or extracurricular experiences you don't want to include in another section. You can also choose to include your GPA in the “Grade” section, but this is also not required.

Skills

- ☐ **Think big:** Choose as many as are relevant to your experiences and field! The skills listed here serve as search terms for recruiters when they are looking through profiles.
- ☐ **Pick your top skills:** Only the top 2-3 skills will show up on your profile when someone is browsing through, so you can reorder them (by clicking the three dot icon) when editing your skills page.

LinkedIn Profile Checklist

Additional Sections (Optional)

Courses: Include some of the relevant courses that you've taken to show off your knowledge of specific topics. It's recommended to keep it to 3-5 courses.

Projects: Think back to your coursework, research experiences, or even personal hobbies that you feel are relevant to the field you want to work in. Treat this section like an additional experience section. Consider uploading media or sharing a link to your project!

Volunteering: Volunteering can show employers more about your values and is oftentimes seen as being just as valuable as paid experience.

Honors & Awards: Were you on the Dean's List? Did you earn any merit scholarships? Win any competitions?

Languages: Do you know any additional languages besides English?

Publications: If you've done any professional writing, whether in research, journalism, or otherwise, this is a great section to showcase your published work. Don't forget to include links and/or citations!

Organizations: Are you a member of any RSOs? Maybe you even hold a leadership position with one? This is another great section to highlight those on-campus experiences.

Licenses & Certifications: Do you have a certification that is valuable or required for your field?



Use the Career & Advising Services' resources or schedule an appointment with a career ambassador to learn more about how you can improve your LinkedIn!



Prep for the Interview

If you have made it through the previous steps, you can now prove your skills in an interview. Some employers will do a phone interview first, followed by a virtual interview on Teams or Zoom, and then an interview on-site at the organization. Review the following categories of questions and prepare your answers to the example interview questions provided.

1 Experience, Skills, and Values

Purpose: Confirm your qualifications for the role and express your general character and personality.

Strategy: Explain how your experience, skills, or character equip you for success.

Examples:

- What are your strengths as an employee?
- What feedback does your supervisor give you about your performance?
- Why should I hire you?
- Who are your heroes? Why?
- Tell me about your current job.
- What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
- Give an example of a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
- What methods do you use to ensure that your work is error-free?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- What does success mean to you?
- What role do you like to take in an assigned project?

2 Working with Others

Purpose: Describe how you collaborate with others and whether you can ethically make decisions in the workplace, especially when under pressure.

Strategy: Be thoughtful, stay positive, and mention your responsibility in your actions.

Examples:

- Tell me about the people you have trouble getting along with or who have trouble getting along with you.
- Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?
- How would your co-workers describe you?
- Your supervisor tells you to do something that is against policy. What do you do?
- Was there ever a time when you had to deal with a difficult or argumentative person? How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a situation where you and another person disagreed and resolved your disagreement. How did you reach that point?
- Can you take constructive criticism without feeling upset? Give an example.



3

Organizational Skills and Time Management

Purpose: Address how you apply time and organizational skills, even under pressure.

Strategy: Showcase your methods by talking about situations where you used them.

Examples:

- How would you describe your organizational skills?
- Describe how you manage your time when you have competing priorities.
- Tell me about the last time you failed to complete a project (or assignment) on time.
- How do you take initiative when requirements on the job are slow?
- On a typical day, tell me what you do in the first and last hour at work.
- Describe a time when you had what seemed like a million things going on at once. How did you prioritize your workload? Were you successful?
- Tell me about a time when you used your organizational skills to solve a problem.

4

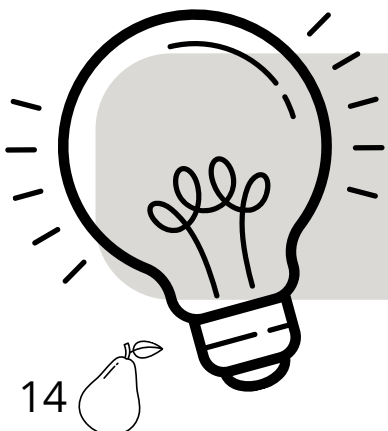
Problem-Solving Skills

Purpose: Share your general approach to solving issues in the workplace.

Strategy: Discuss how you seek out issues proactively, ask for help, adapt to change, and push forward new initiatives and projects.

Examples:

- How do you go about making important decisions?
- What was the biggest change you have ever faced at a job, and how did you adapt?
- Tell me about an improvement you independently made in your work process. How did this improvement help you or others?
- Tell me about a project for which you were responsible but needed the help of others to complete the project. What did you do?
- How do you generally handle conflict?
- Do you anticipate problems well or merely react to them?
- Did you initiate new procedures in your previous position? Tell me about them.



Interview IQ

Whether your interview is online or in person, make sure you're connecting with your interviewer through eye contact, engaged body language, and enthusiasm. This your chance to make a great impression with the recruiter!

5

Management Skills

Purpose: Showcase your leadership and share your philosophy on managing others.

Strategy: Focus on thoughtful responses, be positive, and show respect for positions of authority.

Examples:

- How do you motivate people?
- You are a supervisor of a busy office. Two of your employees just called in and will be out sick for the next two weeks. How do you deal with this unexpected event?
- What do you believe is the role of management?
- How do you deal with individuals in the workplace who are becoming part of the problem rather than part of the solution?

6

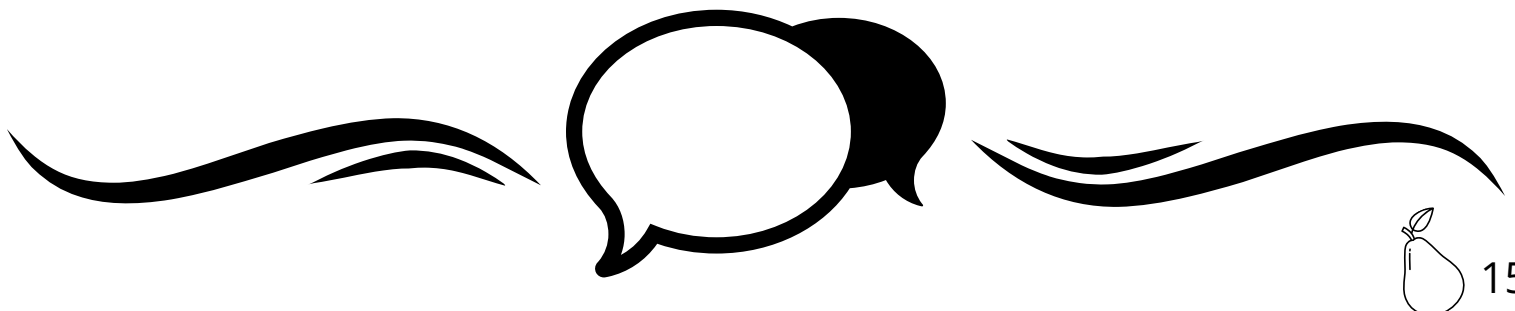
Communication

Purpose: Demonstrate your communication style, strengths, and preferences.

Strategy: Provide clear examples and acknowledge the importance of strong communication skills.

Examples:

- Describe a time when you had to explain a complex idea to someone with little or no background in the subject. How did you approach it?
- Tell me about a situation where your communication style helped resolve a conflict. What specifically did you say or do?
- Can you share a time when a misunderstanding occurred at work? How did you address and resolve it?
- What specific techniques do you use to show someone you are fully engaged in what they're saying?
- When you're delivering important information, how do you ensure clarity and prevent misinterpretation?
- Describe a time when you had to communicate under pressure or on a tight deadline. How did you handle it?
- In your opinion, what's the most important element of effective workplace communication, and how do you put that into practice?
- What communication tools or methods do you prefer for different types of messages (e.g., quick updates vs. detailed reports), and why?



Prep for the Interview:

Follow-Up Questions

At the end of the interview, you will be asked, “Do you have any questions for us?” **Always have questions ready.**

Follow-Up Question Tips

- The first question should always be about the **next steps in the interview process**. Having guidance on how to proceed and what is expected reassures you in the coming days when you have limited information available.
- Following this, ask detailed questions based on your previous research and meetings.
 - Reference something specific from your research on the company
 - Ask for an interviewer’s opinion
 - Ask open-ended questions, not yes or no questions
- Feel free to ask follow-up questions if they seem excited about the topic - review the **Informational Meeting** section of this document for strategies on how to guide this conversation.
- Never ask about salary or pay in the interview.
- Use this time to show your enthusiasm for the role and demonstrate knowledge of the organization. This is the last impression you will leave with your interviewer!

Examples of Follow-Up Questions:

- How will outcomes and success be measured for this role?
- What skills is the team missing that you’re looking to fill?
- How do you typically onboard and support new employees?
- What do new employees typically find surprising after they start?
- What do you enjoy about working here?
- What challenges or barriers have you experienced here that may limit progress towards a goal?
- What opportunities exist for professional development and ongoing learning?

Thank You Note

Don’t forget to send a thank you note the same day, referencing something memorable from the interview.

Remember to share your excitement about the role and organization!





Professional Communication

Use these frameworks to improve your communication in interviews and networking situations.

Elevator Pitch

When asked about yourself, be prepared to give a concise overview of the path that led you to this conversation. This should be brief — no longer than 1–2 minutes.

Education

Introduce yourself, and then state your school, major, and class year or graduation year.

Work Experience

Discuss your relevant work experiences, providing a light overview of your responsibilities.

Strengths & Values

Highlight key strengths or values you hold that relate to your future goals.

Future Goals

State your academic or career objectives, as well as goals for the conversation.

“Hi, I’m [Name], and I’m a senior studying computer science at University of Wisconsin-Parkside. Last summer I worked as a Software Developer Intern for [Company] where I learned to collaborate with a team of developers and business analysts to provide streamlined solutions for internal processes. Last spring, I enrolled in a community-based learning class where I helped build a mobile app for a local nonprofit, which solidified my understanding of full stack development. I’m skilled in Swift and JavaScript programming languages, and I love solving problems through code. I’m now looking for a full-time position and would like to know more about software development opportunities with your company.”

Answering Interview Questions: The STAR Method

To ensure you provide specific, detailed information in your interview, use the STAR method to develop your responses to interview questions.

Situation

Where were you?
Who was involved?

Task

What was the goal you were working towards?

Action

What steps did you take to address the situation?

Result

What was the specific outcome?

Are You Career Ready?

Highlight the skills employers are looking for

Employers are looking to hire college students who know how to use their **experiences**, **strengths**, and **interests**. These students are **career ready**.

You become career ready by mastering these Career Readiness Competencies, which will prepare you for a successful transition into the workplace.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Engage inclusively, challenge inequities, and value diversity.

LEADERSHIP

Motivate others, guide teams, and drive vision collaboratively.

CRITICAL THINKING

Solve problems using situational context and logical analysis.

PROFESSIONALISM

Exhibit reliability, integrity, and accountability.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate clearly and persuasively via listening and speaking.

TEAMWORK

Leverage technology ethically to enhance efficiency.

CAREER AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Pursue feedback, set goals, and seek growth opportunities.

TECHNOLOGY

Work well with others to reach common objectives.



Career Closet

Look the Part

Make a lasting impression at career fairs, interviews, and networking events. Visit the Parkside Career Closet to access professional clothing and accessories at no cost to current students!



WHAT'S AVAILABLE: Choose from suits, blouses, dress shirts, slacks, skirts, shoes, and professional accessories to ensure you feel confident and ready to impress.

HOW IT WORKS: Drop by during our open hours or schedule an appointment through Handshake to browse our selection and find interview-ready outfits tailored to your needs.

DONATIONS & SUPPORT: Want to give back or support fellow students? We gladly accept clean, gently worn professional clothing donations throughout the academic year.

For more career support, visit the Advising & Career Services
The Commons, Wyllie D-1 Level

advisingcenter@uwp.edu | 262-595-2040

Scan the QR code to access more ingredients to get career ready.

Resume tips & examples
Cover letter help
Elevator pitch builder

Interview preparation
Strategies for your internship
or job search



uwp.edu/careerresources

