

# Interviewing Tips for Postgraduate Public Interest Jobs



**Do mock interviews.** Participating in mock interviews (which can be set up through your career services office) will help you identify areas which may require more preparation and calm your nerves by giving you a sense of how an actual interview will progress.

**Enthusiasm and confidence are palpable.** These characteristics are perceived immediately by an interviewer, and they set the stage for a fluid conversation instead of a more formal “interview interrogation” format.

**Most interviewers want to know the forest (you), not just the trees (your skill set).** Employers want to know who you are as a person, and why you are motivated to pursue public interest work with their organization. Remember that employers are not just hiring a unit of labor; they are hiring someone with whom they will interact and collaborate.

**Think broadly when researching the employer organization.** Many job seekers research employer organizations’ websites and memorize facts/figures (“there are so many attorneys on staff, so many in this particular unit, etc.”). These facts are certainly useful, but remember to step back and look at the larger public interest community in which the employer operates: who it collaborates with, how it is funded, does it have a longer-term strategic plan.

**Have a demonstrated commitment to the employer’s mission.** While academic credentials do matter, it is equally – and sometimes, more – important that you can demonstrate a commitment to the organization’s mission through things like past work experiences, clinic participation, volunteerism, and course selection.

**Be prepared to discuss weaknesses.** If asked about a weakness in your resume (bad grade), explain it but don’t dwell on it. If asked to discuss what you perceive to be a weakness in yourself, show a self-awareness of that weakness AND talk about concrete ways that you act to correct it and prevent it from hindering your work.

**Be prepared for hypothetical questions.** Good interviewers will want to see you think on your feet. Sometimes the hypos are designed without any good outcomes available. Do not be afraid to pause to compose your thoughts while processing a question.

**Good interview questions.** Always be prepared to ask the interviewer questions. Below are some examples:

- What drew your interviewer to the organization?
- What do they find to be the most challenging facet of their work?
- What are three things do they find rewarding about their work?
- What attributes are required to successfully do the job you’re applying for? (This may present a chance to further sell yourself by noting that you possess them.)
- What is the supervisory and/or evaluation structure for your position?

**Always send a thank you note/email.** This does not need to be long, but be sure to include a line that will remind the interviewer(s) of a highlight during your interview.

Visit PSJD for more information on public interest interviewing and other job search fundamentals:

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