

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Sarah Michelle and Anna

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Welcome to the *Real Deal NP Club*. Whether you're hoping to become a real deal nurse practitioner or you already are one, this is the place for you to get the resources you need as you tackle this massive transition into practice. We're your hosts, Sarah Michelle, Chief Nursing Officer of Blueprint Test Prep, and Anna Miller, Director of Nursing Content. And we're here to hang out with you each week like your best friends in the NP space. Let's dive in.

Hello everyone and welcome back to the *Real Deal Nurse Practitioner Club* podcast. I'm Anna and I'm going to be doing this episode solo today, and today is going to be all about preparing for that interview. Every NP position is unique and you can be asked many different types of questions, but we're going to go over some of the most common interview questions and how to answer them to put your best self forward.

So if you've been applying for jobs and you finally got that call back to schedule an interview, today's episode is for you. And this episode will be helpful regardless of specialty and whether it's your first advanced practice job or you've been an NP for a while.

Also, did you know that SMNP Reviews has our entire Job Hunt course available for you? It includes resources on where to find NP jobs, job interview preparation, including a different mock interview if you want even more practice, and even things like contract negotiation tips. So definitely check that out, but let's get started into this episode.

One very common question is, tell me about your experience, especially you as a new grad who hasn't worked in the NP field yet. And this is likely one of the very first questions you'll be asked. But don't just rattle off the highlights of what's already on your resume, right? The key is to tell your story.

Briefly talk about your career in nursing. What did your time as an RN teach you? Was there something in particular that made you decide to pursue becoming an NP? How have your clinical rotations that you've been doing

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

in NP school prepared you for this role? You absolutely want to bring that experience up. And you can share what you're most excited about for this particular opportunity, especially if you can relate it to this specific job you're interviewing for.

Another common question is, how do you handle stressful situations? Right, we know nursing is an endlessly rewarding profession, but it can also be really stressful. Even in your dream job, there are bound to be moments where stress creeps in. The interviewer wants to know that you'll be able to handle it, and they should also be interested in how they can support you when you're under stress.

So what you're going to want to do is think about a particular time, ideally in NP clinicals or working as a nurse, when you handled a stressful situation. That would be great to talk about. So if you can't think of any of those, you can even talk about how you managed your schoolwork and studying while working and caring for your family. That can highlight your great time management.

Or an even better thing is you can talk about a time where you reached out to a supervisor because you realized you needed help. That shows great communication skills. And you can use a negative, right, with stress to highlight the positive and how you did the right thing in a scenario, and can really be a valuable resource to their organization.

Another one that I hear all the time is tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult patient. And as much as we enjoy caring for our patients, we know it's not always easy. But the interviewer is not interested in hearing how difficult the patient was, rather they want to hear about you and how you maintained your professionalism.

The interviewer wants to hear your thought process in dealing with all sorts of different patients. You can highlight your communication skills, and also highlight your sensitivity to the situation, whatever it may be.

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

What you want to do is think about all different sorts of scenarios that you have encountered as a nurse and in NP clinicals, and jot those down on a piece of paper so that you can come back to them time and time again. Any specific patient encounters, of course, being HIPAA compliant, you can write down and that way you can easily reference those.

Next one, I don't hear this one all the time, but I have heard it pop up occasionally and more unexpected is, can you tell me what an NP can do? Maybe you are applying for a position in a company that has never had an NP before, or they just might want to make sure that you understand your scope of practice.

Be ready to explain the preparation and the education for NPs and how you can contribute to comprehensive patient care. You can also emphasize how nursing focuses on the care of the whole person. And then, as always, provide an example of how you, as an NP, can do just that. It would also be helpful to look up the NP scope of practice for your particular state, that way you are fully aware of the regulations.

Another question that I've seen is, how will an NP fit into this practice? And this question is kind of related to that one I just talked about. While you may have explained what an NP can do, you should also be prepared to explain why you, as an NP, are a good fit for that particular practice.

So look up what their values are. Will you help expand access to care? Will you provide a new expertise to the practice? Will you be able to share responsibilities with the other clinicians? Once again, remember to highlight the positives.

NPs are wonderful patient educators. You have had so much practice with that throughout your nursing job. We know NPs increase access to care, focus on preventative medicine, therefore helping to decrease acute visits and reduce overall health care costs. There are so many benefits that you can tie in, so focus on what fuels you and what you're most passionate about.

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

And then another one that is definitely popular, especially if you're applying to different work areas or specialty clinics is, why do you want to work in this specialty or at this particular clinic? And with this question, again, the interviewer wants to hear about you and your passion. They don't want to hear that you applied for this position just because or that you saw it online, right?

Think about what makes you excited to come for work. An NP with a passion for a specialty can say things like, I really want to work in family medicine because I enjoy caring for families and individuals of all ages. Or I want to work in acute care as a hospitalist because I really enjoy the complexity of care. And then you can expand further and further, right?

Or for me, I want to work in women's health because I find it incredibly rewarding and empowering. And I can go on to speak about all my women's health background that I've had and what specific areas I do find really rewarding and empowering.

So if you have a specific story about why you chose your specialty, go ahead and share it. And if you're applying for a specialty you have no experience in, but that maybe you're interested in, have an answer prepared for that as well.

Now, one that may be a little more popular if you were in an NP job and it wasn't the right fit and now you're applying for a new one quickly after could be, why did you leave your last position? And when answering this question, honesty to a point is the best policy, right? It's okay to explain that you left due to relocation, better pay, better opportunities for promotion or growth. Or if you're new, for a career transition, like from RN to NP.

But what you don't want to do is talk negatively about your previous employer, because that can come across as very gossipy or just indelicate and unprofessional.

For example, a job that you left because it became emotionally draining can just be translated into, I left my previous position to find a more

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

supportive and inclusive working environment. And then if you've looked up their values or looked up the position online, you can even highlight why you feel that this new organization could meet that need.

Now, another question is, how do you work with other healthcare professionals to provide patient care? Because we know healthcare is interprofessional, so you want to be prepared for a question around that. And it takes clinicians across multiple specialties to care for patients.

So working as an RN, how did you coordinate care with other providers? You can think of physical therapy, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, pharmacy, social services, all of those to ensure that your patient was receiving the care they needed.

As an NP, can you give an example of a referral you made for a patient that had a positive outcome? Think back to all that clinical experience. And this is also another great time to show off your great communication skills, maybe even your follow up skills, and how you can work on a team as well.

And then of course we have the classic, what are your greatest strengths and weaknesses questions. So let's start with what are your greatest strengths? This might seem like a really easy question to answer, but both of these, strengths and weaknesses, actually require a bit of preparation.

When talking about your greatest strengths, you don't want to come across as arrogant, but you still want to seem impressive, right? I know, that's a delicate balance. A helpful strategy here is to look at the job description, look at the employer, what are they looking for? And while you hopefully meet all the criteria, pick a few that you know you would really excel at and talk about those. That way you show how your strengths are relevant to the job, which is exactly what the interviewer is looking for.

And if you're talking about things like your communication, your time management, your being a team player, try to pull quick examples from your time as a nurse or in NP school that can showcase that.

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

And then we have the greatest weaknesses question, right? This can be an awkward or embarrassing question, especially when we're bringing up weaknesses. And no one wants to discuss what they don't do well, especially to a potential employer. And you'll want to avoid the cliché of perfectionism as your greatest weakness, and instead be honest about a weakness that you intend to overcome and how.

In your answer, reply by replacing weakness with something I know I need to improve on. And this rephrasing can change the whole connotation, right? Then when you discuss this weakness or this thing that you're going to improve on, be sure to include the ways that you intend to improve or things that you're already working on.

So for example, you can say something that I know I need to improve on is my ability to interpret 12 lead ECGs. I'd like to use some professional development time to take an advanced ECG course and would love to have opportunities to learn from the more experienced clinicians in this practice. So you're showing how you're relating it to the job and the exact position you're interviewing for and how you intend to overcome it.

Preparing for a job interview can be so exciting and so stressful. I also want you to be mentally prepared to answer some scenario-based questions depending on the area that you're practicing or the area that you're interviewing for.

So look up common interview scenarios or just patient scenarios or different practices and be prepared to answer a content question or two. How would you handle the x, y, and z case scenario? What about this case scenario? And that's really going to be tailored to whatever the job is, but don't be surprised if one or two of those pop up. They love questions that are like, tell me about a time when.

So always be prepared for those and if you want more mock interview questions, again, check out that job hunt course. But I hope this quick interview over just those basic questions gave you some helpful tips that

Ep #127: Ace Your NP Interview: Expert Tips for Landing Your Dream Job

allow you to walk into any interview full of confidence. No matter what the question is, remember to just answer honestly and always try to end on a positive note. You've got this.

Good luck with all of your interviews. Be sure to reach out if you need help and thank you for tuning in. I hope you enjoyed this podcast episode today and be sure to follow the podcast channel and SMNP reviews on YouTube and Facebook, but until next time.

As an extra bonus friends, if you're looking for support no matter what phase of your nurse practitioner journey that you're currently in, I have communities available for both students and new nurse practitioners. In these communities, we work to uplift one another and grow this profession together every single day. Links to join will be included for you in the show notes.

Thanks for listening to the *Real Deal Nurse Practitioner Club*. If you want more information about the different types of support that we offer to students and new nurse practitioners, you can visit npreviews.com. We'll see you next week.