



One Firm WorldwideSM

INTERVIEW TIPS

For lawyers and law students alike, the fall interview process is exhausting, exciting and, yes, stressful. We won't pretend it's not. After all, big decisions are being made. Law firms are trying to find the best candidates to carry on their legacy, and law students are looking for a long-term professional home that will support, challenge, and reward them. To help you make the decision that's right for you, we offer the following suggestions:

Preparing for Interviews

- **Determine what's important to you:** It may be tough to tell at first glance, but firms have different cultures, strengths, and priorities. Before you choose, you need to know what you want. Are you looking for an eat-what-you-kill compensation model, or do you prefer a more collective approach? How much do you value financial stability? Are you already certain what practice you want to join, or would you prefer the flexibility to try out various practices before joining one?
- **Research the firm:** Before you ever set foot in an interview, learn as much as you can about the firm. NALP summaries provide numerical snapshots of firm size, practices, diversity, compensation, and other objective information. The firm's web site can help you determine how the firm views itself and can tell you what big deals or litigation victories the firm has recently achieved. Talk to 3Ls at your school who have been summer associates at the firms that interest you.
- **Clean up your internet presence:** You likely have spent significant time ensuring that your resume projects an appropriate professional image. You don't want that to be undone by your "virtual" resume. Many lawyers are tech-savvy and regularly use sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, and Twitter. Your web presence is an extension of your resume and should portray you as you want to be viewed.

The On-Campus Interview

The on-campus interview is a relatively short, 20-minute meeting with one or two persons from the firm. Typically, the interviewer will spend the majority of the interview asking you questions about your resume, interests, and goals. You will also have a chance to ask questions about the firm.

- **Know your resume:** Be prepared to answer questions about your academic achievements, work experience, and interests.
- **Know the firm:** You can and should ask questions about the firm, but don't ask about facts easily accessible on the firm's web site or NALP form. Demonstrating that you've done some research and know some of the firm's unique attributes conveys to the interviewer that you are genuinely interested in his or her firm.
- **Be yourself:** You should be professional, but not cold or stiff. Being a well-rounded, personable human being is important to being a good lawyer.
- **Be enthusiastic:** Law firms want associates who want to be there. First, because firms spend a lot of money training young associates. Second, because it's much more enjoyable to work with others who are excited about being members of the team.

The Call-Back Interview

Law firms can call back only a small percentage of the candidates they see on campus. When you receive a call-back offer, you'll be instructed to contact the recruiting department to schedule the interviews and make the necessary travel arrangements. At most firms, call-back interviews last a half-day and consist of interviews with four to six attorneys.



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All of the recommendations for the on-campus interview apply here as well. In addition:

- **Treat everyone with respect:** Although your interviews will all be with lawyers, good firms listen to the opinions of their recruiting staff, secretaries, and everyone else you come in contact with as a candidate.
- **Adapt:** Each interviewer has a different style. Some are conversational, others quite formal. It's a bit like dealing with the varying personalities of different judges. By responding well to your interviewer's style, you'll make the interview a more enjoyable experience.
- **Ask questions:** Law firms want to hire people who are interested in working at the firm. The best way to demonstrate your interest is by asking questions about the firm, especially those aspects that are unique to that particular firm. And don't worry—you can ask more than one person at the firm the same question.
- **Take it all in:** Get a feel for the atmosphere of the office. Does it seem friendly? Do lawyers and staff interact when they pass each other in the hall? Do your various interviewers seem to really know each other? You're going to spend a lot of hours wherever you choose to work; you might as well spend them with people you like.

After the Interview

- **Thank-you notes:** There's no requirement to send thank-you notes, and there are differing views on whether they're advisable. However, everyone agrees that if you do send one, you can't misspell your interviewers' names or have other typos.
- **More questions?** You should always feel free to reach out to the lawyers with whom you interviewed or to the firm's recruiting department if you have additional questions.
- **Offers:** When you start getting offers, be courteous to your classmates and your firms by releasing offers once you eliminate firms from contention. Current NALP guidelines allow you to keep an offer open no more than 45 days. You also are not supposed to keep more than five offers open at the same time.

Good luck!