



AC-3M01

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[york.cuny.edu/student-development/](http://york.cuny.edu/student-development/)

*"A diploma alone is not a career strategy."*



Experience Needed:

Volunteering  
&  
Interviewing Strategies

**"A diploma alone is not a career strategy."**

# Why Volunteer (or intern)

Volunteering & interning are absolutes for employers. You are competing for jobs with many thousands of qualified workers. ***How can you get experience if no one will hire you first?***

Advantages of volunteering / interning:

- ♦ **Transfer:** Apply your academic knowledge into industry know-how
- ♦ **Sharpen:** Master technical savvy & strategies; Develop innate gifts
- ♦ **Acquire:** Learn soft skills (interpersonal skills, professional etiquette); Gain new knowledge
- ♦ **General:** Ascertain that you are in a desirable career path
- ♦ Credit / salary / stipend / experience
- ♦ Professional networking (*the more challenging the economy, the greater the value of your connections!*)

| HARD & SOFT SKILLS TRACKING<br>VOLUNTEER / INTERNSHIP |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Day1/Week1  |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   | Rename an Excel sheet          | How to answer phone professionally |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   | How to create an Excel formula | Email protocol                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| D / W 2   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| D / W 3   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| D / W 4   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| D / W 5   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| D / W 6   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Learned   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| Unclear   |                                |                                    |  |  |  |  |  |

## Track Your Skills > Transfer onto Resume

### Research & Preparation

### Introduction (Elevator Speech)

### Interview

### Work Offer

### Track Your Growth

On a daily or weekly basis, list the hard or soft skills you gain or master at your volunteer / internship / salaried position.

- Ask for opportunities to practice what is unclear
- **Transfer** acquired skills onto **resume**
- As you track your skills you will acquire confidence
- You will be clear as to what you know...

**...and it will come out at a future interview!**

## Volunteer Opportunities

Organizations post specific hours, days & job descriptions for volunteers

- <http://www.nycservice.org/>
- [Idealist.org](http://www.idealists.org)

Get your resume approved in order to search for jobs in Cardinal Careers (attend Resume Clinic, 3M01, Tues. & Thurs. 12:30pm)

- <http://www.york.cuny.edu/student-development/career-services>

### Online / Physical canvassing

- Present yourself to businesses in person
- Use one of our introduction letters (following pages); Have professional attire & resume
- Search company websites. Internships/ volunteering may be listed under 'careers'

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Prepare your 'Elevator Speech'

|       |        |                 |
|-------|--------|-----------------|
| Name: | Major: | Year in School: |
|-------|--------|-----------------|

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Your skills:(technical, academic, personal, etc) |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Examples of When You Used Your Skills            |  |  |

|                                     |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Your Involvement (on or off-campus) |  |  |
|                                     |  |  |

|                                  |  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| The 'Mission' of the Employer    |  |  |
| How You Found Out About Employer |  |  |
| Questions for Employer           |  |  |

Questions To Ask Interviewer

You must always have questions. If everything was covered by the interviewer, then make a summary of the *main* points. Never ask things that you should have researched on your own (company website).

- “To reiterate, the top priorities for this position are \_\_”
- “What is your vision for this company / department in the next year / five years?”
- “Am I the right person? (Is there anything that may keep you from considering me?)
- “If I am hired and I am successful, what would I have accomplished during my trial period?”
- “What is the next step in the hiring process?”

Do not discuss salary / benefits / promotions unless the interviewer insists on knowing your position. In such case:

- Mention the common salary for the position, your level of preparation & experience, the type of position being offered (mid, high, entry level), and state what you think would be a fair range / salary. Be flexible.

## Interviewing Strategy #3

### The 3-Step Process



1. Understand what is really being asked.
2. Answer the question briefly in a non-damaging way.
3. Answer the real question by presenting your related skills.

Ex: **“Briefly, tell me about yourself.”**

**Usually the first question.** Variations: What makes you special? Five adjectives to describe yourself; Rate yourself on scale of 1-10, etc.

**Real meaning:** Able to follow instructions?; Personality gauge; Summary of your qualities to make sure that you have what the job requires, and to verify *if you believe* you what it takes.

**Answer:** Fill out top half of ‘Introduce yourself’ on page 4. Access videos below to watch answers.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sC\\_J-Le9a3Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sC_J-Le9a3Y)



(For interview attire & behavior guidance access:

<http://www.york.cuny.edu/student-development/career-services/>)

From your Introduction Outline answers , craft your elevator speech when faced with potential volunteer / internship / hiring opportunities.

### See / Hear Introductions

\*\* (Excellent)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPNYy-7QFG8&feature=related>

\*(Scroll bar to position 6:20)\*



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl7BHAz4uw>

\*\*(Before & After)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cyww7eRVj3E>

*The elevator speech can also answer the most common interview question: “Briefly tell me about yourself.”*



## Customizable Sample Letters

### Present Letter with Your Resume When Canvassing Opportunities

YORK COLLEGE  
The City University of New York  
Jamaica, N Y 11451  
718-262-2282

April 2014

Dear Business Owner or Manager:

I am completing a degree in \_\_\_\_\_, and I am looking to get real-world experience in this field.

Please allow me to volunteer various hours to work at your company, at a mutually-convenient time. I am not soliciting employment but looking to apply my skills while contributing to the growth of your company.

Some of what I have to offer are:

- Cutting-edge practices in the field
- Focus and dependability
- A willingness to do whatever it takes to achieve the next level for your company's good

Should you need any references, I can secure solid references from professional, academic, and personal sources.

Sincerely,

Student Name  
100-23 101 Boulevard, Far Heights, NY 1111  
871. 111. 3444 / [student@yourrealemail](mailto:student@yourrealemail)

## Interviewing Strategy #2



### Answering 'Negative' Questions

**# 1: *Briefly* mention an obstacle that you overcame or are in the process of overcoming.** Choose something that is not too essential to the job.

**# 2: Describe what you have done to overcome the challenge.**

**# 3: Explain the outcome.**

#### **Example:**

**(#1)** *"In the past I had difficulty prioritizing; This caused me to be late on some assignments, and my grades slipped in a few courses.*

**(#2)** *I corrected this by setting up multiple reminders for myself through the alarm & calendar features in my cell phone, with different ring tones for levels of importance. I also chart a to-do list with tasks on one side, and deadlines in the other column; I color code my list in a similar manner to my cell phone reminders.*

**(#3)** *Even though this system takes a little time to set up every week, I am not only conscious of my responsibilities, but I am also able to meet every deadline, and have even been early on some tasks."*

***It is not necessary to disclose very negative situations to an employer. The point is not confession but demonstrating that you can learn from your mistakes, and that you are humble enough to admit you have them.***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0sEb6EyVmM>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTRojxZBeR8>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdnNz\\_n616Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdnNz_n616Y) (over/under qualified)





## Interviewing Strategy #1

### STAR Method

**Situation:** Describe a *specific* event or situation, not something generalized. Be sure to give enough detail. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, a class, or etc.

**Task:** What goal were you working toward?

**Action:** Describe the actions *you* took with an appropriate amount of detail, and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful not to describe what the group did when talking about a project, but what *you actually did*. **Use the word “I,” not “we” when describing actions.**

**Result:** Describe the outcome(s) of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

**Example of STAR response:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nN7Q7DrI6Q>

(scroll bar to 3:13)



JAMES SAE

English Major, Bachelor of Arts

York College- CUNY, The City University of New York

James.sae@yorkmail.cuny.edu

347 100 2022

April 23, 2014

Dear Business Owner or Manager:

I am completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and looking to get real-world experience in my field, by volunteering. I am not soliciting employment, simply the opportunity to help your organization continue to function at optimal level, while perfecting my career skills.

Currently, I am a contributing editor for the official student newspaper of York College- “Pandora’s Box.” This experience has given me the platform to enhance the following:

- Experience in researching and composing hard and soft news articles
- Ability to deliver within tight deadlines while keeping an eye on all editing details
- Mastery of advanced grammar, strict adherence to linguistic standards, appropriate use of colloquialisms

Hands on knowledge of publishing software and programs

I have also spearheaded a newsletter for the Writing Center, where I volunteer as an English tutor. As an English student, also I have knowledge of a wide spate of disciplines such as linguistics, journalism, and literature.

I can provide you with academic and professional references. I look forward to your call so that I may put my skills to work for you.

Sincerely,

James Sae



**JAMES SAE**  
**Accounting Club President**  
York College- CUNY, The City University of New York  
James.sae@yorkmail.cuny.edu  
347 100 2022

April 23, 2014

Dear Business Owner or Manager:

I am completing a Business Administration degree in Accounting, and looking to get real-world experience in my field, by volunteering. I am not soliciting employment, simply the opportunity to help your organization continue to function at optimal level, while perfecting my career skills.

Currently, I am the president of the accounting club, at York College, at The City University of New York. I am also a tax preparer at the VITA program. These experiences give me the platform to enhance the following:

- Work as a team in order to efficiently process hundreds of claims, ensuring customer satisfaction, and continued patronage
- Critical data analysis skills & application of the correct formulas
- Troubleshooting & implementing the right solutions
- Leadership & organizational abilities: public speaking, organizing meetings, delegating, coaching peers in order to help them succeed
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Word, PowerPoint

As an accounting student, also I have up-to-date knowledge of accounting practices, and I can provide you with academic and professional references. I look forward to your call so that I may put my skills to work for you.

Sincerely,

James Sae

**JAMES SAE**  
**Future Teachers Club, Secretary**  
York College- CUNY, The City University of New York  
James.brass@yorkmail.cuny.edu  
347 100 2022

April 23, 2014

Dear Business Owner or Manager:

I am completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Teacher Education, and I am looking to get real-world experience in a related field. I am not soliciting employment, simply the opportunity to help your organization continue to function at optimal level, while perfecting my career skills.

Currently, I am taking courses in my major, at York College, at The City University of New York. I also assist with preparing flyers and correspondence for the community organization that I volunteer for. These experiences give me the platform to enhance the following:

- Work as a team in order to efficiently process hundreds of claims, ensuring customer satisfaction, and continued patronage
- Classroom management and parent integration strategies; Bilingualism and multi-culturalism
- Curriculum and lesson creation including scaffolding and differentiated instruction
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Word, PowerPoint

As a teacher education student, also I have the up-to-date knowledge of accounting practices, and I can provide you with academic and professional references. I look forward to your call so that I may put my skills to work for you.

Sincerely,

James Sae