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INTERVIEW GUIDE

For most people, the job interview is the single most intimidating part of the job search. What can you do to help ease the jitters and boost your confidence? Prepare, prepare, and prepare. Anticipate questions that may be asked, research the company and industry, and go through mock interviews with a friend or professional career coach. Remember that interviews are a two-way street. Ask questions - take the opportunity to make sure the position is a good fit for you too!

Research First

Research is critical before attending a job interview. I know... you don't have time for research. **But if you don't take the time and effort to learn about the organization before your interview, employers will wonder if you really want to work for them after all.** Research the industry in general, get a feel for the company's history and recent activities, find out what products/services they provide, who their competitors are. Also try to determine what the corporate culture is like and read their mission statement.

Visit the company web site. It will usually give you a good feel for the company and what they do. The more you know about the company, the better off you'll be in an interview. [Yahoo Canada](#) is a good place to start if you don't know the web address of the company. Read newspapers to find out what is happening in the industry you are in. The [American Journalism Online](#) has a comprehensive list of Canadian newspapers, searchable by province. [The Globe and Mail](#), [The Toronto Star](#), and [Canoe](#) are good sources of Canadian news and information.

Other good starting points for research include:

- [Chambers of Commerce](#) - find local Chambers of Commerce
- [CharityVillage](#) - charitable and non-profit organizations in Canada. Searchable by Category.
- [FindHelp Toronto](#) - social service, community and government agencies in Toronto
- [Hoovers Online](#) - claims information on over 12 million companies.
- [Job Search City](#) - direct links to Canadian employer recruiting pages. Searchable by province.
- [Monster.ca: Company](#) - employer profiles listed on Monster.ca
- [Profit 100](#) - Canada's fastest growing companies
- [Report on Business](#) - 35 Best Companies to Work For in Canada
- [Strategis: Company Directories](#) - this large site is operated by the federal government
- [Yellow Pages](#) - the Yellow Pages online

Once you have a company name, additional research can be done using the following sources to help you customize your cover letter and prepare for an interview:

- [Canada Newswire](#) - find press releases by organization, keyword or

industry

- [Globe And Mail](#) - do a keyword search through Canada's national newspaper

Visit the web site for a professional association in your field. Industry associations can provide you with valuable insight into how your industry operates, who the key players are and what the current trends are, and may provide networking opportunities. If you need the address of a web site of an association for your industry, try our [Professional Association](#) links or do a search on a search engine such as [Google](#).

Research the position. If you don't have one, see if you can get a copy of the detailed job description for the position ahead of time. Understanding the responsibilities of the position will help you match your skills and experience to the skills and abilities required for the position. Also try to research salary ranges for this and comparable positions (see below for more on this). If you don't already know, find out who you will be meeting with and their position title(s). Figure out where the interview location is and how you'll get there.

Know your skills and be ready to articulate how they relate to the position you are interviewing for. Review your career goals. Review your resume so you are prepared to answer questions about your experiences. Then practice. Review possible questions (see below for common questions) and think about how you may reply. If possible, practice with a friend or do a mock interview with a career counsellor to get feedback about what you say, how you say it and your body language. Be prepared for the general "tell me a bit about yourself" question; rehearse your key messages.

Behavioural Interviews are very common today. Behavioural interview questions are designed to find out how you would react (or have reacted) in specific situations. The idea is that past behaviour is a good predictor of future behaviour. You must be prepared for some of these questions; they are often quite difficult to answer well without preparation. Answer these with specific examples of what you would do (or have done) in the situation. For example: "Tell me about a time you had to deal with a difficult customer".

Before heading to a behavioural interview, review the job posting carefully looking for key competencies that will be examined such as interpersonal skills, team work or problem solving. Reflect on your past experiences when you have demonstrated these traits. Then prepare to discuss these specific situations in detail outlining what role you played, actions you took and the results of your actions.

For more information about preparing for a behavioural interview, see:

- [Succeeding in Behavioral Interviews](#)
- [Behavioural Interviews: A Current Trend Based in the Past](#)

The Day of the Interview: First impressions count! Dress appropriately. Your appearance should be appropriate for the type of position you applied for (but never arrive for an interview in casual clothing). Be clean and well-groomed. Keep makeup minimal and jewelery simple - you want them to listen to what you have to say, not to be distracted by your eclectic fashion tastes. Bring extra copies of your resume, a list of references, transcripts (if graduating from university or college), your portfolio (optional but nice), a notepad and a pen.

Be on time! We can't say this enough ... be on time! Don't wait for the day of the interview to find out how to get there. And factor in extra time for traffic

delays, etc. - there is no excuse for being late for an interview. Actually, it is a good idea to arrive 10-15 minutes early. Know what the recruiter thinks when you're late for an interview? ("Gosh, if he/she is late for a job interview, imagine how often they'll be late for work if we were to hire them!")

During the Interview: First impressions count more than you think! When introduced to your interviewer(s), shake hands firmly and make eye contact. Remember to smile. Body language is important. Be sure to make eye contact; if you don't, you may be seen to lack confidence. Sit straight in your chair and try not to fidget with your hands too much.

When asked questions, allow yourself a moment to collect your thoughts before answering a question. Don't answer with yes or no answers - elaborate ... sell yourself by giving a specific example. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification. This is expected and is preferable to providing an unsuitable answer. Don't try to cover up past mistakes; show how you learned from your experiences. Answer questions honestly. Be prepared for questions designed to see how you react under pressure - keep calm. Don't use slang; use proper words (eg. "going to" instead of "gonna"). Don't interrupt the interviewer / don't be overbearing. Never speak badly about your past employers - be positive, professional and enthusiastic. Be prepared with questions (see a few samples below).

Sample Questions: There are many books on the market with thousands of sample interview questions and suggested responses. By all means, use these as a starting point, but don't memorize the answers! Try to relax, be yourself, and relate your own skills and experiences to those required for the position.

- tell us about yourself
- what do you know about our organization?
- what interests you about our company?
- what are your strengths and weaknesses?
- what are your related skills?
- what did you most/least enjoy about your last job?
- why did you leave your last job?
- why did you choose your area of study in university/college?
- what motivates you?
- do you prefer working alone or as part of a team?
- what is the biggest challenge you have faced?
- what do you see yourself doing in 5 years?
- how did you prepare for this interview?
- why should we hire you for this position?
- salary (see below)

Beware of the temptation to simply memorize questions and answers from popular interview preparation books - you must be able to articulate how they relate to the position you are interviewing for.

What about Salary?

Don't bring up salary if at all possible but make sure you have done your industry research in case the interviewer brings it up. Usually salary is discussed after the employer has decided that they want to hire you. It is to your advantage to discuss salary when you get an offer. By avoiding salary discussions until an offer is made you minimize the risk of eliminating yourself from the running, and now that they have decided they want to hire you, you may have more room for negotiation. For more information, see our [Guide to Salary Discussions](#).

Questions You Can Ask

Interviews are a two-way street. Take the opportunity to ask questions about the company and position to determine if it is a good fit for you and to show the employer that you are interested in the position.

- what are the greatest challenges facing your organization?
- what is a typical day like in this position?
- how would you describe the culture of your organization?
- how much travelling is typical for this position?
- what types of career possibilities would this position lead to in your organization?
- how are employees evaluated?
- what orientation and training opportunities are available for employees?
- when should I expect to hear back from you?

After the Interview

Make sure you know how to spell the names of your interviewer(s) and their titles. Send out a thank you letter within 24 hours of your interview in which you thank the interviewer(s) and emphasize your key skills which relate to the position. It is quick and relatively simple to prepare and may differentiate yourself from other applicants who were interviewed. Keep it short and simple and reiterate your interest in the position. Many employers state e-mail thank you letters are acceptable but some still prefer a traditional written letter. Whatever format you choose, be sure to stick to proper business format and keep it professional.

If You Get an Offer

Congratulations! Remember - you do not have to accept or decline an offer on the spot - ask for a couple of days to think about it.

Additional Resources:

Some additional sites which may help you prepare for the interview:

- [The Successful Interview: It's a Two Way Street](#) A good general interview primer.
- [Career Development Manual - University of Waterloo](#) Includes tips on interview preparation.
- [Interviewing Mistakes to Avoid](#) Avoid these mistakes to keep in the running for the job!

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