

The Legal Interview

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Preparing for Your Interview

1. Know your materials
2. Research the employer
3. Research the interviewer(s)
4. Refresh topical knowledge
5. Set up for Video interview
6. Look and act the part
7. Confidence, Competence, Enthusiasm, and Fit

Be Prepared

- Read instructions and handouts about logistics
- Have interview links handy
- Research the employers
 - Read materials provided about employers
 - Look at employer websites, LinkedIn
- Practice your interview responses

Be Familiar with Zoom

- Set up your Zoom view professionally (for both table talks & interviews)
 - good lighting
 - straight-on view
 - clean and minimal background
 - stable support
- Keep your Zoom use simple for tech-shy Employers
- Log in (and out) punctually and respectfully
- Stay muted upon entry until it's time to talk
- Keep your video on
- Stay calm and flexible for technical difficulties

Be Prompt

- In person, arrive 10 minutes early
- Online, arrive 1 minute early to the Zoom waiting room
- 20 minutes goes fast, it is OK to politely alert the employer
- If you accidentally crash someone's interview:
 - Apologize with a smile, say you'll join in a few minutes, and leave the meeting

Dress Professionally

- Dress professionally for Table Talks as well as Interviews (top & bottom, please)
- Suits tend to be the expected uniform for the legal industry but dress as professionally as you can
- Grooming matters
- A confident and friendly smile is what they'll recall

Have Resume File Ready

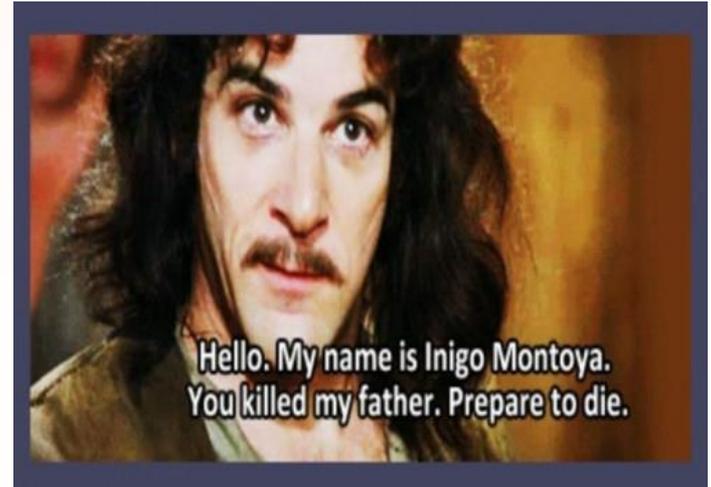
- You can send your resume to the employer IF they ask for it

Follow-Up

- Thank you notes via email
- LinkedIn thank you, coffee chat requests

Have an Elevator Speech (tell me about yourself)

- Helps approach employers (and decent answer to “tell me about yourself”)
- **Use the Inigo Montoya Method:**
 - Polite Greeting
 - Name and Position
 - Relevant personal link / Something about yourself as relates to the employer; and
 - Your request / What you’re looking for



*Hi. My name is Ima Lawstudent and I am a 1L **at Lewis & Clark Law School**. One of my main interests has been in criminal law but I'm still exploring and would like to learn more about working in the justice system. I read your job posting and was excited about the work you are doing to help victims of violent crimes. Do you enjoy this work?*

Interview Question Categories

1. Self-Descriptive
2. Attributes
3. Career Path
4. Job Qualifications
5. Personality/Values
6. Accomplishments
7. Law School Experience
8. Outside Interests
9. Behavioral

Self-Descriptive

Open-ended questions asking you to describe or characterize yourself.

Purpose: To get a feel for what kind of person you are
To assess how & why you answered the way you did

Answer: Reveal desired qualities based on the characteristics, traits, or experiences
you choose to discuss over others (As always = Short, simple, and articulate)

Tell me about yourself.

How would your friends/co-workers describe you?

Why did you choose your undergraduate major?

What experiences influenced your career choice?

What do I need to know about you that's not on your resume?

Do you see yourself as a litigator or transactional lawyer? Why?

How have you changed in the last five years?

How would you describe yourself as a person?

What is important to you in life?

Who is your hero/heroine?

What constitutes success in your mind?

Strengths, Weaknesses, & Professional Attributes

Questions designed to illuminate your strengths and weaknesses in ways relevant to employer.

Purpose: To see if you have the skills they want
To get a sense of your honesty, realism

Answer: Tell employer you have the skills they're looking for
Acknowledge weakness, how hard you've worked to overcome it or used it to advantage
Be honest and confident / Don't be boastful or arrogant

What are your strengths / weaknesses?

What sort of management skills do you have?

How would you build a trusting relationship with a client?

How well do you work under pressure?

Would you make a good trial advocate?

What's the biggest mistake you've ever made?

How do you handle difficult people?

How do you get the best out of people?

How strong are your writing skills?

Career Path and Goals

Questions about your career goals, desire to pursue law – all the way back and forward.

Purpose: To see if you have mindset to do job, be part of organization, and the legal profession

To see a logical progression in your career arc

To see that you're goal oriented

Answer: Tell employer why you want to practice law (especially in *their* type of practice)

Explain variances in a logical way that leads down the arc to law

Imagine your answer as a short story with beginning, middle & end (with more to come)

Keep consistent / congruent with the employer's type of setting and practice

Why did you go to law school? Have your goals changed since then?

How has your education and experience prepared you for the practice of law?

Why did you choose to work at these specific organizations on your resume?

What goals do you have? How are you planning to achieve them?

What further development will you need to be fully effective in your career?

Why did you switch from prior career to law?

What did you do during the gaps?

Why did you leave your prior jobs?

What are your short/long term career goals?

Where do you see yourself in 5 (or 10) years?

Job Qualifications and Suitability for Position

Questions designed to assess whether you're qualified for the position and suitable to the legal field and organization offering it.

Purpose: To see if you have the education, experience, skills to do the job
To see if you are a good fit with the employer's type of work and ethic overall

Answer: Demonstrate understanding of job/employer (research, networking)
Show confidence you can do the work (qualifications, related skills if specifics missing)
Highlight your interest in the relevant area of law (prior experience, classes, orgs)
Show you want to work for the employer and you're qualified to do so

Why do you want to work here?

What kinds of things give you the most satisfaction in your work?

Which of our legal practices/areas are you most interested in?

How much experience have you had in X practice area/skill?

What would you look forward to/fear most about this job?

How do you feel about [negative aspect of the job]?

How strong are your [writing, litigation, organization] skills?

What do you know about our organization?

What sets you apart from other candidates?

What fields interest you other than this one?

Why should we select you over other candidates?

What can you bring to this organization?

What other employers have you applied to and why?

What classes/experiences do you have in [topic/skill]?

Your Personality, Values, and Views on Law

Questions designed to assess your personality, values, and views on the law.

Purpose: To ensure you're a good fit for employer's work and cultural environment
To assess your soft skills, politics, awareness of cultural events, and other lawyering skills

Answer: Demonstrate your emotional IQ, soft skills, and teamwork
Show that you would be good to work with (reliable, personable, capable, confident)
Highlight your commitment to their cause, mission, practice area
Know your audience and demonstrate judgment but be authentic

What qualities do you think a good lawyer should have?

What two or three things are most important to you in a job?

Are you a team player or do you prefer to work on your own?

If you were a court, how would you rule on the following issue...?

Tell me about a recent Supreme Court case you disagreed with, why?

If completely free choice, which law would you like to change?

What is the last time you encountered a culture different from yours?

Describe how you would handle [a disagreement between you and your supervisor about the direction a case should take].

In what environment do you work best?

What is your favorite movie? Book?

How do you deal with stress?

How do you feel about [controversial position]?

How committed are you to X / Could you ever defend X?

How do you work with people different from you?

What interest do you have in [public service]?

Your Specific Accomplishments

Questions designed to showcase your specific accomplishments.

Purpose: To learn more about you through your choice of accomplishment
To see if you're a winner

Answer: Be precise, with concrete details, to bring an accomplishment to life beyond your resume
Help employer learn something new, real, and exceptional about you
Show that you've done well in the past and will bring those same accomplishments forward
Think beyond just professional accomplishments if you achieved something extraordinary

What is your biggest accomplishment?

What one thing have you done that you're proudest of?

What is the most difficult/rewarding thing you've ever accomplished?

Tell me about a complex legal issue you worked on.

What type of responsibilities have you had in prior work experiences?

Describe a professional failure & how you handled it.

What has been the greatest challenge you faced during [experience]?

How did you overcome such a challenge?

What community service project do you believe allowed you to make the greatest impact and how?

Describe a situation where you had to convince someone of your viewpoint.

Describe the project or situation that best demonstrated your analytical skills.

Your Law School Experience

Questions designed to highlight how well (or not) you did in law school, how much (or not) you like law school, and your favorite (or not) experiences in law school.

Purpose: To assess your love of the law and the process of law, overall and specific to employer
To see if you are intellectually curious
To find commonalities

Answer: Keep it positive and focus on what you liked, the classes and experiences you enjoyed, and classes you did well in (don't whine about how awful law school/class/prof is)
Demonstrate your involvement and engagement in classes and the law school community
Show that you are intellectually curious even if something was difficult

What do/did you like most about law school?

What was your favorite class in law school? Professor? Why?

Tell me about your participation on [the journal, research project].

What was the issue you argued in Moot Court? Other side?

Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? Are they an indication of your ability to do a good job at this organization?

What do/did you find most challenging?

Tell me about your hardest law school exam question.

What extracurricular activities have you participated in?

What clinical work have you done in law school?

Outside Interests and Hobbies

Questions about your interests and hobbies outside of law school and work.

Purpose: To break the ice and jumpstart conversation

To ascertain whether you're a well-rounded, balanced person who will be nice to work with

(**OR** whether you will likely spend too much time outside of work!)

To see if you would be good at client business and development

Answer: Show you're a well-rounded, interesting person who has their work priorities straight

Don't let the interviewer believe there is anything in your life to keep you from being productive

What are your outside interests? What are your hobbies?

What is the latest non-legal book you've read?

Tell me about your interest in [rock climbing].

If you were working on a trial, would you be willing to stay late?

How do you spend your free time?

What is something interesting that's not on your resume?

Would your social life infringe on your work commitment?

How important is work/life balance to you?

Behavioral Based Questions

Questions focused on how you handled work/life situations in the past or questions about how you would hypothetically handle certain situations.

Purpose: To reveal your judgment, problem-solving ability and process, ability to handle common situations within the employer's workplace, and your personality (past behavior predicts future behavior)

Answer: Use the **STAR Technique** to show how you previously handled similar situations successfully with a brief anecdote that illustrates your judgment and skills through: A background on the **Situation**, the **Task** you were to complete, the specific **Actions** you took, and the **Results**

Give an example of a time when [a certain situation happened].

Did you ever make a risky decision? Why? How did you handle it?

When you worked on multiple projects, how did you prioritize?

Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?

Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

How would you react if [you had to argue a motion last minute]?

Have you been in a situation where you didn't have enough work to do?

How do you handle a challenge?

Give an example of how you approach a research problem.

What do you do if you disagree with a supervisor?

Have you handled a difficult decision with a co-worker? How?

What is your leadership style?

How would you handle a client who was screaming at you?

Enjoy Yourself.