



Washington University School of Law
CAREER CENTER

Interviewing Guide



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Employers are looking for a person who is likely to be a successful attorney with their organization. In other words, they are trying to determine whether you are a “fit” for them. A good fit will be someone with whom they would enjoy working and someone whom they are comfortable presenting to clients. Employers will be evaluating:

Your motivation (your commitment to the geographic area, your enthusiasm for the employer, your willingness to work hard, etc.);

Your interpersonal skills (your ability to manage stress and be a team player, your attitude and whether you appear upbeat and optimistic, your ability to converse);

Your education and experience (your academic record, relevant prior work experience, your interest in a high demand practice area, your interest in business);

Your intellect (whether you are a quick study, articulate, a problem-solver and creative);

Your professionalism (your judgment, your maturity, your professional image and self-confidence); and

Your preparation efforts (your knowledge of the organization, of the position and of the interviewers). The most common thing that employers say about candidates who do not receive an offer following a callback interview is that they did not consider the candidate to be prepared for the interview.

Employers are looking for candidates that display the following characteristics:

Good communication skills

Charisma

Ability to work on a team

Intelligence

Ability to work under pressure

Confidence

Enthusiasm

Common Sense

Ambition

Creativity

Ability to relate to diverse individuals

Initiative

Strong work ethic

Leadership

Time management skills

Respectful disposition

Attention to detail

Positivity

The preparation required for an initial screening interview, a telephone or Skype/Zoom interview, and a callback interview is largely the same. There are five key steps to preparing for an interview:

1. Research the employer and the interviewer(s).
2. Know your resume and experiences backwards and forwards.
3. Prepare your professional pitch.
4. Connect with students and alumni.
5. Practice, practice, practice.

1. Know the Employer and the Interviewers

Know the employer and the position for which you are interviewing. This means doing your research on the employer regarding current events and recent news, practice areas, employer size and offices, representative clients, etc. The employer's NALP form (if they have one), martindale.com and the employer's own website are great sources of information. Be sure to check the "News" or "Press Release" section of the website. Most organizations also have a "Careers" section on their website where employment opportunities and summer associate programs, as well as the overall culture of the employer, are described in some detail. Knowing these details before the interview will help you frame interview answers in terms consistent with traits the employer deems most valuable. Make sure you highlight experiences in your background that illustrate why you are a good fit for the position.

Know the interviewer(s). This means conducting research on the specific attorney(s) you will meet, including practice area, current landmark cases or news releases, community involvement and undergraduate and graduate institutions. You can research your interviewer(s) using the "People Search" function on the Bloomberg Law database, the organization's website, and basic Google Searches. One word of caution, if you run a Google search on the interviewer and come across non-work related pages on Facebook, Instagram, etc., do not bring up any personal information you discovered on those pages.

Topics to consider as you research:

- How is the organization structured?
- What are the major practice areas of the organization? What percentage of their business/attorneys work in each area?
- Who is the biggest client(s)/type of client(s) of the organization?
- In litigation matters, does the organization generally represent the plaintiff or the defendant?
- Where is the organization's main office? Are there satellite offices?
- Approximately how many attorneys are in each office?
- How does the organization's summer/new associate program run?
- Are there Washington University alumni with the organization? Alumni of your undergraduate institution?
- What are recent big cases and deals the organization has been involved in (particularly, if highlighted in organization's materials/website)? Has the employer been in the news lately?

- How does the organization portray itself? Look to the website and marketing materials for clues.
- What are the bios on the individual interviewers?
- You may also run across hiring criteria, salary, bonus structure, percentage of summer associates hired out of prior classes, etc.

2. Know Yourself

Review your skills, desires and career goals before the interview and know your resume cold. Always be as specific as possible in response to questions (*i.e.*, remember names, dates, amounts, etc. from past experiences). You should be prepared to discuss specifics about previous types of legal work you have mentioned on your resume, including key legal issues involved in any pleadings, briefs or judicial opinions you have listed. Similarly, you should be prepared to discuss any papers, publications or thesis listed on your resume. If you wrote a note for journal or law review, be prepared to discuss it in detail.

Think about experiences you have had that highlight qualities important to legal employers: leadership, verbal and written communication skills, team work, diligence, integrity, ability to meet deadlines, adaptability, conflict resolution, setting and meeting goals, etc.

Think about experiences you have had that highlight the skills legal employers prioritize: legal writing, researching, analysis, oral advocacy, etc.

Show focus and direction. Employers want to see enthusiasm for what they do and for the practice of law in general.

3. Be Prepared to Give Your Professional Pitch

Know why you would make an excellent employee and sell those characteristics, experiences, education, etc. throughout the interview process. This is your “Professional Pitch,” and you will want to work your talking points into the conversation in response to questions. Before the interview, prepare an outline of your talking points. Do not refer to any notes during the actual interview – only use the talking points to prepare. List three or four things that you most want the employer to know about you, and do your best to bring up these qualities during your interview. These qualities may include specific skills like writing, researching, problem solving, and oral advocacy or more general qualities like leadership, loyalty or commitment. Consider taking a CliftonStrengths assessment to identify traits and strengths you can weave into your answers. The Career Center can supply you with a code for this online assessment, if you are interested. Below are several key points to cover in your professional pitch:

Your commitment to the geographic area. “I’m from St. Louis, I went to college in Atlanta, and decided St. Louis is where I want to settle. That’s why I came home for law school.” “I want to settle in the Midwest, and Chicago has the most sophisticated legal market in the region, and

I loved the city when I visited.” “I have family in Philadelphia and have visited often over the years.”

Your commitment to the employer. “I noticed that your firm has a strong IP practice, and that is my primary area of interest.” “I am not sure what I want to do specifically, but your firm has a broad spectrum of practice areas and excellent training.” “I am interested in a smaller firm where I can get to know my colleagues and the clients well.”

You are smart. “I have done well in school. In college I was on the Dean’s list. Like many law students, I’m not 100% satisfied with my law school grades, but I’m a solid student and am just outside the top 1/3 of the class.” “I am interested in tax and have done particularly well in my tax classes. I earned one of the top three grades in Federal Income Tax last semester.” “My spring grades went up substantially, and I think that those grades more accurately reflect my understanding of the material.”

You are hard-working. “I am particularly proud of my academic record because I was very involved in extracurricular activities and typically spent 20 hours a week on my volunteer activities and student government.” “I worked 15 hours a week while going to school full time.” “I worked two jobs last summer and ended up working over 60 hours a week. I have always worked hard and will work hard for your firm.”

You are a good writer. “I enjoy writing. My undergraduate thesis received high honors.” “I have done well in my legal writing classes and received one of the highest grades in my section.” “I received strong positive feedback on my written work product last summer.” “I was selected for law review based on my writing ability.”

Other possible points to cover. You are able to attract business for the firm - “I am very involved in community activities and like meeting people in the community.” You possess attention to detail. You are an expert with knowledge of a particular industry.

4. Connect

Keep in touch with the Career Center. Let a strategist know about your interview. The Career Center can put you in contact with WashULaw students who previously interned at the organization and recent WashULaw alumni at the organization who can provide insight about what to expect in the interview, the qualities and experience that are important to the organization, and a look into the culture of the organization.

5. Practice, Practice, Practice

Practice your answers to possible interview questions. Becoming an accomplished interviewer takes practice, a lot of practice. Because it is difficult to predict the type of interview you will have, it is important to prepare for a variety of interview styles. This Guide contains several different types of interview questions. Review the sample questions, map out your responses on paper, and then practice saying your answers out loud. Do not memorize answers to questions. You do not want to sound rehearsed. But the more you practice answering questions out loud with responses that incorporate elements of your

professional pitch, the more articulate and eloquent you will be during the interview. Be prepared to deal with any 'negatives' on your record, like poor grades or lack of an offer from a previous legal employer. The best approach is to acknowledge the 'negative' and do not become defensive and/or make excuses.

Be aware of all verbal and "nonverbal" communication. Non-verbal communication includes voice inflection, gestures, eye contact, body language, facial animation, posture, etc. Realize that the interviewer's opinion is being formulated within the first three minutes, so it is imperative that your non-verbal communication be positive and confident from the beginning of the interview. Your self-confidence says more about you than almost everything else! Start with a firm handshake and good eye contact. Remember that eye contact matters for virtual interviews as well.

Participate in mock interviews. Do several mock interviews prior to your interview with different mock interviewers. Mock interviewers will provide a fresh perspective on how your answers may be perceived and will assist in fine tuning your message. They will also provide tips on your nonverbal communication cues. You can enlist a friend or family member to play the role of the interviewer, or make an appointment with one or more Career Strategists or Professional Consultants.

One final note about interview preparation - prospective employers will likely conduct internet research to learn more about you than what you have submitted in your application materials. It is important for you to maintain a professional online image, even as a student. Google yourself and evaluate your online image from the shoes of a potential employer. Does your online image (photos and content) reflect a professional image? If not, take down postings, photos or blog content that you would not be comfortable with an employer seeing or reading. Also, consider restricting privacy settings whenever possible to limit those with access to your online content.

Dressing for Interviews

Your interview attire should reflect your professionalism and contribute to your confidence level. You want to be remembered for the content of your interview, not what you were wearing. Err on the conservative side when interviewing. For all interviews (other than a phone interview), you should wear a business suit.

Traditional attorney interview attire consists of the following:

For Men: Dark colored suits (*i.e.*, navy blue, gray or black), matching shoes and belt, a solid white collared shirt (not French cuffs) with a solid white undershirt, conservative tie (one without images or words) and dark socks. Wear sensible shoes that are easy to walk in, and shine them. Traditional attorney interview attire calls for dark colored dress shoes. Limit cologne. Wear tasteful accessories, not ones that will distract (rings, watches, earrings, necklaces, etc). Ensure your suit fits: it is important that your shirt and suit coat complement each other and that your pants' cuff break just at the shoe, not well above it.

For Women: Dark colored pant, dress or skirt suits (*i.e.*, navy blue, gray or black), white, cream or pale colored blouse or shell, close-toed shoes, minimal jewelry and perfume. If you are wearing a dress or skirt suit ensure that the hemline meets at or below the knee. Also, consider wearing plain, skin-tone nylons, without texture. Wear sensible shoes that are easy to walk in and shine them, if they need buffing. Plain pumps or professional flats in neutral colors are best.

Cover tattoos and consider removing unusual piercings. Make sure your hair is neatly combed or brushed.

For all interviews, even callback interviews where the office is business casual, you still want to present your most professional appearance. For callback interviews, it is okay to wear the same suit you wore during your initial interview – the employer will not know or remember.

Each student should weigh the pros and cons of dressing in a less traditional manner. While dressing untraditionally may express your individuality and allow you to stand out, you risk standing out for the wrong reasons. For example, students choosing to wear a large red bow in their hair risk being nicknamed “bowhead.” Students choosing to wear a Bugs Bunny tie risk being nicknamed “Looney Tune”.



Typical Interview Format

Initial screening interviews, telephone, Skype/Zoom, job fair and callback interviews will all generally follow a similar format. While callback interviews are typically scheduled for several hours, the callback will usually consist of a series of 20-30 minute interviews with one or more attorneys that follow the same format as an initial screening interview.

The Introduction: Utilize a firm handshake, make solid eye contact, and maintain a professional demeanor. Remember to make a verbal response to their introduction. Do not just follow them into the interview room without saying something, *e.g.*, "Ms. Johnson, I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you. I have been looking forward to it." Try to establish a rapport with the interviewer. Remember that a successful interview is a conversation.

Information Exchange: Usually, the interviewer will initially control this portion of the interview. They will review your resume and ask probing questions to gather additional understanding or clarification on your background. They may also ask open-ended questions like, "Tell me a little about you." You can try and take control at the beginning by saying something like, "I know you are interviewing a lot of people today. If you would like, I'd be happy to tell you about my background." This is the part of the interview where you should cover your professional pitch talking points in response the questions asked. Show the interviewer that you are excited and interested in working for the employer.

The second part of information exchange will give you a chance to ask questions. Have questions for the interviewer ready. Saying that you do not have any questions could be taken as a sign of disinterest in the employer and the position. Make sure you do not ask a question for which the answer is easily found on the employer's website. (See the *Questions for the Interviewer* section on page 31 for examples.)

Although, the interviewer will typically begin by asking you questions, always be ready for the unexpected. Some interviewers have been known to begin the interview by asking "What questions do you have for me?" Be flexible and be prepared for anything. Obviously it is more difficult to work your talking points into this situation, but do your best.

The Close: Remember to thank the interviewer and let him/her know that you are extremely interested in the employer and wish to be seriously considered for the position. Even if you are not really excited, tell them anyway (if you change your mind later, they might have already excluded you). If misconceptions about you have arisen during the information exchange, now is the time to clear them up.

Public interest and government employers have some unique differences that require mention.

Public Interest: Public interest employers are seeking passionate candidates – the more the candidate knows about the mission that the organization serves, the better. Most public interest employers will have a website which clearly states the mission of the organization. When interviewing with a public service organization, it is important to articulate your

interest in what they do specifically (*e.g.*, do not just say, “I want to help people.” Instead, say “I have an interest in representing abused children and making sure they receive the fullest extent of the protections that the law can provide”). You will also want to be familiar with the substantive legal issues regarding the area of law in which the organization specializes. Public interest organizations are also very concerned about retention; be prepared to answer questions about your long-term career goals and how you will handle your student loan burden. Other common questions from public interest employers focus on how you will handle a heavy case load under difficult circumstances – the employers want to be confident that you can handle the stress of the job, which may expose you to difficult and stressful situations, without burning out.

Government Positions: There are many different types of government positions (prosecutorial, defense, regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies, etc.), so it is difficult to give advice applicable to all government candidates. The best way to prepare for a government interview is to talk with people who work or have worked in the specific office where you are interviewing. They are best qualified to give information on the structure, mission and daily work of the office. Generally, you should be familiar with current events and the current political climate when interviewing for a government position. You should know and be cognizant of the hierarchy to which the position you are interviewing for reports. If interviewing for an agency position, you should be prepared to discuss administrative law as well as the practice area and type of law in which the specific agency engages.

Guidelines for all Interview Formats

General Tips. Your answers to interview questions should be focused and succinct. Do not ramble or fidget. It is ok to take a moment to collect your thoughts before answering a question. If you do not understand a question, it is ok to ask for clarification. Make direct eye contact with everyone in the room when you are speaking (not just the person that asked the question). Speak enthusiastically. When speaking, match the general speed and volume of your interviewer. Try to avoid speaking too casually (*e.g.*, repeated use of “yeah”, “you know?”, “like”, “I mean”, “so”, or “kind of”). Stay positive – do not speak poorly of professors, prior employers, fellow students, the WashULaw or other schools.

Nail down the logistics. Make sure you understand the logistics of your interview – write down the time, location and names of the attorneys you will meet. If your interview will be by telephone, Zoom or Skype, know who is responsible for initiating the call and know the Skype name with whom you will connect.

Arrive Early. If the interview is at a conference, on campus or at the employer’s office, be sure to arrive for the interview a few minutes early. If the interview is through Skype or Zoom, be logged in and waiting for the connection at least 5 minutes prior to the interview start time. Do not be late. Traffic, slow Lyft drivers, losing your way, difficulty with a Skype/Zoom or telephone connection are not valid excuses and will almost always result in the end of your candidacy.

If you will be interviewing at a job fair or off campus interview program, arrive early so that you can locate all of the interview rooms and plan your path from one interview to the next. If you have back-to-back interviews, you do not want to be late because you were wandering around trying to find the correct location!

Do not interrupt. When you arrive for your interview, do not interrupt the interview that precedes yours by knocking or opening the door to announce your arrival. Wait outside the interview room until you are invited in by the interviewer(s).

Bring your materials. Bring extra copies of your resume (printed on resume paper), writing sample, transcript, and references to every interview.

The initial screening interview with an employer gives you the opportunity to communicate verbally and non-verbally your personal and professional skills and abilities. It is important to remember that the potential employer will be assessing both your academic and interpersonal skills during a screening interview. In most screening interviews with legal employers, the employer wants to get to know you. The purpose of this general initial interview is to gather basic information regarding your personality, aptitude, work experience, writing ability, interest in the employer and location, educational qualifications, etc., so that the interviewer can make a determination concerning your viability for the position for which you are interviewing. Basically, the interviewer is trying to determine if you are a “fit” for their office.

Most initial screening interviews with legal employers are about 20 minutes long (hence the commonly used phrase “20-minute interview”). Many times, the initial interview will take place during on-campus interviewing (OCI) or through off-campus interview programs, job fairs or related programs where the employer is conducting dozens of interviews in one day, then selecting a small number of candidates who will be invited back for more lengthy interviews. Even if you meet the employer’s hiring criteria, do not approach a screening interview as a mere formality. Employers will be interviewing many candidates who meet the hiring criteria and will look to narrow the field by looking for students who impress them as professional, intelligent, interested, hard-working, and friendly. Careful preparation for these interviews is essential since each candidate has a very short time to make a positive impression and distinguish himself/herself from the other candidates. Understand that the initial interview is a “de-selection” process for the employer and that it is your goal to sell yourself to the next level of interviews. Try to make it seem like a conversation between two professionals, not just a series of questions and answers. You want to develop a rapport with the interviewer and show that you are a “fit” for their organization.

If your initial interview is at the employer’s office, and they asked you to allow two or more hours, refer to the *Callback Interviews* section on page 17 of this Guide.

Primary Purposes of Screening Interviews

1. To exchange information that will enable both parties to gain a better understanding of the position, the employer and the candidate’s potential “fit” for the job.
2. To give the employer a chance to screen candidates “OUT” of the interview process.
3. To give you an opportunity to “SELL” yourself further “INTO” the interview process.
4. Ultimately, to get an offer from the employer to continue in the interview process or to voluntarily remove yourself from further consideration by that employer.

Job-Fair Interviews are also screening interviews in which you will have limited time to impress employers and to be selected for a callback interview. Job fairs can be located in a central location with numerous employers and candidates interacting in the same room, or they can be more structured interviews located in hotel suites or conference rooms. Regardless of the type of fair, you can be assured that you will have a very short time to impress the employer as a stand-out candidate. Along with the tips outlined above for screening interviews generally, below are some additional tips to increase your chances of success at a job fair:

Dress appropriately. Have a neat, professional appearance to show your respect for the employer and illustrate your seriousness about the process. (See *Dressing for Interviews* on page 8 for more information.)

Make a plan. Know the employers you want to target; research the employers and their missions prior to the fair. Employers want to see energy and passion for their organization. Just dropping a resume with no preparation will quickly land you in the 'no follow-up' pile.

Deliver your professional pitch. Stay focused while engaged in conversation with the employers. The atmosphere of job fairs can be distracting with so many employers and candidates. Staying focused and delivering your professional pitch are imperative. Ask questions and use your research of the organization to spark conversation.

Bring your materials. Bring hard copies of your resume on resume-quality paper, along with copies of your transcript and writing sample in the event an employer requests them.

Take notes. After each conversation, take a moment to write down the organization and the names of the people you met. If the contact provided instructions for future follow up or applications, write down those details before they escape you. Ask for business cards.

Telephone and Skype/Zoom interviews are frequently used by employers to screen candidates and determine whether they should invest the time and money required for a face to face interview. Phone and Skype/Zoom interviews can be extremely useful in situations where the candidate lives in another city from the employer. They are often a make-or-break situation and must be taken as seriously as an in-person screening interview. Some employers have actually made job offers during the telephone interview without a follow-up face-to-face meeting. As such, do not make the mistake of underestimating the importance of the telephone interview.

General Guidelines for Telephone and Skype/Zoom Interviews

Have you materials on hand. Keep a copy of your resume, cover letter, and professional pitch points in front of you. If you are doing a Skype/Zoom interview, make sure they are not visible in the camera. As you cover the items listed on your professional pitch, cross them out. Take advantage of the fact that the interviewer cannot see you and utilize your notes.

Have a professional voicemail message on your phone/Create a professional Skype name. Make sure your voicemail greeting is professional and includes your name. Sometimes there can be confusion initiating the call. If the employer is sent to voicemail, you do not want to be embarrassed by the message. Avoid jokes, music, children, sound effects, etc. If the interview is with Skype, ensure your Skype name and profile picture are professional. You do not want to tell the recruiter for Latham & Watkins or Voices for Children to find you on Skype under the name “Twisted Emu 991.”

Use a secure line and a quiet room. For telephone interviews, consider using a landline. You do not want a dropped call or bad signal to cause you to lose out on a great opportunity. For Skype/Zoom interviews, make sure your internet connection is trustworthy and secure. You do not want an internet outage to cut your interview short.

It is important to make the call in a place with minimal noise and where you can speak at a reasonable volume. The more controlled the space you call from, the less chance for distraction and background noise that the employer may find annoying. If you have noisy pets at home, be sure to conduct the interview in a pet-free room where barking or meowing is out of ear-shot. Turn off all background noise like televisions, music, and computer sounds.

The Career Center can assist you with reserving a quiet room at the law school for telephone or Skype/Zoom interviews.

Disable background noise on the device you are using. Turn off land line accessories like call-waiting, announcing caller ID and second line answering machines that can interrupt the flow of conversation. On a cell phone, turn off notifications that might disrupt the conversation. For Skype/Zoom interviews, make sure to close all other windows during the interview. You do not want that YouTube clip on sculpting a handlebar mustache that was slowly loading in the background to suddenly start playing in the middle of the interview.

Give yourself time. Do not try to fit a phone or Skype/Zoom interview in between classes or at lunch time when you are in a hurry. These types of interviews typically do not last long, but you do not want to have to cut the interviewer off or be rushed.

Answer the phone or initiate the Skype/Zoom call with your name. Take charge of the interview by answering the phone or Skype/Zoom call with your name (*e.g.* “Hello, this is Thomas Barnes.”) This lets the employer know he/she has the right person and denotes a sense of confidence from the start.

Speak slowly and clearly. Speaking slowly and clearly with moderate volume and enthusiasm is very important to the success of the interview. An excellent technique for establishing rapport is to match the interviewer’s rate of speech and volume. Choose your words wisely with proper grammar – avoid slang and fillers like ‘um’ and ‘er.’ In a phone interview, your voice has to portray your image to the employer since all non-verbal communication is lacking in a phone interview.

Do not eat, chew gum or smoke. The interviewer can hear all of these activities through the phone or see them through Skype/Zoom, and it is distracting and unprofessional.

Let your interviewer know you are listening. Be sure to write down the interviewers’ names, and periodically during the call, use their names. Do not rush, interrupt or contradict the interviewer. Listen carefully and be sure you understand the question before you answer. Answer directly with short, complete sentences. Try to avoid ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers. Also, do not run on in your answers. In these types of interviews, it can be difficult for the interviewer to know when you have finished your answer without allowing for a brief pause. Do not take a pause to mean you should continue rambling when you were otherwise finished with your response.

Confirm follow up arrangements. Close the call with a summary of your qualifications and an expression of interest in a face-to-face interview. Before hanging up, confirm any agreements such as in-person interview arrangements or that you will be sending requested follow-up materials such as writing samples or transcripts. Be sure to send the requested materials immediately.

Additional Telephone Interview Guidelines

For a phone interview, it is ok to have water available to avoid a dry-mouth. Even though the interviewer cannot see you, standing up and smiling will affect the quality of the image you project through your voice. You want the interviewer imagining you as a professional in an office, not lounging around your house in sweats. Standing up and smiling will put you in the proper frame of mind for an interview. It will also help with voice control. Do not let your guard down or make the mistake of slipping into a more casual conversation.

Additional Skype/Zoom Interview Guidelines

Dress as you would for an in person screening interview. (See *Dressing for Interviews* on page 8 for more information.) Look at the interviewer and not at yourself on the screen. Smile. Do a run through with a friend before the interview to confirm that the camera is focused on you. Consider the lighting. If you are back-lit (a window is behind you) your face can be lost in a shadow. Instead, have lights next to your webcam. Ensure your space is tidy. Pay attention to the background – you do not want the employer focusing on inappropriate or controversial posters or pictures behind you.

After an initial interview, many legal employers will invite candidates to interview further at their offices in a callback interview. If you have landed a callback interview with a firm, public interest organization or government agency, congratulations! You are one step further in the interview process and closer to receiving an offer from that employer.

Scheduling Your Callback Interview

Respond promptly. Within 24 hours of the call, email or letter notifying you of the callback, acknowledge receipt of the invitation. Even if you feel overwhelmed and cannot yet schedule a date, call the employer and let them know you received the message and will call back in a day or so to schedule an actual date for the interview.

There are two schools of thought on scheduling your callback. Some believe that it is best to schedule the callback date as quickly as your schedule allows. This is advantageous to the extent the hiring decisions will be made on a rolling basis. Others advocate that it is best to take the last callback interview spot, because then you will be fresh in the minds of the interviewers when deliberations occur.

For employers who are not at the top of your list, schedule the callback interview a little later in the recruiting season and hold off booking your travel until about two weeks prior to the scheduled interview date. If you receive an offer prior to the scheduled callback, you may then decline the scheduled callbacks with employers in which you have less interest. If you have already booked nonrefundable airline tickets, contact the employer and let them know you have received an offer that you are very likely to accept and ask them how they want you to proceed with respect to the scheduled callback interview. Contact the Career Center for additional advice with respect to your individual situation.

Avoid scheduling conflicts. Pay attention to the OCI calendar as you schedule callbacks. Do not miss an on or off campus interview opportunity because you have scheduled a callback in another city. Avoid rescheduling callbacks unless absolutely necessary. This reflects poorly on you and WashULaw.

Five questions to ask when scheduling your interview:

What is the employer's reimbursement policy and do they have a form that should be used?

How will travel arrangements be made, and do they have a policy regarding fully refundable vs. nonrefundable airline tickets?

How long should you allow for the callback interview?

Could you contact the recruiting department closer to the interview date to obtain a copy of your schedule and interviewer names?

Are there any materials you should bring?

Take advantage of your trip. Make the most of your visit to a city and try to schedule all your callbacks during the same trip, if possible. Be sure to ask each employer how long to allow for the interview and be prepared to stay as long as necessary. If you have additional time, set up networking meetings in the city.

Declining a Callback Interview

If after the initial interview, you know that you are not interested in working for a particular employer, it is perfectly acceptable to decline a callback invitation from that employer. In fact, employers prefer that you withdraw from consideration if you truly have no interest in working for them. It saves both you and the employer valuable time and saves the employer the expenses associated with interviewing you further.

Remember to decline any callbacks in a professional and polite manner. You never know when you might decide to apply to them again in the future. Thank them for the opportunity, and let them know you enjoyed meeting the on-campus interviewer.

Decline or cancel scheduled callback interviews as promptly as possible so that the employers can schedule other interested candidates in that interview spot. Hopefully, another Washington University Law student will get the callback you declined.

Travel Expenses

Typically, most law firms (especially large law firms) will pay your *reasonable* travel expenses associated with a callback interview (transportation, hotel accommodations, and meals). However, you should be clear about expense reimbursement early on to ensure there will be no confusion. Find out what the limitations, policies and procedures are for that employer before you travel. Ask the recruiting department or the staff person who is organizing your visit.

If you have several callback interviews in the same city, many employers encourage the sharing of expenses with the other employers that you are visiting during that trip. Most often, one employer in that city will serve as your “host” to whom you submit your expenses. The host will then seek reimbursement from the other employers. Ask the recruiting department or the staff person who is organizing your visit.

Some employers have in-house staff that will make travel arrangements for you. Others will expect that you will schedule your own travel and submit receipts for your expenses. Get clarification if needed, and try to book reasonably-priced travel.

If the employer you are visiting does not have an expense reimbursement form of their own, use the one provided by NALP (available on the NALP website - www.nalp.org). Remember to get receipts for all your expenses (taxi, meals, etc.). Submit your expense form and receipts promptly.

If you plan to “piggyback” other initial screening interviews onto the callback, be sure to disclose this to the employer that is paying your expenses and offer to pay a portion of the travel costs.

For some employers (such as smaller law firms, government agencies or public interest organizations), you may have to pay your own travel expenses. Use your investment wisely and try to arrange other interviews and informational meetings during that trip.

Callback Interview Format

Pre-Interview Dinner: Depending on the employer, you may have dinner with a couple of attorneys the evening before your callback interview. Be sure to wear appropriate clothes to the dinner. Dress conservatively. It is always safest to wear a suit. Do not plan to wear the same clothing to the interview. When ordering, keep in mind the eating difficulty that some food items present (spaghetti, some shellfish, etc.). Alcohol with dinner is fine, but no more than one cocktail or glass of wine – use the good judgment that they are looking for. If you have any dietary restrictions (such as kosher), mention them to the recruiting department or person who is organizing your visit. Do not let your guard down during dinner – you are still being evaluated even in that business/social setting.

In Office Interviews: At law firms, you typically have four to six interviews and will meet with attorneys from various practice areas. It will generally be a mix of associates and partners. At least some of your interviewers will be members of the recruiting committee. If you have expressed an interest in one practice area, you may meet with more people from that area. If you are interviewing as a 3L for a specific department, you will generally only meet with attorneys from that practice group. Your interview may also include lunch. Do not drink alcohol at lunch.

In most cases, you will first meet with someone from the recruiting staff (or maybe the hiring partner in smaller firms) who will go over your schedule for the day. Most recruiting departments try to get your schedule to you in advance; however, do not be surprised if the schedule changes at the last minute. Attorneys' schedules are notoriously fluid and client demands often result in last minute schedule changes. Remember to remain flexible. If you need to supply any requested additional information (writing sample, official transcript, references, etc.), give it to the recruiting person.

After meeting with the recruiting department, you will begin meeting with the attorneys on your schedule, either alone or sometimes in teams. Interviews typically take place in the attorneys' offices. The day will resemble a series of the 20-minute screening interviews. Do not worry if you feel like you are repeating yourself – you likely will. Remember that it may be the sixth time you have said it, but it is the first time they have heard it. Do not change the substance of what you are saying. Remember that you have to sell yourself to each and every interviewer because everyone with whom you meet will be evaluating you. Try to work in the talking points in your professional pitch with each interviewer.

Remember to have questions for each and every interviewer. Saying that you do not have any questions may signal a lack of interest to that interviewer.

As you walk through the office, remember that you are also evaluating that employer. Notice how attorneys and staff greet each other in the hallways and whether doors are open or closed. Try to get a feel for the office atmosphere to see if it is a “fit” for you.

Virtual Callback Interviews: Some employers are moving to fully virtual recruiting. While the switch from an in-person to virtual callback may be disappointing, remember that your goal is to demonstrate that you are a good fit and that you will add value to the organization – which you can do virtually. The same guidelines that apply to virtual screening interviews apply to virtual callbacks – test your equipment and internet connection, set up in a clean and calm space with minimal noise or visual distractions, dress professionally, etc.

For longer callbacks with multiple separate interviews, have a glass of water with you so that you can take a drink between interviews. Plan to stay seated through the entire callback; however, if you need to stand up for any reason between interviews, turn off your video, mute your microphone, and ensure you are back in your seat before the next interview begins.

General Guidelines

Do not check your interview attire. Always carry your interview suit onto the plane – do not check it. If your luggage is lost, you do not want to interview in the jeans and t-shirt that you may have worn on the plane. It is also not a bad idea to wear or take along a set of “back up” clothes. Be sure to check the weather forecast to see if you will need an overcoat or umbrella. Traditional legal interview attire should be worn regardless of the office dress code.

Arrive early. Remember to allow plenty of time to get to the employer’s building. Try to scope out the building’s location the evening before the callback. Arrive at the building about 30 minutes before your interview to ensure you will not be late. However, do not go up to the employer’s office until about 10 minutes prior to your interview time. Given the attorneys’ schedules, they likely will be unable to take you early, and it can be awkward sitting and waiting for too long. If you are running late due to circumstances beyond your control, call and let the recruiting department know.

Store any luggage. Take only your portfolio and handbag or briefcase into the interviews. If you have your luggage or backpack with you, ask the receptionist if there is a closet where it can be stored.

Be nice. Remember to be nice to absolutely everyone, including the employer’s staff and the wait staff at restaurants. Be especially nice to the recruiting department. Remember that they are professionals and may have some sway in hiring decisions. Make a great impression on them.

Circle back with your references. At the callback stage, employers are seriously evaluating candidates. Make sure that you have been in touch with all your references recently and that they have an updated copy of your resume.

Odds of Receiving an Offer after a Callback Interview

Callbacks are expensive for the employers that are interviewing you. Even if they are not paying your expenses, they are still investing valuable attorney time in interviewing you. If you receive a callback invitation, the employer is serious about you.

During the 2017 recruiting season, firms nationwide reported making offers to 52% of the candidates who received callback invitations.

Keep in mind that offer statistics do vary by employer size and region.

Employers may utilize several different types of interview questions. It is impossible to anticipate every potential interview question, but generally, interview questions will fall into one of the following categories:

Experience Questions: Experience questions are typically the equivalent of walking through your resume. For these types of questions, it is important to know your resume inside and out. Experience questions might include: “Tell me about your responsibilities in Judge Mason’s chambers.” “Your resume indicates that while you were a legal intern at Purina, you researched legal issues regarding personal jurisdiction. What did you learn in your research?” “During your undergraduate studies, you served as a student government representative – what were your duties as a representative?”.

Personal Questions: Personal questions have no right or wrong answer, but your responses will highlight your level of preparation, your ability to communicate clearly and concisely, and, in some cases, the way you think through issues. Common personal questions include: “What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?” “Why did you go to law school?” “What was your favorite law school class?” “What are your interests outside of law school?” “Why are you interested in working in this city?”.

Behavioral Questions: In the past few years, some legal employers have started using behavioral interviewing techniques in their interviews. Behavioral interviewing is based on the premise that a candidate’s past performance is a strong indicator of future performance. Behavioral interview questions are very open-ended and require the interviewee to respond with a description of a specific situation or task, how they accomplished it and what the results were of their actions. The idea is to have the candidate draw on past experiences and recreate how they did what they did, why they did it and what they learned from it. A common way to structure your response to behavioral interview questions is the STAR technique. STAR stands for **S**ituation/**T**ask **A**ction **R**esult.

Behavioral interview questions typically start with “Tell me about a time,” “Describe a situation where,” “Have you ever,” “What do you do when,” “Give an example of,” or “What would you do if”. Listen carefully to the question. It is ok to take a moment to consider your response – you might say – “That is a great question, let me think on that for one moment.” Then begin your response by describing a specific **S**ituation or **T**ask in a prior work, volunteer or school experience. Next, describe the **A**ction you took to complete the task. Finally, wrap up your answer with the **R**esult of your actions. Let’s look at a couple of examples:

Question: “Tell me about a time you had conflicting deadlines and how you handled the situation.”

Answer: “[**S**ituation/**T**ask] This past summer I worked as a summer associate at Wayne, Kent and Parker. The firm was handling two very large litigation matters, with trial dates set for the same day. About a week before the trials, the lead trial attorney for one of the cases asked me to research a complicated legal issue and provide a written memorandum within three days. The very next day, the lead trial attorney on the second case asked me to draft a motion for his case and set the same deadline. I was the logical person to work on both assignments, because I had been involved in the research leading up to these assignments and could hit the ground running. [**A**ction] Because the trials were both set to begin on the same date, I knew

there was little wiggle room to move the deadline. However, even if I had worked for 72 hours straight without a break, I could not have finished both projects prior to the deadline. As soon as I realized I would not be able to meet the deadline, I called both partners and let them know of the conflict. We convened a meeting, and I suggested that if another associate or summer associate could help with the bulk of the motion drafting, I would assist with the final review to ensure that it captured my prior research. [Result] The partners liked my idea. I completed the research assignment prior to the deadline, then turned to assist the other summer associate with the motion. Both assignments were successfully completed prior to the deadline, and both trials went very well.

Question: "Describe a time that you set a goal for yourself and met it."

Answer: [Situation/Task] As an undergraduate, I was in the Honors College at Bates. In order to graduate, I was required to write a fifty page thesis and achieve at least a "B+" rating from five different professors in the Psychology department. It is notoriously difficult to receive the required "B+" from five different professors with your first submission. Typically, students must re-work their thesis several times in order to achieve the required grade. However, I made a personal goal to complete my thesis and achieve the required ratings by the end of the first semester of my senior year. [Action] I set aside 10 hours each week during the first semester of my senior year to research and write, and I did not allow myself to make excuses. I diligently put in the 10 hours each week, even when it meant working long into the night. [Result] As a result of my efforts, I was able to finish the draft of my senior thesis by the end of the first semester and achieved an "A" rating from all five professors with my first submission.

There are a few things you can do to prepare for behavioral interview questions:

Before your interview, identify past experiences that show favorable behaviors or competencies (*e.g.*, leadership, problem solving, team building, multi-tasking, customer service, etc.). You should also identify past experiences with a negative outcome that can be framed positively by what you learned from that experience - some behavioral questions ask you to identify a failure and articulate what was learned from the experience. Be able to describe your past work experience, difficult situations, or involvement in campus activities and group projects. The past experience does not have to be law or law school related - any situation is good.

Illustrate a logical thinking/problem solving process by describing the situation or task, then the action taken, and conclude with the results.

Be as specific as possible (the more detail, the greater the credibility of your answer). Be able to describe thoughts and feelings in the example you are giving.

Do not be afraid to "brag" about yourself (but do not go overboard either by overstating your past involvement with particular projects).

Unless the interviewer has provided a hypothetical situation, do not generalize or be theoretical about what you could, will or should do. The interviewer is looking for specific past experiences.

Remember that this is not a "timed event." It will take some thought to come up with the best possible example. Do not be afraid to spend a moment "thinking" about the question and give the best answer rather than the first one that comes to mind. Think your responses through before beginning to speak. Make sure you do not end up down a dead end alley. If you are unable to think of a specific experience in the past, let the interviewer know that you may need to come back to that question, or that you have not had that situation happen to you. However, be sure you are able to discuss enough experiences so the interviewer can assess your skills accurately.

Do not try to "can" your responses, but do try and "plan" what might be asked and think about specific past experiences that you might use when faced with behavioral interview questions.

Try to use different examples for each question.

Problem/Fact Pattern Questions: Occasionally, interviewers utilize a fact pattern question. This type of interview question is relatively rare for most legal employers, but be prepared for it just in case. This interview situation consists of a question and answer format wherein the interviewer presents a hypothetical business or legal problem, either actual or made up, and you have to develop a "process" for answering the question as clearly and with as much detail as possible. In many instances the actual answer is not obtainable. The gist of the "problem interview" question is to sample how logical and creative you can be in analyzing the question, developing a process for gathering the necessary information, extrapolating information from general knowledge and formulating an answer based on "all" the knowledge and resources you have at hand. The process is more important than the answer. Examples of a problem or fact pattern question include: "How many marbles do you think would fit in this room?" "Soccer is the third most played team sport in the U.S., behind only basketball and football, and yet, professional soccer has failed to see large scale success in the United States. To what do you attribute this problem and how would you address it?"

If you are given a problem or fact pattern question:

Do not be thrown by the interviewer's questions. Realize that there are numerous good answers. The interviewer is using the problem approach to gain an understanding of your thought processes.

Be concise. If asked for the "top two" issues, confine your response to two items only. Avoid going into too much detail.

Provide logical back up for your answers. Be sure to explain what case facts led you to a conclusion and how you reasoned from those facts to your conclusion.

Do not be afraid to ask clarifying questions. If you do not understand the case facts, you will find it difficult to ace the question.

Remember, common sense goes a long way.

Research Questions: Employers may attempt to gauge your interest in their organization by asking questions that probe how much you know about their organization. The best way to prepare for these types of questions is to research the employer prior to the interview. Examples of research questions include: “Why do you want to work here?” “What excites you most about our organization?” “Which practice areas are of interest to you?” Be sure to answer with specific examples that are tailored to the organization. Do not select a practice area that is not offered at the organization or in the city where you would work.

In the following pages, you will find examples of common interview questions, sample behavioral, prosecutor, public defender and public interest interview questions, a few more difficult interview questions, and a list of questions you might ask your interviewer. These sample questions are not exhaustive, but will provide a good starting point for your interview preparation. Contact the Career Center to schedule a mock interview with questions that are tailored to the organization and position where you will be interviewing.

Tell me about yourself.

Why are you interested in this organization?

Why are you interested in X city?

Why did you go to law school?

Why did you go to law school at Washington University/in St. Louis?

What have you liked most/least about law school? What are your favorite and least favorite courses?

How has law school been better/worse/different than you expected?

How do you think you have changed personally since starting law school?

What would you say are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?

What is the most useful criticism you have received, from whom, and how did you handle it?

What are you looking for in a legal employer/summer program?

What achievements do you look back on with pride? Why?

Why should we hire you?

I see you are fluent/proficient in French. *Ditez-moi . . .* [Be prepared to answer and converse in the foreign language.]

I am interested in the thesis you mention on your resume. What were your principal conclusions?

Where do you see yourself 5 or 10 years from now? [For international students - Do you ultimately want to return to your home country?]

What are your outside interests/activities?

Why are you interested in this geographic area?

How would your friends describe you?

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

Tell me about your work as a legal intern/summer associate/judicial intern last summer.

What extracurricular activities have you participated in during law school?

What area of legal practice is most interesting to you? Why are you looking at this area of specialization?

What two or three things are you looking for in an employer?

What sets you apart from other candidates?

What is your biggest accomplishment?

What does success look like for you?

What questions do you have for me?

Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.

Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Provide an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.

Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.

Give a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.

Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Describe a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.

Give an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.

What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Provide an example.

Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

Describe a difficult decision you have made in the last year.

Give an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something, but failed.

Provide an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.

Give an example of a time when you motivated others.

Provide an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.

Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.

Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

Describe a situation in which a detail you thought to be unimportant turned out to be very important.

Tell me about a time you had to persuade a colleague to accept your point of view.

What have you done in the workforce that shows initiative and creativity?

Tell me about an accomplishment of which you are especially proud and why you chose that particular accomplishment to talk about.

Tell me about your ability to work with people whose style/demeanor is different from yours.

Prosecuting attorney interviews often include hypotheticals and/or role playing exercises and may include panel interviews. If you are interviewing for a prosecutor position, please contact the Career Center to schedule a mock interview tailored to the office where you will be interviewing.

Why do you want to practice criminal law?

Why do you want to be a prosecutor?

Why do you want to work in this particular office?

Why do you want to work for this particular district attorney?

What are your aspirations and goals working in a prosecutor's office?

What skills from law school do you think will be most helpful in working in our office?

What do you see as the role of a prosecutor?

Why are you interested in prosecution, as opposed to public defense?

Are you applying to criminal defense jobs as well? Why or why not?

Did you enroll in any prosecution or defense clinics during law school – why or why not?

How will you relate to witnesses and victims, who are often poor and diverse?

What would make you a good trial advocate?

Is there any type of crime you would have trouble prosecuting?

Prison can be a devastating punishment. How will you reconcile the outcome if you do not personally believe it is appropriate for a given case?

Public Defender Interview Questions

Public defender interviews often include hypotheticals and/or role playing exercises and may include panel interviews. If you are interviewing for a public defender role, please contact the Career Center to schedule a mock interview tailored to the office where you will be interviewing.

Why do you want to be a public defender?

How would you feel representing a guilty person?

Why do you believe you can relate to our client base?

Is there any crime you would have trouble defending?

How do you feel about accountability versus reconciliation?

Public defenders are often overworked and underpaid, why are you so eager to seek this line of work?

What do you think the hardest part of our job would be?

Why do you want to work in this particular office? There are lots of places to be a public defender.

What are traits that a zealous advocate would possess? Do you feel you have those?

Would you feel comfortable representing an individual whose physical appearance is very different from yours?

Are you comfortable working with clients whose views clash directly with yours?

How would you work to earn a client's confidence?

How would you deal with your client if he was charged with several particularly violent offenses and there was a large amount of evidence strongly suggesting he did in fact commit these egregious crimes?

If you come across an unsympathetic judge or an aggressive prosecutor who is unwilling to negotiate or be swayed by your argument, how will you attempt to deal with the situation?

How would you handle a client who admitted to you that they committed a crime in a closing argument? Would you ethically be able to say your client is innocent of these charges?

How would you deal with a client who wants to do something that is against his best interest?

Describe confidentiality and your role in maintaining client confidentiality as an attorney.

Prior to an interview with a public interest employer, it is important to understand the mission of the organization, its particular approach to advocacy, and current developments in the organization's area of law. If you are interviewing for a public interest position, please contact the Career Center to schedule a mock interview tailored to the organization where you will be interviewing.

Why are you interested in working in public interest?

Why are you interested in our particular approach to advocacy (*e.g.*, direct legal services, impact litigation, policy work)?

Why are you interested in working with our clients?

Are you comfortable working with limited support staff?

Are you comfortable working for lower salaries than your counterparts in private practice?

Describe your commitment to public service. What prior public service experience do you have?

What do you see as the rewards for working for a public interest organization?

How would you establish a rapport with clients in distress or from diverse backgrounds?

Tell me about a legal memo you wrote this past year.

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 was your lowest grade? What happened?

What is important to you in life?

What is the latest non-legal book you have read?

Tell me about a recent Supreme Court case you disagreed with and why.

What motivates you?

Describe your worst work environment and your ideal work environment.

How strong are your writing skills? Why aren't you on a journal?

What's the biggest mistake you have ever made? What was the consequence? What was your reaction?

In what ways do you see yourself needing further development in order for you to be fully effective in your career?

What sets you apart from other candidates?

What would be the greatest drawback of this job for you?

If offered the position, how long do you plan to stay at this organization?

How do you feel about working long hours?

What other organizations have you applied to, and why?

What qualities do you think a lawyer should have?

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

In your view, what are the major problems facing the legal industry?

How did you choose your practice area?

What made you choose this employer?

What do you like most/least about your job?

Were you a summer associate here?

What is a typical day like for you?

What would you say distinguishes your organization from others of like size in this city?

What do you wish you had asked when you were interviewing as a law student?

If there is one class you would tell every law student to take, what would it be?

What type of training do you have for new attorneys?

How would you describe the personality of organization as a whole and the office in particular?

How do you staff cases or deals?

What level of client contact do associates have?

What's the most interesting case or deal you have worked on?

Do you allow or require new associates to rotate through several departments? Who will assign my work?

What do you find most challenging as a lawyer?

DO NOT ASK:

Any questions about salary, billable hour requirements, funding sources (for public interest organizations), parental leave policies, etc. until after you receive an offer.

Any question you should already know the answer to after reviewing the employer's webpage and doing basic research.

Any personal questions about the attorney or his/her family (*e.g.*, "How does your spouse put up with the hours you work here?").

Questions which put the attorney on the spot, for example: "Why did four associates leave your practice area in the past year?" However, if the employer has made headlines recently in a negative way, you may want to ask a carefully worded question to show that you are aware of the situation. Consult with the Career Center in advance on how to phrase such a question.

Post-Interview

Follow Up

Many employers make callback and/or offer decisions very quickly following an interview. If you do not hear from an employer within two to three weeks following your interview, it is acceptable to follow-up by email or with a phone call to the recruiter to express your interest again.

Thank You Notes

The Career Center encourages students to send a thank you note following interviews, but it is not required. If you elect to send a thank you note, it is best to send it no later than 24 hours following the interview. For initial screening interviews, including job fair interviews and telephone or Skype/Zoom interviews, decisions are typically made quickly, and you should send your thank you note by email on the day of the interview to ensure that it arrives before a decision is made.

With respect to callback interviews, use your own judgment regarding emailed versus handwritten thank you notes. Some employers feel that email shows much less effort and sincerity on the part of the sender, and regional expectations may differ as well (for the South and smaller offices, you might want to consider the personal touch of a handwritten note). Take into account the age of the person receiving the thank you note – senior partners may frown upon an emailed thank you. Depending on the employers' timeframe, however, an emailed thank you may be appropriate if you believe a mailed

thank you will not arrive before a decision is made.

If you choose to send a handwritten thank you, make sure to use very nice note cards and that your handwriting is not only legible but quite good. If your handwriting is poor, use a typed, business letter format. Whether you use mail or email, remember that the thank you is a piece of professional business correspondence.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to send a thank you letter to the person who organized your visit and ask them to extend your gratitude to everyone with whom you met, instead of sending a note to each and every interviewer. This may be the case in situations where you met with a number of people and schedules may have changed, in which case it may not be possible for you to identify and reach out to each interviewer. As a general matter, however, it is recommended that a thank you note be sent to each attorney with whom you met.

Sending thank you notes with typographical or grammatical errors may negatively impact your candidacy. If you elect to send thank you notes, they must be absolutely perfect – no spelling or grammar errors. You do not want to harm the great impression you made in person with a poorly written thank you letter.

Further, if someone went out of their way to help you land an interview with that employer, consider sending a thank you note to that individual as well.

The perfect thank-you note requires only three sentences, but make sure you do not send an identical thank you note to everyone. For example:

Dear Ms. Johnson:

Thank you for taking time to interview me during my recent visit to Wayne, Kent and Parker. I enjoyed hearing your description of the environmental practice group's needs, and I believe I would be a natural fit. Next week, I will follow-up with the firm's recruiting department.

*Regards,
John Smith*

Or

Dear Mr. Adams:

Thank you for taking time to speak with me yesterday regarding the summer associate position at Wayne, Kent and Parker. The information you shared regarding your experience practicing in the firm's merger and acquisition group was insightful. I am confident that my experience will allow me to succeed as a summer associate, and I would be excited to work with you. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

*Best,
John Smith*

Offer Timing: In most cases, you should hear within two weeks of the callback interview regarding whether you have received an offer. This timeframe may vary a bit depending on the employer and when the recruiting committee meets. The interviewers will usually tell you when you can expect to hear from them. If they do not, it is perfectly acceptable to ask about the projected timeline during your interview.

Receiving an Offer: When receiving an offer, it is important to respond promptly, acknowledging that you have received the offer. You do not have to accept or decline at this point, but do thank the recruiter or attorney for the offer, reiterate how much you enjoyed meeting everyone at the organization, and confirm that you will provide a response before the deadline.

Offer Deadlines: The NALP guideline regarding the time frame for firms to hold open their offers is no longer in effect. If you receive an offer, please be sure that you understand the exact date that the offer will expire. Do not make assumptions. If you need additional time to consider an offer, ask the recruiter.

Negotiating Offers: Most large law firm summer associate and new associate salaries are difficult to negotiate. Summer and 1st year class salaries are generally kept lock step. However, there may be more room for negotiation with respect to post-graduation positions. If you have questions about your offer or salary negotiations, please reach out to the Career Center.

Declining Offers: If you receive an offer and have no intention of accepting it, please decline it immediately. This will allow the employer to make additional offers to other candidates, hopefully your classmates. Please do not simply let an offer expire. Be professional and respond to all offers. Similarly, if you receive multiple offers, please be considerate of the employers and your classmates by promptly declining those that you know you will not accept. When declining an offer, be sure to thank the employer for their time and reaffirm how much you enjoyed meeting attorneys from the office and how impressed you are with the organization. While you should call the recruiter to decline an offer in person, follow up with an email confirming your decision.

Accepting Offers: If you know you want to accept an offer, do so immediately. The organization will be grateful for your prompt commitment, and your enthusiasm will not go unnoticed. Acceptances should be made in person (with a phone call), and you should sign the written offer, and return it to the employer. Once you have accepted an offer, you must withdraw your applications from all other organizations to which you applied.