



Interview Preparation

Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program

Congratulations!

You've been offered an interview with the Kirkhof College of Nursing for admittance into the professional nursing program. Now it's time to prepare. While there are no absolutes with admission interviews, through preparation, reflection, and practice, you can present your best-self.

*The following pages will outline how to prepare, reflect, and practice what to do **before, during, and after** the interview.*

*Office of Student Services
Kirkhof College of Nursing
415 DeVos Center for Interprofessional Health*

*(616) 331-7160
kcon@gvsu.edu*



Before the Interview

Prepare and Practice

Evaluate and know yourself.

When preparing to apply to a nursing program, it is important to reflect thoughtfully on your background, experiences, and motivations. Strong applications go beyond general statements and instead demonstrate how your journey has prepared you for nursing, what you bring to the program, and why this path aligns with your long-term goals.

Reflection Prompts:

- **Personal Background & Accomplishments:** What experiences after high school have shaped who you are today? Which achievements demonstrate your commitment, perseverance, or leadership?
- **Skills & Abilities:** What specific skills (academic, interpersonal) do you possess that will help you succeed in nursing school and in practice?
- **Career Goals:** Where do you see your nursing career taking you? How do your short- and long-term goals align with the mission of the program?
- **Preparation & Qualifications:** What makes you a strong candidate? What unique strengths, perspectives, or experiences do you bring to the nursing profession?
- **Motivation for Nursing:** Why do you want to become a nurse? How do your reasons go deeper than a general desire to “help people”?

Practice speaking about yourself.

Interview success requires practice and preparation. Learning to talk about yourself with confidence and clarity will make answering nursing interview questions feel more natural. Using resources like Big Interview can help you strengthen your responses and prepare for follow-up questions.

Use Big Interview for structured practice

(<https://gvsu.biginterview.com/>):

- Log in with your GVSU credentials.
- Click “Interviews” at the top of the screen.
- Under “For You”, select “Interview Assignments.”
- Enter access code 4e5a65 and click “Go.”

For additional guidance and resources, visit the GVSU Career Center:

www.gvsu.edu/careers.



Before the Interview

Prepare and Practice

Research nursing, healthcare, and current issues.

Staying informed about nursing and healthcare issues is essential for interview preparation and for developing as a future nurse. By researching the profession, keeping up with current events, and engaging with professionals, you will be better prepared to discuss meaningful topics and demonstrate your commitment to the field.

Action Steps:

- **Explore Nursing Fields:** Which areas of nursing interest you most? What skills or values draw you to those specialties?
- **Discuss Healthcare Issues:** How might nurses play a role in addressing healthcare challenges?
- **Engage with Others:** Who in your network (nurses, faculty, current students) can provide insight into the realities of nursing? What questions can you ask them?
- **Stay Current with News:** What sources can you rely on for accurate, timely healthcare news? How do recent stories connect to your interest in nursing?

Online Resources:

- www.aacn.nche.edu/
- www.discovernursing.com/
- explorehealthcareers.org/en/home
- www.rwjf.org/
- www.npr.org/sections/health-care/

Dress professionally.

Dressing professionally for an interview communicates maturity, respect, and readiness for a nursing program. Aim for clean, conservative choices that keep the focus on your qualifications rather than your attire.

Examples of Professional Attire:

Men	Women
Neutral suit with button-down shirt and tie	Pantsuit, skirt suit, or conservative work dress
Dress pants, collared shirt and a tie (blazer)	Blouse/sweater with dress pants/knee-length skirt
Polished dress shoes (black or brown)	Professional flats or low heels in neutral colors
Neat hair, minimal jewelry, no strong cologne	Neat hair, minimal jewelry, limited or no perfume

Before the Interview

Prepare and Practice

Practice Interview Questions

You need to inspire confidence in your ability to succeed in nursing school. Keep in mind the skills and qualifications that nursing schools are seeking in candidates. You were invited to interview, now you must communicate why you believe you are a qualified candidate.

Interview questions may cover many topics, but ***you should prepare*** to discuss your background/preparation, experiences (work, leadership, volunteer), and motivations for pursuing nursing.



Tips for Answering Questions:

- **Be Concise but Complete:** Respond directly to the question with enough detail but avoid long-winded answers.
- **Think Before You Speak:** Pausing briefly is better than filling space with “um” or “like.” Silence shows thoughtfulness.
- **Clarify When Needed:** If a question is unclear or has multiple parts, ask the interviewer to repeat it or take a moment to make sure you answered the entire question before moving on.
- **Give Specific Examples:** Use stories from your background, work, leadership, or volunteer experiences to demonstrate your qualifications.
- **Speak with Confidence:** State your opinions clearly and professionally.

Behaviors and skills that are commonly evaluated during professional school interviews may include:

ethical decision-making
leadership
verbal communication
altruistic
showing empathy
flexibility
interpersonal skills

analytical reasoning
time management
written communication
learning new things quickly
teambuilding
showing initiative

problem solving
accepting feedback
handling pressure
working under stress
learning from successes
taking direction

Before the Interview

Prepare and Practice

Behavioral-Based Questions

It can be said that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior; therefore, it is common to encounter behavioral-based questions during an interview. This exercise may help you identify your skills and competencies in preparation for the questions interviewers might ask you. You will need to identify and describe your skills, characteristics, experiences and qualifications as they relate to the nursing profession.

- Use various situations to describe your experiences from college, jobs, internships, campus activities, student involvement, class projects, teamwork, research, volunteer roles, leadership roles...
- Evaluate the skills you used during your experiences.
- Practice telling detailed stories about your experiences using the S.T.A.R. method.

S.T.A.R. SKILLS METHOD

Think of interviewing as telling a story. The S.T.A.R. method helps you tell your story in an organized manner that is clear to the listener.

Recall 5 successful experiences where you liked how you handled the situation and it resulted in a successful outcome. Also, identify 5 experiences where you liked how you handled the situation and it resulted in an *unsuccessful* outcome. Then, practice talking about the situation with the S.T.A.R. method:

Situation. Describe the challenge, problem, context, background



Tasks. Describe what was required of you, responsibilities

Actions. Describe what you did, behaviors, skills and competencies you used

Results. Describe the outcome, accomplishments, what you learned and contributed

Prepare your Mind and Body

There is nothing more important than treating your mind and body well before an interview. You could have practiced hundreds of questions, but if you are not calm and alert, then your preparation was wasteful. Although realize that a little nervousness *is expected*, and it's ok! After all, the interviewers know you may feel anxious, and a hint of nerves shows that you care about the interview.



Before the Interview

Prepare and Practice

Mindful Preparation

- Relaxation Techniques: Relaxation techniques are helpful for reducing the physical symptoms of anxiety such as an increased heart rate, tense muscles and quick and shallow breathing. Two of the most common relaxation techniques are diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. Google those techniques for detailed instructions.
- ‘Visualization,’ involves imagining yourself successfully completing the interview. In order to make visualization work, close your eyes and imagine yourself participating in the interview. Imagine yourself feeling confident, relaxed, articulate, and poised. Imagine every part of the process, from the first handshake, through saying thank you as you leave. Also, make sure that you are imagining from your own perspective -- not from that of an observer. You should be viewing the scene as you would if you were really there -- not watching yourself participate.
- Have a laugh! Exercise! Listen to music! When you laugh or exercise, the body releases endorphins. Listen to some motivational (or simply relaxing music) on the drive and/or while you wait.
- As you learn relaxation techniques, you'll become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress. Once you know what the stress response feels like, you can make a conscious effort to practice a relaxation technique the moment you start to feel stress symptoms.

Physical Preparation

- Choose your interview clothes the night before and put all of your important items. This will eliminate as many potential delays as possible.
- You *know* that sleep is important because it plays a role in concentration, focus, and alertness. So don't fight it, SLEEP! The 2-3 nights leading up to the interview, you should get uninterrupted, consistent and deep sleep.
- The brain requires quality nutrition to ensure optimum performance. Don't starve your brain. Feed it. Many nutrients from foods are associated with increased wakefulness and alertness. So, do your research and eat well!



During the Interview

Embrace the Opportunity

Presentation and Performance.

Interviewers must easily recognize your ability. You must “speak your truth” maturely and professionally. You should expect to interview with two people: one person is a nursing faculty member, and the other a community partner. The interview will last about 15 minutes and allow for 5 questions.

General Guidelines:

- Please arrive 15-20 minutes early and check in for your interview.
- Greet the interviewer when your name is called, smile, and offer a firm handshake.
- Listen attentively and be aware of your body language.
 - Sit up straight, unfold your arms, don’t touch your face or hair, and keep your legs from shaking.
 - It’s ok to use your hands in moderation. Using your hands may help release nervous energy. Your hands should enhance what you’re talking about and not become a distraction.
 - Maintain good eye contact and nod your head appropriately. Be poised and expressive.
 - When one interviewer asks a question, respond directly to him or her, but also make eye contact with the other person as you are answering.
- At the end, express your appreciation for the interview, summarize your skills, state your interest in being admitted, stand up and say thank you as you shake hands

We will no longer be designating time at the end of the interview for you to ask questions. Please direct any questions you might have after your interview to the staff at check-in or your academic advisor.

Letters of recommendation, resume, portfolios do not have an impact on the admission criteria so **please do NOT bring them to the interview.**



After the Interview

Reflect and Evaluate

What to do after your interview.

After completing an interview, take time to acknowledge your efforts and reflect on what you learned from the experience. Even if the outcome is uncertain, the process itself is valuable and builds confidence for the future.

Celebrate Success: Identify at least three things you did well and are proud of. Recognize that completing the interview itself is an achievement.

Evaluate Performance:

- How effectively did you manage stress and maintain confidence?
- Did you highlight your education, experiences, and skills clearly?
- How strong were your verbal and non-verbal communication skills?
- Were your answers detailed, thoughtful, and specific?
- What aspects went well, and what areas could you improve for future interviews?

Next Steps: Meet with your academic advisor to discuss your path forward. Appointments should be scheduled several weeks in advance through the Kirkhof College of Nursing advising website (

