



## **How to Sail Through Your Technical Interview**

Emily L. Breckenridge, Career Development Specialist

If you're a student at IIT, you will most likely face a technical interview while searching for a job within your field. A tech interview usually consists of questions which are created to measure your quantitative understanding of issues within your major. There are two types of tech interview questions. The first are questions which aim to gauge your technical skills within your industry. The second type of question evaluates your problem solving skills. There is no doubt that tech interviews are difficult and stressful, but if you know what to expect and how to prepare tech interviews can be easier to get through.

**What to Expect** – A tech interview may ask you to draw upon knowledge you gained in classes you took or work experience from a long time ago. They may also ask you to come up with on-the-spot solutions to logic or brainteaser questions, which you've probably never thought about before. The company may even ask you questions that even they have not yet solved.

**How to Prepare** – Start out by reviewing your class notes from classes within your major, which you may need a refresher on. If you're interviewing for a position using Java, for example, make sure you remember all of the ins and outs of Java, and can talk about them knowledgeably. Also, be prepared to talk in detail about what's on your resume. Practice explaining in detail your projects both at work and in the classroom, and how you used your technical skills in those projects. You should also practice your answers to possible questions, both technical and non-technical, out loud. For sample questions, visit the Interview Tools section of our website located at <http://www.cmc.iit.edu/resources/interviewingTools.htm>. Lastly, prepare a list of knowledgeable questions to ask the interviewer. Your questions don't need to be technical ones or brainteasers, but should show that you are familiar with the company, and the type of work you will be doing.

**Additional Advice** – Talk through difficult questions to show the interviewer that you know how to think through a problem. Feel free to draw pictures or diagrams to communicate your thought process and/or solution. If you can't figure out the answer to a problem, communicating your thought process will at least show that you have tried. Some questions may be impossible to solve, but the interviewer may just want to see how you face the challenge. Make sure if you can't solve the problem that you ask the interviewer how to solve it before they move on to a different question.

**Typical Errors to Avoid** – "Techies" are sometimes known for not dressing appropriately. It may not be necessary to wear a suit to work everyday at that company, but projecting that professional image in an interview can't hurt. Also, don't let your talent show as arrogance. Keep your attitude in check, especially if you are interviewing with a "non-techie." You should come across as knowledgeable and confident, but you

shouldn't be condescending. Additionally, if you're asked an open ended question, such as "Have you ever worked with Maple?" try to view it as an opportunity to open a conversation. A simple yes or no answer may indicate that you are unwilling or unable to communicate effectively. Lastly, make sure you have a strong closing. Consider the end of the interview as your last chance to sell yourself by emphasizing how much you'd like to work for the company, or how you think you could contribute a lot to the company's new project.

Companies do not expect you to be an expert on these technical issues and brainteasers, but to at least have a good understanding of the basics and their applications, especially in any work you've done on projects or jobs. For more information about tech interviews or to arrange a mock interview with your Career Advisor, please contact the Career Management Center at (312) 567-6800.