



INTERVIEW SECRETS

Interview Questions PDF

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The Interview

What to Wear

First impressions are made in the first 90 seconds, and your personal appearance is critical to making a good first impression for your CRNA School interview.

"I once went to an interview where a male applicant had not combed his hair properly and it was sticking up on the side. He was oblivious to this and when the director of the program saw him, she simply shook her head. While this is sad, he did not wake up early enough to correct this minor problem and this helped cost him a spot in the program."

-Matthew Harmon, BSN, RN

Men:

Wear a suit and tie with polished dress shoes. Choose a fairly neutral and dark color, as dark colors are classier and more formal. Black, gray or navy blue are great choices. Wear a neutral color shirt – white is a popular choice. Just be sure it's light in color and contrasts well with the dark suit you've chosen. Your tie should be simple – nothing flashy or too bold. This is not the time to make your tie a conversation piece. Stick to a neutral color tie, or blue or red (blue evokes trust, red signifies power).

If you need to go out and buy everything new, do it. It's important that you look your best. On that note, be sure your suit and shirt are neatly ironed. Showing up in a wrinkled shirt is a sure way to blow the interview. This is one of the most common mistakes that men make when going for an interview.

Checklist:

- Haircut one week before the interview
- Clean and pressed Suit, Shirt, and Tie
- Clean and polished shoes
- Shave the morning of (or the night before if your skin gets blotchy after shaving)
- Attache, laptop bag, or briefcase

Women:

A classic cut dress or a two piece pants or skirt suit. Stay with neutral colors and stay away from anything too fashionable. Fashion may impress your peers, but the admissions committee is made of mature and experienced professionals who likely don't pay much attention to fashion, and could be offended by anything that distracts attention away from the topics of the interview.

Do NOT show cleavage and be sure your outfit properly covers your bra straps and the tops of

your underwear or nylons. You are trying to impress the admissions committee with your intelligence, not your body. Look professional to both communicate your serious dedication and commitment to your professional education, and to be taken seriously in return. You should be wearing a suit jacket over your blouse, anyway; but in case you take that off at any point, be sure your bra is neutral in color and does not show through your shirt; it's just tacky. If you wear a skirt, make sure it's close to knee level. This is simply an issue of modesty.

Shoes should be closed toed with heels less than 2" high. Stay away from high heels above 2", as you will want to be comfortable standing or walking for a long period. If you wear jewelry, it should be simple, modest and conservative. If your legs show, be sure to wear nylons. Bring a bottle of clear nail polish in your purse just in case your nylons get a run halfway through the day.

Make sure your clothes are easy to get out of in the event the interview includes a tour of the school which might necessitate changing into scrubs. Wear makeup (stick with light colors – nothing too bold), and either wear your hair up or choose a very sleek way to style your hair if you wear it down.

Checklist:

- Haircut or color one week before the interview (color should be a natural shade)
- Suit or professional dress with a blazer that covers all undergarments
- Neutral color bra
- Clean shoes (polished if necessary) with low or no heel
- Neutral tones makeup
- Simple and conservative jewelry
- Attache, laptop bag, or briefcase *instead of* your purse

Men and Women:

Bring a briefcase to carry your keys, wallet, 3-5 copies of your application and transcripts, notebook, pen, and breath mints.

You will also want to bring non-messy snacks such as nuts or an energy bar in your bag. A recent applicant told me how she followed the advice I gave and showed up an hour early to the interview, but for various reasons completely outside of her control, the school was 4 HOURS LATE in interviewing her! She was starving by the time the interview started and all she could think about was food. She had to excuse her grumbling tummy more than once while answering questions. I'm sure this is a rare exception (and frankly, inexcusable for the school), but better to be prepared.

Importance of the Interview

This is an excerpt from WFUBMC's applicant FAQ section on the importance of the interview:

“Experience shows that people fail to successfully complete programs of nurse anesthesia for various reasons. There are no “givens” that a student with a certain GPA or so many years of experience will automatically be able to successfully pass through the rigorous curriculum. The interview is an extremely important opportunity for us to assess the less-quantifiable attributes that may predict an applicant’s success here. Based on the interview, sometimes applicants with relatively short ICU experience are admitted and some with more experience are declined. The same applies to GPA, test scores, and other measures. Our most important goal, for our benefit and that of our students, is to admit those who give us the best indication that they will be able to withstand the rigors of the program and to become the high quality graduates for which we are known.”

How to prepare the day before

You may feel like a nervous wreck during the interview. This is perfectly normal. To de-stress ahead of time, you can pray, meditate, re-read your research material for the school, and be sure to eat food that you know will not cause you digestive trouble. Get plenty of sleep the night before, and if you can’t sleep just rest, giving your body rest while your mind is busy is still better than no sleep and no rest.

You are going to arrive to your interview 1 hour early, so get your rest!

Interview Day

Arrive an hour early with your chin up and a smile on your face. An hour early may seem excessive, but trust me, it’s not. If you are going to a group interview, everyone else will be there at least 30 minutes early, and if you walk in only 15 minutes early, you will seem “late.” Getting there early will give you time to orient yourself to your surroundings, take many deep breaths and rehearse what you plan on saying.

High-power pose for 2 minutes prior to your interview

According to Amy Cuddy, Associate Professor at Harvard Business School and guest lecturer on TED Talks, we gain confidence by changing our body language. We have all heard that body language is a reflection of what is going on inside, but Cuddy suggests that we can change how we feel inside by changing our body language.

She teaches about power and dominance at Harvard business school, and illustrates that in both the primate kingdom as well as the human one, we tend to expand our bodies – sprawl out and take up space – to show dominance. She calls this a high-power pose. Conversely, when we feel powerless, we close our bodies and make them appear small – folding our arms, crossing our legs, hunching our shoulders, etc. This is labeled a low-power pose.

She ran an experiment in which people were asked to assume high and low power poses, assigned randomly, for two minutes. Immediately after, they were given the opportunity to gamble (confidence makes people more willing to take risks). 86% of those who had been asked to assume a high-power pose chose to gamble, whereas only 60% of those who assumed a low-power pose chose to take the risk.

The researchers also told people to give a speech after sitting in high or low power poses. The judges, who had no idea what position the subjects took, or even what the test was about, evaluated the high power position posers much better. She suggests that before you have an interview, you should go into a bathroom stall and assume a high-power pose for two minutes. It will boost your confidence during your interview and you will ultimately be judged as a more desirable candidate. Just to be clear, she doesn't suggest that you assume a high power pose during your interview, just immediately before.

Find her 21 minute talk at TED.com http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are.html

Common Interview Questions

I have compiled a list of the most commonly asked CRNA School admission interview questions. These questions were compiled from every obscure anesthesia site and every blog or forum post available on the topic. I copy pasted all 20+ pages of data, read through it, deleted anything redundant, or anything that wasn't that helpful. I've synthesized the most useful information for you and categorized it with neat little headings.

The most important thing you can be during the interview is confident! The better prepared you are, the more confident you will be. Questions that appeared in almost every list of "CRNA School interview questions to prepare for" appear in red.

General interview tips

Be courteous (yes sir/mam if the people are much older and experienced than you). Even better is to address each person by their name (Mr. ____ or Dr. _____). Only attempt this if there are only a few names to remember, or if you're really good with names. Be sure to maintain strong eye contact, a firm handshake with each person in the room and say thank you at the end.

You also want to take command of the table when you are speaking; don't hold back. This interview is all about you. The worst thing you could do is to walk out and say I wish I would have said _____. This is your chance.

General Questions

Why do you want to become a CRNA? (This question WILL be asked. It's THE most commonly asked question in the CRNA school interview).

Prepare your answer and practice it out loud with friends or family 3-5 times; and again the day before

What would make you a successful CRNA?

Tell us about yourself and your experience.

Tell us about your strengths and weaknesses?

How do you describe success?

How do you handle conflict?

How do you handle stress? Give a scenario.

What leadership experience do you have?

What volunteer work or community service have you done?

What are your roles and responsibilities?

Who is the greatest influence in your life?

How do others see you?

If you could be any animal, what would it be, and why?

What is your favorite color and why?

If you were a number, what would it be?

What do you want your tombstone to say?

What do your enemies say about you?

If you could have a meal with any 3 people in the world, who would they be?

Tell me about your proudest achievement.

What are your two most important achievements as a nurse?

You seem so confident; are you prepared to be a novice again? How do you handle criticism?

How well have you prepared? Do you have support?

Is your spouse/partner fully supportive of this effort?

What is your support system like?

How do you feel about giving up a paying job for 2-3 years?

What financial preparations have you made to ensure that you will not have financial difficulties during anesthesia school?

What preparations have you made to prepare for the rigors of CRNA School?

Do you foresee any barriers to your education? (Finances, time commitments)

Career goals

What motivates you to pursue an advanced nurse practitioner role?

Why did you choose this career field?

What are your short and long term career goals?

Where do you see yourself in five or ten years from now?

Describe personal, professional, and educational attributes that make you uniquely suitable for this career field.

How do you feel that your background will influence your research, clinical work and areas of interest?

What changes in your personal or professional lifestyle do you anticipate as a graduate student and as an advanced nurse practitioner? How have you planned for this?

What is your single strongest personality trait that will help you in your academic and professional career as a CRNA?

What is your most important weakness that you will struggle with during your academic and professional career?

As a member of a small and elite profession, what obligations will you have, if any, toward this profession?

Tell me about your clinical CRNA shadow experience? How did that influence you to pursue this profession?

What have you done to develop or change in the last few years?

Next question, why did you decide to go from being a _____ to being a nurse to applying to CRNA School?

Program specific questions

To answer these questions with confidence and competence, you need to know the school's program very well, and also know its competing programs. There must have been a reason you applied to this program over the other ones out there. Know those distinctions very well. Know which stats this program boasts over the other programs. Know what they're proud of.

Also find out what research is being conducted by the faculty of the school. Knowing what they're interested in will have a very positive impact.

If you're applying to this program because you think it's the only chance you have to get accepted... don't say that out loud. Come up with another reason to use during the interview. Here are some alternative reasons for you to consider:

- The method of instruction at the school vs. others you have researched
- How close it is to your home, family, region, or airport
- The percentage of coursework that is available online vs. in classroom
- The number of clinical hours earned during the program
- The size of the classes
- The track record of the school for success in graduation rates, diversity, job placement, etc.

What do you know about XYZ School and our program?

Why did you choose our program? (They WILL ask this)

How do you think you will fit into the program?

What are your expectations of the program?

What will you do if you don't get into the program?

What do you think it takes to complete this type of program?

What makes you think you're able to complete this type of program?

What strengths do you bring to this program?

Why should we pick you over someone else?

Do you foresee any barriers to your education?

Educational history

Tell us about your research projects

Why do you have so many C's on your transcript?

I see you took a graduate level course in _____. How has that class helped you in your clinical practice?

Work history

Be very careful what you offer up about your experience. If you've only done a balloon pump once or twice, don't offer that as part of the training you have (or just tell them you've done it once or twice). They will assume you are proficient with anything you tell them you have experience in.

The clinical questions they ask you WILL be based on the experience you've had. They don't expect you to have mastered every area of ICU, just the procedures and patient populations you've dealt with day in and day out. If you attempt to inflate your experience by claiming expertise in areas where you are still a novice, it will grossly backfire and you'll look and feel ignorant.

If they do happen to ask you a question you are unfamiliar with, such as a question about an open heart patient when you worked in Neuro, just tell them you don't have experience in that area. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question or what type of answer they're looking for.

Tell us about your work experience.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

What is your unit like? What kind of patients and drips do you take care of? What is your favorite and why?

Tell me about a typical pt. in your ICU.

How long have you been in the ICU?

Give me an example of a time when you had to think out of the box.

Give an example of when you worked on a team.

Tell me about a time when you had to manage a difficult clinical situation.

Tell me about a time when you were working with someone who wasn't pulling their weight, and they had a different value system than yours. How did you deal with this person?

Tell me about a time when you failed. What happened, and how did you recover?

Give an example of where you showed leadership.

Give me an example of your problem solving.

Discuss a mistake you made and how you resolved it...

If I asked your boss to tell me your weaknesses, what would he tell me?

Do you work well under pressure? Give an example.

What was your last difficult pt.? What made it difficult and what did you do?

Be prepared to talk about any sedation/paralytics/pain med infusions you use in ICU (eg. Nimbex, Fentanyl, Ativan drips to sedate).

Talk about any epidural experience you have had in ICU if any.

Ethical questions

In clinical, if someone told you that you were taping your IV wrong, what would you do?

If I told you to do the IV "this" way, and you didn't want to do it, what would you do?

Tell me about a time when you had an ethical dilemma at work. What did you do?

Tell me about a time when you felt it was you against everyone else. You thought you were right and that everyone else was wrong. What did you do?

If you saw one of your fellow students or colleagues using drugs outside of work/classroom, what would you do?

Clinical questions

They will ask you questions you do not know the answer to. That is ok and expected. They want to see that you are not so arrogant that you will just BS your way through it. Remember, they know the answers to all of these questions, so you're not fooling anyone by making stuff up. If you are familiar with the term/procedure but do not recall specifics, simply say you are familiar with it but not sure the exact answer. That shows them that you know when to ask for help and that you're aware of your own limitations.

How do you wean a patient from the Ventilator?

What would you do for a patient that comes in with a M.I.? Why?

Select a vasoactive medication and describe how it works on the molecular level.

Tell me about Vasopressin. Where does Vasopressin work?

Please explain the difference between SA02 and PA02?

What is Mv02?

Tell me everything you know about hemoglobin.

Discuss the pharmacologic differences between dopamine and dobutamine.

Identify Myocardial infarctions on a 12 lead EKG.

What are appropriate interventions for cardiogenic shock?

What increases ICP?

What is the FIRST thing you would do if you looked up and saw 2nd degree type 2 heart block, and the BP was low?

How does Atropine work?

How does Digoxin work?

What are the symptoms of sepsis?

What would swan numbers show in a septic pt. and why?

What does levophed do? What is its mechanism? What receptor sites does it work on?

Normal range for ICP?

What do balloon pumps do and how are they beneficial for heart patients?

Why don't you given beta blockers to asthmatic patients?

How do you calculate SVRI?

Interpret these _____ gases?

How would you treat these gases?

If I told you to give atropine, what would you do? (Would you follow orders without asking questions?)

The correct answer here is to ask about the patient. You would never administer a drug without knowing the patient's background.

Anesthesia profession questions:

What does a CRNA do?

What is the role of a CRNA?

What do you see as your role as a CRNA?

What are current political issues in the field of anesthesia?

Find them at: AANA.com or studentdoctor.net Anesthesia forum

With what theoretical/research/philosophical approaches to the field do you identify?

If you had to pick a topic for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, what might it be?

Who (within the field) has influenced you the most?

What do you consider the biggest issue facing the profession today? Next 5/10 years?

Questions to ask the school:

One of the biggest mistakes you could make here is to ask a question that is clearly posted on their website. You should very thoroughly read through their website before the interview and make up a list of the school's strengths, as well as questions that still remain once you've learned all you can online. These questions are just there to give you a good starting point.

Some programs have 12 months of clinical, while others have 24 or more. The case requirements are the same, but the experiences can vary greatly - even between students in the same program. You are required to have 5 open heart procedures. In one program you may stand in the room basically observing 5 open heart procedures. In another program, you may put in the lines, intubate the patient, deliver the anesthetic and give all the drugs. Those are completely different experiences.

The requirements for regional anesthesia are: 1 spinal, 1 epidural. One is not enough to get you anywhere near proficient. You need to do 50 to reach 90% proficiency and some programs will get you that level of experience, but probably not in 24 months. When you look for a desirable position the employer will be most concerned with your level of clinical experience. Difference in program length is often related to amount of time in clinical.

A program can have some students in great clinical sites and some students in clinical sites where the CRNAs can't push their own medications, and are highly restricted. Remember, you're interviewing them just as much as they're interviewing you.

Also, do remember that some questions are better to ask than others. Avoid asking close ended questions. These are questions with yes/no or finite answers. If you really want to know these things, call ahead and ask the secretary. During the interview, you want to show critical thinking skills by asking the school open ended questions.

Example: Rather than asking, "What are your pass rates on the certification exam?" You should ask "What do you feel contributes most to your high pass rates on the certification exam?" Why are your pass rates so much higher than the national average?" The first question suggests you haven't done much research, while the second question shows a depth of thought that will be more likely to impress them.

What are you looking for in an ideal SRNA?

What is your definition of excellence?

What are the strengths (and/or weaknesses) of the program?

How are students who struggle academically handled?

How do you handle a significant life change of one of your students? Ex. Death in the family, divorce, major illness, etc.? Is the student given a grace period? (Avoid mentioning the birth of a child as they may assume you are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant and thus exclude you from their consideration.)

Could you describe what the classes are like? Lectures, discussions, problem-based learning, etc.?

What do you feel is the biggest factor contributing to the attrition rate of ___? (Know the attrition rate before the interview). Only ask if their attrition rate is very high or low.

Are the students pushing their own medications and doing a variety of procedures?

How do you deal with competition with residents to place lines/intubate/perform other procedures at clinical sites? Do they work with CRNAs outside of an ACT environment?

What is the average number of pediatric and thoracic cases?

What type of regional anesthesia experience does your typical graduate obtain? How many spinals and how many epidurals?

Some clinical sites offer a wider range of experiences than others. How are students assigned to clinical sites? If I am selected, will I have a choice in which clinical sites I am sent to?

If the program has a sim lab, ask “what is the sim lab experience like? What are some of the things you simulate?”

If accepted, what will make me a successful student in your program?