Graduate School Interviewing Skills

The Art of Interviewing

1) An interview is an exercise of balance, leverage & control.
2) Know your interviewer. Know yourself.
3) Prepare. Always

Know your Program

- Department website
- Faculty, especially your potential advisor
- Graduate students

Know Yourself

- Review your resume
- Review your statement of purpose
- Review your transcripts
- Know your goals

Interview Types

There are different types of interview formats. These are the some of the most common interview formats:

1. One-on-One Interview
2. Committee Interview
3. Group Interview
4. Behavioral Interview
5. Case Interview
6. Video/Telephone Interview
7. Lunch/Dinner Interview

10 Potential Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student?
3. How has your undergraduate background prepared you for our program?
4. How would you rate yourself in the following areas?
   - Reading and Comprehension
   - Analytical Skills
Communication - oral and written, listening

5. Why would you be an asset to our department? How would you be able to contribute to our program?
6. What challenges do you think you might face in the graduate program?
7. What skills or abilities do you hope to strengthen through our program?
8. What has motivated you to pursue this academic field?
9. What are your short term and long term goals?
10. How do you see this program fitting into your career goals?

Questions to Ask

- How long does it take to complete the program?
- Where are recent alumni employed? What do most graduates do after graduation?
- What types of financial aid are offered?
- What criteria are used for choosing recipients?
- What opportunities are available through the program to gain practical work experience?
- Are there opportunities such as assistantships, fellowships or internships available? What are the deadlines to apply for these opportunities?
- Are there any scholarships or fellowships available? How do I apply?
- What types of research projects are current students pursuing?

During the Interview

SOLER is a non-verbal listening and communication technique. It stands for

- Sit squarely
- Open posture
- Lean forward slightly
- Eye-contact
- Relaxed body language

The Day Of…

- Be on time (actually, arrive about 10-15 minutes early)
- Bring a copy or two of your CV/resume and personal statement
- Know your audience. Address them with respect and use their title; don’t talk to them like a friend
- Follow the cues from the interviewer—follow suit in both your tone and in the timing of introductions and conclusions. Never try to cut off or extend the interview
- Convey your passion for your research. That’s why you’re pursuing graduate school, and this is your opportunity to relate that to the committee
Phone Interviewing
• A new way of weeding out and/or confirming graduate applicants
• More common, almost expected, in the humanities and social sciences
• Almost always on the spot
• Some advice on how to prepare yourself for phone interviews:
  ✓ Have your graduate application files near a phone so you can quickly bring yourself up to speed on the school that is calling.
  ✓ Make sure you have a neutral message on your voice mail.
  ✓ If you are not prepared, make a tactful excuse (such as being on your way to class) and suggest an alternate time to call.

After The Interview
• Send a thank you note/card
• Thank all interviewers
• Send within 48 hours

Keep Practicing
• Mock interview software now available on connect SC
• Mock interviews available at the USC Career Center
• Think it. Write it. Say it

The goal of any interview is to communicate to the interviewer that you are ready for and excited about their graduate program.
• An interview is an exercise of balance, leverage & control.
• Know your interviewer. Know yourself.
• Prepare. Always.