

*"Jobs are won in the interview! Anticipate questions that may be asked by reviewing the job description and company website, and plan high-impact answers. Go through mock interviews to become more familiar with, and effective in, various interview situations."*  
-The Canadian Job Directory

## Interview Skills Workshop

*This workshop will provide you with the knowledge to market yourself successfully in an interview!*

- How to prepare for a job interview.
- How to answer typical and behavioural interview questions
- How to professionally present yourself in an interview.

**Go through a Mock Interview!  
Drop-In Hours  
Monday to Friday  
1:30pm to 3:30pm**

First-come, first-served basis,  
sign-up starts at 1:00pm



***"Focused on Your Success"***

## **CONTENTS**

Introduction .....	3
Preparing for the Job Interview .....	4
Typical Interview Questions .....	8
What are Employers Looking for in Answers .....	8
Behavioural Based Interview Questions .....	10
Off-the-Wall Interview Questions .....	11
Questions to Ask at the Interview .....	12
Telephone Interviews .....	12
Thank You Letter/Example .....	13
First Impressions/Professional Image .....	15

## INTRODUCTION

The interview process is an exchange of information between the interviewer and the candidate. There are two purposes to an interview – the employer’s and the candidate’s – yours.

### Employer’s Perspective

The major purpose of the interview from the employer’s perspective is to select and hire the most qualified and suitable person for position and the company.

An interview gives an employer an opportunity to:

- meet the person who sent the resume
- explore a possible fit between what the candidate has to offer and the qualifications of the position
- assess the candidate’s potential
- explore the candidate’s ability to think
- assess presentation style, command of the language and knowledge of the field
- determine the candidate’s understanding of the position and organization
- compare the candidate with others who are being interviewed

### Candidate’s Perspective

The major purpose of the interview from the candidate’s perspective is to be successful in receiving a job offer.

An interview gives a candidate the opportunity to:

- present yourself in the most positive
- convince the employer of the strong fit between your skills and the qualifications of the position
- demonstrate your understanding of the position and the organization
- articulate effectively what skills you have to offer, how your skills have been developed and where they have been used
- find out more about the position and the organization
- determine whether you would actually want to do the work if offered the job
- decide if the organization is one for which you would want to work
- conclude whether or not the position is one that would lead you in the direction you would like to go with your career

## **PREPARING FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW**

During an interview, the employer is seeking information about you. In addition to wanting to know what you have accomplished in your life, the interviewer may also want to know how much effort you have put into preparing for the interview itself. Being prepared for the interview tells the employer several things:

- you are sincerely interested in the company and the job
- you would not be surprised about or unhappy with the type of work the organization expects
- you are a conscientious person; you do your homework
- you know how to work independently and find out the answers to questions
- you are aware that the interviewer's time is valuable, and you know how to make efficient use of time

### **Your Preparation will Benefit you by**

- analyzing your own talents, abilities, accomplishments, interests, as well as the organization's needs
- you will be able to present yourself with confidence, and answer the interview questions with concrete examples that will impress the interviewer
- you will have more confidence in your skills and abilities pertaining to the job
- you will be better prepared to ask the interviewer(s) questions about the job
- you will improve your chances for being considered for the job

Preparing for the interview requires the following:

### **I. Know Yourself/Self Assessment**

Self-knowledge is absolutely crucial when going for a job interview. Knowing your skills, interests, strengths, and personal qualities and demonstrating them with examples will help you to answer interview questions with confidence. Use your resume as a guide to assist you in identifying specific examples; look to your employment, volunteer, academic and other related experiences that would demonstrate your abilities and competencies. Answering some of the following questions will also help you to remember certain aspects of yourself and will assist you in determining if the position is suitable for you.

1. Which subjects did you enjoy the most/least?
2. What types of projects did you like the best? Were they group or individual projects?
3. What are your short-term/long term goals?
4. What are some of your strengths/qualities?
5. What type of work situations are you comfortable in?
6. What type of work are you looking for, and will it provide you with long-term professional development and personal satisfaction?
7. What are some of your short-term/long-term goals?

## II. Job/Skills Matching

Analyze the job description and be prepared to support your ability to do the job with validating skills and experiences from course work, projects, work/volunteer experiences, and extra-curricular activities.

The job interview prep sheet will help you to focus on your abilities, skills, and experiences and match them to the employer's needs.

In the first column list the main requirements and qualifications of the position. In the second column, write your specific skill and or experience that would match the qualification in the first column. In the third column support the skill or experience you acquired by providing describing an example in point form that would demonstrate that you meet the employer's requirement. This exercise will also help you to prepare for behavioural-based interview questions.

### Job Interview Prep Sheet Example

Position Requirements	Your Qualification/Experience	Your Example
Ability to work well with others	Leadership activities on-campus	VP of the Marketing Club, coordinated volunteers to organize and on-campus event

It is also a good idea to do this exercise with other skills that employers may look for in candidates but may not necessarily outline in a job description. The Employability Skills chart lists the skills that employers require in the workplace.

### EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS 2000+: QUALITIES EMPLOYERS SEEK

Fundamental Skills The skills needed as a base for further development.	Personal Management Skills The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive one's potential for growth.	Teamwork Skills The skills and attributes needed to contribute productively.
<p><i>You will be better prepared to progress in the world of work when you can:</i></p> <p><b>Communicate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read and understand information presented in a variety of forms (eg: words, graphs, charts, diagrams)</li> <li>• write and speak so others pay attention and understand</li> <li>• listen and ask questions to understand and appreciate the points of view of others</li> <li>• share information using a range of information and communications technologies (eg: voice, e-mail, computers)</li> </ul>	<p><i>You will be able to offer yourself greater possibilities for achievement when you can:</i></p> <p><b>Demonstrate Positive Attitudes &amp; Behaviours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel good about yourself and be confident</li> <li>• deal with people, problems and situations with honesty, integrity and personal ethics</li> <li>• recognize your own and other people's good efforts</li> <li>• take care of your personal health</li> <li>• show interest, initiative and effort</li> </ul> <p><b>Be Responsible</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set goals and priorities balancing work and personal life</li> </ul>	<p><i>You will be better prepared to add value to the outcomes of a task, project or team when you can:</i></p> <p><b>Work with Others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand and work within the dynamics of a group</li> <li>• ensure that a team's purpose and objectives are clear</li> <li>• be flexible: respect, be open to and supportive of the thoughts, opinions and contributions of others in a group</li> <li>• recognize and respect people's diversity, individual differences and perspectives</li> <li>• accept/provide feedback in a constructive and considerate manner</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use relevant scientific, technological and mathematical knowledge and skills to explain or clarify ideas</li> </ul> <p><b>Manage Information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems</li> <li>• access, analyze and apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines (eg: the arts, languages, science, technology, mathematics, social sciences, and the humanities)</li> </ul> <p><b>Use Numbers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decide what needs to be measured or calculated</li> <li>• observe and record data using appropriate methods, tools and technology</li> <li>• make estimates and verify calculations</li> </ul> <p><b>Think &amp; Solve Problems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess situations and identify problems</li> <li>• seek different points of view and evaluate them based on facts</li> <li>• recognize the human, interpersonal, technical, scientific and mathematical dimensions of a problem</li> <li>• identify the root cause of a problem</li> <li>• be creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions</li> <li>• readily use science, technology and mathematics as ways to think, gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions</li> <li>• evaluate solutions to make recommendations or decisions</li> <li>• implement solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals</li> <li>• assess, weigh and manage risk</li> <li>• be accountable for your actions and the actions of your group</li> <li>• be socially responsible and contribute to your community</li> </ul> <p><b>Be Adaptable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work independently or as part of a team</li> <li>• carry out multiple tasks or projects</li> <li>• be innovative and resourceful: identify and suggest alternative ways to achieve goals and get the job done</li> <li>• be open and respond constructively to change</li> <li>• learn from your mistakes and accept feedback</li> <li>• cope with uncertainty</li> </ul> <p><b>Lean Continuously</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be willing to continuously learn and grow</li> <li>• assess personal strengths and areas for development</li> <li>• set your own learning goals</li> <li>• identify and access learning sources and opportunities</li> <li>• plan for an achieve your learning goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Work Safely</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be aware of personal and group health and safety practices and procedures, and act in accordance with these</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribute to a team by sharing information and expertise</li> <li>• lead or support when appropriate, motivating a group for high performance</li> <li>• understand the role of conflict in a group to reach solutions</li> <li>• manage and resolve conflict when appropriate</li> </ul> <p><b>Participate in Projects &amp; Tasks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan, design or carry out a project or task from start to finish with well-defined objectives and outcomes</li> <li>• develop a plan, seek feedback, test, revise and implement</li> <li>• work to agreed quality standards and specifications</li> <li>• select and use appropriate tools and technology for a task/project</li> <li>• adapt to changing requirements and information</li> <li>• continuously monitor the success of a project/task and identify ways to improve</li> </ul>
--	---	---

Source: The Conference Board of Canada

### **III. Know the Industry/Organizational Fit**

Researching the company prior to the interview is also important in preparing for the interview. Learn as much as possible about the company and be prepared to demonstrate your knowledge. Some good sources of information include:

- ❑ company website
- ❑ corporate brochures/annual reports
- ❑ company profile
- ❑ articles, press releases, newspapers, professional journals
- ❑ attending a corporate presentation on campus and attending career fairs

These sources of information will help you to answer the following:

1. How has the firm grown, and what are its future growth plans?
2. What services/products does the firm provide for its customers?
3. Who are their customers/competitors?
4. How large is the organization? Are they a national or international company?
5. What is the company's mission statement?
6. What is the outlook of the industry in which it operates?
7. Where does the company stand in comparison to others in the industry?

This type of company research will also help you to understand how you are going to fit into the organization and how the position relates to the company's goal in the products/services it provides and the customers of the organization.

### **IV. Practice Answering Interview Questions**

Reviewing typical and behavioural-based interview questions and preparing answers to them may mean the difference between a confident and articulate answer or a confusing and halting answer. When preparing answers to interview questions, write them down in point form and remember to provide a validating experience or example to demonstrate how you gained a particular skill, experience or knowledge. Interviewing is a skill in itself and you can only improve your style and confidence by practicing with a friend, family member or a career counsellor.

## TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Here is a list of sample of typical interview questions you can expect, especially at first interviews. These questions assist the employer is assessing your skills, abilities, knowledge, interest and suitability.

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What interests you about this job?
3. What do you know about our company?
4. What skills/qualifications do you have that are applicable to this position?
5. How do you see your past experiences helping you in this position?
6. Why did you choose to study \_\_\_\_\_?(discipline)
7. How do you feel your academic studies will help you in the job?
8. Why did you choose the university you did to study your program?
9. What are some of your strengths?
10. What would you consider to be your weakness?
11. What are some of your short term and long term goals?
12. Why do you think I should hire you?
13. What are two accomplishments that have given you the most satisfaction, and why?
14. What skills have you gained from some of your course work and school projects?
15. Where do you see yourself in five years?
16. How well do you work with people? Do you prefer to work alone or in teams?

## WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR IN ANSWERS

The key to effectively answering job interview questions is to understand the purpose of the questions. It's hard to respond to statements like "Tell me about yourself", if you don't know what the employer wants to know.

### Questions About You and Your Skills

- Tell me about yourself.
- What five words would you say describe you best?
- What do you consider your most important abilities?
- What are your strengths?
- Why should I hire you?

The interviewer is trying to get to know you and what makes you different from other candidates in order to determine which candidate is most suitable for the position and will most likely succeed in the position. To answer this type of question well, you have to be able to describe your skills and abilities and how they relate to the particular job. Emphasize the appropriate aspects of your background, experience, skills, accomplishments, and characteristics. The typical weakness question seems to cause a problem for most candidates. The reason employers ask this question is to see if you have the capability of recognizing an area that you need to improve on and if you have the initiative to self-improve and self-develop yourself. The weakness you choose to describe should not be related to the position and should be something that you have already improved on or are currently working towards.

### **Questions About Your Interest in the Company**

- What is it about our services or products that interests you?
- What is your understanding of the nature of the job and the company?
- Why did you apply for this job?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why do you want to work for our company?

These types of questions provide the interviewer with how much knowledge you have of the company and the job in which you are applying. It is very important that you have done some research on the company before the interview. State what you know about the company and its operations and why you are interested in the job. Emphasize how your skills would meet the company's needs.

### **Questions About Your Ability to Fulfill the Job Requirements**

- What qualifications do you have that would make you successful in this position?
- Do you have the ability to work independently as well as in a team?
- How will your degree program help you succeed in this position?
- Give me an example when you had to meet a tight deadline.
- Are you able to multi-task?

The employer has certain qualifications that are important to perform successfully in the position. These questions are used to find out how well your skills, education, knowledge and experience match the requirements of the job. The key to answering these questions is to know the job description, the responsibilities and duties of the job. You will then need to prove to the employer that you have some or most of the qualifications by providing specific examples that reflect your skills, knowledge and abilities.

### **Questions About Your Commitment**

- What are some of your short and long term goals?
- Why did you choose to study your discipline?
- What do you hope to gain from this position?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Can you describe a goal that you set for yourself that you were proud to accomplish?

Employers are looking for employees with motivation and drive. People who have a high degree of motivation tend to be goal oriented. People who set goals for themselves, both career-related and personal goals, tend to be dedicated and committed employees. People who have a high degree of motivation also tend to continuously strive to bring about improvements in their job performance and in themselves personally, in the employer's eyes these employees tend to be efficient and productive workers. Employers will also determine if your goals correspond with the company's goals.

## Questions about Your Previous Experiences and Performance/Behavioural Based Interview Questions

Behavioural interviewing is a style of interviewing that many companies are using in their hiring process. The premise behind behavioural interviewing is that *the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation*. Behavioural interviewing is said to be 55 percent predictive of future on-the-job behaviour, while traditional interviewing is only 10 percent predictive. Employers determine core competencies or skills necessary for success in the job. Then they ask pointed questions to determine if the candidate possess those skills.

Below are a couple of tips to help you anticipate some BBI questions and prepare for them:

- ❑ Determine the skills/traits the employer will try to examine. From your company research you will find information on their web site, job description, literature and other materials that indicate the specific requirements that will probably be mentioned.
- ❑ Identify specific examples of times you have demonstrated the listed traits. Use examples from your experiences from university, college, employment and volunteering, extra-curricular activities etc. Use the Job Interview Prep Sheet to help you.

In the interview, your responses need to be specific and detailed. One strategy for preparing for behavioural interview questions is to use the STAR Technique as outlined below:

### STAR Technique

#### Situation

Describe the situation that you were involved in. Don't generalize the situation, you want to be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand.

#### Task

What were you trying to achieve in the situation. Again, providing details is important in this step.

#### Action

Describe the action you took in the situation to achieve the final result. You should be focusing on the skills you used in the situation. Be sure to keep the focus on you even if you were involved in a group effort. Describe your role and what you did as part of the team. Also, don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

#### Result

What happened in the end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

## Behavioural Interviewing Example

**Question:** Give me an example when you were faced with a problem and how did you handle it?

**Situation:**

I was the volunteer newsletter coordinator for our community centre newsletter, the Community Reporter. One of our issues was ready to go to print when a few of our advertisers decided not to place an advertisement.

**Task:**

We had to determine how to fill in the extra spaces but also have enough revenue so as to not generate a loss. We were also on a tight deadline as the printers required the final draft within 48 hours.

**Action:**

I compiled a list of local businesses in the area and organized a team meeting with all the volunteer newsletter staff. They all made phone calls and offered advertising space for a 10% discount rate which was enough for us to break even on those ads.

**Result:**

All the extra spaces were filled with new advertisements and the draft was sent to the printers by the deadline date. The newsletter still made a profit.

### Sample Behavioural Based Interview Questions

1. Give me an example of a time when you used good judgement in solving a problem.
2. Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
3. Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
4. Describe the most significant or creative presentation in which you had to complete.
5. Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in achieving it.
6. Give me an example that would convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people and situations.

### OFF-THE-WALL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

If you haven't already experienced some off-the-wall interview questions, you probably will at some point. These weird and wacky type of questions such as "What superhero would you like to be for a day?" or "If you were an ice-cream flavour, which would you pick?", are enough to throw your performance right off.

You probably are wondering why do interviewers ask these crazy questions that have nothing to do with your ability to do the job. Employers ask these questions to see how well you can think on your feet. They may want to see your creative side or your sense of humour. They may want to challenge you to see how well you cope under stress. Interviewers know there are many resources on preparing for interviews and how to answer interview questions.

They may want to see how well you respond to a question that you probably didn't prepare for. Since off-the-wall questions are impossible to prepare for you just need to do your best at that moment and take some time to think about your response before answering. The best thing is to be yourself and give an honest answer.

## QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK AT THE INTERVIEW

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will give you an opportunity to ask questions. This is your opportunity to inquire more about the job, projects/assignments or the company to ensure that the opportunity is also right for you. Do not ask questions that would have been easily determined through your company research. It is also recommended that questions regarding salary and benefit be brought up by the employer. This will usually happen during the second or third interview. Below are examples of questions you may wish to ask during the interview.

1. What would be a typical day for someone in this position?
2. Can you describe the company's management style?
3. Can you describe the company's corporate culture?
4. How is this department perceived within the organization?
5. What are the traits and skills of people who are the most successful within the organization?
6. What new products/services is the company considering introducing over the next few years?
7. Could you tell me about the people with whom I'll be working most closely with?
8. Would I be working alone most of the time or in a group?
9. Will the company be entering any new markets during the next few years?
10. What would be some of the projects or assignments of this position?

## TIPS FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

All of the usual tips for preparing for a personal interview apply to telephone interviews. However, there are also some unique considerations when you are marketing yourself over the telephone.

**Plan ahead.** If a telephone interview is a possibility, practice making brief, interesting statements about how your qualifications relate to the job.

**Be prepared.** Have your resume, answers to anticipated questions, and a list of questions you want to ask nearby. A pen and paper would also be handy to jot down information you may want to recall later.

**Don't drink, smoke or eat** during a telephone interview. Give the interviewer(s) your undivided attention.

**Dress appropriately and sit up straight.** This may sound odd considering that the interviewer (s) can't see you, but it is easier to sound business-like when you are neatly dressed.

## TIPS FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

**Answer questions in short sentences.** The only thing the employer has to go on during a telephone interview is your voice. Short sentences are more readily understood than long, rambling explanations. Shorter responses also provide you with more interactions between you and the interviewer.

**Practice your answers** and tape record your voice to monitor how well you articulate your responses to anticipated questions as well as to monitor how you will sound. Pay particular attention to what the tone of your voice is communicating. Employers are looking for enthusiasm and positive outlook.

**Restate the question.** If you are asked something you are not sure how to answer, repeating the question gives you extra time to think of an answer. It also ensures that you have correctly understood the question, and avoids long silences on the phone.

**Ask if you have made yourself clear.** When you have given a particularly complex answer, ask the interviewer(s) if the information was understood. This encourages the employer to ask further questions and helps to avoid possible misunderstandings.

**Answer questions courteously.** A note of irritation in your voice is even more obvious over the phone than it might be in a face-to-face interview. Try to sound relaxed and confident.

## WRITING A THANK YOU LETTER

A thank you or follow up letter should be send after each interview to express your appreciation for the opportunity to meet with them. This letter also gives you the opportunity to re-state your interest in the company and the position reinforcing how you can use your skills and experience in the job.

The letter should be addressed to the individual(s) that interviewed you. Include their name(s) on the letter and send a copy to each interviewer. Be sure to type out your letters, it exhibits professionalism; if you have great handwriting, then send a card but for the most part, typed letters are better.

### **Paragraph One**

Shows gratitude and makes a specific reference to the job.

### **Paragraph Two**

Re-iterates interest in the position and stresses key points working in the candidate's favor.

### **Paragraph Three**

Stresses the fit between you and the job/company.

### **Paragraph Four**

Restate gratitude and closes on a positive note.

## THANK YOU LETTER EXAMPLE

Elizabeth Landry  
B&G Communications Inc.  
26 St. Jean Street  
Ottawa, ON K1Z 4Y8

Dear Elizabeth Landry:

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this past Wednesday to discuss the position of the Staff Writer position. The day was certainly an enjoyable and informative one, and I appreciate the chance to meet with you and the other members of the interview team. This helped me understand both the requirements of the position and the work environment.

The position of a Staff Writer sounds like a challenging and exciting opportunity, and I would like to re-iterate my strong interest in this position. I am confident that my background and experience are a good fit for the job and its requirements:

- \* my newspaper editing background would be an enormous asset
- \* my previous short-term assignments as a staff writer with the university newspaper
- \* my excellent communication and interpersonal skills would enable me to fit into your work environment as well as work well with the media and community

I am also enclosing a piece I wrote expressing some of my ideas on story ideas and articles for your future edition of "In the Workplace".

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I look forward to possibly working with you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Ever hear of the old adage: “Actions speak louder than words”? This is very applicable when being interviewed. Not only is what you say important but also how your face, body movements and appearance communicate during the interview. Here are some guidelines to follow:

Remember body language sends more than 80% of the message. Sit up straight, look alert, maintain eye contact and smile.  
- CACEE, Career Option

**Smile:** gives the impression that you are friendly, approachable and enthusiastic.

**Eye Contact:** demonstrates confidence in yourself and interest.

**Firm Handshake:** denotes self-confidence.

**Movement:** keep your hand gestures limited. Too much animation will distract the interviewer(s) from listening to your answers.

**Facial Expressions:** smile periodically, keep face muscles relaxed.

**Posture:** shoulders back, head up and no slouching. Avoid raising barriers to communication. Do not cross your arms or turn your body away from the conversation.

**Sitting:** keep legs crossed or together with both feet flat on the floor.

**Tone:** your tone of voice should be pleasant, clear and audible. Do not mumble or use a loud tone of voice.

**Boundaries:** sit at arms length from the interviewer(s). People want their personal space respected.

**Calm and Poised:** avoid nervous habits that detract from your message. Don't play with your jewellery or pen, tap your finger or fidgeting. Being well prepared for the interview will help you to stay calm.

**Other:** do not chew gum or eat candy during the interview.

### Professional Image

First impressions are critical in an interview and the first thing the employer sees when greeting you is your appearance, therefore you must make an effort to have the proper attire for the interview. Dressing conservatively is the best approach.

Tips for both men and women:

- clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- conservative suit
- well-groomed hair style
- cleaned and trimmed fingernails
- minimal cologne or perfume – no body odor
- no visible body piercing – conservative ear piercing for women is alright
- well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- minimal jewellery