



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

The Law School

Interview Guide

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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of an Interview

Strictly speaking, an interview is a formal meeting at which a prospective employer can assess the qualifications of an applicant. More loosely construed, an interview is your opportunity to color the rather two-dimensional picture an employer will have of you based on your application materials. In an interview, applicants and employers exchange information in a process that is designed to help each side determine if the other fits their needs. From the employer's perspective, the goal is to ascertain whether the candidate measures up to his/her credentials and, sometimes more importantly, whether the candidate will be a "good fit" within the work environment. Applicants are trying to determine whether the employer (and work) truly interests them and whether they will fit and thrive in the position.

Even if you already feel comfortable in an interview setting, preparation and repeated practice are crucial to effective interviewing. You should practice your responses out loud in front of a mirror, with a CDO counselor, and/or with a friend. Many law students have never interviewed for a professional position. Others may have experience interviewing but in other professions. This guide will help you familiarize yourself with professional interviews in general and, more specifically, prepare you for some of the quirks of the legal interview.

Screening Interviews vs. Callback Interviews

Screening interviews are frequently the first step in the formal interview process. Generally, employers decide who will be interviewed based on submitted application materials. Most often, these materials are resumes and cover letters that a student has sent to the employer (either in response to a posted opening, a proactive outreach effort or in a resume collection coordinated through the CDO). Screening interviews may take place at the employer's office, at a job fair, via teleconference/videoconference or at the law school through a formal interview program. Through this process, the employer aims to identify candidates who possess the necessary qualifications and who exhibit enthusiasm and potential for success with the employer. Screening interviews usually last 20-30 minutes.

If an employer responds favorably to a candidate, they will offer a callback interview. These interviews are lengthier and are usually held at the employer's office. The callback interview allows a greater number of attorneys and staff members to participate in the interview process. While each employer may follow a slightly different process for callbacks, a student can expect to meet with approximately four attorneys for at least 30 minutes each and with a different set of attorneys over a meal. Some employers opt to conduct panel interviews, with multiple attorneys interviewing a candidate simultaneously, rather than the one-on-one approach.

Quite frequently, the callback interview focuses more on personality, work ethic and professional objectives than credentials. If the employer has determined in the screening interview that the candidate can do the work, the callback interview is frequently used to determine whether the candidate will be someone with whom they wish to work.

Some employers do not follow a two-step interview process and simply invite a candidate, based on his or her resume, for a one-time, in-office interview. The format of such an interview will often follow that of a typical callback interview as described above.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

It is absolutely essential that you know as much as possible about the employer with whom you are going to interview. Spending five minutes reading the employer's website immediately prior to an interview is not effective preparation. You should never use a screening interview to find out basic information about an employer, such as what type of law they practice, how many attorneys are in the firm and where the employer's offices are located. You want to save your precious interview time for insightful questions that convey your interest and not waste time gathering basic information that can easily be accessed prior to the interview. You also do not want to demonstrate to the interviewer that you did not bother taking the time to conduct elementary research.

The basics:

- Size
- Structure (associate to partner ratio, aspects of different divisions within the firm, number of offices, etc.)
- Location
- Areas of practice
- Involvement in the community
- Representative clients
- Current news items about the firm or its attorneys
- Diversity
- Pro bono policies
- Salary ranges
- Billable hours
- The names, biographies and backgrounds of some of the attorneys who work there (at the very least, research those attorneys who will be conducting the interviews)
- Recent expansion or contraction
- Major ongoing or recently-completed cases

Where to find the basics:

- The employer's website
- The National Association of Law Placement (NALP) Directory. Access the Directory online at www.nalpdirectory.com. This resource gives you great information about member firms' billable hours, salary ranges, number of summers hired, number of summers extended associate offers, etc.
- Lexis and Westlaw. Search individual attorneys or firms in case law directories to find representative clients and/or recently decided cases
- Bloomberg Law
- Martindale Hubbell. Access this online at www.martindale.com.
- ABA Newswire
- Simple Google searches
- LinkedIn

While you need to know about the employer, it is also extremely important for you to know yourself – meaning how you will market yourself, what skills you have to highlight and how to

discuss both your previous accomplishments and future goals. This can be very difficult for students, especially those who are not yet sure what type of law is of interest to them. Take heart: no one is asking you to commit to a practice area for the rest of your life, but you do need to be able to articulate to the employer what makes you interested in them and why you would be an asset. Take time to make logical connections before and during your interview. For example, if you know you are deeply interested in criminal law, then do not interview with an employer that (a) never goes to court, or (b) has absolutely no criminal law practice.

If you do not know what practice areas interest you, then be able to tell the employer what interested you enough to take time out of your schedule to interview with them. For example, you really enjoy your Torts class. You can say to the employer who has a significant medical malpractice practice, "I am only a 1L, so I am not yet sure what type of law I want to practice; however, I really enjoy my Torts class [for reasons X, Y, and Z] so I'd love to gain some experience in that area. When I was researching your firm, I noticed that 40% of your practice is devoted to medical malpractice cases. That is what piqued my interest in your firm and made me want to interview with you."

Questions You Will Be Asked (and for which you should have answers)

There are some questions that are so common in legal interviews that you should have specific answers to them prepared and ready in advance. Below are several examples.

- Have you decided what city you would ultimately like to settle in?
- Why do you want to live in (place)?
- Do you have family in (place)? What ties do you have in (place)?
- How would you describe yourself? Tell me about yourself.
- What do you consider your greatest weakness? Strengths?
- What motivates you?
- What kind of law are you interested in?
- Why did you go to law school?
- Why did you select Notre Dame Law School?
- What do you like about law school?
- How has law school been better, worse or different than what you expected?
- What is your favorite class? Why?
- Are your grades a good indication of your academic achievement? Why or why not?
- What law school activities do you participate in and enjoy?
- What do you do when you're not in class/studying?
- Have your ideas about being a lawyer changed since you entered law school?
- If you weren't in law school, what would you be doing right now?
- When are you available to begin work?
- How would a previous employer describe you?
- How did you get your last job?
- What did you gain from your last work experience?
- Describe your ideal level of supervision.
- What problems have you encountered in previous jobs?
- What is the most interesting job you've ever had?
- What achievements do you look back on with pride and why?

- What is some constructive criticism that you have received, and how have you responded?
- Describe the biggest challenge you have faced and how you have overcome it.
- How do you evaluate success?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why are you interviewing with our organization?
- Who else are you interviewing with?
- What practice area do you see yourself in?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- What goals do you have for your legal career?
- What long-term satisfaction do you expect to obtain from a legal career?
- If you could be anything other than a lawyer, what would it be and why?
- Why should we hire you?
- Do you have any questions for us? (The answer to this is always “Yes” so have questions prepared.)

Questions You May Want to Ask

The questions you ask should be determined by the flow of the interview, the rapport/dynamic you build with the interviewer and the specifics of the discussion you have. While ideally most of your questions will come from the conversation itself, you should prepare several questions in advance just in case. In any event, only ask those questions in which you have a true and genuine interest in the answer. Below are several examples of questions you may consider asking.

- Why did you (the interviewer) decide to join the organization?
- Why do you like being part of this organization?
- What do you like best about what you do? What do you like least?
- What is the most interesting project you’re currently working on?
- Has working here been what you expected?
- What keeps you here? Do you see yourself here long-term?
- How would you describe the organization and the people who work for it?
- How would you describe the personality of the organization?
- How would you describe the hierarchy or structure of the organization?
- What do you see as the benefits/drawbacks of working at an organization this size?
- What do you think sets this organization apart from other organizations in the area?
- For those employers with multiple offices: Are the different offices independent? Is there a shared client base?
- Is there a mentoring system at your firm for summer positions (or entry-level associates)?
- When people are working on projects, how common is it to seek out advice or input from others in the group/department?
- How are assignments distributed?
- Why type of supervision and evaluation are given to a summer associate?
- How many participants does the firm expect to have in the summer program? (For younger associates who summered at the firm) How is life at the firm different from your summer experience?

- Are offers extended by a particular practice group?
- What practice areas are growing at the fastest rate? Are there plans to expand into other practice areas?
- What changes do you foresee in (practice area)?
- What outside activities are attorneys involved in (local bar association, civic organizations, etc.)?
- How are new attorneys trained? Summer clerks/associates?
- How soon does a new attorney have direct client contact?
- How do you find the quality of life within the firm?
- What is your day-to-day work life like? What about for a clerk/associate?

Questions You Should Not Ask

- Any question that you could answer through simple research.
- Are you laying off attorneys right now?
- Questions that are most appropriate after an offer as been extended:
 - Salary/Benefits
 - Vacation/Leave Policy
 - Billable Hours Requirements

(Most of these questions can be answered through other sources.)

Improper Questions

It may seem odd that improper questions come up at all in interviews within the legal profession. However, improper questions do occasionally arise, usually in an attempt to facilitate conversation. Some examples of improper questions are:

- How old are you?
- What is your religion? Are you Catholic?
- Do you plan to have children?
- What does your spouse do?
- What is your ethnic background?
- What special needs do you have regarding your disability?

How you handle these questions, if you ever encounter them, is up to you. The best way to handle an improper question is to attempt to determine and address the potentially legitimate concern that may lie behind it, while ignoring the improper question itself. Below are some examples:

Q. What kind of help are you going to need in doing your work due to your disability?

A. Actually, I do not need any help doing my work. My education and training have more than adequately trained me for the duties related to this position. All I need are some minor adaptations of my desk or work station and colleagues who can relate to me professionally.

Q. Do you plan to have children?

A. I believe my career will be successful with or without children. I have always managed to find a healthy balance between my private and professional life and plan to continue to do so in the future.

If you encounter an interviewer who asks improper questions, please talk with the CDO. We will keep all information confidential and need to know such information in order to assess the ongoing relationship with the employer as well as prevent similar incidents in the future.

Behavioral Interviewing

An increasing number of legal employers are using an interviewing process called “behavioral interviewing” to identify the best candidates for their organizations. Behavioral interviewing is based on the theory that past and present behavior is a predictor of future performance. By asking an applicant to give examples of past or current use of specific “competencies” (e.g., skills, abilities, personal traits), interviewers hope to assess and predict the applicant’s future performance and potential success with their organization. This interviewing technique has been used effectively in the business world for a number of years and is now being adopted by more and more law firms, especially larger ones.

Some of these “competencies” are:

- issue spotting
- analysis
- problem-solving
- dealing with crisis situations
- handling project or work failures
- creativity /imagination
- using good judgment
- handling complex issues
- negotiating
- composure
- leadership
- delegation
- flexibility
- taking initiative
- organization
- maintaining sustained effort
- behaving ethically
- taking responsibility
- showing motivation, commitment
- communication (both verbal and written)
- building personal relationships
- listening
- taking criticism
- time management
- teamwork
- attention to detail
- perseverance
- information sharing

To respond to questions posed by an interviewer using this technique, you will need to show that you possess and have used the “competencies” relevant to the interviewer’s organization. You can use examples from your entire life experience: law school, prior education, work, extracurricular and general experiences.

When responding to a behavioral interviewing question, use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

Situation: Explain the situation by providing the interviewer with the necessary context for the example you are about to give.

Task: Describe the task that you faced, including the outcome that was expected of you.

Action: Using “I” or “we” statements, describe the specific course of action that you took.

Result: Explain the result that you achieved. More importantly, relate to the interviewer what you learned from the experience. Many times the result achieved is less important than the lesson learned.

The following are some examples of behavioral interviewing questions:

- Tell me about a time when you explained a complex issue to a person in a way that they could understand it.
- Tell me about a time you were assigned a research project in an area that was unfamiliar to you and how you approached it.
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a person you were working with and how you handled it.
- Describe an ethical dilemma you were confronted with and how you dealt with it.
- Tell me about a time when you had multiple high-importance projects with competing deadlines and how you handled it.
- At one time or another everyone has something fall through the cracks. Tell me about a time when that happened to you and what actions you took to correct it.
- Describe a project where you encountered failure and were forced to change your approach to achieve success.
- Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a project.
- Tell me about a time you encountered significant resistance or a major setback on a project you were working on, but managed to work through it anyway.
- Tell me about a time that you had to convince your team to do something that they did not want to do. How did you do it?
- Give me an example of a time when you had had to have people with very different work styles or ideas work together on a project. What, specifically, did you do to pull them together?
- Tell me about a time where, if it had not been for teamwork, your goal might not have been achieved.
- Give me an example of a time when priorities changed quickly. What did you do? What was the result?

In a related approach to behavioral interviewing, some organizations will present you with a unique situation and ask how you would respond to it. For instance, they may ask what you would do if you needed to get from South Bend to San Diego but had no money. The purpose of the question is simply to see how well you think on your feet. Of course, there is no correct answer to such a scenario and no real way to prepare an answer ahead of time. Nonetheless, you should be aware that such questions could be asked so that you are not taken by surprise.

THE INTERVIEW

Dress for the occasion

Interviews for legal jobs are *professional* interviews. If you dress unprofessionally, it reflects negatively on your interest level, your commitment to the interview process and your ability to represent the employer in a professional manner. The first impression you make with a potential employer will play a large part in whether you have a favorable interview. The interviewer will make a judgment based on how you present yourself and what you are wearing in the first five seconds that will be difficult to overcome if it is not positive. **Remember that you are dressing to impress a potential employer, not to appeal to your peers, and the legal industry is quite conservative overall.**

You must wear a dark suit. Specifically, wear a suit that is clean, pressed, in good condition and fits you well. If you are looking to buy a suit because you feel your wardrobe lacks an appropriate one, you are welcome to ask the CDO for input. Pay attention to your shoes. Polish them – scuffed shoes are an indication of lack of attention to detail. Do not wear shoes that are too casual, in need of repair or simply worn out. Do not use perfume or cologne. Accessories should be moderate and tasteful. Strive to appear neat, clean and fresh. Detailed checklists for both men and women appear below.

General Appearance Tips

- Plan ahead: Make sure you have appropriate interview attire and everything fits correctly.
- Prepare your clothes the night before, so you don't have to spend time getting them ready on the day of the interview.
- Have your suit dry cleaned after an interview so it is ready for your next interview.
- Be sure to clean your eyeglasses.
- Bring a breath mint and use it before you enter the building.

Men's Interview Attire

- Suit (navy blue or dark grey)
- Long sleeved shirt (white preferable or light blue, solid), no colored collars
- Tie (striped, solid or simple pattern; dark or muted colors)
- Belt (black or cordovan)
- Conservative leather shoes that match your belt (black or cordovan, clean and polished)
- Dark dress socks that match your pants
- No jewelry other than wedding ring and/or class ring
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Clean shave or trimmed beard
- No aftershave or cologne
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Cover any tattoos
- Portfolio or briefcase

Women's Interview Attire

- Suit (solid dark color)
- If you wear a skirt, it should not be tight and should be no shorter than an inch above your knee. Your suit jacket and skirt or pants should fit comfortably so that you can raise your arms above your head, sit, stand, move around – be comfortable and professional from all angles, seated and standing.
- Coordinated blouse (white or muted color)
- Conservative close-toed shoes (moderate heel)
- Limited jewelry (no dangling earrings or arms full of bracelets)
- Professional hairstyle (pulled back is preferable so that you do not have to brush your hair away from your face during the interview)
- Neutral pantyhose
- Light make-up
- No perfume
- Neatly manicured, short, clean nails. If polished, polish should be a light or clear shade.
- Cover any tattoos
- Portfolio or briefcase

What Not to Bring to the Interview

- Gum
- Cell phone
- iPod and earbuds/headphones
- Coffee or soda
- Backpack
- If you have a lot of piercings, leave them at home (earrings only for women)

Bring the right materials

Even if the employer has not asked you to bring any materials to the interview, bring the following:

- A copy of your resume
- A copy of your cover letter
- A list of your references with the appropriate contact information
- A copy of your transcript
- A copy of your writing sample

If an employer has specifically requested materials, make sure to follow the instructions given by the employer for submission of these materials. Some employers will ask that you bring the materials to the interview. Others will ask that you submit the materials to their office or the CDO prior to the interview. Failure to follow simple instructions regarding submission of materials reflects poorly on you (remember that, as a lawyer, an important part of your job will be following rules and instructions), leaving the employer to question your interest and/or your abilities to do the work.

Convey your interest

Employers frequently tell us that candidates are unable to articulate WHY they are interviewing with a particular firm. If you have done your homework, this simply becomes a matter of expressing yourself in an enthusiastic but professional manner. Make a list of accomplishments or strengths that make you attractive to this particular employer. Evaluate your strengths and think of specific examples that will illustrate those strengths. Do not limit yourself to legal job experience. Many of the skills you have developed in non-legal jobs transfer to the legal profession. However, you must be able to articulate your qualifications in a convincing manner. For example, “I have an excellent work ethic” does not convey the point as effectively as “I am a full-time student, work part-time, finance 100% of my education, and maintain a B average GPA.” Similarly, “I am a people person” does not speak to your rainmaking abilities as well as “I worked in public relations for three years prior to coming to law school, have been elected SBA class representative and am a student member of the American Bar Association.”

Try to connect your current interests and past experiences to the type of work done by the employer. For example, if you did a substantial amount of volunteer work in the past, talk to non-profit employers about your commitment to helping others. If you went to law school for the sole purpose of becoming a prosecutor, tell an attorney general’s office that very fact. If you worked as a file clerk in a title company and that sparked an interest in real estate law, emphasize that to the employer that specializes in real estate law.

Be professional and personable

No matter what your qualifications are, you will not interview successfully unless you establish a positive, professional rapport with the interviewer. Establishing this rapport starts the minute you walk in the door.

Arrive at least 5 to 10 minutes early for your interview. If you are more than 10 minutes early, go to a restroom and check your appearance (hair, teeth, makeup, clothing). If you are participating in an on-campus interview, you can simply wait for your turn at the study tables outside the interview rooms. If you are interviewing in the employer’s office, check in with the receptionist about 10 minutes before your scheduled appointment. (If you are more than 15 minutes early, wait in the lobby or find a coffee shop. Arriving too early can be disruptive for the employer.) When you check in with the receptionist, let him/her know your name, why you are there, and who you are meeting (e.g., “Hello. My name is Joe Student. I’m here for a 10:00 interview with Jane Lawyer.”). TIP: Be friendly and courteous to everyone within the office no matter what their title or position. Staff can be extremely helpful (and influential) in the interview process. Also, make mental or physical notes on every person who assisted you during your interview so that you will be able to send appropriate thank you notes after your interview.

Greet the interviewer with a smile and a firm, dry handshake. If you are nervous and your palms are sweaty, keep a handkerchief in your pocket or purse and discreetly wipe your hands before you go into the interview. Maintain good posture (no slouching, slinging an arm over the back of your chair or leaning over to rest your elbows on your knees). While the interviewer is speaking, be an active listener by maintaining eye contact and nodding occasionally when appropriate.

If an interviewer attempts small talk at the beginning of the interview, engage in a friendly and honest manner. You can miss a critical opportunity to establish rapport with the interviewer by deflecting such talk. Even in a 20-minute screening interview, many interviewers allot the first three to five minutes for introductions and ice-breaking. Your ability to relate to the interviewer is as important as the answers you provide. Interviewers are trying to evaluate your ability to communicate with clients and colleagues. Initial moments of small talk offer an opportunity to find common ground; personal connections are often what make a candidate stand out among peers in the interviewer's memory.

When you are speaking, exhibit an enthusiastic demeanor and use a confident and conversational tone. Searching for a job is not easy but you cannot afford to let past disappointments or "job search fatigue" overshadow current and future opportunities. You must project an upbeat and engaging image. Importantly, do not speak negatively about past employers, other firms, your classes or your professors. If you have a bad employment experience in your past that you do not know how to address without speaking negatively, talk to the CDO counselors about how to handle it. If you do not enjoy a particular course or law school subject, shift the focus to something you do enjoy. Even if the interviewer is engaging in negative talk, do not be tempted to follow.

Avoid lengthy conversations about weaknesses. Acknowledge the question and then move on. Your answers should be confident and unapologetic. For example, if the employer asks why you did not work last summer, then do not say, "I interviewed with a lot of employers but I just didn't get any offers." Instead say, "Although I didn't work in the legal field last summer, I participated in Notre Dame's Summer London Program. I had the opportunity to take a course in European and International Labor Law which really sparked my interest in labor law in the United States. In fact, the reputation of your firm's labor and employment practice group is one of the reasons I was so eager to interview with you." Similarly, if a criminal defense attorney seems concerned about your grades, you could say "My grades weren't as high as I expected after my first year, but my GPA has gone up each semester since. You can also see by my transcript that my strengths lie in coursework related to criminal law, as I received an A- in both Evidence and Criminal Law."

When the interview has concluded, thank the interviewer for his/her time and let him/her know that they should feel free to contact you if they have additional questions. Of course, you do not want to pressure them to tell you whether or not you will receive a callback interview, but it is acceptable to ask about the general time frame of the recruiting process so that you can plan accordingly.

Phone and Video Interviews

Phone and video interviews have become more common as employers look to reduce recruiting costs. While much of the preparation for a phone or video interview will be the same as that for an in-person interview, there are a few additional elements to keep in mind. As you prepare yourself for a phone or video interview, please consider the following:

- Participate in a mock interview over the phone or video to help familiarize yourself with the experience and the technology.
- Choose a room for the interview that is quiet and will allow you to conduct the interview free of distractions or interruptions.

- Test your phone or webcam in advance of your interview. Make sure that you have good reception in the room where you will conduct the interview and that your phone is fully charged.
- If you are interviewing over the phone, prepare notes to keep in front of you to aid you if necessary.
- Dress as you would for an in-person interview. Even if you are interviewing over the phone, dressing professionally can help put you in the proper mindset for the interview.
- Speak up and speak clearly. This is important in all interviews, but especially in those over the phone or video. It can be very difficult to hear a student who is too soft-spoken or speaks too quickly.
- Avoid interrupting the interviewer. Again, this is important in all interviews, but especially in those over the phone or video where the interviewer cannot be seen or there is a slight delay in transmission. Allow for a brief pause before you begin to answer the interviewer's question to ensure that you do not cut him or her off.
- Close the interview strongly. There is no handshake at the end of a phone or video interview, so it can be easy for students to just let the interview tail off at the end. Be sure to thank the interviewers and make a good final impression.

The CDO has dedicated space for phone and video interviews. If you wish to use the space, you must reserve it in advance. To do so, please contact Heidi Bager at hbager@nd.edu. We strongly encourage all students to schedule a practice run in the room prior to their real interview if possible.

FOLLOW UP

Send a thank you

Take notes immediately after each interview to record your impressions of the firm and the people you met. Be sure to write down the name of everyone you met so you can remember to send them a thank you note. A thank you note reaffirms your interest in the position and expresses your appreciation to the interviewer for taking the time to consider you. Send the note promptly after the interview (the next day is ideal) and no later than the close of business the following day if possible. Handwritten notes make a great impression and are expected in some regions (specifically southern states), but e-mail notes are generally acceptable. Refer back to topics discussed in your interview (both position-related topics and “unrelated” topics such as a shared interest in fly fishing) and personalize the message whenever possible.

Without exception, thank you notes should be sent after every interview, even informational interviews.

Give the employer time

Hopefully, the employer has given you a general time frame for the remainder of their recruiting process. If they have not, tactfully ask where they are in the process and when they hope to conclude. Avoid asking bluntly, “So, when will I hear from you?” If the time period outlined by the interviewer has passed, give them a bit more time. If you still have yet to hear, it is acceptable to contact them. Tell them that you are still extremely interested and offer to provide any additional materials that they might need in their decision-making process. Even if you are

extremely anxious to hear from an employer or are frustrated by the process, remember to maintain your professional demeanor. In the event you have not received a timeline from an employer, waiting two weeks (or ten business days) after the interview to follow up is a good rule of thumb.

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING OR REJECTING OFFERS

Notre Dame Law School is a member of the National Association of Law Placement (NALP) and endorses NALP's *Principles and Standards for Law Placement and Recruiting Activities* (Principles and Standards). Reprinted below is Part V: General Standards for the Timing of Offers and Decisions. You can view the complete text on NALP's website at (<http://www.nalp.org/fulltextofnalpprinciplesandstandards>).

A. General Provisions

1. All offers to law student candidates ("candidates") should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter unless the offers are made pursuant to Sections B and C below, in which case the later response date should apply.
2. Candidates are expected to accept or release offers or request an extension by the applicable deadline. Offers that are not accepted by the offer deadline expire.
3. A candidate should not hold open more than five offers of employment at any one time. For each offer received that places a candidate over the offer limit, the candidate should, within one week of receipt of the excess offer, release an offer.
4. Employers offering part-time or temporary positions for the school term are exempted from the requirements of Paragraphs B and C below.
5. Practices inconsistent with these guidelines should be reported to the candidate's career services office.

B. Full-Time Employment Provisions

1. Employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 28 days following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 14 days from the date of the offer letter, if an employer requests such reaffirmation in its offer letter.* Employers that have requested the reaffirmation may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 14-day period. Offers made after December 15 for full-time positions to commence following graduation should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter.

** It is recommended that you reaffirm the offer in writing. If you have any questions about accepting an offer, please ask a CDO counselor.*

2. Candidates may request that an employer extend the deadline to accept the employer's offer until as late as April 1 if the candidate is actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations. Candidates may hold open only one offer in such circumstances. Employers are encouraged to grant such requests.

3. Employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least October 1 of the candidate's final year of law school, provided that such offers are made prior to or on September 2. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within thirty days from the date of the offer letter, if an employer requests such reaffirmation in its offer letter. Employers that have requested the reaffirmation may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 30-day period. After September 2 of a candidate's final year of law school, employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 28 days following the date of the offer letter.
4. If an employer makes an offer to a law student candidate not previously employed by that employer before the beginning of the law school's on-campus interview program, that offer should not expire until at least 28 days following the first day of the law school's on-campus interview program. Employers should contact the appropriate law school(s) to determine these dates.
5. Employers offering candidates full-time positions to commence following graduation and having a total of 40 attorneys or fewer in all offices are exempted from Paragraphs 1-4 of this Section. Instead, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks.

C. Summer Employment Provisions for Second and Third Year Students

1. Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 28 days following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within 14 days from the date of the offer letter, if an employer requests such affirmation in its offer letter.* Employers that have requested this reaffirmation may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 14-day period. Offers made after December 15 for the following summer should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter.

** It is recommended that you reaffirm the offer in writing. If you have any questions about accepting an offer, please ask a CDO counselor.*

2. Candidates may request that an employer extend the deadline to accept the employer's offer until as late as April 1 if the candidate is actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations. Candidates may hold open only one offer in such circumstances. Employers are encouraged to grant such requests.
3. Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least 28 days following the first day of the law school's on-campus interview program.
4. If an employer makes an offer to a law student candidate not previously employed by that employer before the beginning of the law school's on-campus interview program, that offer should not expire until at least 28 days following the first day of the law school's

on-campus interview program. Employers should contact the appropriate law school(s) to determine these dates.

5. Employers offering candidates positions for the following summer and having a total of 40 attorneys or fewer in all offices are exempted from Paragraphs 1-4 of this Section. Instead, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks.

D. Summer Employment Provisions for First Year Students

1. To position law students to be as successful as possible, their efforts during the first semester of law school should focus on their studies rather than on job search activities. Nonetheless, opportunities to learn about professionalism, professional development and the legal profession in a group setting are appropriate early in law school. Recognizing that law schools will differ in philosophy as to first-year career development activities, law schools nevertheless should not begin providing one-on-one career counseling or application document reviews to first-year students before October 15 (except in the case of part-time students who may be given assistance in seeking positions during the school term). Individual law schools may set later dates as appropriate.
2. Recognizing that opportunities to learn about professionalism, professional development, and the legal profession are appropriate early in law school and recognizing that law schools will differ as to whether and how to include prospective employers in career development activities, educational and professional development contact with 1Ls is permitted at any time at the discretion of the school. Prospective employers and first year law students, however, should not initiate contact with one another and employers should not initiate formal one-on-one recruiting contact with one another, including applications, interviews, or offers to first year students, before December 1. Appointments with candidates for interviews should be established for a mutually convenient time so as not to unduly disrupt candidates' studies.
3. All offers to first year students for summer employment should remain open for at least two weeks after the date made.

Please note that not all employers are members of NALP, so the standards above may not be observed by every employer with whom you interview. If you receive an offer from an employer with a short deadline and are unsure of how to handle it, please contact a CDO counselor for advice.

Bottom Line on Accepting and Rejecting Offers

Be professional and expect the same behavior from employers and other applicants. If an employer is pressuring you to make a quick decision, take that into consideration when evaluating whether you want to work for that employer. On the other hand, if you receive an offer from an employer for whom you would like to work, do not hesitate to accept and immediately withdraw your name from consideration by other employers. **Specifically, after accepting an offer, you must contact all employers with whom you have interviewed and still remain a candidate to remove yourself from consideration. Similarly, if you are**

scheduled for any upcoming interviews after accepting an offer, you must cancel them immediately. Be gracious when rejecting offers, thanking the employers for their time and the opportunity they presented to you.

It is both unprofessional and unethical to continue to interview – or worse, to accept a job offer – after you have accepted an offer with another employer. Doing so reflects poorly upon your character and upon Notre Dame Law School. If you have accepted an offer, you must not pursue or entertain any other offers. If you are ever in doubt as to how to handle an acceptance or rejection of a job offer, please contact the CDO for assistance.

INTERVIEW CANCELLATION POLICY

All interviews are, of course, professional appointments and should be treated as such. You should always make every effort to attend an interview as scheduled, whether it is informational or evaluative. The individual conducting your interview has taken time out of his/her day to meet with you, and that professional courtesy should be treated respectfully.

In the event a cancellation is absolutely necessary, you should always give the appropriate individual as much notice as possible in order for that person to adjust his/her schedule. For any scheduled interview other than an on-campus interview arranged through the CDO, you should directly contact the individual with whom you have been communicating prior to the interview (e.g., interviewer, recruiting contact).

For on-campus interviews through the CDO, the procedure outlined below must be followed. Failure to abide by the procedure outlined below may result in suspension from on-campus interview participation until appropriate corrective action is taken.

If you must cancel a scheduled on-campus interview, please remember that:

- Interviews must be cancelled at least **two business days** before the interview, Monday through Friday. Emailing the CDO on Saturday that you cannot attend an interview scheduled for Monday is not acceptable. You must provide sufficient time, at least two business days, so that new arrangements can be made. All on-campus interviews are cancelled through the Recruiting Program Manager (awruble@nd.edu).
- If you have a true emergency and must cancel less than two business days before the interview:
 - As soon as possible, email the Recruiting Program Manager at awruble@nd.edu.
 - For any interview appointment you do not keep, write a message of apology to the employer and submit a copy of the message to Kevin O’Rear, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs. This must be done in order to ensure that you can continue to participate in on-campus interviews.

You are expected to attend all scheduled on-campus interviews unless you have already accepted an offer of employment. If you have accepted an offer of employment, then you must submit a

written request to Ali Wruble at awruble@nd.edu that all on-campus interviews be cancelled. (Please note that considering an offer is not the same as accepting an offer.)

Late on-campus interview cancellations create problems for all parties concerned.

- Employers miss the chance to fill a slot with another student.
- Several late cancellations can cause an employer's total number of interviews to drop below the level that makes a trip to campus worthwhile.
- Your colleagues lose valuable opportunities to meet with employers.
- Students interviewing immediately after a "no-show" may find an employer less than receptive.
- Employers are not pleased when they arrive on campus and receive a schedule vastly different from the one that was sent to them only days before.

Please help us encourage employers to continue to interview on campus by keeping your interviews. Please help your classmates by giving us at least two business days' notice if you must cancel an interview.

THE TOP 10 INTERVIEWING MISTAKES

This list was compiled from feedback from employers and is presented to help you learn from the mistakes of others.

1. Coming to an interview unprepared

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- If a firm asks for materials ahead of time, make sure you follow their instructions and submit the materials ahead of time. Failure to follow simple instructions regarding submission of materials reflects poorly on you, leaving the employer to question your interest and/or your abilities to do the work.
- While it is great to know the bios and backgrounds of the scheduled interviewers, don't focus solely on that information in your research. Schedules change and a different attorney may interview you than originally scheduled. Don't let this throw you. Know enough about the employer that you can speak intelligently with any of their interviewers. Also, when researching the firm and the interviewers, consult more than one source to make sure that your information is current and correct.
- Do your homework and research the basics on each and every firm. Will it take time? Yes. Is it necessary to interviewing well and getting a job? Definitely.
- Have questions in mind for the interviewers. Pick five or six of your favorites and plan to ask at least three of them. Ideally, your conversation will spark other

questions as well so that most of your questions will be driven by the interview. Remember, the answer to “Do you have any questions?” is always “Yes.”

2. Inappropriate attire

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Err on the side of conservative dress.
- Make sure all items of clothing are clean and pressed and fit you appropriately.
- Try on the outfit a few days before the interview to make sure everything is in order. If you are really concerned, put the outfit on and stop by the CDO for some advice.

3. Not marketing yourself

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Define yourself and be able to articulate what makes you different from others. Know your major strengths and accomplishments as they relate to the job you are applying for and the company.
- Have an agenda. Know what points you want to get across to the employer. Instead of waiting for the interviewer to bring them up, work these points into the conversation as you answer questions.

4. Unnecessarily long resumes

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Limit your resume to a single page.
- Don't use “funky” fonts or graphics that take up space that should be devoted to information.
- Be selective about the information you put on your resume. Every entry should be included for a reason. If it doesn't further your application, leave it off.
- Have a CDO counselor review your resume prior to distribution.

5. Typos on application materials

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Run spell check.
- Proofread your materials multiple times.
- Have other people you know (family, friends, CDO staff) proofread your materials. The more eyes, the less likely a mistake will be overlooked.

- Make sure you are sending the correct letter to the correct employer addressed to the correct firm. Keep notes on who you have met and at which firm they work. Check bar directories or firm websites for correct spelling of names.

6. Interviewing for practice

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Do your research and know what the employer, position and work are like before you sign up to interview or submit your materials.
- Know what your interests are and don't feel compelled to conform to others' expectations.
- If you are unsure what you want to do, make sure you can articulate a reason as to why you would want to gain experience with that particular employer. If you can't, don't sign up for an interview. It is disrespectful to the employers (who will sense that you are "practicing" on them and will resent it), unfair to classmates, and, ultimately, a waste of everyone's time.

7. Lack of confidence or professional demeanor

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Review the list of questions you may encounter and practice answering them before your interview.
- Participate in mock interviews, either through the CDO or informally with your friends.
- If you don't feel comfortable greeting people, start practicing. When you meet a new person socially, shake their hand confidently, look them in the eye, smile, and repeat their name as you greet them. The more you do this, the more comfortable you will become until the process becomes second nature.
- It is OK to be nervous but don't let your nerves take over. If your voice starts to "quiver", take a moment to think about the next answer. If your hands are sweaty, keep a handkerchief in your purse or pocket to discreetly dry them before shaking hands. If you begin to sweat, keep your jacket on. Make sure you arrive a little early so you are not rushed and you have a few moments to breathe deeply and relax.
- It is OK to admit that you are new to the law and have a lot to learn. Employers do not expect you to know everything, and they won't be quizzing you on case law. They are looking for some indication that you have the ability to do the work and that you are a person they would enjoy having in their work environment. Think about what you have to offer in relation to both of these goals and then practice how you will convey that to the interviewer.

- Be aware of distracting/annoying/offensive habits that will detract from an otherwise top-notch interview: slouching, fidgeting, chewing gum, “cracking” your knuckles, using slang or poor grammar, cursing, failing to turn off a cell phone and/or answering a ringing cell phone, etc. Even if the interviewer is engaging in these behaviors, do not follow suit.
- Remember to maintain your professionalism in all contact with the employer, including email communication and voicemail messages.

8. Asking questions that are only appropriate after an offer has been extended

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Resist the urge to ask questions about salary, benefits or employee policies.
- Find out the answers via research or other methods.
- Talk with the CDO staff. We can help you find out some answers to your questions without having to ask them in the interview.

9. Forgetting that meals/cocktails parties are part of the interview process

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Stay away from alcohol at lunches and dinners. If the event is a cocktail party and you drink alcohol, feel free to have one drink. If you don’t normally drink, don’t feel compelled to do so.
- Know and remember your table manners. If you aren’t comfortable with the etiquette rules regarding which fork to use for which course, which water glass is yours, etc. review them prior to the meal.
- Don’t order something difficult or messy to eat or that will give you bad breath. If your interview continues after the meal, stop by a restroom to ensure you don’t have food in your teeth. Have a breath mint.

10. Confusing an interview with an interrogation.

TIPS TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM:

- Many candidates expect to be interrogated. An interview is a *business conversation* in which both people ask and respond to questions. Candidates who expect to be interrogated avoid asking questions, leaving the interviewer in the role of reluctant interrogator. Candidates should also refrain from interrogating the employer.

INTERVIEWER ERRORS

Interviewers may be in the perceived driver's seat, but that does not mean they are perfect. They make plenty of mistakes, and we present some common ones below. It is up to you to make the most of each interview, and you should never let an interviewer's mistake affect your chances for getting a great job.

Not preparing for the interview

- Circumstances may arise that make it difficult or impossible for the interviewer to carefully review your resume prior to the interview. You can be offended or you can use this situation to your advantage. Be prepared to walk the interviewer through the highlights and strengths of your application materials if it appears they are unfamiliar with your resume.

Engaging in distracting and/or unprofessional behavior

- Interviewers have been known to talk amongst themselves and ignore the candidate, answer cell phone calls, or even denigrate other employers during the interview process. Don't let this rattle you. Rise above the situation and, whatever you do, do not join them in such behavior.
- Do your best to steer the conversation back to your agenda whenever possible. Sometimes you simply won't be able to redirect this kind of behavior. If you can't, you will certainly want to consider it in determining whether you want to work with this person.

Talking too much

- Some employers spend a good portion of the precious interview time describing the work and the environment, leaving you little time to ask questions or describe your strengths. If this happens to you, try to get some of your most pressing questions answered before you go, even if it means asking them as you are shaking hands goodbye.
- Use your thank you note to highlight your strengths and touch on your most important skills, especially if you think they were glossed over due to time constraints.

Conducting interviews when they aren't really hiring

- Of course, situations change and a firm that conducts interviews with every intention of hiring may find that a change in circumstances dictates otherwise. Don't jump to conclusions if it seems like a firm interviewed but then did not hire.
- If you suspect that an employer is interviewing with no intention of hiring, please talk with the CDO. We strongly discourage such a practice and will work with employers to find more productive ways to maintain their presence on campus.

Focusing too much on grades

- Employers are trying to determine if you are able to do the work required in the available position. One of the ways to do this is to look at GPAs. Unfortunately, many employers

use this one criterion to manage the large number of resumes they receive and determine what interviews they will conduct. Do your research and know the hiring patterns of the employer. Look at associate bios to see if your qualifications fit.

- If the interviewer focuses the entire interview conversation on grades, first try to direct him/her to other topics of conversation. Do this by highlighting your accomplishments or by asking a question. If the grade questions persist, try to determine if there is a particular point to the line of questioning. Did you receive a low grade in a class that deals with one of their major practice areas? If so, find ways to reassure them (point to higher grades in their other practice areas, talk about the steady rise in your GPA, talk about past work experiences that relate to the practice area, etc.).

Offensive or inappropriate questions

- See the earlier section on illegal questions and think about how you might handle one if it comes your way.
- Sometimes an interviewer will ask inappropriate questions in a misguided attempt to put the candidate at ease. Do your best to respond to the question in a professional manner.
- Take into account a “unique” sense of humor. The interviewer may be trying (albeit, unsuccessfully) to break the ice with a bit of humor.
- If the interviewer is truly being ignorant, take the opportunity to *gently* educate them. For example, if an interviewer sees that you are fluent in a foreign language and jumps to the conclusion that you want to work with indigent people, explain that you developed your language skills in conjunction with your education in business because you are interested in international business opportunities. You can further explain that while helping the less fortunate is a noble career path, your interests lie elsewhere.

Uninterested/indifferent/unenthusiastic/lethargic interviewers

- We all have our “off” days. So do interviewers. Don’t let an interviewer’s off day negatively affect your employment possibilities. Be aware of where you fall in the interview schedule. If you are the 20th interview of the day, know that the interviewer may be exhausted. Make sure to approach them with an upbeat attitude, energy, and enthusiasm. Hopefully, it will be contagious.
- Just because attorneys may be skilled in asking questions, it does not mean they are great interviewers. An interview can quickly slide into cross-examination. Try to break up the rhythm of the interview with questions. If the interviewer is non-responsive, you may go through more questions than you expected. Have some old favorites to fall back on if the interviewer is less than engaging.
- Take the interviewer’s behavior and attitude into account when evaluating an employer but, if the interviewer is less than pleasant, don’t immediately condemn an employer based on one person. Do your best in the screening interview to receive a callback. There you will have an opportunity to meet more employees to determine if the interviewer’s personality is the exception instead of the rule. Also, if you are active in

networking within the profession, you may have other opportunities to meet other members of the firm to assess the disposition of those who work there.

Being less than honest about their criteria

- Again, you cannot change or control the behavior of others. All you can do is to empower yourself with as much information as possible and proceed based on that information. If an employer says they value a particular characteristic (diversity, prior careers, leadership), take that at face value but also conduct some research into what the employer has actually done to further that goal. If they say they value leadership, look at the bios of their newer associates. What leadership positions did they hold in law school or do they currently hold? If an employer says they value diversity, take note but also look at how they recruit, who they retain, and what steps they are taking to diversify their workforce.

Good luck with your interviews!

Please do not hesitate to talk with us about any worries, questions or concerns you may have about the interview process in general or a specific scheduled interview. We are here to help.