



COMPLETE GUIDE

NURSING JOB INTERVIEWS

FOR INTERNATIONAL NURSES
& F1/OPT GRADUATES



INTRO

“Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.” - John Wooden

These words hold true in so many different aspects of life: tests at school, presentations at work, speeches at public gatherings, even a fishing trip or a flight to the States from overseas. It’s especially appropriate with a job interview.

You would want to take care to ensure you come into an interview for a nursing job in a foreign country ready to go: knowing the employer, knowing what questions to expect, having questions of your own ready to go, ready to conduct yourself in an appropriate manner.

In the **Complete Guide to Nursing Job Interviews**, the experienced minds behind Conexus Medstaff put you in the best possible position to succeed. Using this wealth of expertise and first-hand experience in working with, placing and supporting candidates, the Guide makes use of best practice tactics that will help you make a lasting impression from the beginning of the hiring process (meanwhile, we take care of the rest).

It’s all the preparation you’ve been looking for but specifically tailored for nurses and graduates hoping to make a lasting impression on **fingers crossed** your next boss. Because successful preparation is preparing to succeed.



PART 1

PREPARATION: Five Things to Work On

To successfully prepare for a nursing job interview, you need to know how to prepare. With that in mind, here are six particular things you can work on heading into your interview. They can apply whether you are participating in a telephone or teleconference interview (which may occur at earlier stages), or an in-person, face-to-face interview.

1. Know who you are and how you got where you are.

This is a multifaceted issue. Of course, you should know your résumé inside out, to the point that you're able to recount your big accomplishments and competencies. But it's also about avoiding pride, and brushing the accomplishments the team as a whole aside.

You played a significant part in the success of the healthcare delivery team: only you will be able to broadcast that part. Don't be afraid to sell yourself, because this is no time to be modest.



PART 1

PREPARATION: Five Things to Work On

2. Understand the role you are being interviewed for.

The biggest part of preparation is to know what you're getting yourself into. So get familiar with the expectations of the job description. From there, write out answers against those stated expectations on how you meet them. Be confident, but make sure you don't embellish. You will be found out if you say you can do something that you clearly cannot.

3. Research and learn as much as you can about the organization.

Beyond the job description, you can effectively prepare for an interview by getting fully acquainted with the company. Read their own website and perform general internet searches - perhaps they are prolific on social media or on healthcare industry trade publications. Three critical things you should look for are statements about mission, vision and/or organization values.



PART 1

PREPARATION: Five Things to Work On

5. Prepare some answers to common interview questions.

In the next section, you'll discover some frequently asked questions you'll need to be ready for. Practice answering those questions verbally. Here's a good exercise to do this: Role play with another person playing the interviewer. Practice speaking your answers out loud while alone.

6. Practice smiling in a mirror while you answer your questions verbally.

Studies actually prove that when you smile, the positivity that smile conveys will show up in senses other than what the interviewer sees. They'll hear it in your voice, feel it in your enthusiasm. Depending on where you're at in your nursing career, you clearly love nursing or would love to be a nurse. So the key here is to convey a professional, controlled level of enthusiasm for what you love to do.

*To learn more about things you should prepare for, be sure to read our article **25 Insightful Job Interview Tips for Nurses**.*



PART 2

INTERVIEW FAQs: Four Particular Questions to Be Ready For

There are reasonable things to expect during the job interview, including some common questions. We can delve deeper into these questions, and show you what you and the client want to get out of these FAQs.

1. “Why do you want to work here?”

What they want to know: This is a standard question to help your potential employer gauge how much time you’ve taken to learn about their organization. It gives them an idea of how seriously you’re taking the role, how passionate you are about their organization, and where your passions lie.

How you can answer: The quality of your answer comes down to how thoroughly you’ve researched the hospital/organization before the interview. Be sure to check out their website to find out more about their values and how they fit in with your own. Also, think of this question as a chance for you to hold the interviewer accountable: interviews are a two-way street. You’re here because you’ve done your preparation, looked into the mission, vision and values of the organization, and have surely found something there that has kept you enthusiastic about the role. It’s the hospital or facility’s turn to back up what they’ve said about themselves.



PART 2

INTERVIEW FAQs: Four Particular Questions to Be Ready For

2. “How do you perform under pressure?”

What they want to know: As you know, every healthcare environment brings its own set of challenges, and at times things will get stressful. The interviewer wants to see that you’ll be able to cope in these situations and exactly how you deal with stress.

How you can answer: Don’t worry - this isn’t a trick question, and the interviewer won’t be expecting you to say you’ve never felt stressed! Instead, talk about how you stay calm and focused on work, whether that’s taking deep breaths or reminding yourself why you entered the profession in the first place.

3. “What are your biggest weaknesses?”

What they want to know: The interviewer wants to see if you’re aware of any areas where you need further training or development. It’s also an opportunity for them to piggyback off the previous question, and get a sense of how you handle pressure in a more harmless situation. They want to see what you’ll do in a more relevant and critical job-related situation.

How you can answer: Seek out a positive response. Talk about areas of nursing where you have not gained a lot of experience or where you don’t feel as confident. However, try not to choose any of the primary responsibilities of the role you’re applying for. The main idea here is to show how you’re ready to minimize the weakness and create a positive frame of discussion.



PART

2

INTERVIEW FAQs: Four Particular Questions to Be Ready For

4. “How would you handle a patient who complains?”

What they want to know: This is a common question used to find out about your listening skills and how you deal with tricky situations. As with the earlier question about pressure, this situation will give the interviewer a chance to see if you are field tested and able to be plugged into a stressful situation that is nevertheless an unavoidable part of the nursing trade.

How you can answer: This is a great opportunity to share specific examples of how you helped to keep a patient calm. They want to know that you can empathize with patients and are committed to doing everything you can to help them, whether that’s alleviating discomfort or conferring with the attending doctor.

*If you want to learn more about some frequently asked questions you might encounter at a job interview, read our article **Seven Questions to Expect in a Nursing Interview.***



PART 3

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

So you may have forgotten about this element of the interview. When you, the candidate, can switch roles and ask questions of your interviewer. This is a great chance to show how much research you've done about the facility, how invested you are in getting the job, and a strong level of professionalism to match your credentials. Here are five great questions you can ask to turn the tables and learn more about the next place you might work at.

1. “Are there any specific skills that the department is currently lacking?”

Not only does this question tell you the skills that your potential workplace are short on, but it also provides an opportunity to highlight or reaffirm any of your skills to the interviewer that you think might help to plug these gaps. Treat this in a **QARR** format: Ask the **Q**uestion, listen carefully to their **A**nswer, **R**espond and **R**eassure them that you can help them with the issue.



PART

3

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

2. “How would you describe the style of the management team?”

If there’s anything in the job description that you’re unsure of, now is the perfect time to ask for more information. This allows you to delve deeper into some aspects of the role that may not have been addressed in any significant detail up to that point. This will also show the interviewer that you’ve paid close attention to the job description, and that you are likely to take the role, with all of its responsibilities, seriously.

3. “Why are you recruiting for this role?”

It could be that the team is growing, or that members of staff have left; whatever the reason, you’ll get an insight into the way the department is working right now. Also, finding out how many new members of the team they’re recruiting for can help you spot possible employee retention issues.



PART

3

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

4. “Will the successful candidate be mentored or supervised?”

As you know, nurses work in high-pressure and often varied workplaces, so, depending on your experience, the opportunity to be mentored can be invaluable for your development. This question will not only let you know whether this is possible, but it will also give you an idea of how the employers expect you to work, i.e. autonomously from day one, or with close supervision and support.

We have even more questions you can ask that will impress your interviewers in our article **Nine great questions to ask at a nursing interview.**



PART 4

MAKING WEAKNESS A STRENGTH: Handling the toughest interview question

We get it: no one wants to admit they are weak, certainly in a job interview. It's easy to feel vulnerable whenever you're asked about your weaknesses, and the questions surely race through your head if you're not prepared for it.

- How candid can you truly afford to be?
- What should you stay away from?
- How do you take something like this and come away from it looking good?

Latching onto this as a vulnerability issue, it's always best to find how you can flip the negativity. Start with some positive thinking, with this gem from author Dr Brene Brown...

“Vulnerability isn't weakness. It's the most accurate measure of courage.”

Here are a few tidbits to steel that courage when an interviewer asks, “What would you say your weaknesses are?”



PART

4

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

Take control of the weakness

Take an approach that you've already identified where you fall short. In fact, when you have your weakness identified, address it immediately in that fashion:

"I've identified that one of my weaknesses is that I <INSERT WEAKNESS HERE>."

If you'd like, give an example of it; if not, immediately move on to the steps you're taking to address the weakness.

The energy you create with this affirmative responding statement turns the matter around completely, and lets the interviewer know **"I'm taking care of this."** But be prepared to follow through: if you're fortunate enough to be hired, recognize that the interviewer or line manager will be watching, making sure you live up to your vow when the situation presents itself.



PART 4

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

Beware of the "Hey, I'm Great Trap" - 1

Two particular responses to the weakness question are likely to draw an eye roll from the people on the other side of the table.

- "I'm such a perfectionist."
- "If anything, I'm too committed/too much of a workaholic."

These responses are often perceived as weak responses that don't appear to really address an actual weakness. Diligence and dedication? Sign me up!

In reality, you need to dive deeper into how these weaknesses, you know...weaken you. Are you often easily convinced that only you should be tending to the patient? Has constructive feedback eaten away at you? If examples exist, talk about them as well in your response, then address how you've taken steps to fix them.



PART

4

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

Beware of the "Hey, I'm Great Trap" - 2

One more thing about "perfectionism" as an answer to the weakness question. In truth, it may come across that you've resorted to spouting cliches that don't sound genuine.

A part of any nurse's skill set is perceptiveness and the ability to perceive one's self should come out in addressing the weakness question. Above all else, be true to who you are, and take the time to investigate who you are in the workplace and how you're trying to improve any flaws.



PART

4

QUESTION THE QUESTIONER: Four Questions You Should Ask

Address weakness at other points of the conversation

You may find a chance in the course of the interview to address weaknesses as they come up during the conversation. For example, the interviewer may wonder about some things in your background, and how they match up with the job description.

No problem: **talk about it then and there.** If you follow the principles of turning it into a positive and a sign of your growth and maturity as a nurse, the interviewer will likely be satisfied on the weakness matter before they even come to that part of the conversation.

We can show you other ways to handle the weakness in our article **How to handle questions about your weaknesses at a nursing interview.**



CON CLU SION

Nurse job interviews are nerve-wracking, whether they take place in the US or in your home country. But preparation through research, practice, and self-assessment of your accomplishments, competencies and goals play a big part in coming across professionally.

Above all, treat a job interview as a conversation, not a confrontation.

As we've stated earlier in this guide, the interview is a two-way street, wherein you are interviewing the healthcare organization as much as the other way around. It's down to you to figure out if this is a good fit, and you should endeavor to figure that out.

If everything checks out and you like what you see during the interview, be sure to reiterate your interest by:

- **Stating that you'd like to work for them;**
- **Offering to help clear up any other information they have questions.**



ABOUT US

Conexus Medstaff is dedicated to helping skilled international registered nurses and international graduates already in the US achieve their dream of working in the US.

Our experienced team is committed to ethical, best practice nursing by improving the working lives for our candidates and clients.

That (and so much more) is what makes Conexus one of the leading international nurse recruitment agencies in the USA. Offering excellent benefits, training and education, full support to build a long-term nursing career in America, and full management of your immigration and visa process

Learn more about why Conexus Medstaff is the right choice for nurses.

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