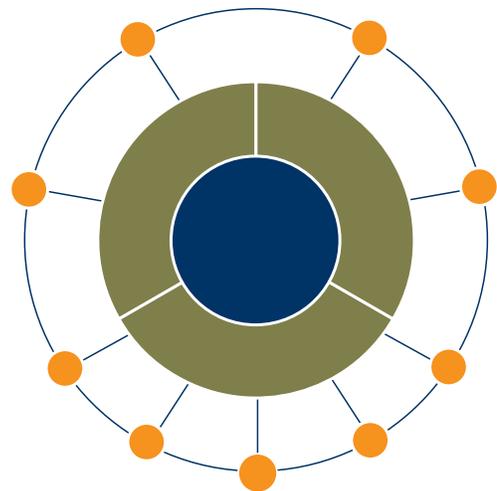


EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FRAMEWORK

Interviewing for Employability Skills

September 2020

Employment interviews are a critical part of the hiring process for most employers. This resource provides sample interview questions that align to the U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework.



Introduction

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Employment interviews are a critical part of the hiring process for most employers. This resource provides sample interview questions that align to the U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework.

WHO USES THIS TOOL?

It can be used by employers to help consider job candidates' employability skills or by educators to prepare students for interviews and to reinforce employability skills in education and training programs. Please note that an interview is only one approach for assessing candidates' skills and should be considered in light of other factors, including the veracity of candidates' statements; the interview purpose, environment, and structure; and the ability of interviewers to evaluate candidate responses.

GETTING STARTED

This tool begins with a review of the different types of interview questions and then lists sample questions related to specific employability skills.

Interview Questions

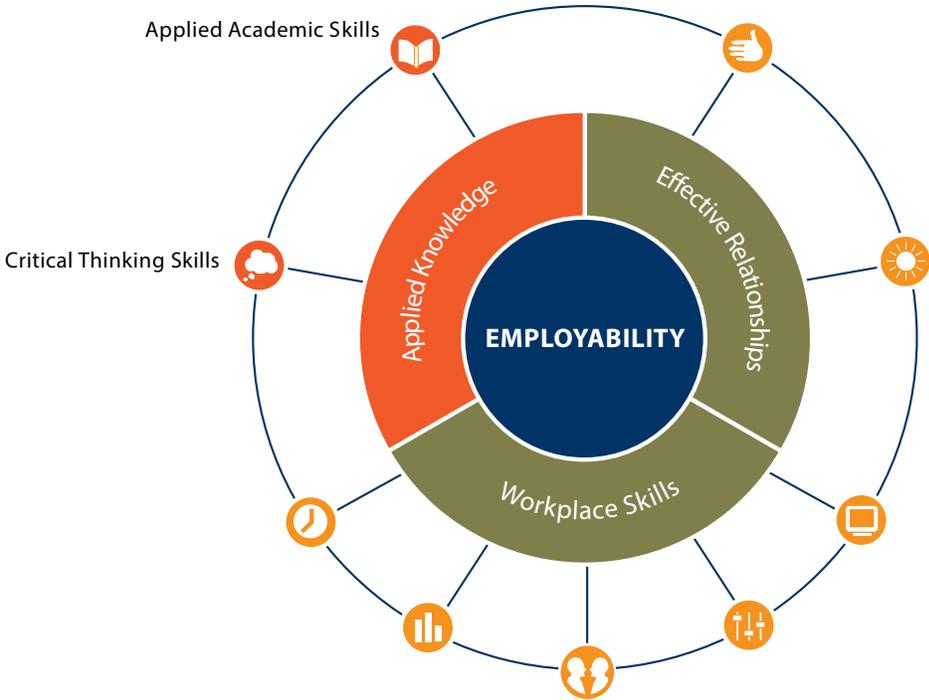
Interview questions can include the following types:

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Hypothetical questions. What would you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you handle a client who said [insert sample statement]?• How would you redesign this process to increase efficiency?
BEHAVIORAL	Questions asking candidates how they have acted in the past. What have you done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe a time when you displayed leadership.• How have you handled last-minute high-priority tasks?
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Questions asking candidates' opinion on a topic or themselves to gauge their self-management and self-awareness skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do others describe you?• What do you think is your greatest strength?
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Questions asking candidates to restate their qualifications. What do you know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your experience with Microsoft Office?
PROBLEM SOLVING	Questions or problems for candidates to demonstrate critical thinking and communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many gas stations are there in the United States?

Applied Knowledge

By nature, applied knowledge is difficult to capture in an interview. However, situational questions specific to the job can require candidates to use their academic or critical thinking skills, while behavioral questions can get at past examples of applied academic skills.

EXHIBIT 1
Employability Skills Framework: Applied Knowledge





Applied Academic Skills

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question or administer a writing sample (or other test) that will require candidates to draw upon the applied academic skills they will need to use in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer shares a hypothetical email and asks the interviewee to read it and respond to this prompt: if you were given this email, what questions would you ask the sender?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of how they have used applied academic skills in their academic or professional past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways have your job and education prepared you to take on greater responsibility? • Can you describe an instance where you have had to rewrite a training manual (or other relevant job task) and your process for revising it?
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Ask candidates to describe their academic background or occupational training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What certifications do you have? How do you think that certification will help you be successful in this position?
PROBLEM SOLVING	Ask candidates to demonstrate problem solving skills using applied academic skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your training helped you solve problems on the job?



Critical Thinking Skills

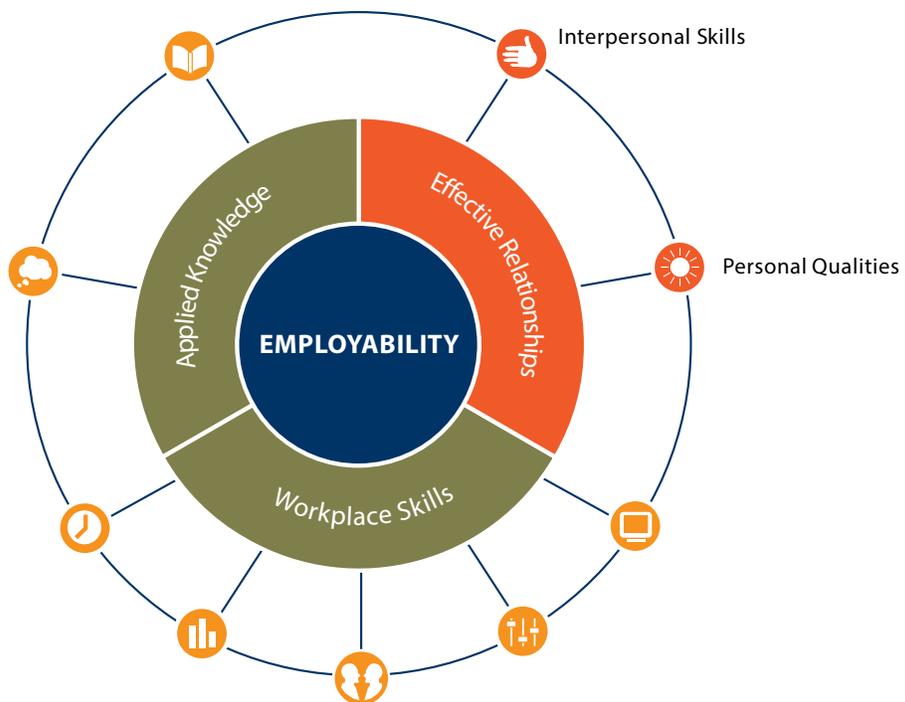
QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question that will require candidates to think critically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you solve a problem where you don't have all the information and there is an urgent deadline?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of their critical thinking skills in their academic or professional past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please provide an example of how you have handled a critical decision while a supervisor was unavailable.
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Ask candidates to solve a problem using critical thinking skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you had to address only one problem in our industry within a one-year timeline, what problem would you address?

Effective Relationships

Situational, behavioral, and self-management questions can help interviewers gauge candidates' interpersonal skills and personal qualities. Effective relationship skills can also be displayed throughout an interview, especially when candidates describe their experience working with others and handling difficult situations.

EXHIBIT 2

Employability Skills Framework: Effective Relationships





Interpersonal Skills

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question about candidates' professional relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you approach participation in a team that is unusually large?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of their interpersonal skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you resolved conflicts between coworkers? • How would you handle a member of a large team who disagrees and causes delay and friction? • How did you develop relationships with your coworkers at your most recent job? • Describe a time when you had problems with your supervisor and how you addressed them.
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Ask candidates their opinion on interpersonal topics such as collaboration, teamwork, and leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think defines a leader? • How skillful are you at "sizing up" others?



Personal Qualities

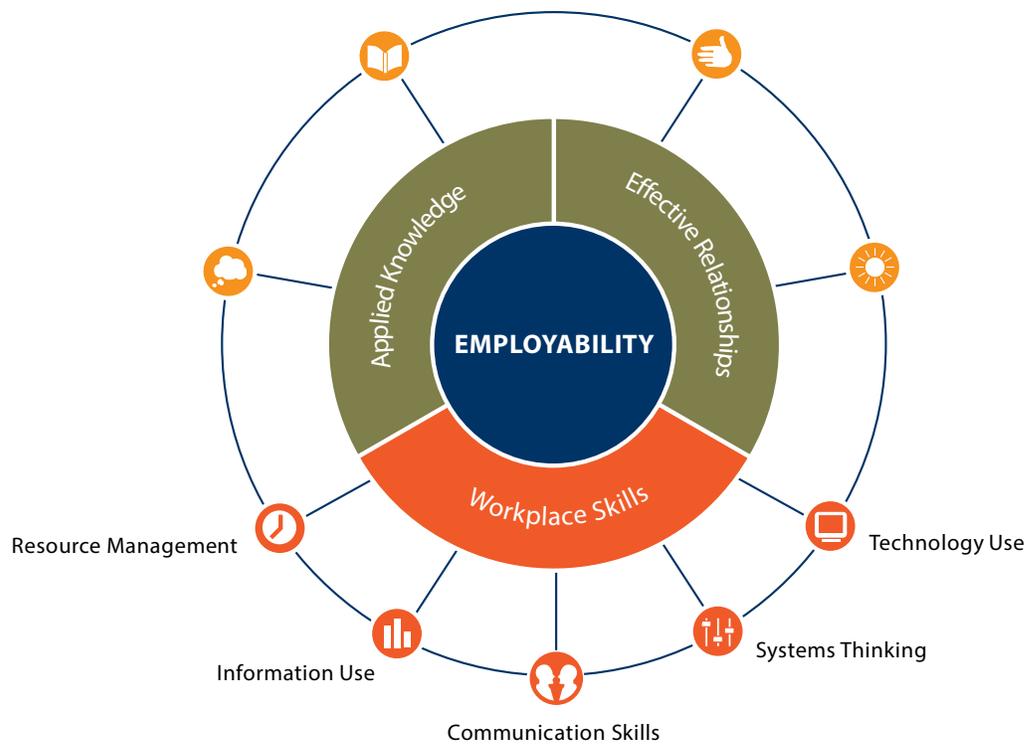
QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question about candidates' personal qualities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you orient yourself in this company if you were hired? • If your supervisor asked you to inform coworkers of a new policy, what would your process be?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of their personal qualities and how they would apply them to the job responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a time when you were confused about instructions for a task and what you did.
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Ask candidates about their personal qualities that would be important to your workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you judge professionalism? And how do you demonstrate it? • Describe your attendance record in school or previous employment. • Describe how you manage your workday.

Workplace Skills

Asking candidates to relate their skills to previous and future job tasks can provide an illustration of their workplace skills. Communication skills, in particular, can be displayed throughout an interview rather than evaluated through specific questions.

EXHIBIT 2

Employability Skills Framework: Workplace Skills





Resource Management

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question that has candidates relate their approach to managing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you handle large projects at a time when staffing is low? • What would you do if multiple clients contact you with urgent items?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of a situation that illustrates their time, money, material, or personnel management skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been over budget on a project but with work left to complete? What did you do? • How much leeway do you give your team members to make decisions? How do you still maintain control of the final product?
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Ask candidates to verify skills referenced in their resumes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see on your resume that you were a shift manager. Can you describe your approach to helping your team accomplish its tasks?



Information Use

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question that has candidates describe finding and using information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you orient yourself in this company if you were hired? • If your supervisor asked you to inform coworkers of a new policy, what would your process be?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates for an example of information collection, synthesis, and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a time when you were confused about instructions for a task and what you did.



Communication Skills

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
SITUATIONAL	Ask a hypothetical question where candidates have to describe their communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you introduce yourself to a client after you were hired? • If a customer had serious complaints about a coworker (or product), how would you respond? • An interviewer provides a sample memo. What three main points do you take away from this memo?
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates to talk about their past use of communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you communicated to coworkers when you were overwhelmed at work? • Have you ever been asked to read a significant amount of material in a short time span? What strategies did you use? • When you write reports, how do you usually get started?
SELF-MANAGEMENT	Provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their communication skills by asking questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have questions for me? (Note: Questions should reflect that the candidate has been actively listening and processing the information relayed during the interview. Questions could include these: What does a typical workday look like? What are some of the challenges I can expect in this position? What does success look like in this position?)
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Ask candidates to verify skills referenced in their resumes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It looks like customer interaction was required in your previous position. How did you communicate with customers (e.g., email, face-to-face, phone calls)?



Systems Thinking

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates to talk about their understanding of their roles in larger systems (e.g., school, workplace, or community).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you describe a past job and your understanding of how it supported the company's goals and mission?
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Ask candidates to verify skills referenced in their resumes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have you found to be the biggest challenge of working on an assembly line (or other responsibility that would convey systems thinking)?



Technology Use

QUESTION TYPES	APPLICATION TO SKILL SET	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
BEHAVIORAL	Ask candidates to talk about their past technology usage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What operating systems or new technologies have you learned and how did you teach yourself?
EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION	Ask candidates to verify skills referenced in their resumes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many years have you worked with Photoshop (or other technologies required by the job)?

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