

What to Ask • What to Look For • Protecting Your Work-Life Balance

This document is to help guide you in decision-making when looking for your first job as a physical therapist.

Asking the right questions in an interview is one of the most underrated skills a candidate can have. It shows you are an active participant and helps you evaluate if a job and company is right for you. It helps you identify red flags. Working for a company that does not match your values can lead to burnout and moving away from the career you love.

Goals for a Job That Will Support You and Your Career

Protected Mentorship

Positive Team Culture

Reasonable Caseload

Clear Growth Path

Respect as a Teammate

"The right job won't require you to shrink.

It will make room for your growth."

Things to Watch For

Red Flags	Green Flags
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Productivity > 85-90%• Consistent double-booking (ask to look at the schedule to evaluate the EMR system)• No structured mentorship• Expectation to complete notes at home• No clear PTO policy• High turnover of PTs• Leadership dodges questions• "We need someone to hit the ground running"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protected mentorship• Reasonable caseload and schedule• Supportive director• Growth pathways and specialty options• Connected, collaborative team• You leave the interview feeling like THEY value YOU

Questions to Ask & What to Look For

Workload & Productivity	Mentorship & Professional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your productivity expectation • How many patients per day do clinicians see • Is documentation time included • Are double-bookings expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What structured mentorship exists • How often will I have time with my mentor • Is mentorship protected time
Clinical Autonomy & Special Interests	Work-Life Balance & Schedule
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 or 1:2 care models • 60 min evals, 30-45 minutes follow-ups (>40 is better) • Scheduled documentation blocks • Reduced caseload for first 3-6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly 1:1 mentorship • Shadowing opportunities • Clear year-one growth plan
Compensation & Benefits	Company Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I shape my caseload toward my specialty • Do you support specialty con-ed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are schedules consistent • Is overtime expected • How flexible is PTO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership supports specialization • Paid con-ed & professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35-40 hour workweek • Respect for time off • Limited evening/weekend expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the full salary range • Is pay tied to productivity • Do you offer loan repayment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long do PTs stay here • What do new grads struggle with most • How does leadership support clinicians
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent salary structure • Reasonable bonus metrics • At least 3-4 weeks PTO on top of holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low turnover • Collaborative team culture • Supportive leadership

Notes
