

INTERVIEW TO WIN

A job interview is an opportunity for an employer to learn more about your skills, qualifications, and whether you will be a good fit with the organization. It is also a chance for you to learn more about the employer, the company, and whether the position will be a good match with your career aspirations.

PREPARATION FOR AN INTERVIEW

Preparation is essential for a successful interview! You want to ensure that you are able to convey to the employer that you are the most suitable candidate for the position. You are the interviewer's main source of information concerning your qualifications. Do not assume that the interviewer knows all of your qualifications and accomplishments; you must clearly spell them out as you answer questions during the interview.

Step 1: Research the company and the industry.

Employers expect candidates to know some information about the company in advance. Use the company's website to learn more about their mandate, mission, products, services, and their market. Use news sources and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) to research the recent organizational activity, view discussions and updates from the company and in the industry. Look up the interviewers on LinkedIn to see if you have any common network connections and to find out more information about their career backgrounds and interests. This will help you to answer either of these commonly asked questions: **“Tell me what you know about this company”** or **“Tell me why you want to work for this company”**.

Step 2: Review the job description and understand the job requirements.

Employers expect candidates to understand the job requirements and be able to demonstrate how their skills and experiences match these requirements. Go over your **Accomplishments Statements** from the resume and prepare additional examples of your achievements from previous work, volunteer, or academic studies that are related to the job requirements.

Step 3: Review sample interview questions and practice your answers.

Planning and thinking through your answer and practicing your delivery in advance will give you more confidence, which will make you more comfortable during the interview process. Please refer below for information on different types of interview questions.

Step 4: Verify interview information.

When the interview date and time are being arranged, verify the following information:

- Name (correct pronunciation) and title of the interviewer(s)
- Location of the interview OR virtual platform you will be using (Zoom, Google Hangout, Teams or Skype)
- The amount of time being allocated for the interview
- Whether there will be employment tests and the duration of the tests

Verifying this information will allow you to plan your time effectively and to mentally prepare for the interview.

WHAT TO BRING TO AN INTERVIEW

- Additional copies of your resume and cover letter
- A pen and paper for taking notes
- Your portfolio and samples of your work, when applicable
- Your references, neatly typed on a single sheet of paper

TIPS FOR INTERVIEW SUCCESS

- Dress for success; first impressions are made in the first few seconds of an interview, it is important that your clothing be neat and professional, even in a virtual interview
- Aim to arrive 10 minutes before the start of the interview
- Have a solid handshake, and repeat the interviewer's name when you are introduced
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer during the interview
- Be positive and do not say anything negative about a past employer

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Pre-screening or Telephone interviews

This type of interview is used to narrow down a large pool of candidates, or when the interviewer is out of town. It may seem less formal than an in-person interview, but it is equally as important. Typically, the interviewer will ask you 3-5 questions to determine whether you meet the criteria for the position.

- If using a cellular phone make sure it is fully charged and has a strong signal
- Have your resume and cover letter as well as a pen and paper in front of you
- Make sure that you are in a quiet space, free of distractions and interruptions
- Smile, speak clearly, and do not rush your answers

Virtual Interviews

This type of interview is commonly used in place of an in-person interview when in person is not an option due to remote work or interviewer(s) availability. It is just as formal as an in-person interview.

- Confirm the virtual platform you will be using
- Make sure your laptop or tablet is fully charged/plugged in, and test all related equipment (camera, microphone or headphones) beforehand
- Find a quiet, well-lit professional looking space where you won't be interrupted.
- Remove all distractions such as email alerts, software updates and other notifications that may distract you or show up on the screen during the interview
- Look into the camera to give the illusion that you are making direct eye contact with the interviewer

In-person interviews

This type of interview is the most common. The job seeker is invited to attend a meeting with the hiring personnel for the position. These interviews can be either informal or structured and formal depending on the employer and type of industry.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Introductory questions

Introductory questions give you an opportunity to describe yourself and your accomplishments as they pertain to the job you are applying for. These questions are used to assess your background, your experience and your “organizational fit”. These questions are open-ended and give you an opportunity to sell yourself to the hiring personnel. Typical questions to explore your background include:

- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “Why are you applying for this job?”

Behavioural questions

Behavioural interview questions will ask you to describe a past situation or experience giving specific examples of how you dealt with a particular situation. Behavioural interviews are based on the premise that the best predictor of future behaviour is based on past behaviour. The key is not to get the “right” answer but to demonstrate how you handled situations in the past.

Behavioural interview questions usually start with the phrase:

- “Tell me about a time when...”
- “Describe an experience you have had when...”
- “Give me an example of when you have demonstrated the following skill...”

To answer these questions well, you need to be prepared with specific examples or experiences. Use the **S.T.A.R. technique: Situation, Task, Action, and Result.**

Situation: Describe a specific event or a situation you were in. The who, what, where, when etc.

Task: Explain the task you had to complete, highlighting any specific challenges or constraints, e.g. deadlines, issues, costs

Action: Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits the interviewer is looking for.

Result: Close with the results of your efforts. Include figures to quantify your results if possible.

Situational questions

In this type of question an interviewer may provide a hypothetical situation and ask you how you would respond or solve a problem. Think carefully about what is really being asked. For example, if the question asks about meeting deadlines, the interviewer wants to hear you describe your time management skills. If the situation describes an upset client or customer, clearly outline your skills in customer service.

Technical questions

These questions typically assess the particular skills you will need to perform the job. Hands on tests and questions are phrased to find your level of experience with specific equipment, software, processes, procedures, etc.

Conclusion or Wrap Up

The interviewer will usually end the interview asking if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to display further interest in the job. Always have two or three well-thought out questions about the company or the position to ask the hiring personnel when you are asked “**Do you have any questions for us?**” Some questions to consider asking are:

- “**What are the next steps? When should I be expecting to hear back?**”
- “**Can you tell me about the team that I would be working with?**”
- “**Who would I be directly reporting to?**”
- “**What would be the most significant way I could make a contribution to your team?**”
- “**What is a typical day/week like in this role?**”

OTHER SCREENING TOOLS

Employers will occasionally use additional screening tools to screen potential candidates:

- Security Clearance Check
- Background Check
- Police Check
- Credit Check
- Drug Test
- Language testing

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview, it is a good idea to reflect on your performance and consider what questions you answered well and what questions could have used more information. It is a very good idea to send a **Thank you Letter** in an email format to the person who led the interview. This should be sent within a 24-hour period of when the interview was held. If you have agreed to provide additional information or samples of your work be sure to do this as soon after the interview as possible.

DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It is important to be prepared for the more difficult interview questions that employers may ask during the interview.

- What is your target salary? What do you feel this position should pay?
- Make sure to conduct some research and establish a salary range ahead of your interview using the following resources. The following are examples of useful resources:
 - www.jobbank.gc.ca
 - www.payscale.com
 - www.indeed.com
 - www.glassdoor.com

UNLAWFUL QUESTIONS

The Law in Ontario prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of:

- Citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex or pregnancy, gender identity, gender expression, family status (such as children), marital status, sexual orientation, receipt of public assistance, are all illegal!
- Employer's questions must be related to the job for which you are applying.

The [Ontario Human Rights Commission](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/) protects job seekers against unlawful questions.

What can you do?

- Ask the interviewer to clarify the meaning of the question
- Ask the interviewer in what circumstances does the question apply to the job.
- May politely decline to answer