



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

School of Law

Interview Workbook

Howdy!

This is the Texas A&M University School of Law Office of Career Services Student Interview Workbook. In this workbook, you will find several questions frequently asked by employers. There will be space for you to write out your answers. Be sure to use the Career Services Interview Packet to help you create the best answer!

You can also contact your Career Service Advisor if you have any questions or need any advice!



Notes about company/agency/firm:

Be prepared to research and show it. Think 1) foundational information (size, geo locations, practices, industries, etc.), 2) as well as what the employer is really well known for, ranked in, etc., and, 3) the organization's people (their backgrounds, expertise, etc. Study their bios and LinkedIn profiles.) _____

Checklist

- ☐ Research Employer
- ☐ Select interview outfit
- ☐ Practice Interview Questions
- ☐ Pack your bag (copies of resume, transcripts, business cards, in pad folio)
- ☐ Plan your commute (directions/parking)
- ☐ Write Thank You Note(s) within 24 hours of interview

Researching the Employer – Resources:

- 1) NALP Directory (for large firms/gov't agencies), nalp.org
- 2) Vault, vault.com
- 3) Chambers, chambers.com
- 4) U.S. News, law.usnews.com/law-firms
- 5) Martindale/Texas Legal Directories, martindale.com
- 6) Employer's Website
- 7) State Bar of Texas, texasbar.com
- 8) Former and Current Students
- 9) Professors and Career Services

What are you going to wear?

Men

☐ **Suit: Color** _____

Tip! Black, Navy or Gray

☐ **Shoes: Color** _____

Tip! Make sure polished no scuffs

☐ **Tie: Color** _____

Tip! Red, Navy or Yellow

☐ **Facial Hair**

Tip! Trimmed

☐ **Dress Shirt: Color** _____

Tip! White or light blue, no bright colors or patterns

☐ **Socks: Color** _____

Tip! No white socks, dress socks

☐ **Belt**

Tip! Match shoes

Women

☐ **Suit: Color** _____

Tip! If possible skirt suit, if so wear panty hose

☐ **Shoes: Color** _____

Tip! Closed toed, modest height

☐ **Hair**

Tip! Groomed and out of face

☐ **Nails**

Tip! Nude nail polish or none at all

☐ **Blouse: Color** _____

Tip! Pastel colors

☐ **Jewelry:** _____

Tip! Minimalist, pearls, no statement necklaces

☐ **Make Up**

Tip! Conservative



Questions You May Be Asked

Law School/Legal Career Questions

Why did you decide to go to law school?

Have something compelling and authentic to say. Where true, share a personal reason. Share how and when you decided to go to law school and what you think a law school education will enable you to do. Do not have a generic answer here. Also, try to marry your reason for going to school with the kind of work you want to do, as it relates specifically to the employer with whom you are interviewing.

I see you go to Texas A&M University School of Law. Why did you choose Texas A&M? How has your experience been so far?

Think of any geographic ties to the employer, think of the professors and the classes being taught as to what drew you there (i.e. one professor who also practices at a particular firm, an expert in an area of interest, reputation, rank, etc., Give a good, thoughtful answer as to why and not showing it was be default or on a whim. Your experience has to be positive. Speak to your favorite parts, what you've enjoyed learning, etc.

What is your most favorite class in law school? Why did you select particular course work?

Be specific about why it's your favorite – what you've learned, how it's taught, etc. Think about your background and what you want to do in relation to this employer, and tie in the coursework in a relevant manner.

In your experience, what are the best things about law school?

Always be positive. Speak to the learning opportunities, the professors who you learn from, your fellow students and what you learn from them, opportunities to test your ideas and challenge them, learning what you're restricted by, what lawyers can and cannot do, etc.

Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?

If your grades are good, say yes, and stay humble, and speak to the study habits and study routine that it took to get you the good grades and how you'll continue

these habits and practices as an attorney. If you have a bad grade or two, speak to how you evaluated what you could have done differently leading up to exams, and the steps you've taken to "course correct" to do better next time. Also, you can speak to your understanding of the material and if there was a particular reason you did not perform well on exam day (without making excuses). _____

Could you explain to me your school's grading system? How do you rank in your graduating class? _____

If participated in Law Review, Property Journal, Moot Court, Mock Trial, ADR, Clinics, and/or Externships – What have you learned from your participation?

Be specific and think of skills or knowledge that are transferable to practice. _____



What do you hope to accomplish in your career as a lawyer? What are your ultimate career objectives?

Speak in terms of longevity with this particular employer, of making a long-term contribution to the employer and its clients, as opposed to just advancing and being promoted. _____

Is there any particular area of law you are interested in?

Provide the why and tie in with the employer's practice and expertise in this area, opportunities to grow and develop here. _____

Based on your experiences, what has best prepared you for the practice of law?

Think of anything relevant (education, work, internship, interest) or something you have had to learn from scratch, a situation that has enabled you to serve, etc. AND tie it into being in a service profession – being a lawyer. _____

What qualifications do you possess that would make you a good lawyer?

Think of education, work experience, character traits that would be relevant and be specific as to how, why you think they would make you a good lawyer. _____

Describe the most difficult experience you've had to deal with in law school (or in first legal job) and how you handled it.

Stay positive. Do not speak negatively about another person, situation, or employer. Focus on what you learned, how you overcame, and how you use this experience to propelforward. _____

What are you looking for in a law firm (or other employing organization)?

Opportunity to serve, real responsibility, hands-on learning, etc. Show you are ready to learn and grow and do not need a great deal of hand holding. Also, speak to how you think you can contribute, as opposed to what the firm can do for you. Do not mention anything about compensation, promotion prospects, etc. Do not sound self-interested.

Resume/Previous Experience

I see from your resume that you worked at _____. Tell me about your work there.

Describe with this employer/position in mind, and draw out anything that would transfer well – even if not substantively, subject matter-wise, think about leadership, responsibility, team work, writing, communication, etc. _____

Prior to working there, you listed on your resume that you were employed with _____, tell me about your work there. (Repeat as needed). _____



Why are you leaving your current position?

Do not say anything negative that will put you in a negative light OR discount the experience you gained there. Rather, be positive about the prospect of working with the new employer. Speak opportunistically. _____

What do you like about your current position?

Highlight what is relevant (writing, negotiating, communicating, advocating) and transferable to this employer, in this new position you're interviewing for. Highlight any responsibilities, leadership roles you have. _____

I see you have been honored by being awarded [scholarship, medals, other recognitions]. Please tell us about [X].

Speak of HOW you got there – what you had to do and pull out traits, habits, work ethic, practices, etc. Stay humble. _____

Open/Ended – Why You Type Questions

Tell me about yourself.

Pick the highlights, including some basic information like where you're from and where you went school) and segue naturally into what brought you to law school and what you want to do with your legal education. Make sure you are comfortable with your narrative and that it's all relevant. _____

Do you have a mental picture of what you will be doing in five years? If so, describe it.

Make sure it's a future where you're contributing to this employer's mission/clients/goals, etc. Frame it in terms of the value you add and not in terms of success for you/what the employer can do for you. _____

What is it about our organization and/or practice that is attractive to you?

Speak specifically to show you've done your research, and tie your experience, education, and/or interests in with what employer is doing/is known for. _____

What qualifications do you possess that would make you an asset to our organization/firm/company?

Again, begin by pointing out specific knowledge you've gained about the employer and marry it to what you bring to the table. _____

Why should I hire you?

Similar to the above, and also, this is an opportunity to bring up what you've been complimented on in the past (by a professor, a peer, an employer) as to how you work, your ethics, habits and practices, etc. _____

Behavioral Questions

Describe an activity in which you played a leadership role, whether it was in school or in the community.

Make sure you point out transferable skills. This is an opportunity to use your elevator speech and speak to your skills and experience. _____

What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?

Speak to something that did not come easily to you, hurdles you've had to overcome, and if present, the results that affected change that was impacted, or someone being helped. _____

What are your perceived strengths? Weaknesses?

Tell them why you think so. On the weakness, address how you can improve. Each is not a forgone conclusion, but speak to how you can keep growing and improving. _____

Have you ever accomplished something you did not think you could?

How? What did you learn? How can you use this going forward, in tackling other challenges? _____

Tell me about a time you took the lead on a project.

Speak to initiative, responsibility. How will you do this going forward? _____

Tell me about a time when you achieved a goal as part of a team. How would you characterize your role?

Show initiative, leadership, and responsibility even as you speak to working well as part of a team. Remain positive. Show agility. Speak to how you'll work going forward. _____

Tell me about a time you were innovative.

Why? How? Impact. Mention serving someone else if this was the case. _____

As attorneys, we deal with complex legal issues. Can you tell me about a time you simplified a complex issue to someone in a way that helped them understand it?

How? What did you learn? How will you this going forward? _____

Describe a time when you had to make a critical decision with very little information.

Speak to seeking out your resources and self-teaching and not needing hand-holding. This is what lawyers do every day. _____

Tell me about a time you had a research project in an area that was completely unfamiliar to you.

Same as above and also address how you plan to do this in the future. As a lawyer, new questions will be brought before you every day. _____

Tell me about a time when you had multiple high-importance projects with overlapping deadlines.

Speak to how you were able to prioritize and balance urgent and important with projects of lesser importance. _____

Tell me about a time when you tackled a problem or situation that others avoided or refused to handle.

Speak to how you took initiative and responsibility, but stay humble in your answer. Address it as an opportunity. _____

We expect our interns to jump in with both feet, but we don't want them to drown.

Tell me about time you started a task and then realized that you weren't quite sure what you were doing.

Speak to how you were not afraid to ask questions but how you also sought out your own resources and worked from there. _____

What is the last conflict or confrontation with another person that you faced and how did you handle it?

Speak to conflict resolution, taking ownership, and what you learned and can do differently next time. Speak to staying calm, not getting personal, etc. _____

Describe an ethical dilemma you were confronted with and how you dealt with it.

Ethics and integrity are paramount always, and especially in the practice of law.

Speak to how you did not waver. _____

Give an account of a professional mistake you made and how you handled it.

The recovery is key, as is the honesty about the mistake. Report it and fix it. How did you correct?

Describe a job situation in which you had to make a significant change in the way you had been doing things.

Speak to flexibility and adaptability. Lawyers have to pivot every day. _____

Situational Questions

Deadlines, frustrations, problematic people and silly rules can make a job difficult. How would you handle these things?

Keep eyes on the main objective – serving the client. It is not about you, but rather assisting the client to get to an end goal. Don't sweat the infrastructure, find a way to do what you need to do within to assist client. _____

Responding to Tough Questions:

An employer may ask you about some “weakness” on your resume. This can be a layoff in the past, poor academic performance at some point, or a gap in time on your resume, for instance. Anticipate being asked about this, and be prepared to overcome any questions and/or doubts with 1) a positive spin and 2) speak to how the experience / situation was a learning opportunity, and 3) point to how you’ve since course-corrected.

If you are asked, remain positive. Do not ever say anything negative about a past employer, school, or work environment. (If you say anything negative, the audience thinks you are the problem and that you’ll have problems again with them.)

If you are asked about something such as a layoff, be prepared to offer helpful information where you can that puts you in a positive light. Provide numbers and a business reason if you can – a group lay off because of a company downsizing is different from one performer being eliminated where there was poor performance.

If you are asked about a bad grade, do not make excuses but you can offer up information about circumstances that the employer cannot ask you about (for instance, the loss of a family member, or an illness), and you can speak to what you learned (i.e., I need a quiet place to study, have made myself that kind of environment.)

In addition to presenting positively, speaking to what you have learned and what you can contribute, remember to not ever sound defensive. You need to show you are able to accept criticism and improve, as lawyers are critiqued most every day.

Questions You Pose to Interviewer(s)

Associate:

- Tell me about the work and working environment.
- How is work assigned to associates?
- Generally, does the firm staff leanly, or less so, on any given matter or transaction (understanding that the size and scope of the deal or transaction affects this)
- How soon does an associate have to declare practice area?
- Relatedly, is there a rotation through practice areas?

Summer Associate:

- Tell me about your summer program.
- Do summer associates rotate through one or more practice area? If so, how are these chosen?
- Are summer associates able to do real, substantive work?

Attorney Training and Mentoring:

- Tell me about attorney training.
- Is there a formal mentoring program / assignment system?
- How do associates know if they are gaining the right type of skills and experience?
- Are there milestones laid out within each practice group? (End of 1st year, 3rd year, etc.)

Interviewer Insights:

- **What do you like about being a part of this organization?**
- **Why did you choose this firm?**
- **What keeps you at this firm?**
- **What sets this firm apart from other firms of this type?**
- **Which of the firm's practice areas are expanding?**
- **Are there any new areas the firm plans to move into?**
- **Is there anything you did not know about the firm prior to joining that you think would be helpful or good for me to know?**
- **How would you characterize the culture and philosophy of the firm? Your practice group/a particular office location?**
- **What is your favorite part about being an attorney at your level?**

