SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

PERSONAL FINANCE CAREER GUIDE
A helpful guide for jumpstarting your internship and job search!

Student Academic Affairs & Career Development Office
1194 Nancy Nicholas Hall • 1300 Linden Drive • Madison, WI 53706
608-262-2608 • advising@sohe.wisc.edu • www.sohe.wisc.edu
The process for finding an internship or full-time position should be multi-faceted and can involve the use of a variety of different resources. The Student Academic Affairs and Career Development Office has compiled a list of several internship and career search tools below for you to utilize in your job search.

**BuckyNet** is an internet-based on-campus recruiting and job posting system for UW-Madison students, alumni, and employers. Through BuckyNet, students can find internships and full-time employment opportunities, sign-up for on-campus interviews, learn about employers, and register for career events and workshops.

**Internships.com** is the world's largest internship marketplace bringing students, employers and higher education institutions together in one centralized location. This site specializes in helping students and young professionals find the right internship to kick start their career.

**Indeed.com** posts millions of jobs and internships from thousands of company web sites, job boards and newspapers. One search. All jobs. Indeed.

**Going Global** contains a database of global job and internship opportunities and has an H1B Visa database, which is particularly useful for international students. It also provides useful information such as country career guides and an employer directory. Access Going Global through your BuckyNet account.

LinkedIn’s mission is to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. When you join LinkedIn, you get access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights that help you be great at what you do. **LinkedIn for Students** is an entire section of the site dedicated to helping students get the most out of LinkedIn.

**UW-Madison** hosts a variety of career fairs in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Career fairs provide an opportunity for students to interact with employers, learn about available internship and full-time opportunities, and demonstrate their interest in particular organizations or positions. Login to your BuckyNet account to see a list of upcoming fairs.

**CFP.net** is the official website for the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (CFP Board). The CFP Board’s mission is to uphold the standard of excellence for competent and ethical personal financial planning. Through this website, students can find resources related to the financial services industry, including a Career Center featuring both internships and full-time jobs in personal finance.
YOUR GUIDE TO CREATING A TAILORED APPLICATION PACKAGE

Once you have found a position of interest, you will need to create an application package to market your skills and experiences as they relate to that position. When designing your materials, it is crucial to demonstrate how your background, knowledge, and skills make you an ideal candidate. Therefore, you should update your materials any time you apply for a new position. Putting it simply, a successful job application emphasizes the connection between what you have to offer and what the employer is looking for. Below is a sample position description, followed by an outline that highlights the different parts of both a resume and cover letter, along with a sample application package tailored to this specific position.

SAMPLE POSITION DESCRIPTION

**NOTE:** Highlighted text indicates which elements of the position description the candidate plans to highlight in their application materials.

**Job Title:** Financial Analysis/Development of Retirement Plans Internship  
**Organization:** Retirement Income Planning, LLC  
**Location:** Madison, WI

Retirement Income Planning, LLC is a full-service financial services firm with offices in Madison and Milwaukee. The main office is located in Madison off of Interstate 94 near East Towne Mall. Our firm places a strong emphasis on the values of integrity, confidentiality, sophisticated analysis and planning, accuracy and excellent client services.

This internship position is an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the investment and financial services profession.

Prerequisite: Junior or Senior applicants only.

This internship requires the following skill set:

1) Knowledge of basic mathematics.  
2) Ability to precisely communicate.  
3) Absolute appreciation of the confidential nature of information used in the analysis and development of client cases.  
4) Professional attitude and demeanor.  
5) Understanding of basic financial planning concepts (training provided).  
6) Ability to use the computer and financial planning software (training provided).  
7) Interest in learning basic knowledge of financial products (training provided).

The responsibilities of the position include the following:

1) Entering client data pertaining to assets, investment holdings and budgets into software program.  
2) Running projections of a client’s future retirement assets and income, analyze long term care needs, analyze life insurance needs.  
3) Assist in determining the proper investments and financial products to include in recommendations to clients.  
4) Assist in compiling illustrations and reports for client meetings.

Pay – $12.00/hour with opportunity for increases and bonus.

Hours – Approximately 10 – 15 hours per week. Note: Some work each week may be remotely completed and not require presence in our office.

Candidate must have reliable transportation. Our offices are located on the bus line.

Please email a resume and cover letter to Mark Farnan at mark@riplanningllc.com. Please also include contact information for a reference within your academic department (i.e., a finance professor) that can speak to your abilities.
COVER LETTER GUIDELINES

Name
Street Address • City, State Zip • Phone Number • Email Address
Portfolio/LinkedIn

Date

Contact’s Name (if known)
Contact’s Title (if known)
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr. / Ms. ________________, OR Dear Hiring Manager or Search Committee, (if name unknown)

OPENING Paragraph
• Clearly state the exact position you are applying for using the same title listed in the job description
• Include how you learned about the position and/or company (“Name drop” if someone referred you)
• Capture the reader’s attention by displaying the knowledge you have gained from your research about the
organization and its mission
• Briefly describe & connect why you are interested in working for the organization and doing this type of work –
remember to focus on what you can do for them, not what they/this position can do for you
• End the paragraph by summarizing why you feel you are qualified before leading into the body paragraph(s)

BODY Paragraph(s) – Typically 1-2 paragraphs
• Clearly state your educational background including: University name – Degree – Major – Graduation date
• Describe & connect college activities, work experience, and skills you have gained relevant to the position
• Illustrate through specific examples how you will be an asset to the organization/role
• Use key words from the job description to describe your experience, focusing directly on the desired skills and
qualifications of the position

CLOSING Paragraph
• Express your interest in an opportunity to interview
• State that you have also enclosed your resume with additional information if you’d like
• Invite the employer to contact you by including your phone number & e-mail address
• Show appreciation by thanking the employer for their time and consideration

SALUTATION
Sincerely, (NOTE: Leave 3-4 lines blank for your signature)

Your Signature
Your Typed Name

Copy and paste an electronic signature or use a script font to sign your letter.
Tyler Harris
1234 N. North Street • Madison, WI  53717 • (608) 555-1234 • tharris@wisc.edu
www.linkedin.com/in/tylerharris

August 10, 2017

Mark Farnan
President
Retirement Income Planning, LLC
2810 Crossroads Dr., Suite 4000
Madison, WI 53718

Dear Mr. Farnan,

I am writing to apply for the Financial Analysis/Development of Retirement Plans Internship with Retirement Income Planning, LLC. I learned of this position through BuckyNet, the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison)’s primary job and internship database. As a student in the School of Human Ecology (SoHE) at UW-Madison, I have learned the importance of helping individuals make healthy, sound financial decisions, and I look forward to the possibility of working for an organization that places a strong emphasis on values such as integrity, confidentiality, and excellent client services. I am confident that the combination of my education and finance experience will allow me to thrive in this internship.

I am currently a junior in the Personal Finance program at UW-Madison and plan to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in May 2019. Through my coursework, I have learned about everything from basic financial management concepts to the importance of economic wellbeing for individuals and families. To date, my favorite class was Building Financial Assets and Capability in which I learned to help assess and prevent household financial problems and improve people’s financial security. Through a semester long team project, I was able to gain depth knowledge on skills related to managing cash flow, credit and debt, and saving for long-term goals, including retirement. I plan to continue gaining financial management knowledge through upcoming courses such as Financial Coaching and Advanced Consumer Finance, and I am confident that what I learn will immediately benefit Retirement Income Planning, LLC in this internship.

In addition to my educational background in personal finance, I have spent the past few years developing significant experience related to the financial services industry outside of the classroom as well. For instance, I am currently the President of UW-Madison’s Financial Occupations Club for University Students (FOCUS). Through this role, I have the unique opportunity to collaborate with students, staff, alumni, and industry professionals to provide events and resources for students pursuing finance-related careers across campus. Moreover, as a peer educator for SoHE’s Financial Life Skills course, I have learned how to communicate difficult to understand financial concepts clearly to freshmen who are learning about this content for the first time. Additionally, I joined the Financial Planning Association (FPA) of Minnesota to strengthen my knowledge and connection to the industry as well. Lastly, this past summer, I was fortunate enough to intern with First Fiduciary Corporation, where my role included preparing for client meetings, building relationships with clients by listening to and understanding their needs, and implementing a paperless tracking system that housed confidential client information.

I am incredibly excited about the possibility of putting my classroom and financial services experiences to good use in an internship with Retirement Income Planning, LLC. I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss the position and my qualifications with you. Please contact me at (608) 555-1234 or tharris@wisc.edu to arrange an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tyler Harris

Tyler Harris
# COVER LETTER CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to assess the quality of your cover letter. You will want to answer “Yes” to as many questions as possible to ensure you are submitting a high-quality application.

## Layout, Appearance, & Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is your contact information listed at the top of the page in the same way it is on your resume?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you include the date you wrote the letter following your contact info?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you include the contact information of the hiring manager/company?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the letter addressed to the hiring contact? Or, “Dear Hiring Manager,” if unknown?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the letter an appropriate length (typically 3-4 paragraphs and 1 page long)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the font, style, and paper quality match that of your resume?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the letter vertically centered on the page (i.e., balance of white space throughout)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you use a business letter/block format (i.e., all paragraphs left-justified and not indented)?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you limit the amount of sentences that begin with “I” as a way to vary your writing?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you avoid using contractions (i.e., I’ve, didn’t, it’s, etc.) to maintain a professional tone?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## First Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the first sentence clearly state the specific position you are applying for?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you indicate how you found out about the position?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you briefly explain why you are interested in this specific organization and/or role?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you summarize why you are qualified before leading into the body paragraph(s)?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Body Paragraph(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is your letter tailored to the organization, demonstrating you have done your research?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you describe what you can contribute to the organization (i.e., skills, experience, etc.)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your letter focus on what you can do for the organization, not what they can do for you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you use specific examples of how your skills and experience will benefit the organization?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the info in the letter intrigue the employer by providing more detail than your resume?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a logical flow your information (i.e. separate paragraphs for education vs. experience)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do your statements demonstrate enthusiasm for and interest in the position?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you differentiate yourself from other candidates by highlighting your unique qualifications?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Closing Paragraph & Salutation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you reiterate your excitement for the position?</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you refer to your resume as a way to gain additional knowledge about your skills?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you express your interest in the opportunity to interview?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you thank the reader for their time in considering you as an applicant?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you include your contact information for them to reach out to you if needed?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you include a closing phrase such as Sincerely, Best, etc.?</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there blank lines below the closing phrase, allowing space for a written or typed signature?</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you remember to sign the letter (using an e-signature or script font)?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESUME GUIDELINES

Name
Street Address • City, State Zip • Phone Number • Email Address
Portfolio/LinkedIn

EDUCATION

• As an undergraduate student, education should be the first section listed underneath your contact information.
• Omit high school information from your education section now that you are in college.
• For each institution where you have received or will receive a degree, you should include the following information:
  o Institution name, along with the city and state on one line.
  o Degree(s) you have or will be receiving (i.e., Bachelor of Science).
  o Major(s) (i.e., Personal Finance).
  o Certificate(s) you are pursuing, if applicable (i.e., Certificate in Business).
  o Graduation month and year (i.e., May 2018), on the same line as your degree.
  o Cumulative and/or Major GPA, if above 3.0; include scale (i.e., 3.2/4.0).
• You may also include additional information such as relevant courses, honors received as a student (including the Dean’s List), study abroad institution(s), etc. in this section.

EXPERIENCE SECTION(S)

• Tailor your headings to draw attention to relevant experience as it relates to the position you are applying for (i.e., Finance Experience rather than Work Experience).
• Each individual experience listed should include the organization name, city and state, your position/title, and the dates you were involved (i.e., May 2015 – December 2015).
• Include 2-5 bullets per experience, clearly outlining your skills and accomplishments while in the position vs. simply listing duties you were responsible for.
• Start each statement with a strong action verb that demonstrates a skill and utilize the following formula to build bullets:
  o What you did + How you did it + Why you did it + Impact it had (when applicable).
  o EXAMPLE: Coordinated monthly networking events (WHAT) by partnering with local alumni chapters (HOW) to provide an opportunity for students to develop connections within their field (WHY), which increased alumni membership by 20% (IMPACT).

ACTIVITIES

• If you are involved on campus or in the community, you may include a section that focuses on those activities (consider calling the section something like “Campus Involvement” or “Community Engagement”, etc.).
• Similar to the other Experience section(s), you should include the List these activities in the same format you used for the Experience section(s): organization name, city and state, position/title, and the date range you were involved, along with 2-5 bullets that clearly outline your skills and accomplishments.

SKILLS

• The skills section is optional and should be reserved for tangible skills you can demonstrate, such as specialized software skills (beyond Microsoft Office), design or foreign language skills.
• Avoid subjective phrases such as “Team Player,” “Hard Worker,” “Good Communicator,” etc. If you want to highlight those skills, build them into your bullet points and/or your cover letter.

RESUME DO’s

• Choose a clean font between 10-12pt.
• Use one consistent format, bullet type, font, size, etc.
• Use present tense verbs for current positions & past tense verbs for previous positions.
• Quantify statements with numbers, percentages, etc.
• Set margins between 0.5”-1” and balance white space.

RESUME DON’Ts

• Don’t exceed 1 page for an undergraduate resume.
• Don’t use a pre-formatted resume wizard or template.
• Don’t simply list your job duties – focus on skills instead.
• Don’t use personal pronouns (i.e., I, me, my, etc.).
• Don’t allow spelling or grammatical errors of any kind.
• Don’t include info like birth date, marital status, etc.
SAMPLE PF RESUME

Tyler Harris
1234 N. North Street • Madison, WI 53717 • (608) 555-1234 • tharris@wisc.edu
www.linkedin.com/in/tylerharris

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Bachelor of Science
Madison, WI
May 2019
Major: Personal Finance – CFP® Board-Registered Program and Spanish
Cumulative GPA: 3.9/4.0 (Dean’s List, All Semesters)

Universidad de Sevilla
UW-Madison Study Abroad Program
Seville, Spain
January 2017-May 2017

PERSONAL FINANCE EXPERIENCE

Financial Planning Association (FPA) Minnesota Chapter
Chapter Member
Minneapolis, MN
September 2015-Present
• Gained industry knowledge by attending two FPA Next Gen socials and the April 2016 FPA chapter monthly meeting
• Applied for and received scholarship to attend the FPA Annual Symposium in November 2015
• Participated in the FPA Career Fair in February 2017 as a way to network and learn more about career options

UW-Madison Financial Occupations Club for University Students (FOCUS)
President
Madison, WI
August 2016-Present
• Collaborate with 4 organization officers to provide personal and professional growth opportunities for students interested in careers in the financial services industry, including professional speaker events, socials, and firm visits
• Network with finance professionals in the Greater Madison area to build and strengthen industry connections

First Fiduciary Corporation
Investments Associate
Saint Paul, MN
Summer 2017
• Participated in client meetings to develop interpersonal skills and gain additional knowledge on financial products
• Implemented paperless files initiative by working with Financial Planners to streamline communications and build a new online database to house confidential information for Fiduciary Investment Managers

UW-Madison School of Human Ecology
Financial Life Skills Course Peer Educator
Madison, WI
September 2016-December 2016
• Facilitated and led small group discussions and activities for 9 university freshman in order to cultivate a comfortable learning environment
• Communicated basic financial management concepts to new students to help provide a strong foundation for their financial future
• Enabled students to set personal and financial life goals to promote healthy decision-making throughout their college career and beyond

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

UW-Madison Housing
Resident Assistant
Madison, WI
August 2016-May 2017
• Facilitated academic, cultural, recreational, community, and social programming for 200+ residents in Angell Hall
• Helped students adjust and get to know their roommate(s), floor members, residence hall, and university community
• Selected to attend the Resident Assistant (RA) Leadership Conference in Florida in February 2016

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Woodcrest Church Mission Trips
Adult Leader/Student Participant
Eagan, MN
Summers 2009-2015
RESUME CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to assess the quality of your resume. You will want to answer “Yes” to as many questions as possible to ensure you are submitting a high-quality application.

Layout, Appearance, & Grammar

- Is your name at the top bolded and larger than the rest of your text? □ Yes □ No
- Is your contact info included (address, phone number, email, portfolio/LinkedIn)? □ Yes □ No
- Is your resume an appropriate length (1 page for undergraduates; 2 pages for graduates)? □ Yes □ No
- Are the margins acceptable and consistent throughout (0.5” – 1”)? □ Yes □ No
- Is there an even balance of white space on the top, bottom, and sides of the page? □ Yes □ No
- Is the resume visually appealing? Is it easy to scan and evenly spaced? □ Yes □ No
- Is the resume in a legible font (Sans Serif recommended), set to 10-12pt size? □ Yes □ No
- Is the formatting consistent throughout (i.e., use of bold, bullet type, heading styles, etc.)? □ Yes □ No
- Are the correct verb tenses used (i.e., present tense for current jobs, past tense for past jobs)? □ Yes □ No
- Did you avoid using first-person language (i.e., I, me, my, etc.)? □ Yes □ No
- Is your resume free from spelling and grammatical errors? □ Yes □ No

Education Section

- Is the institution name written correctly (i.e., University of Wisconsin – Madison)? □ Yes □ No
- Is your major included and listed correctly? □ Yes □ No
- Did you list any certificates you are pursuing correctly (if applicable)? □ Yes □ No
- Is your study abroad institution included (if applicable)? □ Yes □ No
- Is your GPA listed if above a 3.0? Is it two decimals or less and out of a 4.0 scale (i.e., 3.21/4.0)? □ Yes □ No

Experience Section(s)

- Are you utilizing appropriate headings (i.e., Education, Experience, Activities, Skills, etc.)? □ Yes □ No
- Is at least one heading tailored to your industry (i.e., Finance Experience)? □ Yes □ No
- Did you list your experiences in reverse chronological order (most recent first) in each section? □ Yes □ No
- Does each experience contain the organization name, location, position title, dates, & bullets? □ Yes □ No
- Are there 2-5 bulleted statements per experience? □ Yes □ No
- Do all statements demonstrate skills and accomplishments rather than routine tasks/duties? □ Yes □ No
- Do your bullet statements start with strong skill/action verbs and market results of those skills? □ Yes □ No
- Did you quantify results (i.e., use numbers) whenever possible? □ Yes □ No
- Did you highlight the most relevant experience as it relates to the position you are applying for? □ Yes □ No

Additional Things to Consider

- Have you had your resume reviewed by others, including a career advisor? □ Yes □ No
- Do you revisit and update your resume even when you are not searching for a position? □ Yes □ No
- Are there gaps in your experience sections that you can address by gaining more experience? □ Yes □ No
- Have you saved your document as a PDF file to send out? □ Yes □ No
- Did you refrain from using a resume wizard or template? □ Yes □ No
REFERENCES PAGE OUTLINE

List 3 professional references on your references page. These can be past or present supervisors, professors, student org. advisors, etc.

Include all of these elements for each reference you list.

Your header should look the same here as it does on both your resume and cover letter.
REFERENCES

Frank Frieberg
Financial Planner
First Fiduciary Corporation
Former Supervisor
(800) 555-5678
frieberg@firstfiduciarycorp.com

Linda Lepe
Director of Consumer Finance and Financial Planning
School of Human Ecology
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Financial Life Skills Course Instructor
(608) 262-1234
lindalepe@sohe.wisc.edu

Ray Richmond
Director of Housing
UW-Madison Housing
Former Supervisor
(608) 265-4545
rrichmond@housing.wisc.edu
YOUR GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

If your tailored application package successfully lands you an interview, you’ll need to be ready to market yourself effectively in person. This step-by-step guide will help you prepare for all aspects of the interview process – before, during, and after.

Main Objectives
As an interviewee, you have a few major objectives to accomplish during the interview process:

- Demonstrate that you have done your research on the organization and the position you are interviewing for
- Reinforce your skills and prove you are qualified by talking about your experiences as they relate to the position
- Persuade the interviewer(s) that you can help solve their problems and meet the organization’s needs
- Ask thoughtful questions to determine if the position and organization are a good fit for you personally

Before the Interview
Anything on your resume is fair game to be asked about in an interview, so be sure you know how to articulate answers related to each experience you have listed. Be prepared to give specific examples and tell detailed stories about each of your qualifications and accomplishments. Have several examples ready and be able to draw from many diverse experiences to demonstrate how your education and background match the skills needed to be successful in the position.

Research the Organization and Position
Doing your research is a critical step in the interview process. By researching the organization, you will have a better understanding of their mission, vision and goals, how the organization is performing, what it prides itself on, and how your experiences align with the role. Read through the “About Us” or “Who We Are” section of the organization’s web site and most recent annual report if possible. By knowing what the organization values and what the position requires, you can tailor your responses to any questions asked accordingly. Your research may also help you develop a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview.

Practice
You may think you know everything you need to know about yourself and what is on your resume, but have you ever said any of those things out loud? It is very important to prepare answers to common interview questions in advance and to practice how you deliver your responses. Review the Interview Prep Worksheet on the next page, schedule a mock interview with your career advisor, sit down with a friend to practice, or write out sample responses to questions - whatever it takes for you to feel more prepared. Never underestimate the importance of practicing before the actual interview.

Choose an Outfit
Dressing appropriately and conservatively for an interview is critical since your appearance will be the first impression the interviewer has of you. It’s important to wear business professional attire and to keep makeup, accessories, and fragrance to a minimum. Below are some examples of appropriate interview attire.

Additional Tips
- Know where you are going – have the company address and room number on hand
- Allow yourself plenty of travel time and plan to arrive at least 5-10 minutes early
- Save the organization and/or interviewer’s phone number just in case you are running late
- Write down the name(s) and title(s) of your interviewer(s)
- Bring a padfolio and pen, extra copies of your resume and reference page, and a list of questions to ask the interviewer, but leave the coffee, water bottle, and cell phone in your car
Common Interview Questions

Regardless of the position, you can typically expect certain questions to be asked. Below is a list of some commonly asked interview questions and a bit of information about what the employer is looking for in a response.

1. **Tell us a little bit about yourself.** (This question is really asking, “Tell us about yourself in relation to this position.” Briefly touch on your education, experience, and interest in the position.)

2. **Why are you interested in this position?** (You should be expecting this question and it serves as a chance to demonstrate the research you have done on the position and organization.)

3. **Why did you select your major/how has your major prepared you for this role?** (Having a solid understanding of your major and what you’ve learned as a result of your education can help demonstrate your ability to translate your classroom learning into real-world experiences.)

4. **What are your strengths and weaknesses?** (Focus on strengths as they relate to this role and give examples where you have demonstrated your strengths. In talking about your weaknesses, do not focus on anything that would negatively impact your ability to do this particular job. Also be sure to explain how you have identified ways to work on those weaknesses and give examples of how you have improved in that area.)

5. **Give me an example of a time when...** (Any question beginning with this phrase is asking for a specific example of a time when you’ve encountered this – answer by addressing the following things: what was the situation, tasks that needed to be completed, what action(s) did you take, and what was the end result? The thought process is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Below are a couple of examples.)
   a. Tell me about a time when you had to use your analytical skills to solve a problem.
   b. Give me an example of a time when you have demonstrated leadership.
   c. Tell us about a time when you disagreed with a coworker? What happened? How did you resolve the issue?

6. **Tell us about one of your greatest accomplishments.** (This is an opportunity to showcase a significant project or task that might prove you have the skills needed to be successful in this role. Be specific about what you achieved and how.)

7. **Why do/did you want to leave your current/last job?** (The employer is looking for reasons that show a desire to do better or for someone just out of college to give an idea of career goals.)

8. **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?** (This is in reference to your professional/career goals. Employers often want to hear that you see a future with their organization.)

9. **What do/did you like best about your current/last job?** (This gives employer an idea of the types of job duties you enjoy doing.)

10. **What has been the most interesting job or project you have had in your working career so far?** (They are likely more interested in the reasons than the answer, which may give the employer an idea of what you want from a job.)

11. **How would your former co-workers describe you?** (This gives the employer an idea of how you would like to be perceived.)

12. **What is your ideal supervisory style?** (This gives the employer an idea of the type of supervisor you work well with.)

13. **Why should we hire you?** (This question is similar to the ‘strengths’ question – focus on the unique skills and experiences you bring to the table that set you apart from other candidates. What can you do for them that other candidates cannot do? Be confident in your response!)

14. **Do you have questions for us?** (You should! This shows us that you are prepared for the interview.)
**STAR Method for Answering Behavior-Based Interview Questions**

Behavioral interviewing is a technique employed by interviewers to evaluate your past behavior in order to predict your future behavior in a particular situation. Answering behavioral questions is not an easy task, but proper preparation will assist you in answering them successfully.

Utilizing the S.T.A.R. method will help you construct an organized, specific, thoughtful, and concise answer. Be sure to remember the result! Many people leave this part out, and the end result is often what employers are most interested in hearing more about.

**STAR Method**

During the interview, your responses need to be specific and detailed. Tell them about a specific situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly describe the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive outcome or result (aka: what did you learn). Your answer should contain these four parts: Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

**Situation**

Think of a situation you were involved in that had a positive outcome and relates to the question asked. You can use examples from classes, an internship, a volunteer experience, your part-time job, etc.

**Task**

Describe the tasks involved in the situation. Think about the goal you were working toward. What specifically were you trying to accomplish?

**Action**

What did you specifically do to make an impact? What was your role in the process? Even if the question relates to a team-oriented project, the employer is most interested in learning more about what you did to help the team succeed.

**Result**

Describe what happened as a result of your actions. What did you learn from this experience? A positive end result is what they are really looking to hear in your response, so spend some time talking about the how the situation turned out.

**Example**

**QUESTION:** Tell me about a time when something didn’t go as planned. How did you handle it and what was the result?

**Situation:** During my volunteer experience at Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, I was the lead volunteer in charge of the “Bike for Boys & Girls Club” event.

**Task:** In this role, I was responsible for recruiting and organizing volunteers for the event and coordinating the overall logistics of the day’s event.

**Action:** I collaborated with my supervisor to understand the various components of the event, like how many volunteers would be needed for each station, and what each of their roles should be. I charted out a plan and began to recruit and assign volunteers. Each volunteer was given more detail about their role for the event and told when to arrive that morning. On the day of the event, two of the scheduled volunteers failed to show up. Therefore, it was my responsibility to evaluate the current list of volunteers and reassign roles as necessary. I determined which stations could get by with fewer workers and then moved volunteers accordingly. Doing this required clear communication with every volunteer as it was important for them to feel confident in their role.

**Result:** By explaining our needs and each of the different roles to the volunteers who were reassigned, they all felt confident to assist with the day’s event. Even though we were short two volunteers, the event ran very smoothly and the community members who participated never even realized we weren’t fully staffed. It was a great success!
INTERVIEW PREP WORKSHEET

ORGANIZATION: ____________________________________  POSITION: ______________________________________

List important information and facts you found out about the organization, their mission, and the people interviewing you in doing your research to prepare for the interview:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

TOP 5 SKILLS – Identify the 5 most relevant skills you want the interviewer to know you have **as they relate to the position you are interviewing for**:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

Practice using the STAR Method – Use one of the skills and experiences you listed to the left to tell a story using STAR (Situation, Task, Action, and Result). **Be sure the story is relevant to the position you are interviewing for.**

S

T

A

R

Experiences/Stories – How have you demonstrated those skills in the past? What stories can you tell to prove you have them? **List one example per skill:**

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

List 3-5 questions to ask your interviewer(s) that demonstrate your interest in the position and organization:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________________
THE INTERVIEW ITSELF

The interview process can take on many different forms. You may have a phone or Skype interview to start, or you may advance straight to an in-person interview. Either form can involve one or multiple interviewers. It is not uncommon to go through a series of interviews as employers search for the right person for the job. In general, preparation for phone, Skype, and in-person interviews will be the same. Below is a general overview with interviewing tips to help you prepare.

Phone and/or Video Interview

A phone or video interview is generally the first type of interview you will encounter as a potential job candidate. This type of interview is typically designed as a screening interview to allow the organization to narrow down candidates they would like to meet in person. They are also used as a way to minimize the expenses involved in interviewing out-of-town candidates.

Prepare for a phone or video interview just as you would for an in-person interview. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, develop answers to common interview questions, and practice. In addition, have a list of questions ready to ask the interviewer(s). Review the job description, do your research on the company, and be ready to discuss your background and skills during this conversation. You may consider having a copy of your resume and the organization's website pulled up in front of you, if possible, however, do not rely on materials in front of you because you want to remain as natural as possible. Practicing for a phone or video interview with a friend or family member may help you to feel more comfortable and prepared for the actual interview. Get feedback on your tone, enthusiasm, clarity, and nonverbal cues. And be sure to conduct the actual interview in a space with minimal visual or noise distractions so you can give the interviewer(s) your undivided attention.

Individual One-on-One In-Person Interview

If you make it past the initial screening interview, typically the next step is to engage in one or more in-person interviews. In an individual in-person interview, you will interview with one person who will ask you a series of questions about you and your experiences to help determine your fit within the organization. Come prepared with several STAR examples about your experience in addition to questions to ask your interviewer. If you are scheduled for multiple interviews with different individuals, you may be asked some questions more than once.

Group In-Person Interview – Multiple Interviewers

When going in for an interview, you may be interviewed by multiple people or a panel at one time. These types of interviews can be treated very much like an individual in-person interview. Maintain good eye contact with all of the people in the room when answering questions. However, you may choose to direct your questions at the end of the interview to specific individuals based on what they said throughout the interview, or you could ask more general questions that any or all can answer.

Group In-Person Interview – Multiple Interviewees

You may also be invited to participate in an in-person interview where multiple candidates are interviewing at once. These interviews are generally designed to see how well you work with other individuals and to evaluate your communication and leadership style. Often times, you may be asked to solve a problem together as a team and/or present a solution to the interviewers. Be courteous, speak up when appropriate, include other interviewees, and do your best to stand out.

Additional Tips

- Greet your interviewer(s) with a firm handshake and a smile
- Maintain good eye contact and posture throughout the interview
- Be yourself and show enthusiasm for the position
- Be mindful of your nonverbal communication and avoid filler words (i.e., “like,” “um,” “you know,” etc.)
- Ask for clarification on a question or take a moment to formulate your thoughts if needed. It is better to make sure you understand the question and come up with a thoughtful response than to not answer the question posed to you.
- Give detailed responses to questions, but don’t ramble on once you have provided an answer
- Always remain positive....Some questions may get at “negative” topics, but don’t ever badmouth a former employer!
- Avoid topics about salary and benefits in the interview – these can be addressed once an offer is made
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time, shake hands on the way out and ask for a business card to follow up
AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Immediate Follow-Up
Promptly send an email or handwritten thank you note to each interviewer you met with during the interview process. Briefly reiterate your interest in the position and organization, as well as your qualifications. Also include something personal from the interview to refresh their memory about what was discussed (i.e., having graduated from the same college or university as the interviewer). Making it personal goes a long way in helping you remain a top candidate. See below for a sample follow-up email.

Additional Follow-Up
Sometimes the hiring process can take longer than expected, so it is acceptable to follow up if you were given a timeline for when a decision should be made and that timeline has passed. Simply contact the employer, express your continued interest in the position, and inquire about the status of the search. Do not ask if the job is yours or contact the employer before a decision was supposed to have been made. Be patient, as these things can take some time. The internal hiring process can vary greatly depending on the organization. Regardless of how long the process takes, the employer should eventually contact you with a hiring decision.

SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

Dear Mr. Farnan,

Thank you for taking the time to interview me this morning for the Financial Analysis/Development of Retirement Plans Internship with Retirement Income Planning, LLC. I am very passionate about working in an environment where I can help individuals make sound financial decisions. Having the opportunity to hear from you about why you founded Retirement Income Planning, LLC was incredibly inspiring. I truly enjoyed learning about how you have been able to grow the firm and serve so many clients in both Madison and Milwaukee.

As a junior majoring in Personal Finance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an active member of the financial services community, I am confident that my education and experience will allow me to grow and excel in this position. I am even more excited to join your team now that we have had a chance to discuss the role in greater detail.

Thank you for sharing your story with me – how exciting to know that we are both Badgers! I hope to continue the conversation about this position and look forward to hearing back from you soon. Please let me know if you need any additional information as you make your hiring decisions.

Sincerely,

Tyler Harris
SoHE Student Academic Affairs & Career Development Office

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Monday – Friday
9:00am – 4:00pm

LOCATION:
1194 Nancy Nicholas Hall
Fetzer Center for Student Excellence

APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING:
Schedule 30-minute career advising appointments through the MyUW Scheduling Assistant or via the contact information below

CONTACT:
advising@sohe.wisc.edu
608-262-2608