



The ASE Interview

What to expect

The ASE Interview is different from a normal job interview in a few ways. In this pamphlet we will try to outline the specific things you should be prepared for to succeed in an ASE Interview, as well as give you some general information that you can use for job interviews in the future.

The first thing to remember is that the mentor has a copy of your application. S/he knows what you wrote in your essays, what classes you have taken, who wrote your recommendations, etc. For this reason, we do not request a resume from students. Most of the information contained in a resume is already on your application and in your position specific essay. We have included a section on resumes for your information only. Please *do not* send a resume to the ASE Program for inclusion with your application. For practice you may bring a resume to your interview, but a resume is *not* a requirement of the ASE Program.

Not all mentors choose to interview students, even though we strongly encourage them to interview at least some candidates. Do not be discouraged if you do not get a call from a mentor.

Some mentors may choose to interview you over the phone, rather than in person. There are several reasons why this may happen: time constraints, geographical locations, etc. We have included a section on the telephone interview.

The interview is as much for **you** as it is for the mentor. This is your chance to ask questions about the position, the mentor, the organization, etc. You can ask as many questions as you wish to find out if the position matches your original impression from the Position Description. If something is unclear to you, it is better to find out the specifics in the interview rather than three weeks into the summer. If the mentor does not ask if you have questions, it is perfectly within your rights to ask if s/he will answer some questions that you may have about the position.



It's a good idea to research the organization or position subject so you will have a general idea about the mentor's work. Do you know what Bonneville Power Administration does? What exactly does it mean if someone creates riparian habitat? While you may not know specifics about the mentor's work, your research will give you some basis for intelligent questions. It's a good idea to reread the position description before you go to the interview to refresh your memory on the position.

Checking online is a good first step. Also, pay attention to the newspaper to keep an eye out for articles about the company/agency. Once you learn the mentor's name, do a search to look for a scientific article the mentor may have authored. Your initiative and interest in the position will impress the mentor.

Remember that no one expects you to be perfect. For many of you this will be your first interview – while it can seem unnerving at first, the mentor is not trying to make you uncomfortable. They are all interested in the ASE Program and working with high school students.

If you have any questions about any of this information, feel free to give us a call at (503) 422/7: 83. Good luck to all of you.

General information



- Show up about 10 minutes early but no more than 15. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU BE LATE. THERE ARE NO EXCUSES.** If you are late (which you should never be!) make sure to call and tell them the circumstances. This should be *only* because of an emergency.
- When corresponding via email, use complete, grammatically correct sentences. (No “lol”, etc.)
- Plan for contingencies (e.g. bad weather, traffic and parking). Be sure of where you are going and plan for plenty of travel time. *Get specific directions when you set up the interview if you are unsure about where you will be going.* If you are taking public transportation, plan for a late or missed bus/train.
- Take a minimum with you to the interview – no unwieldy bags, stereo equipment, etc. Turn off your cell phone.
- Treat everyone respectfully, from the receptionist to your interviewer, and leave a favorable impression. These people may be your co-workers.
- Be polite, use proper grammar (no slang, profanity, slurs, etc.), and speak clearly and precisely. When people are nervous, they tend to speak too quickly. Make a conscious effort to speak slowly. Look people in the eyes – you will exude confidence.
- **NEVER LIE** about your skills, background, or abilities. Chances are it will be revealed later. The ASE Mentors realize that you do not have college-level classes or skills they expect of a 10-year professional. Your two best skills are your intelligence and your motivation. The mentor usually knows if you are qualified *before* s/he interviews you.
- Don’t be self-deprecating. You have skills and abilities to offer these people – show it in how you talk with them.
- If you sense that the interview is ending, follow the lead of the interviewer.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time and exit the building properly.
- Make sure that you get a good night sleep before your interview. This will help you function at your best!

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Each mentor will ask you his/her specific questions. One of the biggest complaints we hear from mentors is that the students are reluctant to talk in the interview. **BE PREPARED!** There is nothing more frustrating than for a mentor to hear “I dunno” or “It’s okay” in response to their questions. The mentor wants to learn about you, but the only way they can do this is if you talk. You may be scared, which is perfectly normal, but the mentors aren’t “out to get you.” The more you talk, the more the mentor knows about you, and the higher the chances are that you will get a position. If you prepare answers to possible questions it will be much easier to talk in the interview.

- A good interviewer will ask open-ended questions (i.e. ones that require more than a yes or no answer). You should be prepared to *answer* with more than just a yes or no as well.
- If you don’t understand a question, ask the interviewer to repeat it or ask for clarification or a definition. Sometimes the mentors forget that they are talking in technical terms. It’s better to ask for clarification than to misunderstand the question.
- Paraphrase your answer with their question. For example:



Interviewer: “What is your background with computers?”

You: “My background with computers is...”

This gives you a chance to gather your thoughts as well as show the interviewer that you are answering the question.

- Take your time in answering a question. Don’t feel as though you need to blurt out an answer the second the interviewer stops talking. Use about 5 seconds to collect and organize your thoughts, then answer the question. On the other extreme, don’t take *too* long to answer a question.
- It’s okay to add something to a question once it’s been answered. If you remember a piece of information that you feel is important for the interviewer to know, it’s never too late to tell him/her.
- Be prepared for specific questions (some of the following questions are ones that ASE mentors asked the students they interviewed):
 1. *What are your strengths?* This is a chance to talk about things that weren’t included in your application, expand on or clarify parts of the application, and showcase your abilities.
 2. *What are your weaknesses?* Be honest - everyone has weaknesses, and the mentors don’t expect that you can do everything. However, you can answer the question in a way that highlights a strength. “While I don’t have any experiences with XYZ Program, I taught myself A and B programs and am currently learning C program.” This shows the mentor that you are familiar with similar areas and that you can easily learn a new program.
 3. *What will you have to offer this company?* You should know the answer to this question, because this is what we ask you to write in your position specific essay.
 4. *What is unique about you?* In other words, why should we hire you over the other 25 applicants? List strengths that others may not have—not “I’m taking AP Biology, I work well with people, I’m a hard worker.” So is everyone else.

5. *Tell us a little about yourself.* Feel free to talk about your activities, classes you enjoy at school, other work you've done. However, there is no need to go into lots of detail about your family, your pets, etc.
 6. *Why are you interested in this position? Why did you apply for this position?*
 7. *Where do you see your career (or college plans) heading?*
 8. *What laboratory, computer, etc., background do you have?*
 9. *What course work have you had in the position area?* While this information is on your transcript, AP Biology doesn't tell the mentor about specific course work. Perhaps you studied a module of environmental science, etc.
 10. *Have you had the responsibility of a job before? If so, what was it?* Special projects are particularly impressive.
- Be prepared for specific questions about your application. It is wise to read over your application and essay prior to going to the interview.
 - Prepare several questions for the interviewer that shows you've thought about the position. Remember, this is a chance for you to interview the "position" and see if it's right for you. For example:
 1. What sort of project(s) will I be involved with?
 2. Will I work mainly with you or with other employees/grad students/etc.?
 3. What sort of schedule will I have?
 4. Why do you find this type of work interesting?

A specific question that a mentor suggested is: "I want to know more about what it would be like to work on your project. If I work on your project, what would my day/week look like in terms of the activities that I would be doing and with whom?" This is an excellent way for you to decide if you *really* want to spend 8 weeks at the position.

- Ask your interviewer for her/his business card. This will give you the correct information needed for your thank you correspondence.



Phone Interview

Some mentors may decide to conduct a phone interview rather than meet you in person. The basic interview format will be the same as a personal interview. The mentor may call to set up a phone interview, or s/he may conduct the interview the first time you speak to each other.

- Be prepared for a phone interview any time you get a call. You will probably not have any advanced warning. Make sure that your voice message is professional.
- Have your questions and notes readily available for you to grab. You can also have a notepad nearby to jot down any questions as they come up.
- Be sure to ask for the mentor's name and address for thank you correspondence.
- Make sure you are in a quiet place. It's difficult to concentrate on what the mentor is saying if you (or your siblings) are watching MTV or the stereo is blaring. It's appropriate to ask the mentor to hold for one moment while you move to a quieter phone or ask people to be quiet. These few seconds can also give you time to collect your thoughts.

- If you are eating food or chewing gum – get rid of it.
- Talk professionally (no slang, etc.) and make sure you speak clearly and loudly. Your voice can easily get garbled on the phone, so make sure you are being understood.
- Answer the phone professionally, i.e. “Hello, this is...” Not “Hey!” You may think your best friend is calling but it could just as easily be a mentor.
- Alert your family that a mentor may be calling to interview you. Make sure they take a message, and if the mentor wants you to call him/her back, call *as soon as possible*. Don’t wait two weeks to return the call!
- If you have an answering machine, get rid of “cutesy” messages and make sure your name is mentioned in the message.

CORRESPONDENCE

Thank you note

Immediately following your interview, sit down and write a brief thank you note to the person(s) with whom you interviewed. *This note should be sent the same day as your interview.* A thank you note serves many purposes. Basically you are thanking someone for his or her time interviewing you, you are reaffirming your interest and enthusiasm about the position, and you are reinforcing your name to the interviewer. It is a positive business touch.

An example of an appropriate thank you note:

Date	Your Address
Interviewer Name	
Interviewer Address	
City, State, Zip	
Dear _____:	
I would like to thank you again for meeting with me this morning to discuss the kygt ship position at A1 Computing. It was very interesting learning about the company and the software programs it creates.	
I would very much look forward to working with A1 Computing and appreciate your consideration. If you should have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.	
Sincerely,	
<i>Your Signature</i>	
Your name	
Area code/555-1234	

NOTE: *Use the proper spelling, title, address, etc., of the person(s) to whom you are writing.* When in doubt, double check. An easy way to get the correct information is to ask for the interviewer’s business card or to look on the organization’s website.

The note should be short and professional. **Always** use a plain note card or paper (no “cute” stationary, notebook paper, etc.). The letter should be typed or word-processed, with no errors, smudges, etc. Sign your name with blue or black ink. Again, mail the note as soon as possible.

Calling

Do *not* call the mentor to see if you have the position. While this can be a good business tactic, the ASE Program is different than a regular interview. We ask that mentors do not inform students of their decisions in case a student gets multiple offers.

The ASE Program will call you if you are offered a position, not the mentor. The ASE staff will start contacting applicants in late April, and all applicants will be notified by the middle of May.

Appearance

How you present yourself is very important. Your personal presentation says a lot about how you feel about yourself, the interview, the company, and the person(s) interviewing you. Some mentors specifically commented on the fact that students did not dress up for the interview--remember that the mentors may work in an organization where a tie, skirt, etc., is commonplace.

MEN: Wear a tie, button down shirt, slacks or khakis (no jeans!). A suit or jacket is optional for the ASE Interview, but you would probably want to wear one in a regular job interview. You should also wear dress shoes or loafers, socks, and a belt. No excessive jewelry, hair gels, or cologne. (This is an interview, not a date.)

WOMEN: Dress, dress slacks or skirt and blouse, stockings, flats or low heels. If you use make-up, keep it toned down; use subtle nail polish and minimal jewelry, perfume and hair spray/gel. In some areas it is perfectly acceptable to wear a blazer, blouse and slacks.

It is better to be overdressed than underdressed. Go with a conservative approach – you can always jazz up your appearance after you get the job.

While no one wants to admit it, appearances *do* count in our society, particularly when you do not know an individual well. Remember that your mentor will be several years older than you (and probably more conservative), and s/he may expect you to show up in conservative business apparel. While you will not get the job based on your appearance, looking professional can say a lot to a mentor about your commitment to the program and may give you an edge up on those individuals who show up for the interview in jeans and a T-shirt.

Each organization and each area has different dress codes. What is okay to wear to an interview at the Forest Service in Bend may not be appropriate for an interview at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. Use your judgment, or ask your parents, teachers, or relatives. Again, it is better to show up overdressed than to sit through an interview feeling uncomfortable because you are talking with five men and women who are in suits and you are wearing your “Rolling Stones” T-shirt.

This may seem obvious, but it needs repeating:

- Good personal hygiene is a **MUST**. Don’t show up to the interview after a game of mud football or finishing basketball practice without showering first. You’ll be nervous and may sweat, so don’t forget anti-perspirant/deodorant.
- Brush your teeth. You may want to chew mint gum until you get to the interview, but ***don’t forget to get rid of the gum prior to your interview.***
- Fingernails and hands should be clean. In all likelihood you will be shaking several people’s hands.

- Everything you are wearing should be clean, ironed, and checked for loose/missing buttons. *Clothes do not need to be new, but they should be clean and wrinkle-free.* Do a trial run of what you will be wearing to make sure it still fits and looks appropriate.
- Shoes should be polished and laces tied. Wear socks or stockings that are hole-free.

DOs and DON'Ts

DO

- PREPARE!!
- Look, act, and talk professionally
- Research the organization
- Allow for plenty of prep time
- Show your enthusiasm – smile :)
- Ask people for assistance and advice
- Talk

DON'T

- Show up late or ill-prepared
- Eat/drink/smoke/chew gum
- Talk your competition down
- Lie/Exaggerate
- Bring people to your interview
- Keep calling to see if you got the position - The ASE Program will inform you if you have received one or more job offers

Resume

This section is for your information in the future – the ASE Program does not require, nor expect, a resume. You may take a resume to your interview if you would like, as it would be good practice for future job interviews.

There are many different styles for a resume. Following is one that is appropriate for someone your age and experience level, but it is by no means the sole format. Reference books about resumes or a career counselor at your school can give you more information about resumes.

The resume should be neat (precise, consistent margins, no smudges/erasures/correcting fluid), no more than one page in length, printed on white or light bond paper (cream, light gray, etc.), and proofread *numerous* times to ensure there are *no* errors. Enlist the help of others to proofread. You will often miss mistakes because you have looked at it so many times. Don't rely on spell check – it won't catch wrong dates or words that might be used incorrectly. Your resume is the first thing a potential employer may see of you, especially if you send it in prior to your interview (the ASE Program is an exception). Make the resume look as professional as possible.

If you keep your resume on a computer file, it is easily updateable as you build your portfolio of experience and education.

The resume will include the following:

- Your name and permanent address.
- **Objective** (optional): a brief statement about why you would like the job.

- **Education:** Generally just your present school, although you can include other summer programs, supplemental course work outside of regular school, a year spent on an exchange program, etc.
- **Activities:** Shows your involvement in school and community activities. List in chronological order, with most recent activities listed first.
- **Experience:** List more “professional” experience vs. baby sitting, lawn mowing, etc. List chronologically, with most recent employment first.

YOUR NAME 123 Main Street Mayfield, OR 99999 (503) 555-5555 email	
OBJECTIVE:	To secure a summer apprenticeship position in biomedical research.
EDUCATION:	North High School, Mayfield, Oregon, <i>September 2004-present</i> Status - Sophomore, GPA 3.54
ACTIVITIES:	Junior Varsity Soccer Team, <i>Fall 2004, 2005</i> Future Business Leaders of America, <i>2004-05</i> Science Club, <i>2004-present</i> Freshman Class President, <i>2004-05</i>
EXPERIENCE:	Concessions Clerk, Nutritional Enterprises, Inc., Mayfield, OR, <i>Fall 2005-present</i> . Concessions sales for Mayfield Stadium. Duties include food and candy sales, inventory, cashier, stocking, clean-up. Warehouse Worker, Mr. Greenjeans Farms, Mayfield, OR, <i>Summer 2004, 2005</i> . General summer worker at produce farm. Duties included: cleaning scales, bins, and weigh buckets; directing pickers to row areas, weighing and charging customers for u-pick items, and hauling produce to cold storage.
REFERENCES:	Ms. Marge Simpson Manager, Nutritional Enterprises (503)555-5554, email Mr. Homer Greenjeans Owner, Mr. Greenjeans Farm (503)555-2222, email Mr. Gary Larson North High School Math Instructor (503)555-3232, email

- **References:** VERY IMPORTANT – get permission to use people as a reference *before* listing them. It’s also a good idea to let them know about jobs for which you are applying so they will be prepared when a potential employer calls.

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1. Arrange a time for an hour or half-hour long mock interview with an adult who doesn't know you well. Give him/her the position description(s) you will be applying for and a copy of your application. If you don't have a copy of your application, make up a resume that reflects your background and interests in a similar way. Tell your interviewer you want to leave 15-20 minutes after the interview to hear their impressions of your strengths and weaknesses as an interviewee and potential apprentice.
2. Prepare for your interview using the **Sample Interview Questions below**.
3. Go through the mock interview just as you would for your real interviews. Dress professionally, and fully pretend that you are in a real interview. Take notes during your discussion about your strengths and weaknesses, and do what you can to change your weaknesses and focus on your strengths. For example, something you can change for an interview is your body language, while you wouldn't be able to add more classes to your transcript than you've taken.
4. Write your interviewer a thank you note, preferably the same day.
5. Remember, even if you do not become an apprentice or aren't interviewed, this practice will help you develop interview skills you'll use in applying for jobs, college, and other positions throughout your life.

Sample Interview Questions

Feel free to add your own questions.

General

- What are your major strengths? What are some of your weaknesses?
- Tell us about yourself.
- What have you read recently?
- What are your hobbies?
- How do you like your classes? Which classes are your favorite and why?
- What things do you admire in other people?
- What was the best (and worst) criticism you ever received? Why?
- Why are you applying to this position?
- How well do you follow verbal and written instructions?

Future

- What are your long-range career/education goals?
- Where do you see yourself after you graduate from high school or college?

Employment

- What previous experiences have you had that may apply to this position?
- What qualities would you like your co-workers to possess?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What is your schedule this summer?
- Please describe an example situation where you learned new skills quickly.
- What challenges have you faced in school and how have you dealt with them?
- In one of your previous jobs, what were the challenges facing you and how did you deal with them?
- Can you manage time effectively?
- How well do you work independently?

- When are you the most and least productive?
- How would your last supervisor describe you?
- Describe the ideal team member and leader.
- Do you work better as an individual or in a team?
- What would you like to know about the company or the position?

How to Improve Job Interviews

1. **Research the organization** – read its web page, look up articles about the field of study and/or the organization’s research/work in it, do a literature search (ask your science teacher and/or librarian for help if you don’t know how) about the position you’re interested in.
2. **Self-assessment/areas that need improvement** – Know yourself, your strengths, weaknesses, and accomplishments. **Express qualifications** – know three good reasons why you are an outstanding candidate and work them into your responses during the interview.
3. **Perform practice interviews** – learn the kinds of questions you may be asked and develop your best answers. You can ask parents, friends of the family, advisors and teachers at school, and even your friends to be mock interviewers. If you have time, try to set up a mock interview with an actual business owner to help you prepare. Try your school’s career counselor for ideas of people to contact; your parents might know someone as well.
4. **Dress/groom professionally** – it’s better to be overdressed than underdressed for an interview. Wear something that you know you look good in and also is comfortable. Avoid revealing or tight clothing, perfume or cologne (many people are allergic), and excessive cosmetics. Keep jewelry simple and hair well kept.
5. **Be early** – 10 minutes is about right. If there is any chance you will be late (just don’t be), call to let your interviewer know. Turn your cell phone off.
6. **Make eye contact. Shake hands.**
7. **Listen to the interviewer** – respond completely to the question asked and try to understand why s/he is asking that question.
8. **Share the conversation** – make your answers accurate, brief, and as interesting as you can. Avoid monopolizing the interview.
9. **Be positive** – don’t knock your school, past employers, teachers, etc. Be enthusiastic (and honest) about the positive aspects of your experiences. Don’t be apologetic. Share your good characteristics you thought of before the interview.
10. **Ask questions** – a must that gives you a chance to find out more about the position and employer, as well as to show your interviewer (and probably mentor) that you researched his/her organization and subject matter. Questions you might ask include hours/days worked, what you would be doing, what kind of person your mentor finds easy to work with, what his/her expectations are of an apprentice, if there are possibilities for future employment with the organization, and so on. You should sit down and brainstorm everything you would want to ask before your interview. Sharing the list with parents, advisors, etc. is a good way to hone your questions. Remember to prioritize your questions, because your interview time will be limited.
11. **Point out why you like the organization** – are there reasons why you think the organization is a particularly good one? Are there factors that led you to choose to apply to this position

over others in the same field? If so, citing them can help build a link between you and the mentor/interviewer.

12. **Express interest** – assuming the position still interests you at the end of the interview, take time near the end of the interview to express that interest. Unless you tell them, the interviewer has no way of knowing this.
13. **Learn what happens next** – find out if the interviewer needs any more information or if s/he has any questions about your Adult Recommendations.
14. **Express thanks** – thank the interviewer for his/her time and interest. If appropriate, thank the receptionist/secretary or anyone who also helped you, but don't linger. Get a business card and send your interviewer a thank you note the same day of your interview.



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