

Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
Preparing for a Job Interview

IDL primarily utilizes a behavioral-based interviewing style. The behavioral-based interview is based on the idea that the best way to predict future performance is to examine past performance in a similar situation by focusing on how a candidate performed in *specific* work-related situations. Questions on behavioral job interviews are generally going to ask you to give a specific example of an experience and then you'll be asked to follow up with specific details, such as describing the actions you took to manage the situation and the results of your actions. While behavioral-based questions are predominant, you may be asked a combination of behavioral-based, traditional and technical questions in the interview.

- **Preparing for an Interview:**

It is often difficult to think of good examples within the time constraints and stressful context of a job interview. Therefore, you will likely find it useful to do some work in advance of your interview:

1. **Competencies:** Review the job announcement and the IDL public website (www.idl.idaho.gov). Get to know the agency and how the position you are applying for fits into the organization. Then think about and make a list of the competencies likely needed to do the job. Examples of some competencies include: decision making, problem solving, leadership, interpersonal skills, planning and organizing, communicating, critical thinking, team building, etc.
2. **Experiences:** Review your resume and/or employment history (or if you have little work experience, think of school projects or volunteer work or extracurricular activities in which you have participated). Think about individual contributions you have made and also teams you have worked on at each job. Make a list of memorable projects, new experiences and things you learned at each job. Try to remember the details. Write down what you did, how you contributed, your actions, what you learned, and the results of your actions.
3. **Tie Experiences to Competencies:** Now tie your experiences (in #2) to the competencies (in #1). Take the time to formulate a question about each competency and how you would answer it given your experiences. If you have trouble writing questions, you may want to search the web for "behavioral interview questions." While this won't return the exact questions, it will give you an idea of how behavioral interview questions are formatted. Remember to use a specific example when asked for one, and try to use work examples (rather than personal/family examples) whenever possible.
4. **Traditional Questions:** Remember there may also be "traditional" interview questions asked as well. You may be asked questions such as, "What are your strengths or weaknesses?" or "What would your former co-workers say about you?" You may also be asked about your technical knowledge as it relates to the job you are applying for. Think about what those questions might be and prepare answers much like you have done for the behavioral questions (above).
5. **Candidate Overview:** Whether you are asked or not, it is always a good idea to prepare to answer a question that gives the audience a good, concise (3 minutes) introductory overview of your experience, your education and your ambitions. Not too much detail, but enough to give the interview panel an introduction to you and to what you bring to this job.
6. **Practice out loud:** You may want to have a friend or family member "interview" you or you could practice answering questions when you are driving in your car or when you are at home alone. It is important to hear yourself answer the questions out loud rather than just in your head. Hearing yourself answer the questions will help you be more concise and you will notice if you start to ramble or get off point. It will also make you more at ease when you hear yourself start talking in the interview.

- **The Day of the Interview:**

1. **Appearance:** Dress in a manner that is professional and appropriate to the position you are seeking. A suit is not always required, but jeans or work clothes are not typically the best choice either. Be clean and well groomed. If you are unsure, ask Human Resources about what is appropriate for the particular position.
2. **Answering Questions:** On the day of the interview, bring an extra copy of your resume for quick reference to your previous jobs. Also, as you are answering the multi-part questions, feel free to ask a panel member to repeat the question(s) so that you can provide a complete answer. Since you don't know what the questions are in advance, don't try to bring scripted answers...you have prepared by refreshing your memory and connecting your past experiences with the job.
3. **Complete Answers:** You may know some or all of the interview panel members. If this is the case, don't assume they already know about you and that therefore you don't need to answer the questions completely. Even if they do recognize the situations you are describing, they may not remember what your role was, and they certainly don't know how you were feeling and what you were thinking. Be complete with your answers as if you were new to the organization.
4. **Time Management:** Remember there is a limited amount of time allotted for the interview. Some questions will require longer answers than others. In most cases you should try to keep your answers to around 3-5 minutes. When practicing, your goal is to be complete and concise. Cut out extraneous stuff that may be "interesting" but is not really about you and your talents.

**Preparation is the key to a good interview.
After you have prepared, relax and enjoy the interview!**