

# LINFIELD COLLEGE



## Nursing Interview Success Packet

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Linfield College 2255 NW Northrup, Portland, OR 97210 School of Nursing

Have Questions? Contact Matt Hiller, Ass't Dean of Students/Dir. of Student Life, at [mhiller@linfield.edu](mailto:mhiller@linfield.edu) or 503.413.7561

# You landed a coveted nursing interview as a new grad... NOW WHAT?

This packet includes steps to take that will help you have a successful interview. Preparation at every level will set you apart from others interviewing for the same position, will help relieve stress of the situation, and may even help you enjoy the interview process.

In addition to tips on successful interviewing, this packet explains a popular model of interviewing, and concludes with sample interview questions and mock interview rounds you can utilize for practice interviews.

You've worked very hard to get where you are and with continual hard work in terms of preparing for your interviews we know that you will land the RN job you've been dreaming of!



# BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW

- 1. Be Prepared:** When you are offered an interview, ask HR if they can tell you about the format, number of participants, and length of the interview, so you can prepare. Even though HR has your resume, it's always a good idea to have printed copies to take with you to your interview in the event that not all the interviewers have had a chance to review your information. Also, prepare copies of your reference list as well as other documents such as letter of references.
- 2. Research The Organization:** Most likely you researched the organization before submitting your resume and application but if not, it is pivotal to do so before your interview! Look at their website and pay attention to their mission statement, philosophy, and history. Understanding the organization and the position you are applying for will help you understand who they are and who they are looking for as they build their nursing team. Exploring information about the organization will also help you in formulating questions to ask them during your interview. Well thought out questions about the organization will show that you have researched what they are about and that you have a true interest in being on their team.
- 3. Formulate Your Questions:** It is a guarantee that at some point of the interview (probably near the end) they interviewers will ask if you have any questions for them. You should have at least 4-5 prepared questions that you can ask that address topics such as mission/philosophy of the organization, opportunities to advance your nursing career within the organization, educational assistance programs, what a typical shift on your floor/unit will look like, and what to expect for an orientation program for a new graduate.
- 4. Formulate Your Answers:** This interview means a lot to you and the last thing you want to do is to appear caught off guard during your time with the interviewers. Think through questions that they might ask you and formulate how you will answer them before you go into the interview. Many organizations are moving towards the Structured Behavioral Interview Model which focuses on what you have done in the past rather than what you say you would do in the future. Your responses that tell a story should have three parts: 1) a background of the situation, 2) your action, and 3) the outcomes/results of your action. For preparation of your interview, you should think about how your past experiences and current skills relate to the position you are applying for and prepare short descriptions of situations dealing with areas such as leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, customer service, and the mission of the organization.

# DURING YOUR INTERVIEW:

- 1. Dress Professionally:** The organization selected you for an interview because they were impressed with things that you have accomplished both in and out of nursing school, the experiences you have had, and the fact that you have proven to be successful in nursing school and in passing the NCLEX. Continue to impress them with a professional appearance for your interview. Looking your best conveys professionalism and tells volumes about your character and the attributes you will bring to the workplace. You will want to select an interview outfit that is conservative, neat, and clean. It's also important to stay away from other distractions such as flashy jewelry, overpowering fragrances, or chewing of gum.

**2. Arrive Early:** If you are feeling rushed to get to your interview you may not have an opportunity to calm the nerves before meeting with your interviewers and that could be a detriment to your interview performance. Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early to allow for parking and a visit to the restroom. Once you arrive to your interview site one of the first things you might want to do is silence your cell phone. Not only could your phone ringing pose a distraction, but the interruption could also demonstrate that you are not fully present for the interview. Also, things out of our control happen, like traffic accidents/traffic jams, so it's a good idea to have the phone number of the appropriate office within the organization in the event that you get stalled and need to communicate about a late arrival.

**3. Remember Your Non-Verbals:** Interviewers are looking for a nurse to be well composed and professional. Your non-verbal communication will tell more than you can imagine. Don't forget interviewing fundamentals such as a firm handshake, a pleasant smile, direct eye contact, uncrossed arms, and an energetic tone of voice. Aside from displaying enthusiasm and sharpness, these gestures also reveal how you will interact with your patients. You poise points to how you will handle the countless unfamiliar and frightening scenarios a nurse faces during his/her career. It's likely that your interviewers are appraising your non-verbal communications as much as your verbal communication.

**4. Show Your Enthusiasm:** Interviewers are looking for nurses who show excitement and passion about their careers, nurses that have something unique to offer, and nurses that are fond of the organization for a specific reason (ie. mission statement, magnet status, etc). Engaging the interviewer in conversation about your excitement and what you can bring to the organization also demonstrates your eagerness and ability to interact with people, something very important in nursing. While you may not yet have years of nursing experience, your excitement and interest in the organization will help interviewers build confidence in your fit for the profession and organization. It's important to maintain positivity during the interview and radiate confidence in yourself and the achievements and experiences that have gotten you to this point.

**5. Answer/Ask Questions:** Interviewers ask questions in which they are looking for an answer. Do not wander off-topic or skirt around the subject if you do not know how to answer. If you do not understand the question, ask for clarity. Be prepared that interviewers will be taking notes during your interview. At the beginning of the interview you may also ask if they mind if you take some notes during the interview. This could come in handy for jotting down a question that they asked that you might want to ask a further question about at the end of your interview. Do not pass on the opportunity to ask questions when the time comes to do so during the interview. You are interviewing the organization just as much as they are interviewing you.

## AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

**1. Follow-Up:** The practice of sending a thank you letter is not outdated! Start your letter immediately as it's good to mention a detail or two about the interview and reiterate a few reasons why you believe you are suited for the position. A thank you letter shows the interviewer that you are a responsible, caring person who is serious about this organization and the position you applied for. Additionally, it allows interviewers to see your name and qualifications one last time. If you did not collect business cards from all the interviewers, a phone call to the HR office would help in finding names of those who participated in your interview. The HR office can also assist you in finding out if a handwritten or email thank you letter would be most easy to receive by all interviewers.

## Sample Thank You Letter Format:

1<sup>st</sup> Line: Say thank you.

2<sup>nd</sup> Line: Tell them why you are thanking them and of the impact of the interview.

3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Lines: Express something specific that they shared during the interview.

Closing Lines: Share your continued interest.

## Sample Thank You Letter:

“Thank you for the opportunity to interview with (name of organization). I appreciate the time and effort from all the staff involved in the interview.

“I left the interview impressed with your organizations philosophy of patient care and very enthusiastic about the staff’s dedication to providing quality and comprehensive health care to all patients.”

“I appreciated hearing your thoughts about the qualifications and challenges facing the nurse who fills this position. I agree that the balance of responsibility for a new graduate may be hard but learning of your dedication to training and supporting new nurses reminds me of clinical placements that have shaped me to be successful and competent as a student nurse.

“ I remain very interested in this position and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about (name of organization) and (specific unit). I believe in the mission of (name of organization) and remain confident that I have the skills, knowledge, and passion to join your team in providing exceptional care to patients and their families. Thank you again for the opportunity to share my skills, experiences, and interest. I look forward to hearing from you soon.”



# Structured Behavioral Interviewing

Many healthcare organizations are moving towards implementing Structured Behavioral Interviewing.

Structured Behavioral Interviewing is an assessment process that focuses on what you have done in the past, not on what you say you might do in the future. Rather than asking you directly if you have a particular skill or trait, the interviewer asks you to provide an example of a time when you demonstrated the skill or trait that they are seeking.

To prepare for a Structured Behavioral Interview Question, take some time now to recall specific situations that show behaviors related to:

Work Experience

Leadership

Teamwork

Conflict Management

Initiative/Planning

Prioritizing

Customer Services

Mission of the Organization

Think about how your past experiences (doesn't have to be nursing experiences) and current skills relate to the position you are applying for and prepare short descriptions of each situation so you are ready to give details and share your story during the interview. Your stories should have three parts:

a **BACKGROUND** of the situation

your **ACTION**

the outcome or **RESULT** of your action

## Sample Structured Behavioral Interview Questions:

1. At times patients or their families ask us unexpected questions or make unusual requests that we haven't dealt with before. Tell me about a time when this has happened to you.
2. Tell me about a time when compassion influenced your interactions with your co-workers or a patient.

# Sample Interview Questions

- Please tell us about yourself.
- Why did you decide to become a nurse?
- Why did you choose (\_\_\_ nursing area) as your desired area to work in?
- What do you know about our organization?
- Why do you want to work in our hospital and/or community?
- As a new nurse, what qualities or skills do you possess that will be an asset to you for quickly adapting to the demands of your working environment?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What interests do you have outside of work?
- What part(s) of your nursing education did you enjoy the most? What have you learned about yourself while in nursing school?
- What have you done in nursing school that has shown initiative?
- What does professionalism mean to you?
- What nursing organizations do you belong to and how do you stay current in the profession?
- What do you think are key skills needed to be an excellent nurse? How have you developed these skills?
- Describe your perfect job.
- What do you value most in a job?
- What qualities or characteristics do you admire most in people?
- Describe your relationship with your last manager or supervisor.
- What type of work environments do you thrive in and what was your best work situation and why?
- How would you describe your work ethic and approach towards nursing?
- What kinds of management style do you like the most, the least, why?
- How would you describe your skills as a team player?
- Tell us of a time when you had to give difficult feedback to a coworker. How do you ask for feedback about your performance from others?
- Please share an experience of how you have prioritized your workload when faced with many demands.
- As a nurse you will be in contact with patients with a variety of needs and lifestyles. What kind of patients do you find difficult to work with?
- What are strategies you employ to successfully work with diverse populations?
- Describe a difficult decision you've made and the process you went through to reach that decision.
- How do you handle stress?
- How would you handle unexpected circumstances, such as being short staffed or having to perform a treatment you have not done before?
- Tell us about a difficult situation you have experienced in a clinical or work setting. How did you handle it, what did you learn from it, and how would you implement what you learned in a positive way in the future?
- Health care is a service-oriented industry. Tell us of a time you personally created good customer service experience for someone.
- Please give an example of when you have offered respect and caring to a patient or a coworker.
- How would you describe your weaknesses in terms of clinical skills, and what do you need from us to help address developing those skills?
- Tell me about a clinical mistake you made, and what you learned from the experience.
- What approach would you take in explaining a complex clinical issue with a patient who does not have a clinical background?

## Sample Interview Questions, cont...

- A patient is frustrated because they had been kept waiting for their appointment. How would you handle the situation and patient's frustrations?
- Imagine that a physician is suggesting an approach with a patient you have been monitoring and you disagree with this approach. How would you address it?
- Tell us about a conflict you have had with someone who did not agree with your thoughts or actions. How did the experience make you feel and how did you work so solve the conflict?
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What makes you right for this job?
- What do you believe sets you apart from other candidates?
- Why should we hire you?
- What do you feel you can bring to this job?
- Are you aware of your limitations and prepared to ask for help when needed?
- What would you like to be doing in 5 years?
- How long do you see yourself staying if we offered you the position?
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Sample Interview Questions For Recruiters

- What qualities/skills do you think the selected candidate will have to possess to succeed in this job?
- What do you think will be most challenging for the selected candidate in the first 6 months?
- What is the size of the unit? How many patients does your facility have the capacity to serve?
- What is the current staffing and staffing ratios (for example, of RNs to nursing assistants or LPNs)?
- What is your nurse/patient ratio? Does it vary by shift?
- How would you describe the patient population?
- What would a typical week be like for the selected candidate?
- Do you have 8/10/12 hour shifts?
- Can you explain the scheduling process?
- What are the expectations for the selected candidate in terms of night and weekend hours? Is there a shift differential?
- Is call required for this position? If so, what are the call requirements?
- What sets this organization apart from its competitors?
- What are the current challenges that your company faces?
- How does the administration view nursing in terms of importance to the hospital?
- How much independence do nurses have in being creative problem-solvers?
- How would you describe the level of autonomy you expect from nurses on this floor?
- Are nurses allowed to suggest areas for research to improve patient care? If so, are they allowed to design and carry out research projects with other professionals?
- What unique challenges has this unit faced over the last year? (i.e. successes, failures, etc.)
- What are some changes and challenges you have seen here in the past year (in terms of an increase of certain clinical issues, staffing changes, patient demographic changes, etc.)?
- What is your orientation program like? Do you have a preceptor program? What is its duration?
- How have you oriented new staff onto the team at your organization? How long does the orientation period last? (Also ask fellow staff how they were trained.)



# Sample Interview Questions For Recruiters, cont...

- Can the orientation phase be lengthened if I feel I need more time? If my preceptor feels I need more time?
- How much of the orientation phase will be spent on the shift I will be working?
- Will I work with one preceptor throughout or will I have several different preceptors?
- Where are new grads assigned?
- How often are performance reviews conducted and what is your process?
- I would like to be certain I am meeting your expectations. How will the selected candidate's performance be evaluated? Is there a formalized feedback process?
- Who would be the selected candidate's primary supervisor?
- (To ask a direct supervisor) How would you describe your management style?
- How does this position interact with your position?
- How would you describe the culture, management style and organization here?
- Why did you choose to work in this organization – what is most rewarding?
- Can you give me an example of something you like, and dislike about working for this company?
- How does this organization feel about continuing education? Do they allow time off for and/or pay for continuing education?
- What is your retirement plan like? Will you contribute?

\*Note that your last question should always be:

- What is the next step in the hiring process?

This way you will know their hiring time frame and when you can expect a call.



# Mock Interview Rounds

The following pages give mock interview rounds for you to use as practice. Try having a friend or family member be the interviewer to make the mock interview as realistic as possible.

## Round 1

- Why did you decide to become a nurse?
- Why led you to choose (\_\_\_ nursing area) as your desired area to work in?
- What do you value most in a job
- Tell me about a difficult situation you have experienced in a clinical or work setting. How did you handle it, what did you learn from it, and how would you implement what you learned in a positive way in the future?
- Describe a difficult decision you've made and the process you went through to reach that decision.
- Please give an example of when you have offered respect and caring to a patient or a coworker.
- How would you describe your skills as a team player?
- Tell me about a conflict you have had with someone who did not agree with your thoughts or actions. How did the experience make you feel and how did you work so solve the conflict?
- As a nurse you will be in contact with patients with a variety of needs and lifestyles. What kind of patients do you find difficult to work with?
- What part(s) of your nursing education did you enjoy the most? What have you learned about yourself while in nursing school?
- What have you done in nursing school that has shown initiative?
- Are you aware of your limitations and prepared to ask for help when needed?
- Please share an experience of how you have prioritized your workload when faced with many demands.
- What makes you right for this job?
- What do you believe sets you apart from other candidates?
- Do you have any questions for us?

# Mock Interview Rounds

## Round 2

- Please tell us a little about yourself.
- Why did you decide to become a nurse?
- Why did you choose (\_\_\_ nursing area) as your desired area to work in?
- Why do you want to work in our hospital/organization?
- What does professionalism mean to you?
- What do you think are key skills needed to be an excellent nurse? How have you developed these skills?
- What types of work environments do you thrive in and what was your best work situation and why?
- How would you describe your skills as a team player?
- Tell us of a time when you had to give difficult feedback to a coworker. How do you ask for feedback about your performance from others?
- What are strategies you employ to successfully work with diverse populations?
- How do you handle stress?
- Tell us of a difficult situation you have experienced in a clinical or work setting. How did you handle it, what did you learn from it, and how would you implement what you learned in a positive way in the future?
- Health care is a service-orientated industry. Tell us of a time you personally created a good customer service experience for someone.
- What are your greatest strengths in the clinical setting and what are your areas that you strive for improvement?
- Why should we hire you?
- Do you have any questions for us?

# Mock Interview Rounds

## Round 3

- Why did you decide to become a nurse?
- Why led you to choose (\_\_\_ nursing area) as your desired area to work in?
- As a new nurse, what qualities or skills do you possess that will be an asset to you for quickly adapting to the demands of your working environment?
- What have you done in nursing school that has shown initiative?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- Describe your relationship with your last manager or supervisor.
- How would you describe your work ethic and approach towards nursing?
- What do you think are key skills needed to be an excellent nurse? How have you developed these skills?
- How would you handle unexpected circumstances, such as being short staffed or having to perform a treatment you have not done before?
- A patient is frustrated because they had been kept waiting for their appointment. How would you handle the situation and patient's frustrations?
- How would you describe your weaknesses in terms of clinical skills, and what do you need from us to help address developing those skills?
- As a nurse you will be in contact with patients with a variety of needs and lifestyles. What kind of patients do you find difficult to work with?
- Health care is a service-oriented industry. Tell us of a time you personally created good customer service experience for someone.
- What do you feel you can bring to this job?
- What would you like to be doing in 5 years?
- Do you have any questions for us?