INTERVIEW PREPARATION FOR RESIDENCY



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interviewstream



- **Three "assignments" (not mandatory) constitute <u>one</u> mock interview.**
- **27 questions, 2 minutes to answer each, no "re-tries."**
- **Contact me when you have completed the three "assignments", and we will make arrangements for me to review your videotape (in person or via email).**



First impressions are usually lasting!

A first impression is based *not only* what you are wearing.

People also perceive:

how you **LOOK,** how you **MOVE** and how you **SOUND**

Interviewers decide about you in the ***first few seconds*** of seeing / meeting you.



Then, they spend the rest of the interview ***justifying*** their decision.

First Impressions

can only be made **ONCE**



Interview Suit

Look like a successful physician - not a student!
Inspire Confidence!

- SUIT (professional, neat, comfortable and conservative):

  Jacket / pants **or** jacket / skirt <u>cut from same cloth</u>

  - Make sure it is free of tags, pulls, lint, and wrinkles!
  - Make sure it fits - not too large, not too small!

- **Black, dark blue, medium / dark gray.**
- ***Women*:** pantsuit or skirt suit

(skirt: NOT too short - at knee or just above, no slit)

- Blouse underneath: preferably solid

(or very subtle pattern): Avoid low cut.

- Sheer hosiery

- ***Men*:** single-breasted, 2- or 3-button jacket.
- SHOES: simple, closed toe, low heel (for women)





Bags

Black or dark color,

no studs, tassels, or logos



←Do

Don't!→



Portfolio

Black, **brown**, **maroon**

Accessories

Belt should match shoes



Do→



←Don't!

BRING NOTES, PAPER, PEN, AND AN ADDITIONAL COPY OF YOUR CREDENTIALS

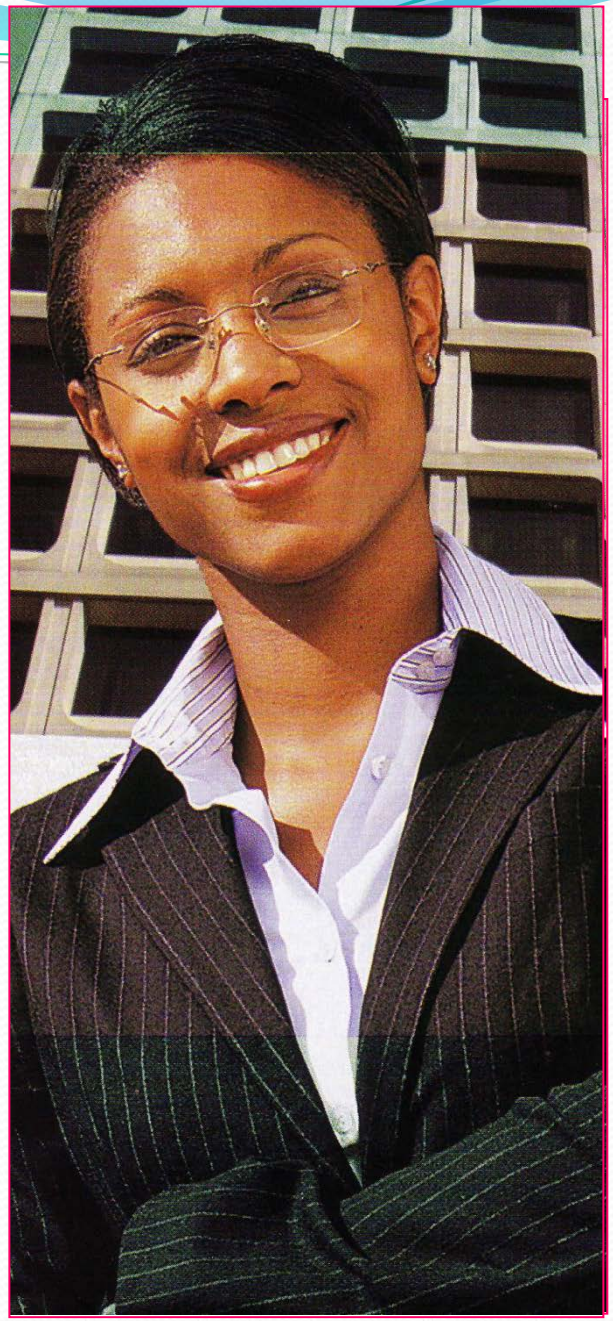
Personal Grooming

Hair
Women: well-groomed
Men: well-groomed

Nails
Women: short-medium length, clear polish, no chips
Men: clean, buffed, trimmed

Make-up
Natural-looking. Do not use too much!

Hygiene
Clean clothes
Very light perfume / cologne, if any



THE INTERVIEW

THE INTERVIEW MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR USED IN THE SELECTION OF RESIDENTS (ACCORDING TO SURVEY OF RESIDENCY PROGRAM DIRECTORS).

- A GREAT INTERVIEW MAY JUST GET YOU THAT POSITION!
- IF SELECTED FOR AN INTERVIEW, IT MEANS THE PROGRAM CONSIDERS YOU A COMPETITIVE CANDIDATE.
- PLAN STRATEGICALLY - SCHEDULE THE INTERVIEW AT THE PROGRAMS IN WHICH YOU ARE MOST INTERESTED AFTER YOU HAVE SOME INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE. PLAN ON A FULL DAY FOR YOUR INTERVIEW AND POSSIBLY A DINNER THE EVENING BEFORE.



Preparing for the Interview
"Proper Prior Planning prevents Poor Performance"



Practice interviewing to organize your thoughts and help you clearly answer questions. Ask someone (friend, classmate, spouse, family member) to conduct a "mock interview" And/or use Interview Stream.

Make a list of the top five things you want a program to know about you. This could include goals, values, accomplishments, and abilities. What makes you unique / a good candidate?

Know the program: RESEARCH! Review all information you have received. View the website. Be familiar with Key Faculty. Speak with alumni who have interviewed at - or matched into - the programs to which you are applying.

Ask well thought out questions to demonstrate interest and preparation.

Know the specialty. Be prepared to answer why you have chosen this Specialty, Program, and Area of country.

Check your Facebook page (and other social media) to be sure there is nothing unprofessional or incriminating lurking in cyberspace. (Set Facebook to "private"). Watch what you say on blogs. Program directors / administrators will likely "Google" you!

Know your CV and Personal Statement. Any information is 'fair game' for questions!

Be prepared to discuss strengths and weaknesses.



DO NOT "NO SHOW" FOR AN INTERVIEW! THIS IS A SMALL COMMUNITY - OTHER PROGRAMS WILL FIND OUT.

- **HERE IS AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO CANCEL AN ALREADY-SCHEDULED INTERVIEW:**
  THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVITATION TO INTERVIEW AT YOUR RESIDENCY PROGRAM. REGRETTABLY, I NEED TO CANCEL MY INTERVIEW SCHEDULED FOR (DATE). I APPRECIATE YOUR CONSIDERATION OF MY APPLICATION AND I APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE.

- **HERE IS AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO REJECT AN INTERVIEW OFFER:**
  THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVITATION TO INTERVIEW AT YOUR RESIDENCY PROGRAM. UNFORTUNATELY, I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCEPT AT THIS TIME. THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING MY APPLICATION.

BE ON TIME. CALL TO CONFIRM YOUR APPOINTMENT DATE, TIME AND LOCATION. CONSIDER A "DRY RUN."
KEEP YOUR CELL PHONE OFF!

BE POLITE, RESPECTFUL, GRACIOUS AND COURTEOUS - HOW YOU INTERACT WITH EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT!

BE CONFIDENT, ENERGETIC, AND PLEASANT AND HONEST.
PROGRAMS ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO WILL FIT IN – NOT CAUSE CONFLICT.

MAKE EYE CONTACT AND OFFER FIRM HANDSHAKE. BE AWARE OF BODY LANGUAGE - GOOD POSTURE.

LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE PROGRAM. SHOW ENTHUSIASM AND BE A GREAT LISTENER. EXPRESS PASSION FOR YOUR FIELD, PATIENT CARE, ETC.

DO NOT SPEAK NEGATIVELY ABOUT YOUR MEDICAL SCHOOL, PROFESSORS, COURSES OR ADMINISTRATION.

WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR?

KEY TRAITS:

ARE YOU RELIABLE, PROFESSIONAL, FLEXIBLE, AND CHEERFUL?

CAN THEY ENTRUST YOU WITH THEIR PATIENTS?



WILL YOU FIT IN? CAN YOU DO THE JOB?

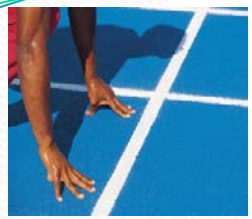
ARE YOU SOMEONE THEY CAN WORK WITH FOR 3+ YEARS?

WHAT YOU CAN ADD TO THE PROGRAM?

HOW WELL DOES THE PROGRAM MEET YOUR GOALS?

HOW COMPATIBLE ARE YOU WITH THEIR PROGRAM?

ARE YOU SINCERELY INTERESTED IN THIS PROGRAM?



GET READY FOR YOUR INTERVIEW:

KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND THROUGHOUT!

**** Don't just TELL me, *SELL* me!**
Be a "DO-er", not a "SAY-er" **

How did you handle hospital-based situations?
(patient care, teamwork, leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, multi-tasking, prioritization, etc.)

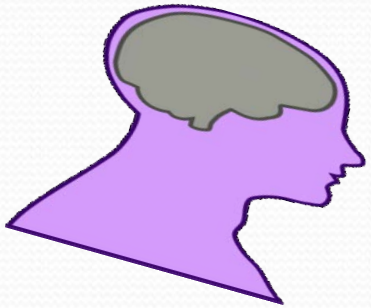
Be *SPECIFIC*
(Do not theorize or generalize).
Include context, action and results.

Behavioral Questions!

Behavioral interviewing is based on discovering how the interviewee acted in ***specific employment-related*** situations. The logic is that ***past performance predicts future performance***. Behavioral questions will be more specific than traditional interview questions:

(S.T.A.R. Method = *SITUATION, TASK, ACTION, RESULTS*):

- ✓ A specific situation
- ✓ The tasks that needed to be done
- ✓ The action you took
- ✓ The results i.e. what happened



Questions in a Behavioral Interview

- ❑ *Tell me about a **stressful situation** you experienced in medical school and how you handled it.*
- ❑ *Tell me about a time you made a **mistake** and had to tell a resident or an attending.*
- ❑ *Describe a time when you **anticipated** potential **problems** and **developed** preventive **measures**.*
- ❑ *Have you handled a **difficult situation** with a patient? How?*
- ❑ *Give me an example of a time when you demonstrated **leadership**.*
- ❑ *Share a rewarding **team experience**.*

Consider some **special situations** you have dealt with or **projects** you have worked on.
You may be able to use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have **successfully solved problems** or **performed memorably**.
The stories will be useful to help you respond meaningfully in a behavioral interview.



GROUP INTERVIEWS

Two main ways program leadership / administration / faculty / residents conduct "group" interviews:

1) A panel interviews a single candidate

2) An interviewer or panel interviews a group of candidates *together:*

- Each candidate gets **SAME** question: Last candidate asked either has the *advantage* of time to prepare **or** the *disadvantage* of having to simultaneously come up with a unique answer.
- Interviewer is interested in how well the candidate interacts with the group.
- For example: ***"What led you to pursue this specialty?"***
  If you feel someone already answered the question how you would, when it's your turn, say:
- ***"As Student X also said, my interest in this specialty stems from my experience during my clinical rotation",*** then elaborate on your unique experience. Show that you are **listening** to your peers.
  Acknowledging what someone else has said, and drawing on it, demonstrates significant **interpersonal** skills.

- Each candidate gets a **DIFFERENT** question and the group is asked to comment.
- Example: They describe an **ethical dilemma** and say ***"Student X, how would you handle such a dilemma?"***
- When Student X has finished answering, the interviewer asks Student Y:
  "So what do you think of what Student X said? Would you handle it the same way?"
  If you disagree, say so but delicately:
- ***"I can see where Student X was coming from but, in my experience, I've found it's better to handle it by, etc."***

What are they looking for in these potentially "awkward" scenarios?

- ✓ Does the candidate **handle pressure** well?
- ✓ Will the candidate **speak up** in challenging situations?
- ✓ Can the candidate **communicate effectively (modestly and respectfully)** in an challenging construct?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

1. TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF. *"PRESENT - PAST - FUTURE"*

- ✓ ***BRIEF REVIEW OF WHO YOU ARE (I'M ORIGINALLY FROM _____). EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND INCLUDING UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE, WORK AND LIFE EXPERIENCE.***
- ✓ ***REVIEW ATTRIBUTES FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL SUCH AS EXPERIENCES THAT LED YOU TO THE SPECIALTY.***
- ✓ ***REVIEW WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THIS RESIDENCY AND WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THIS HOSPITAL.***

2. WHAT INITIALLY STIMULATED YOUR INTEREST IN MEDICINE?



3. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE (SPECIALTY NAME)?

4. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CLINICAL EXPERIENCES IN (SPECIALTY NAME)?

5. WHAT WILL BE THE TOUGHEST ASPECT OF THIS SPECIALTY FOR YOU?

6. WHAT CHALLENGES WILL POTENTIALLY AFFECT THIS SPECIALTY IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE IN HEALTHCARE TODAY?
- *REMAIN CURRENT ON "**HOT TOPICS**", "**TRENDS**" AND "**ISSUES**" FACING THE SPECIALTY .*

7. WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS? WHY SHOULD WE CHOOSE YOU?

8. WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS PROGRAM? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT IT?

9. WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A RESIDENCY?
WHAT FACTORS WOULD LEAD YOU TO RANK A PROGRAM HIGHLY?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

10. WHAT ARE YOUR LONG TERM GOALS? WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS POST-RESIDENCY?

11. DESCRIBE A DIFFICULT TIME IN YOUR LIFE AND HOW YOU DEALT WITH IT.

12. DESCRIBE THE MOST *DISAPPOINTING* / *CHALLENGING* CLINICAL EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD SO FAR.
DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO HANDLE A DIFFICULT OR DEMANDING PATIENT.

13. DESCRIBE THE MOST *MEMORABLE* / *POSITIVE* CLINICAL EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD SO FA



14. TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF ABOUT YOURSELF.

15. WHAT DO YOU DO TO COPE WITH STRESS? HANDLE CONFLICT?

16. DISCUSS A PATIENT TEACHING ACTIVITY THAT YOU PLANNED AND IMPLEMENTED.

17. CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS 'DEFICIENCY' ON YOUR RECORD?

- ✓ ***BE OPEN AND NON-DEFENSIVE – NO "EXCUSES".***
- ✓ ***EXPLAIN HOW YOU OVERCAME THE CHALLENGE AND IMPROVED YOUR ABILITIES AS A RESULT!***

CLINICAL / ETHICAL QUESTIONS

18. HOW WOULD YOU APPROACH AN ATTENDING IF YOU THOUGHT HE/SHE WAS WRONG ABOUT A PATIENT?

19. A PATIENT HAS UNSTABLE VITAL SIGNS AND IS THROWING UP BLOOD.
WHAT YOU WOULD DO AND WHO WOULD YOU CALL?

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED



20. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MEDICINE.

21. IF YOU COULD NO LONGER BE A PHYSICIAN, WHAT CAREER WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

INAPPROPRIATE OR ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

THE LAW PROHIBITS SOME TYPES OF QUESTIONS - HOW YOU HANDLE THEM IS A PERSONAL DECISION.

- ✓ DON'T RESPOND AGGRESSIVELY OR REFUSE TO ANSWER. (REDUCES POSITIVE IMPRESSION).
- ✓ **SMILE, REMAIN PLEASANT,** AND *FOCUS ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF YOUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR TRAINING*.

"UNCONVENTIONAL QUESTIONS"

22. IF STRANDED ON A DESERTED ISLAND, WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE? (WHAT 3 MEDS WOULD YOU BRING?)
23. IF YOU WERE AN ANIMAL, WHAT ANIMAL WOULD YOU BE?
24. IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ANYONE – LIVING OR DEAD – WHO WOULD IT BE?
25. IF YOU COULD BE ANYONE ELSE, WHO WOULD YOU WANT TO BE?
26. WHAT WOULD YOUR BEST FRIEND SAY IS YOUR MOST ANNOYING QUALITY?
27. WHAT IS YOUR GUILTY PLEASURE?
28. WHAT SONG REPRESENTS THE "SOUND TRACK" OF YOUR LIFE?
29. DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS.
30. TEACH ME SOMETHING.
31. TELL ME A JOKE.



QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

THE INFAMOUS: *"WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST WEAKNESS?"*

TIPS FOR PICKING YOUR "BEST" WEAKNESS

Don't pick a weakness that is actually a desirable quality

"I have no weaknesses." (not true!)

"I am too much of a perfectionist."

"I work too hard sometimes."

Be honest BUT <u>don't</u> mention essential clinical / patient care skills.
Select a weakness that is minor and "fixable" --
one that you have already turned into a strength.

Choose something you can (or have) improve(d) which demonstrates that you are motivated and self-aware. Frame your answer around 'positives'.

<u>Bottom line:</u>

Show that you are working on your weakness(es) - through concrete steps - because a great physician is always looking for ways to grow and learn!

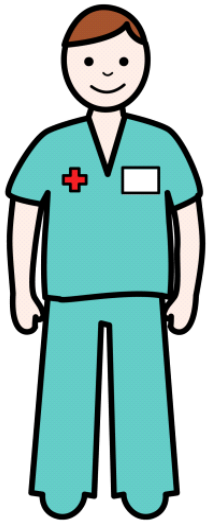
Questions you may want to ask (faculty / program directors)

1. What are the clinical / non-clinical responsibilities of residents?
2. Do your residents express that there is an appropriate balance between independence and supervision? How does residents' autonomy change as they progress?
3. How are residents evaluated?
4. What percentage of residents complete the program?
5. Where do graduates go -- Private practice? Academics? Fellowships?
6. What fellowships are available?
7. How do your residents do on their boards?
8. Are there opportunities for research and teaching? Is research required?
9. What teaching responsibilities for medical students is required of residents?
10. What are the program's strengths and challenges?
11. What are you most proud of about this residency? What makes your program unique?
12. What are this institution's values?
13. Do you foresee any changes in the program in the next 3 - 5 years?



Questions you may want to ask (Residents)

1. How are the residents and Attendings to work with?
2. Do residents socialize as a group?
3. What is the daily workload? Work / call schedule? Time off?
4. How much autonomy do residents have to manage cases?
5. Is there enough ancillary support? (Phlebotomy, social work, respiratory therapy)
6. Are you happy? Was this a good match for you?
7. What has changed since you came to the program?
8. How accessible is faculty?
9. Is the institution committed to residents' education?
10. Is the program responsive to suggestions for change?
11. How are the medical benefits?
12. Tell me about the area/community (schools, recreation, outdoors, safety, etc.)





Social Events: Dinner or Lunch with Residents

If invited to a social event with residents every effort should be made to attend. Residents are the main group with whom you will need to "fit in" (plus, their feedback often carries significant "weight" with the DME).

Even during seemingly casual dinners or lunches, **keep proper etiquette** and relationships.

Social events are a great way to meet residents but **they should be considered interviews**. Do not get too informal -- your behavior will be reported to the Program Director.

"Business casual" attire may be appropriate but consider wearing a suit anyway (better to be 'over-dressed' than 'under-dressed'?)

Unless specifically invited, do not bring a spouse or significant other.

Criteria - Program selection

Professional

Current residents:

Do they seem happy? Supportive of one another? What is the 'spirit' of the program?
What is Their Board pass rate?
What do residents do at the completion of training - Fellowships and/or job placement?



Program / professional development:

reputation
type (academic or community) / quality and size
rotation schedule and call schedules
will the program support professional growth?
(Look at the weekly schedule of rounds, conferences, and teaching sessions)
Are there sufficient mentors for residents?
Does the director seem committed to the residency program?



Clinical responsibilities:

What is the residents' direct patient responsibility?
number and mix of patients seen by residents?

Opportunities for research and teaching:

What is the quality and quantity of research?

Personal *(will I be happy?)*

Location / housing / cost of living / school system / opportunities for family



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

WRITE DOWN YOUR IMMEDIATE IMPRESSIONS OF THE INTERVIEW AND HOW IT COMPARES TO OTHER PROGRAMS FOR WHICH YOU HAVE ALREADY INTERVIEWED.

TAKE NOTES SO YOU REMEMBER EACH INTERVIEW!

ASSIGNING A SCORE TO EACH PROGRAM FROM YOUR LIST OF NEEDS / WANTS CAN BE HELPFUL.

SENDING "THANK YOU" NOTES IS PROPER ETIQUETTE AND A POWERFUL WAY OF SHOWING COURTESY AND PROFESSIONALISM -- ALL OF WHICH ARE PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS SOUGHT IN A STRONG CANDIDATE.

WRITE A NOTE TO *ALL* THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN YOUR INTERVIEW PROCESS INCLUDING RESIDENTS WHO TOOK YOU FOR DINNER AND/OR WHO LED YOUR HOSPITAL TOUR.
THE NOTE SHOULD BE BRIEF -- "SHORT AND SWEET" IS APPROPRIATE!

- **REFERENCE THE DATE ON WHICH YOUR INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE**
- **THANK THE INTERVIEWER FOR HIS / HER TIME**
- **MENTION SPECIFICS FROM YOUR INTERVEW**
- **DISCUSS WHAT YOU LIKED ABOUT THE PROGRAM**
- **REAFFIRM YOUR INTEREST**

ASK THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR IF THE PROGRAM PREFERS THANK YOU NOTES VIA EMAIL OR REGULAR MAIL. WHILE MOST PROGRAMS DO NOT MIND EITHER, SOME MAY PREFER ONE OR THE OTHER. WHICHEVER METHOD YOU USE, SEND YOUR NOTES *AS SOON AS POSSIBLE* FOLLOWING YOUR INTERVIEW!

Below is a sample to give you a basic idea of what to include.
Ensure that your notes(s) are uniquely-tailored to your interview(s)!



Date

Dear Dr. (Last Name):

It was a pleasure meeting with you on (DATE). I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and to once again express my sincere interest in your residency program.

Your program has all the components of an excellent residency; a diverse patient population, a variety of cases, hands-on-training, state-of-the-art facilities, fellowship opportunities and residents who are team players. Most of all, I was impressed with the dedication of the attending staff to providing a breadth of experience and their sincere interest in guiding residents to reach future goals.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I trust that during our discussion I was able to convey my desire to become a highly motivated and successful resident.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Review of Key Strategies

(Try to...) RELAX … and BE YOURSELF!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Demonstrate *RESEARCH*

(do your "homework")

Explain by *EXAMPLE*

Ask *QUESTIONS*

Express *ENTHUSIASM*

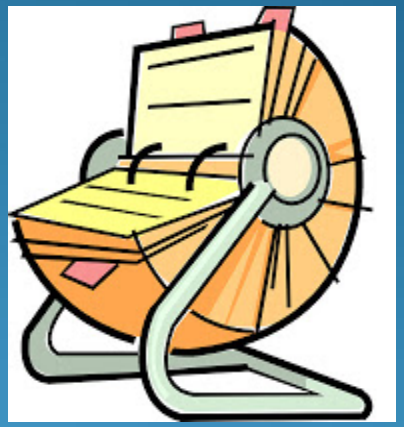


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