

Pharmacist Interview Guide

Step-by-step interview guide for people applying for hospital and community pharmacist job openings

From Anita Stosur, Independent Interviewer and Career Coach

Pharmacist belongs to popular career choices all around the world. International survey conducted in 2015 showed that in average, **more than twenty people applied for every single pharmacist job opening in the United States**, and more than ten candidates applied for every job with this title in the UK (*both hospital and community pharmacist job openings were included in the study*).

As you can guess, **it is not easy for the interviewers to choose a best person from twenty candidates, especially when the applicants have similar background and education**. The interviewers have to follow a complex interview template, consisting in personal, behavioral and technical questions. This is the only way to assess the qualities of different job applicants. I have personally interviewed more than three hundred applicants for various pharmacist roles, and therefore I understand:

- That your qualification doesn't matter in an interview.
- That most people **focus on completely wrong things in their interview preparation**.
- That everyone can get this job, if they know what to do and **HOW to do it in their interview**.
- What questions interviewers use, and how to answer them to **maximize your chances of signing a coveted job contract**.

I am going to **guide you step by step through the interview process on the pages of this eBook.**

We will start with **some basic things**, such as an attire to choose, the pre-interview research, etc.

In the second part of the book, we will focus on the interview itself.

You will learn how to act there, **how to present yourself as a great candidate for the job.** I will show you what to focus on in your non-verbal communication, and in your interview answers. You are also going to learn how to answer behavioral questions in the interview, the key principles you need to have on your mind while answering them.

Third part of this guide is dedicated to **twenty most common interview questions for pharmacists.** You will understand why they ask each question, what they really try to find out with it, and you will learn how to answer it, telling them what they expect to hear from a perfect job candidate.

Final part of the book is dedicated to **interview follow-up**, and you'll learn how to leave the good *last* impression, and how to follow up with an email or a letter.

Once you read the entire book, you will understand what to do before your interview, during it, and also afterwards. It should help you to get rid of stress, feel confident, and do well in the interview. Let's enjoy this journey!

You can ask me one question right now:

Doesn't the recruitment vary from organization to organization, from country to country, from hospital to retailer?

Surely, there are some variations, especially if we compare recruitment in the United States and in Europe. Interviews are **more sophisticated** in Europe, and recruitment became sort of science, with all the personality testing and psychometry. In the US, however, **intuition of the interviewers and your ability to sell your skills and knowledge still** plays the prime.

Having said that, when you are interviewed for a job of a pharmacist, you can hardly expect to deal with interview questions for managers, or with role play for bank tellers...

The basics of recruitment, as well as the questions, are very similar every time an institution recruits for a position of pharmacist, doesn't matter if the interview takes place in New York or London, in a state hospital, or in a big retail store. Once you understand these principles and questions, and learn how to adjust your behavior to the specific conditions of the interview, you will be ready to make a great **impression**, and get a job, regardless of the place of your interview. And that's exactly the goal of this book—to make you ready. Enjoy your reading!

Anita Stosur,

Your Personal Job Interview Coach

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I. Before the job interview

Chance favors the prepared mind.

Success in a job interview is not dependent only on your answers to interview questions. Your **non-verbal communication** matters, your **demeanor** counts. **What you wear and what you bring** with you is also important, and you can be sure that interviewers take notice of all those things. The first part of pharmacist interview guide deals with these issues. Let's start!

Pre-interview research—do not forget to do your homework

Once you start working as a pharmacist, **you will quickly understand the** ethics, the working environment, the habits of the customers and your colleagues, simply the in and outs of a particular job.

But if you want to have a chance to succeed in a tough competition of twenty other job seekers in an interview, **you should research about these things upfront.**

Don't hesitate to leverage the power of the internet. **Practically every company or hospital has a website. You can learn about their vision, their goals and values, and check** their product portfolio, trying to find the unique selling points, learning about their successes and failures....

What's more, you can leverage the power of social media as well, finding out something about people working at the place, and potentially even about your future manager, or simply the person who's going to lead the interview with you.

Try to find out who they are (hint: the email communication prior to the interview should tell you the name of the person—it's often the email sender), what they do, and what they are proud of.

Having the knowledge, you'll be able to recognize and point out things that **make their institution unique, or at least good (think location, portfolio, prices, quality of employees, ett.)** , doesn't matter if we speak about hospitals or retailers.

This knowledge will help you to connect with your interviewers (in a good sense of word), and tell **why you'd prefer to work for them, and not in some other pharmacy.**

We live in times when loyalty is only an empty word in the mouth of the employees. Job hopping is reaching new heights, and most job applicants know nothing about the companies where they apply for then job. You should be the one who does more, reads more, learns more. Show them that you care, that this isn't just another interview for you. Make them feeling special—the information from pre-interview research will allow you to do so....

I suggest you to spend at least one hour researching their website. Make notes, and **read them before the start of your interview.** You can even bring them to the interview with you, and the interviewers will see that you committed time and effort to learn something about their organization.

To summarize it, focus on the following things in your research:

- Unique selling point, e.g. what makes the place of work special – can be their values, prices, location, variety of products, quality of employees, design of the place, anything
- Their goals, values, working environment, history—you'll use this information to connect with the recruiters.
- Person of the interviewer—their social media profiles, reputation, articles (if there are any).

The more you know, the better you'll be able to react to their words,

Interview Attire

In an ideal world, physical appearance and attire of job applicants, as well as personal preferences, would have no effect on the final decision of the interviewing panel.

But **we do not live in an ideal world.** Personal preferences, as well as your physical appearance, can make a difference in an interview.

While it is foolish to believe that good attire can win you a job contract, **it is also foolish to believe that wrongly chosen attire can not ruin your chances.**

So, what to wear to the interview in a pharmacy?

You shouldn't wear something extremely classy, or an expensive piece of clothes.... Good pharmacist is humble, and they do not try to stand out from the crowd of other employees. That would only initiate envy and other undesirable emotions on the workplace.

I would recommend pants or long skirt and blouse or shirt for women, and trousers and shirt for men. **White and blue are perfect colors for medical environment.** On the top of that, you can **inspire yourself with the colors of the institution** (e.g. blue for Walmart, if you apply in their pharmacy).

The actual dress code of the place (if they stick to any) will give you the best hint.

I suggest you to **visit your future place of work, and take notice of the clothes the pharmacists (and other employees) have on them.**

This visit will actually help you to understand much more than just the dress code. You will see how the workers greet the visitors, how they act, simply you will see the **behavior that is expected from a good pharmacist in that particular place.**

Later on, you can follow the same way of conduct, so the interviewers get the feeling you'd fit well to the team.

To summarize it, you should:

- Check the dress code in the place, and follow it with your own choice of attire
- Stay humble, avoiding something overly expensive or chick
- Stick to white and blue color, if you are not sure about the dress code, or if they do not follow one
- Use the visit to the place as an inspiration for your own conduct, observing the way the pharmacist work, walk, talk, simply the way they act in their daily job.

What to bring to the interview with you?

Interviewers will do their background check, calling the preceptor (pharmacist) who supervised you during your advanced pharmacy practice, or your residency. Therefore it is a good idea to **get a written recommendation from these people**, or at least to bring their contact details to the interview.

However, if you did not have a good relationship with your preceptor, it would be better to not bring anything, and hope they would not contact him.

Oppositely, if you had a very good connection, **you can even contact the person upfront**, telling them to expect the call, and ensure they provide a good feedback on your skills and working ethic.

Except of your references, you should print a few copies of your resume, diploma, and certification. I would also suggest you to bring a pen and paper, **and take notes in an interview**. This little gesture shows that you really care, that the meeting is important for you.

The interviewers may eventually not ask for a copy of your resume or certification. They may not take it, or do not look at it at all.... Anyway, the fact that you brought many things with you shows how much you care, how much you want the job.

Most applicants bring only their resume, or they bring nothing to the interview with them.

Try to be better, try to do more, in every sense of the word. Interviewers will appreciate it at the end. **“Doing more” attitude is exactly what they try to find in a perfect job applicant.**

To summarize it, you should bring to the interview with you:

- Written references from your preceptor, and previous employers (ort at least their contact details if do not have the references)
- Copies of your diploma, resume certifications
- Paper and pen to take notes

II. In an Interview

There are a few more things you should understand before you start to think about interview questions, and practice the answers. We'll have a look at them in this part of the interview guide.

Act, as an ideal pharmacist would act in their daily job.

This magical sentence can win you many job interviews in your life, not only in the pharmacy, if you follow the advice.

Most job seekers believe that their answers to interview questions decide about success or failure in an interview. But if you asked HR managers and interviewers what really decides in an interview, they will tell you exactly the same thing I am going to tell you right now:

Your presence, your non-verbal communication, as well as your overall demeanor are even more important than your answers to interview questions.

Who is an ideal pharmacist?

They have a friendly personality. Courtesy and compassion are amongst their qualities. They are passionate about their job, like to talk to people about their problems. They are a great listener. Good pharmacist definitely keeps an eye contact with the patients. They act professionally, understand the nuances of their job, and know how to talk to different patients. They understand that each patient is a client, and they act accordingly. They work on their qualification all time, keeping up to date with latest practices and trends. They are happy about their daily job, and do their best to build and maintain good relationship with other staff members.

And **you should act in the same way in your interview**. What does it mean?

You definitely should:

- **Keep an eye contact with your interviewers.**
- **Be friendly and humble, show respect in an interview.** Try to create good relationship, show respect, and compliment them if you can. “Super important” people, who think they know everything best, are rarely hired for a job in a pharmacy....
- **Show passion for the job.** The interviewer must see that you are passionate about this opportunity, that you really want to become a pharmacist, that you see a meaningful purpose in the role.
- **Listen very carefully to all questions, stay focused.** You should speak to the point; answer the questions precisely, quickly and with smile. That’s the way a great pharmacist work in their job, when serving patients. Remember? Act, as an ideal pharmacist would act in their daily job....
- **Talk nicely about people (former classmates, bosses, preceptor), about yourself, about the job you want to get.** You should never talk negatively about anyone. Employers are tired of negative people who complain about something each day in work. Show them that you are different!
- **Have some knowledge of the visions, the goals, and the uniqueness of the institution,** and demonstrate this knowledge with your interview answers.

If you follow this advice, interviewers will believe that you have **a perfect personality for a job of a pharmacist**. That is priceless for every company.

Hiring managers know that they can always train you to do your duties better, or that you can improve your knowledge of different medications and treatments. However, **once you do not have the right personality for this job, you will never become an excellent pharmacist**, either at their institution, or anywhere else.

Therefore it is crucial to stick to the advice, and do your best to convince them that you are a perfect person for the job.

Even if this behavior isn't natural for you, I still suggest you to try and show it in an interview. We do work on our **personality and attitude all life long**, so why not to work on it a bit, while we strive to become **better pharmacists, employees, people....**

Try to overcome your ego, and leave bad habits at home. Show them that you are (or can be) a great pharmacist, and that you know what it takes to become one.

Once your interview finished, the interviewers should think:

What a pleasure it was talking to this job candidate.

If they feel good with you in an interview, they will play with an idea of felling good with you in work as well, and they will believe that the patients/customers of their pharmacy can experience the same positive feelings. And this is exactly where you want to have them!

Act, as an ideal pharmacist would act in their daily job. This is the safest way towards a coveted job contract.

Perspective of an employer

Most job seekers think only about themselves. Let me show you an example.

When inquired about a reason for their application for a pharmacist job, they talk about *clean and professional working environment, great salary, continuation of their studies, etc.* However, **this is a perspective of an employee.** These are the benefits you'd experience in the job—not the employer.

To be honest, the employer is not interested in your salary, good feelings, career growth, and in all those things. **Companies care for their business, not for yours.** Of course they'll be happy if you feel good working for them, and manage to reach your goals, but this is a secondary thing, at least in their eyes....

Actually just a few job seekers have an ability to **look at things from a different perspective, with the eyes of an employer.** These guys would use a different answers to the question about the reasons for their job application:

- *They apply because they believe to be good pharmacists, and they strive to make customers happy with their service, so they'd return to the pharmacy again, and spend more money there.*
- *They believe to **bring some value to the retailer or to the hospital where they apply for the job.***
- *They apply because they really like the vision and the working environment of the pharmacy, and they believe to fit perfectly in the team. They want to deliver something, not only come to job, and collect the paycheck at the end of the month.....*

Simply, they do not talk only about benefits they want to gain, but also about **benefits the employer could gain from the employment relationship with them.**

In the next chapter, I will show you brilliant answers to twenty most common pharmacist interview questions. These answers correspond with “the perspective of an employer” attitude. But it is important to understand this attitude before you start mocking the answers, so it can become a part of your mindset, and you'd find right answer to any possible question. Employer first, customers second, your benefits third—the golden rule to remember when you prepare interview answers.

How to answer behavioral questions in an interview

Interviewers will ask about various work-related situations from the past. The logic they use is the following one: If you acted in a certain way in situation A, you'd likely act in the same way in similar situation in the future.

Let's have a look at one behavioral question:

“Give an example of a time you made a point to go above and beyond with customer service.”

I heard countless applicants reply to this question in one of the following ways:

- *I do not have such an experience.*
- *This is my first job application.*
- *I have never been in the situation.*

These answers were bad. Candidates could hardly get any points for their answers, **since they did not answer our question at all!**

We will analyze and answer specific behavioral questions for pharmacist interview in the following chapter of the book. However, there is one rule you should remember: **Never say you can not answer a question.**

If you really haven't experienced certain situation, I suggest you to use the following formulation:

- *I have not been in such a situation before. However, if it happened, I would do the following: ...*

This should be your third option. Before going for it, you should think about real situations from the past, or think up one. To summarize it, anytime answering behavioral question in an interview, you should:

1. **Talk about situation that really happened** to you, and explain your behavior in the situation.
2. If you didn't experience such a situation, but thought up one before the start of your interview, use this one for your answer to demonstrate the appropriate behavior ;).
3. If you can not recall any situation, and haven't made up one, just **use the following formulation:** *"I have not been in such a situation before. However, if it happened, I would do the following: ..."*

That's it. Let's have a look at particular interview questions and answers, the principal section of this eBook.

III. Twenty Most Common Pharmacist Interview Questions

Based on my personal experience with interviewing candidates for various pharmacist positions, I chose and analyzed twenty most common interview questions for hospital and community pharmacists.

We will have a look at **some personal, behavioral and technical questions**.

There is a short hint for every question, explaining **why the interviewers ask the question, and what you should focus on when answering**. Several **sample answers** follow each hint.

Feel free to use my presented answers as an inspiration for your own interview answers.

The following twenty questions are analyzed:

1. **Why do you want to become a pharmacist?**
2. **What did you like the most about your studies? What subjects did you have problems with?**
3. **What do you want to accomplish on this position?**
4. **What problematic situations may occur in a daily job of a pharmacist?**
5. **What characterize a great pharmacist from your point of view?**
6. **What are your strengths and weaknesses?**
7. **Where do you see yourself in five years time?**
8. **This job is repetitive. What would motivate you to do it well every day?**
9. **Describe the time when you went above and beyond of what was expected of you (in your internship).**
10. **Give an example of a time when you were overwhelmed with work. How did you handle it?**
11. **Here is a case describing a common drug interaction. How would you resolve the problem?**
12. **If a patient accused you of a bad service, what would you do?**
13. **How do you spot drug seeking behavior?**
14. **You cannot read the prescription. What would you do?**

15. You realize that two drugs the customer is taking may interact. What would you do?
16. What things do you need to assure yourself about before dispensing prescription medicines to any customer?
17. How do you keep up to date with current pharmacy practice, new drugs and trends in the industry?
18. What are your salary expectations?
19. Why should we hire you and not somebody else?
20. Do you have any questions?

1. Why do you want to become a pharmacist?

Hint: To ask “*why did you chose this career?*”, or “*why pharmacist?*”, or “*why do you want to become a pharmacist?*” are some of the typical starting questions.

Clean working environment, smart colleagues, and exceptional salary are the true reasons why people choose their path in pharmaceuticals.

But these reasons should not resonate in your interview answers. You should rather speak about *helping the others, your passion for medicine, and about your true love to the nature of the job.*

While we all work for money (nobody would go to work without getting paid), interviewers want to hear about other motives.

You should also avoid connecting your application with your studies. Saying that you applied because you had graduated from the field, would equal to saying that you had to apply, because you had already invested six or eight years into the career. Such an answer would suggest a must, rather than a desire to have the job.

Sample answers:

- *I was always interested in treatment of various diseases, in drugs, and in medical equipment. It was my passion and I never hesitated when choosing my career. I feel it is my true calling to work as a pharmacist. What's more, I believe to have both knowledge and personality to become a good pharmacist, and bring value to your place, for both you and the customers.*
- *Every person has some skills, and everyone is good in doing something. People enjoy talking to me, because I am a good listener, and I have a good understanding for their needs and problems. What's more, pharmaceuticals has always been my field of interest, so I want to become a pharmacist simply because I like the daily duties of the pharmacist.*

2. What did you like the most about your studies? What subjects did you struggle with?

Hint: Pharmacists must know their job. If they did not, someone could easily die.... Interviewers will give you **couple of questions about your studies**, and they can even ask some practical questions, to see whether you remember anything from school (but don't worry, they won't rest you from Math ☺).

Anyway, you should pick practical subjects and residency for your interview answer, since that will show that you like the real job of a pharmacist, and that you know what is expected from you.

Each of us dislikes some subjects. Interviewers have most likely seen **your marks and know what troubled you** at school. Therefore you should **tell them about your weaknesses, and about subjects you struggled with**. Nobody is perfect. Interviewers themselves had their problems with certain subjects, and they will appreciate your honesty and humility.

Sample answers

- *I really enjoyed the APPE we had to complete. I had the chance to do a real job under supervision, and the experience convinced me once again that to work as a pharmacist is what I want to do in my life. I believe it was a good preparation for the job. And mathematical subjects, especially Calculus, were the toughest. I needed a few attempts to pass the exam. I understood, however, that every subject is important, and I worked hard until I finally passed the exams.*
- *As you can see from my marks, I did not struggle with any subject. I took my studies seriously and put all my time and effort into preparation for lessons and exams. I studied, because I had a dream of becoming a pharmacist one day, and I sacrificed a lot for achieving this goal. I would say I liked practical subjects the best, but still, every subject was important and I did my best to learn it.*

3. What do you want to accomplish on this position?

Hint: It is not easy to find some major accomplishments a pharmacist should seek in their job. There are little options to get promoted, and pharmacists do not make major decisions that would influence the entire business. However, **employers look for people who desire to not only have a job, but to accomplish something in their work.**

What can a good pharmacist accomplish in their job? Well, they can definitely change many small things. And small things make a big difference at the end of the day. *The fluttering of a butterfly's wings can effect climate changes on the other side of the planet.*

You should talk about an impact that every little action has, **about the accomplishments from a point of view of the company, not your personal accomplishments.** Let me show you good answers.

Sample Answers:

- *From my point of view, every pharmacist plays an important role on the functioning of this institution, since they help patients to get rid of stress, they show compassion. In my job, I want to build a good reputation for your hospital, delivering pleasant,*

friendly, humble and honest service to every patient. I would be very proud of myself, and have a good feeling from the job, if I manage to attain this goal.

- *I do not seek major accomplishments in my professional career. I am not that kind of a person. If I see that my behavior makes patients happy, and satisfied, if I see that my work helps your business to prosper, it will make me happy.*

4. What problematic situations can occur in a daily job of a pharmacist?

Hint: Job of a pharmacist seems an easy position for many, especially for those who never tried it. But one deals with **all kinds of patients (good and bad), and many difficult situations happen** in a pharmacy, or in a hospital, on a daily basis.

Employers prefer to hire people who do not wear pink glasses, and are ready to handle all aspects of their job. Therefore you should acknowledge the problems, and talk about them in your interview answer.

Interviewers may give you further questions about problematic situations, e.g. dealing with drug seeking behavior. However, you should go ahead and talk about them on your own. Show them that you are aware of the problems, and ready to solve them.

Sample Answers:

- *This job is not easy. One has to talk to all kinds of people, old and young, nice and angry, clever and not so clever. It may be difficult sometimes to meet wishes of every single customer, but I work on my communication skills, trying to learn to talk to every person in a most appropriate way.*
- *Being unable to read a prescription is a serious problem. I prefer to have contact details of all medics and officials in the area, to be able to confirm what they originally wrote. People seeking drugs represent another problem. However, at*

school they taught us how to spot this behavior, and I know what I would do if I spotted it.

- *Drug interaction is one of the common problems we face. It is important to keep your knowledge up to date, so you will notice all possible interactions, and explain the situation to the customer. It may also happen that we do not have the medication the patient needs, or wants. In this case, we should offer them an alternative product, or if we don't have any alternative, we should suggest another pharmacy.*

5. What characterize a good pharmacist from your point of view?

Hint: One can approach this question in three different ways. You can list strengths that characterize good pharmacist, and to the strengths belong: good communication skills, enthusiasm for the job, responsibility, detail oriented personality, ability to perform day in day out, etc.

If you want to go one step further, you can **talk about benefits the pharmacist can bring to the place, not about the “features” (strengths) that characterize them.** You can list those little daily achievements of pharmacists, such as satisfied patients, returning clients, excellent relationships between colleagues, well-organized records, etc.

Third alternative is to summarize it all into a **mission of a pharmacist**, a simple but powerful sentence.

Each alternative can satisfy the recruiters, and it depends on your preferences which one you choose....

Sample answers:

- *Good pharmacist is polite, enthusiastic and friendly. They smile on all patients and look for opportunities to help them, to make them feeling better. They are focused on their job, look for feedback, and constantly try to become better in work.*

- *After being served by a good pharmacist, patients leave the store with smile on their faces. What's more, they will return to the same pharmacy, if they need medicine again. A good pharmacist makes the store a nice place to be for everyone, and the owner of the pharmacy will see the difference in their cash flow.....*
- *Good pharmacist maintains the best possible level of patients' satisfaction and fulfills all their daily duties with ease and grace.*

6. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Hint: This typical **interview question scares many job seekers**. Nobody likes to talk about their weaknesses, especially if they try to **impress someone, and get the job**. What's more, we can always see the weaknesses of the others, but we often **struggle to identify our own weak spots**. All in all, it's a difficult question.

On the other hand, once we overcome the emotional difficulty that relates to this question, we should be able to list strengths that are relevant for the job. And that's exactly what you should pick for your answer:

- *good communication skills*
- *ability to understand the needs of other people*
- *patience and responsibility*
- *orientation on detail*
- *ability to talk to all kinds of people*
- *problem solving skills*

Similar approach applies to our weaknesses. **Certain skills are crucial for other roles, but they do not matter for a pharmacist**. For example, a good pharmacist does not have to possess any management or leadership skills. They do not have to possess great computer skills either. . .

You can even choose a **weakness that may be considered strength by certain employers**, such as being over-friendly to patients.

You should think about yourself, trying to **identify the strengths and weaknesses you'd talk about in an interview**. And you should elaborate on your answer, explaining **how you try to improve on your weaknesses**. Recruiters will appreciate that attitude.

Sample answers:

- *I have good communication skills, and I do not have a problem to talk to anyone. On the other hand, I struggle to manage people, to lead them. I plan to work on my management skills in the future, to improve on this weakness.*
- *I am patient, responsible, and I do not mind doing the same job day after day. I also possess decent problem solving skills. But I would love to improve on my computer skills. They aren't that bad, but I should improve on them to keep the pace with young generation. I recently started to attend evening computer classes.*

7. Where do you see yourself in five years from now?

Hint: Interviewers ask this question for two reasons. First of all, they want to see if your career plan matches the possibilities they can offer.

Most of the time, the **career growth options are rather limited**. *You can possibly pursue the career of a consultant.* However, it is questionable whether these jobs offer something more than a typical position of a community pharmacist offers. One can sometimes progress on a position of a pharmacy manager, or on some cross-related role of a technician.

However, speaking in general, they want to hire someone who wants to keep the job for years. Therefore you should not talk about career growth, and want to stay with them for long, longer than five years.

Needless to say, you can leave the pharmacy much earlier. You do not need to stick to the promises you made in the job interviews.

Second intention is to see if you think about your career only, **or if your goals relate to the goals of their business**. Try to reflect on it in your answer.

In any case, you should have an idea about your future. **Every responsible employee** has some goals, and knows what they want to do in five years. You should never say that you have no idea about the future, though it might be the only true answer 😊.

Sample answers:

- I would love to specialize in chronic illnesses and complicated diseases. However, I understand that I need some practice before pursuing this direction, and therefore I applied for this job. I know there is an option to become a specialist here, in a few years time, and I hope to achieve my goal in this hospital.

- I do not really think too much about what will happen in five years time. My goal is to become a pharmacist and to do a good job, day after day. I may think about career growth later, but it's not on my mind right now.

8. This job can be repetitive. What would motivate you to do it well every day?

Hint: Job of a pharmacist is repetitive, and therefore you should **focus on your preference to routine** in your interview answer, and on a good feeling from a well-done job being your primary motivation to deliver, day in day out.

Alternatively you can say that from your point of view **the job is not repetitive**, and elaborate on it with an explanation of your attitude to work. The sample answer should help you to understand what I mean.

Sample answers:

- *To be honest, I prefer routine to creativity. Once I learn to do things, I carry out my duties well, and have good feeling from doing that. Jobs in which you have deal with many different duties every day are not really a good option for me.*

- *I try to focus on relationships. If I enjoy time spent with my colleagues, if I succeed in building good relationships with the patients, if I feel like a member of a hard-working team, it makes me happy and motivated to work hard every day. Whether the job is repetitive doesn't matter to me.*

- *From my point of view, this job is not repetitive. I know that pharmacists carry out similar tasks day after day. But there are problems you need to solve, and new patients come to the place every day. On the top of that, you need to complete accredited education classes, so you also learn new things. Many different things happen in a pharmacy on a daily basis, and with the right attitude the job is never boring.*

9. Describe the time when you went above and beyond what was expected of you (in your internship).

Hint: Pharmaceutics is a competitive business. Each retail store operates a pharmacy nowadays, we have big retail chains, pharmacies in hospitals, and many other, independent players on the market.

Qualification and knowledge won't be enough to succeed in an interview. You need to show something more, and I speak about the following things in particular:

- *excellent communication skills*
- *ability to understand the needs of the others*
- *ability to deliver more than expected – that's going above and beyond...*

If you have no previous experience with going above and beyond in work, try to speak about similar situations from the college, or even from your family life. All you have to do is to talk

about the situation when you **did something extraordinary for another human being**. Your **attitude matters the most**, not the particular situation you pick for your answer.

Sample answers

- *I consider it a duty to do my best for every patient. I would not be satisfied with myself in any other case. For example in my last job in retail, I called a friend, expert in the area of electronics, to ask for an advice when a customer gave me a tough question about a computer they considered purchasing. The customer really appreciated what I did, and I believe we both felt great. They made a purchase at the end as well....*
- *I always try to exceed the expectations of everyone. It is the best way to make the patients come back to the pharmacy. The competition is enormous, and I understand that returning customers are crucial for each business. During my internship I tried to be helpful and I provided a lot of additional information to the patients, based on my best knowledge and conscious. I was not obliged to do so, but I somehow felt it was right to do it. It was also a great training for me, because I understood how people react and what is good to say to them in various situations.*

10. Give an example of a time when you were overwhelmed with work. How did you handle it?

Hint: Work of a pharmacist can be pretty demanding, especially if you work in a busy retail store. Interviewers know that an ability to plan your work, and to prioritize the working duties correctly, can play big time when the schedule is busy, and people tired.

Try to show them that you can handle the pressure, describing a situation when you **successfully overcame difficult feelings and emotions in job**. If it is your first job application, you can speak about college times, internship, or about any other busy period of

your life. One way or another, your story should have a happy ending, meaning that you handled the heavy workload....

Sample answers

- *Normally I do not feel overwhelmed with work, but I know it can happen. I remember when my colleague unexpectedly left the company we both worked for. It happened two years ago. I was supposed to take care of their duties until the managers found a good person to replace the colleague who left. I really needed to prioritize my tasks, as it was impossible to do everything. I worked for eleven hours a day, for a span of two weeks. I was really overwhelmed and couldn't function outside of my job. However, I managed to get through it, and looking back, I consider it a good time management and stress resistance training.*
- *I had to plan my work when preparing for the final exam, since I had to take care of my small sister, go to part time job, and also study to obtain the certification. Tell me about being overwhelmed... It was a hell to talk to me back then. However, I prioritized my study tasks, created a daily plan, and worked according to the plan. Task after task, day after day, my plans helped me to cope with all duties, staying sane. Finally I managed to pass the exam. Stressful situations belong to life, and we can not always choose the amount of work we need to handle.*

11. Here is a case describing a common drug interaction. How would you resolve the problem?

Hint: Nobody knows all cases of drug interaction, and interviewers do not expect that from you either. But **you should get neither shocked, nor say that you can't solve the issue.** If you can not suggest a replacement for one of the drugs so the two won't interact, I suggest

you to say that you would consult a colleague with more experience, or that you would use one of the **certified drug interaction checkers** to find the solution.

Attitude matters, not the knowledge. Stay calm, admit you may need assistance, and show the right responsible approach to dispensing drugs.

Sample answers:

- *To be able to consider this case responsibly, I would need to know more about the condition of the patient. There might be a good complement for drug X in drug Y, which does not interact with Z, like X does, but has the same effect. However, as I said, I would need to know more about the patient to be able to responsibly say if we can find a way around.*
- *To be honest, I do not have enough experience to make the decision, and I would consult my colleague, ideally someone with better experience, who likely solved the same case of drug interaction before. I would learn from this experience and for the next time, I'd know what to do, without a need to consult anyone.*

12. If a patient accused you of a bad service, what would you do?

Hint: The patient is always right, even when they are not. You know the common saying... If people pay money for something, they expect nothing but perfection. When standing in a queue at a pharmacy, some people get angry, and you should consider it as something natural in a given situation.

Therefore you should **never suggest arguing with a patient**. Oppositely, you should suggest giving them additional questions, staying calm and relaxed. And you should also say that **angry customers would not have an effect on you in job**, that once the angry person left, you'd be ready to serve new customer with smile on your face.

Sample answers:

- *First of all, this is unlikely to happen as I always do my job in a responsible way, and try to exceed the expectations of every person in the pharmacy. But if it happened, I would apologize, ask what I did wrong, and try to resolve it. I understand many people are unhappy in medical environment. They can act in a strange way because of that. I understand it, and it would not effect me negatively in work. It's just a part of this job....*
- *I would simply keep my working ethics. I would stay polite, kind and friendly, doesn't matter if the patient was angry. After all, you can not satisfy every person in the world. Bad behavior belongs to every pharmacy, and it should not shake with our comfort zone. We should stay professional in our conduct, regardless of the client we deal with.*
- *I would try to stay calm, listen to their needs and complaints, and act accordingly. I would always remember the lesson the situation taught me, in order to approach another patient in a better way next time.*

13. How do you spot drug seeking behavior?

Hint: People have **different intentions when asking for medicine**. Good hospital pharmacist should be able to spot drug seeking behavior. You should have a system of steps, or a list of warning signals, to tell if someone seeks drugs instead of real treatment.

In your interview answer you should stress that you are aware of the problem, and have a system of steps that allows you to quickly spot a drug seeker.

Sample answer:

- *I discussed this problem with the preceptor during my internship. I learned a good way how to spot drug seeking behavior, watching the following indicators: Patient says only a particular drug will work; Patient frequently reports losing medications; Patient has “give me this drug” attitude, instead of “this is my problem attitude”; Something is missing in patient’s medical records. When I spot one of these warning signals, or if the patient looks strange, I know something is likely wrong. One should use their intuition as well, but we have to do it carefully. Every patient is a client and to accuse someone of drug seeking, without being 100% sure, won’t be good for our reputation...*

14. You cannot read the prescription. What would you do?

Hint: *Do you take action, or do you call the physician immediately, without trying to find out what’s written on the paper? Do you have a system of steps to take when you can’t read the prescription? And do you care at all? Like many other times in an interview, your attitude and approach is tested with this question.*

You should try to convince the hiring manager that you would never fill out a prescription, if you were not 100% sure about the drug to dispense. And you should show them that you know what steps to take if one can not read the text. Calling a doctor should be your last option, but should be on your list. Let’s have a look at sample answers.

Sample answers

- *I have a system of steps I use every time I can’t read the prescription. Firstly, I ask the patient to help me decipher. The doctors typically tell the patients what they prescribed, so sometimes patients help us to identify the drug. If patient isn’t sure, I look at their profile if it’s maintenance medication. That may help. If I still can’t figure things out, I will call the doctor.*

- *I would try to understand the handwriting before doing anything else. I'll will get accustomed to the handwriting of the doctors and be able to read the prescriptions most of the time, I believe. But if I could not read it, I would ask a patient to help me out. If we were still unable to identify the drug, I would contact the doctor and ask them. I always try to solve the problems without bothering other staff members. But in this case, I prefer bothering my colleagues, or the doctor, rather than risking substituting a wrong drug.*

15. You realize that two drugs the customer is taking may interact. What would you do?

Hint: It's your duty to inform the patient about possible drug interactions (though many pharmacists don't do it). What's more, if it goes about a serious interaction, you should suggest them an alternative, send them back to their GP, or consult a specialist.

Most pharmacists won't do this, since they rely on the prescription, and think that each patient reads about possible interactions. However, you do not want to present yourself as a typical pharmacist in an interview, do you?

Sample answers:

- *I would inform the patient immediately and ask them if they discussed the issue with their physician. If they didn't, I'd either send them back, or call the physician on my own to discuss the issue. To make the call effective, I would firstly look for substitutes that do not interact with each other, and suggest the alternatives to the doctor on the line.*
- *It depends on the seriousness of the interaction. If it was insignificant, I would only inform the patient, warning them of possible side effects. However, if it was significant or substantial, I would not let them take the drugs before consulting it with their physician or a specialist in our pharmacy. My personal conviction is that pharmacists*

should be responsible and think in their job—they shouldn't blindly follow the text on the prescription.

16. What things do you need to assure yourself about before dispensing prescription medicines to the customer?

Hint: Employers look for **customer oriented pharmacists**, people who do not hesitate to talk to the patients, people who understand that pharmacy is also a business, and the communication is a crucial part of the success of each pharmacy.

Show the interviewers that you care, that you know what you do, and also inform the patient on the things they should rather be aware of, such as possible side effects, interactions, etc.

Sample answer

- *I need to assure that the patient understands how to take the medicine—that's the most important thing. I usually repeat them the instructions, including dosage and frequency. Typically I write it on the cover, for later reference. I also check if there's no drug interaction, and if the medicines are not expired. The originality of the prescription and doctor's signature is also important, especially if it goes about habit forming substance. Once I am sure the patient is eligible and ready to take the medicine, and that the package is in a good condition and does not interact with other drugs they use, I dispense it. Of course, I try to make these checks as quickly as possible, to not waste time in job.*

17. How do you keep up to date with current pharmacy practice, new drugs and trends in the industry?

Hint: New drugs are certified every day. Good job applicants should show the interviewers that they are never satisfied with their knowledge, that they always seek **improvement**. Accredited continuing education classes are mandatory, and you won't impress the interviewers saying that you attend. Try to show them **that you do something extra**.

Do you read any vocational magazines? *Did something catch your eye lately? Did they conduct any successful medical experiment? Is there a new popular drug on the market? Is there a new pharmacy chain in town? Is there a new law or regulation that affects your job or the pharmacy business in general?*

Show them that pharmaceuticals is **not only your field of work, but also your passion**. Show enthusiasm about trends in the industry, mentioning magazines you read, and conferences you attended. That's a **superb way to stand out from the crowd of other, passive job applicants**, who do nothing else than attending mandatory classes.

Sample answers

- *I read U.S. Pharmacist and Pharmacy Times. When traveling home from work, I typically spend about twenty minutes checking latest news on RxTimes, just to ensure I won't miss anything important. I also try to attend a conference at the local University twice a year. I like pharmaceuticals, so I enjoy doing these things, and I try to stay on the top of my game.*
- *I have a family and I try to find a healthy work-life balance. Therefore, once out of work, I do not spend much time reading magazines, or doing something else related to work. I attend ACE classes and follow all other requirements to renew my license each year. On the top of that, I try to use every free minute in work (when no customers are in the store) to consult my colleagues about the latest trends. I read pharmacy articles on the internet when there's a bit of free time. To summarize it, I try to be a good pharmacist, but I also need a balanced life, since my performance in work would drop if I did not have the balance.*

18. What are your salary expectations?

Hint: Pharmacist belongs to the **highest paying careers in the world**. For example, an average pharmacist in the United States earns about \$100,000 - \$140,000 per year, including benefits. That's better than vast majority of careers can offer.

Of course, many of us decided for this career path for this reason, to earn decent salary. It's a difficult field to study, and one needs to put in an awful lot of money and effort before going for their first pharmacist job interview. I believe that very few people would decide for pharmacy studies, if the average salary was below \$75,000.

Anyway, it is always good to **say that salary is not the deciding factor**, stressing things that matter more for you, such as **feeling from a well done job, nice working environment**, personal satisfaction from being a good pharmacist, from helping people, etc.

But if they expect to hear a number, it is good to mention an average one, and the source.

Sample answers

- *Salary is not the deciding factor for me. I like the job description, I like your pharmacy, and I would be proud to have this job. I am sure I would not be underpaid at this place.*
- *According to information on salary.com, average wage for pharmacist in this state is about \$120,000. However, I do not think about numbers when deciding about my job. I believe this is my calling. I hope to get this job and I am sure once I prove my abilities, there won't be any problems with the salary.*

19. Why should we hire you, and not one of the other applicants?

Hint: Most applicants say that they have the best qualification, experience, or predispositions. That isn't a good answer....

First of all, all interviewed applicants met the criteria on experience and qualification. **They would not be invited for an interview if they did not meet them...**

And secondly, you do not know the other applicants personally, so you can't really tell if someone isn't better than you...

Other job seekers have a tendency to use one of the following answers:

- **Because I am the best candidate for this job.** *This is too general. Tell us in which way you are the best.*
- **Because I need this job badly (because of the debt I have to pay).** *Interviewers are not concerned about your personal problems.*
- **Because I fulfill the requirements.** *All applicants fulfill the requirements, at least most of them. Meeting the requirements is not a reason why we should prioritize you and not someone else.*
- **I have no idea.** *If you have no idea, how can we know?*

There are **many bad answers to this question**. What is the right way though?

The right way is to talk about something **unique, about the value you can bring to the institution, you and only you, something that differentiates you from other applicants for the job, in a positive way.**

While it is difficult to list sample answers suitable for you (each of us is unique and can bring different form of value as a pharmacist), I will list couple of good answers from other applicants, as an inspiration for your own thoughts.

Sample answers

- *I believe that pharmacist can make a visible difference between an average, and an exceptional hospital, at least in the eyes of the patients. I consider this job my personal mission, and believe my attitude and way of talking to patients are rather rare. You should hire me so you can benefit from my attitude.*
- *I love people. I like to talk to everyone, and I always try to see the best in them. This helps me to be naturally nice, even if the other person is rude or indifferent. I did not talk to other applicants, and I am sure they are all nice people with different*

characters and strengths. But if you did not find anyone else with my attitude, I would certainly be a good hire for this position.

20. Do you have any questions?

Hint: If you did not sleep in an interview, and if you really want to get the job, you should ask some questions. It shows that you care, and that you are still interested, after everything you've heard in an interview.

But you should not ask about something that was clearly explained on the job description, or already said in an interview. Good things to inquire about are the **next steps of recruitment process, company culture, working environment, and similar points**.

Sample answers:

- *Can you tell me something more about people working at this pharmacy?*
- *How many people will be working with me?*
- *Are there any opportunities to teach or precept pharmacy students?*
- *What are the next steps of recruitment process?*
- *When should a chosen applicant start with the job?*
- *Do you set monthly goals for pharmacists?*

Right preparation for interview questions

As you can imagine, **one can get dozens of different questions in a pharmacist interview.** We tried to cover all important subjects in our selection, based on the **most updated information and experience.** But after all, your interviewers can still use **different wording,** or completely different questions to **assess the same capacities.**

It is impossible to list, and to prepare for, all possible questions and scenarios. If you tried to do so, it would only stress you out, and at the end of the day you would hardly remember a single answer...

The key to success lies in **mastering the right principles and attitudes, those the interviewers seek in the best applicants (and in their interview answers).** We outlined these attitudes and principles in our answers to commonly used pharmacist interview questions, as well as in other sections of this eBook.

Once you manage to learn them, once they become a part of your mindset, you'll be able to find a good answer to any question they may ask you.

Your interview preparation should consist in learning and understanding the thinking of the interviews, and the attitudes and opinions they seek in ideal candidate for the job. That's the **only possible way to be perfectly prepared,** because after all, nobody can tell the exact questions they will ask.

I believe that if you read this book carefully, and did it at least twice, you should have this knowledge. Practicing individual answers is also good, as it helps us to get rid of stress and feel more confident in the interview. Read, practice, and get a job of your dreams....

V. Last Impression and Interview Follow-up

Most job applicants do not use the opportunity to leave a good last impression in an interview.

It is a pity.

Once your interview finished, you should **thank the interviewer** for their time, **praise them for their efforts**, and simply **leave a room in a positive and friendly manner**. That is called *leaving a good last impression*.

Even if you do not have a good feeling from the interview, you should still do this. You should take control of your emotions and leave a room with a smile on your face.

Last look into the eyes, firm hand shake, and good words can do a lot, especially if the interview is undecided, and personal preferences of the interviewers will have the final word. This is often a case in an interview for pharmacist position, or for any other interview that is packed with applicants that have similar background and experience.

I also suggest you **to send a follow up letter** one day after your interview.

You can inspire yourself with a following example:

Dear Mr. Abc,

I want to thank you for giving me a chance to present myself in the interview for community pharmacist position at XYZ company.

After the interview with you, I am really motivated to work on this position. I like the vision, goals and ideas of the corporation, as well as the working environment and people I met in the pharmacy. I believe I can be a good member of your team and help you to achieve the highest possible level of patients' satisfaction and profit.

I hope you will make a right decision, and I wish you all the best in your career.

Best Regards

Your name

Your phone number

Your email

It is always good **to send at least a short thank you note** (you can find countless examples online), in order to demonstrate that your interest for the job lasts.

Follow up letter can not win you a job contract. But it can help you to get one, or to open some doors that lead to other opportunities. It is easy to send a letter and you should send it after every interview. Most people don't send follow up letters, but most people are screened out. You do not want to be.

Build bridges, not fences. You'll benefit from it greatly in a long run.

Final word

One competes against **dozens job seekers in their pharmacist interview**, all having qualification to handle the job. Someone can say that the market is oversaturated – and it is true. But still, there are some jobs, and you can be the one who succeeds to secure them. Doesn't matter if the chances are slim....

Interviewers will use many questions, personal, behavioral and technical. They do it to get a complete picture of your abilities, and to uncover some important and some minor differences between you and other job applicants, as well as between you and their profile of an ideal job candidate.

However, interviewers and pharmacy managers are only people, like I and you... They have their desires, like to be praised for their work, and they can not resist hiring an applicant who presents themselves as an ideal candidate for the job of a pharmacist.

If you use the knowledge from this book, present yourself in a right way, bring everything with you, and offer great answers to their questions, they will have no other option to employing you, unless some candidate did it even better. In such a case you should hold your head up high, since you would know that you did maximum for your success.

We cannot influence everything, and if someone is better (or their mother has a job in the pharmacy), we just need to accept the situation, and move on. Every interview is a lesson, a chance for you to practice what you learned in this book. You'll get better with every new opportunity, and I am sure you'll land a new job very soon.

Thank you for reading my eBook, and see you in an interview!

Anita Stosur,

Your Personal Job Interview Coach