

The University of Akron School of Law

Career Planning & Placement Office

Sample Judicial Clerkship Interview Questions

Questions a Judge Might Ask You

- Why do you want to clerk?
- Why do you want to clerk for me?
- What are your ties to this area?
- Why do you want to clerk for a trial/appellate court?
- What are you looking for in a clerkship?
- To which other judges/courts have you applied? Why did you choose them?
- Why did you go to law school?
- What are your career plans after law school?
- How does a clerkship fit into your long-term career plans?
- Where would you like to work ultimately?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How would you describe your work style?
- How would you describe your writing style?
- What is your favorite course in law school and why?
- What is your least favorite course in law school and why?
- What do you consider your greatest strengths? Your greatest weaknesses?
- Tell me about your work with (journal/clinical).
- Who is your favorite Supreme Court Justice and why?
- What do you think about the Supreme Court's recent ruling in _____?
- What are your views on states' rights (or other substantive legal areas)?
- What do you think about precedent?
- Tell me about your experience this past summer at (employer).
What kind of substantive research and writing experience did you obtain?
- Let's talk about your writing sample. Why did you choose this topic?
Why do you think the better decision would have been to reverse the lower court?
Don't you think the Supreme Court's recent decision in _____ weakens your argument?
(or some other question(s) challenging your analysis)
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to juggle competing deadlines and priorities
and how you handled it.
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Tell me about your interest in (fly fishing, snowboarding, filmmaking . . . etc.)
- What are some of the most recent books you've read?
- Why should I hire you?

Questions You Might Ask the Judge

- What criteria do you use in selecting your clerks?
- How would you describe your relationship with your clerks?
- What is the scope of their responsibilities?
- How do you delegate assignments?
- How is a typical case handled from start to finish?
- What are your favorite types of cases? What are your least favorite types of cases?
- How would you describe your work style?

Questions you Might Ask the Judge's Clerks

- What are your duties and responsibilities?
- How would you describe your relationship with your judge?
- Does the judge provide you guidance and feedback? If so, how?
- How would you evaluate your judge's mentoring abilities?
- How interested is the judge in clerks' personal and professional lives?
- How is the judge viewed in the legal community?
- What is the work load like?
- What types of cases are on the docket? Do certain types of cases predominate?
- Are you able to spend time in court?
- What do you like most about clerking? What do you like least?
- If the judge is Chief Judge, do clerks assist in administrative work? If so, to what extent?
- If the judge is a Senior Judge, how does senior status affect caseload or type of cases?
- Does the (district) judge sit with the Circuit? If so, how does that affect the type/amount of the clerks' work?
- Does the (circuit) judge sit as a trial judge? If so, how does that affect the type/amount of the clerks' work?
- What is it like living in the particular town? Is it easy to make friends? Do you hang out with clerks of other chambers?
- What are the best and worst things about clerking for the judge?

Things to Think About During Your Interview

- Are the secretaries brusque and condescending or friendly and obliging?
- Are the law clerks genuinely enthusiastic or are they delivering platitudes through clenched teeth?
- Does the judge seem aloof and distant, or is there a warm ambience that suggests familiarity and teamwork?
- Does the judge's perception of him or herself match that of his or her staff?
- Are the judge's habits consistent with you own?