

## *The Basics*

In addition to doing research and practising your answers to common interview questions, you should be aware of general interview etiquette. Remember the following points when preparing for an interview:

- Review your resume, and make sure that you can explain everything on it.
- Arrive at the interview ten minutes early to give yourself an opportunity to collect your thoughts and relax. Be aware that many employers will have their receptionists record the time you came in. If you rush in at the last minute, an employer may have serious concerns about your ability to arrive on time for a normal day at work.
- Get a good night's sleep before your interview. You will think more effectively in the interview if you are rested. Also, yawning will not impress anyone.
- Eat something before the interview. If you are worried about your stomach growling, you will not be able to concentrate on the questions.
- Dress appropriately for the position that you are applying to. Try to dress like the people who work there would dress if they were representing their organization at some function. If you are unsure about what to wear, always err on the side of being too dressed up.
- Make sure that you are clean, neat, and well-groomed. Interviewers do notice your appearance, and first impressions are critical in an interview situation.
- Take a copy of your resume, transcript, references and perhaps a portfolio or work samples with you. Also take a pen and paper, as you may want to record some important information.

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Go for a mock exercise before the real talk at the job table

### **Go for a mock exercise before the real talk at the job table .....**

Campus So what if you are not a mountaineer. Or a keen hiker. You still cannot treat your interview like a careless morning trot along a jogger's path. Your jaw-jaw at the interview table is nothing less than a cautious climb up a mountain trail--which begins around your early childhood and meanders through the years at the academia before reaching a new summit in your career.

And as you retrace your steps down memory lane make sure that you post flags at important landmarks of your life and career, so that you can pop them before the interview panel scoops them out of you. You don't want to be at the receiving end, do you?

Face the panel, but don't fall off the chair in a headlong rush-and-skid attempt to tell your story. Take one step at a time. If you place your foot on slippery ground, you could be ejecting out on a free fall.

So prepare, fortify your thoughts, re-jig your memory, and script and design your story (without frills and falsity). Without the right preparation and storyboard, you could be a loser at the interview. Here are a few preparation tips that books on interviews sometimes overlook.

### **Before the interview**

#### **1. Chronological Outline of Career and Education Divide your life into "segments" defining your university, first job, second job. For each stage, jot down :**

The reason for opting certain course or profession; Your job responsibilities in your previous/current job; Reason of leaving your earlier/current job. You should be clear in your mind where you want to be in the short and long term and ask yourself the reason why you would be appropriate for the job you are being interviewed for and how it will give shape to your future course.

#### **2. Strengths and Weaknesses**

You should keep a regular check on your strengths and weaknesses. Write down three (3) technical and three (3) non-technical personal strengths. Most importantly, show examples of your skills. This proves more effective than simply talking about them. So if you're asked about a general skill, provide a specific example to help you fulfil the interviewer's expectations. It isn't enough to say you've got "excellent leadership skills". Instead, try saying:

"I think I have excellent leadership skills which I have acquired through a combination of effective communication, delegation and personal interaction. This has helped my team achieve its goals."

As compared to strengths, the area of weaknesses is difficult to handle. Put across your weakness in such a way that it at least seems to be a positive virtue to the interviewer. Describe a weakness or area for development that you have worked on and have now overcome.

#### **3. Questions you should be prepared for**

Tell us about yourself.

What do you know about our company?

Why do you want to join our company?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

How have you improved the nature of your job in the past years of your working? Why should we hire you?

What contributions to profits have you made in your present or former company? Why are you looking for a change?

Answers to some difficult questions :

Tell me about yourself ?

Start from your education and give a brief coverage of previous experiences. Emphasise more on your recent experience explaining your job profile.

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What do you think of your boss?

Put across a positive image, but don't exaggerate.

Why should we hire you? Or why are you interested in this job?

Sum up your work experiences with your abilities and emphasise your strongest qualities and achievements. Let your interviewer know that you will prove to be an asset to the company.

How much money do you want?

Indicate your present salary and emphasise that the opportunity is the most important consideration.

Do you prefer to work in a group?

Be honest and give examples how you've worked by yourself and also with others. Prove your flexibility.

#### 4. Questions to Ask

At the end of the interview, most interviewers generally ask if you have any questions. Therefore, you should be prepared beforehand with 2-3 technical and 2-3 non-technical questions and commit them to your memory before the interview.

Do not ask queries related to your salary, vacation, bonuses, or other benefits. This information should be discussed at the time of getting your joining letter. Here we are giving few sample questions that you can ask at the time of your interview.

#### Sample Questions

Could you tell me the growth plans and goals for the company?

What skills are important to be successful in this position?

Why did you join this company? (optional)

What's the criteria your company uses for performance appraisal?

With whom will I be interacting most frequently and what are their responsibilities and the nature of our interaction?

What is the time frame for making a decision at this position?

What made the previous persons in this position successful/unsuccessful?

#### 5. Do your homework

Before going for an interview, find out as much information on the company (go to JobsAhead Company Q and A) as possible. The best sources are the public library, the Internet (you can check out the company's site), and can even call the company and get the required information. The information gives you a one-up in the interview besides proving your content company or position.

Clearing the interview isn't necessarily a solitary attempt. Seek assistance from individuals who are in the profession and whose counsel you value most. Be confident in your approach and attitude; let the panel feel it through your demeanour, body language and dressing.

Getting prepared for your interview is the best way to dig deep and know yourself. You will be surprised that it would breed a new familiarity become more familiar with your own qualifications that will make you present yourself better. All the best and get ready to give a treat.

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## **Dressing right for the interview**

Let's say you are going for an interview tomorrow. You have prepared yourself well for the occasion - anticipating the questions and getting ready the answers - but have you given a thought to what you will wear?

If you have not peeked into your wardrobe yet, it's time to take a real hard look now. Your application's fate depends not just on how well you answer the interview questions, but also on how well you project yourself physically.

The first impression your interviewer makes about you is based on the way you look, and you know what they say about first impressions. According to Joe Hodowanes, J.M. Wanes and Associates career strategy advisor, "The way a person dresses is the single biggest non-verbal communication you make about yourself."

The right dressing is a measure of the seriousness that you place on the position, as a person normally spends time on his looks if he considers an event important enough.

"Although proper dressing by itself will not get you the job, a poor dress sense may exclude you from further consideration," warns Gerry Ditching, managing partner of [Filgifts.com](http://Filgifts.com). Besides, given two equally good applicants, the company may choose to hire the person who is dressed more professionally.

Here are some tips to give you a headstart.

### **Men**

Long-sleeved shirt and dark slacks. White is still the safest and the best color for shirts. The colour is also appropriate for our tropical weather. Also acceptable: pale shades such as beige, blue, and other pastels. Tuck in the shirt and do not roll up the sleeves. Never wear a short-sleeved shirt to an interview or any business purpose. Wearing a short-sleeved shirt will destroy your executive image.

Ties. Optional. But if you do wear one, choose a conservative pattern. Solids, small polka dots, diagonal stripes, small repeating shapes, subtle plaids and paisleys are all acceptable.

Belts. Belts should match your shoes. Those with smaller buckles with squared lines look more professional.

Socks. Black socks are the best, followed by blue or gray, depending on your attire. Never wear white socks! Check your sock length, too--no skin should show when you sit down or cross your legs.

Shoes. Black or burgundy leather shoes with laces on them, because tassel loafers are very casual. Other suitable colors are brown, cordovan and navy.

Hair. Keep neat, short and preferably parted on the side. And shave off all those facial hair.

Jewellery. Wear no or little jewellery. The watch and wedding ring are the only acceptable pieces of jewellery to go with the male attire. Thin gold or leather-strapped watches look professional but not digital watches. Also, avoid political or religious insignias, necklaces or bracelets. Definitely no pierced body parts, and cover up your tattoos!

Accessories. As much as possible, use leather briefcases or folders to hold copies of your resume. Use narrow briefcases and avoid plastic folders and plastic ball pens as they are out of place.

## **Women**

Three-piece business suits, blouse and skirt or slacks, and cardigan twin-sets. Sleeveless shirts should be rejected. Short-sleeved blouses are okay when they are tailor-cut or have features such as a sports collar or double breast design to create a business-like look. Skirts can either be long provided it does not create a Cinderella or barn-dance look or short where it falls no shorter than two inches from the knee. Nothing too revealing, please!

Panty-hose or stockings. A must for professional grooming, but nothing with overly fussy patterns. Bring an extra pair, just in case the ones you are wearing run.

Shoes. Closed shoes or pumps with at least 1½-inch heels suggest a more professional look. Dark colors are best.

Hair. Hair longer than shoulder length should be worn up or pulled back. Don' t let it fall in front of your face and don' t keep trying to fix it during the interview. Avoid large hair ornaments and trendy hairstyles.

Make-up. Be subtle; natural is the key word. Light shades of lip coloring and nail polish are recommended."

Jewellery. Be conservative. Studs of gold, silver or pearls are best. Do away with gaudy fashionjewellery, and those that clank and make noise when one moves.

Accessories. Folders and bags should blend well with the total professional look. Women should match their purse with their shoecolour.

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## *Answering Interview Questions*

Regardless of what type of question you are asked, you will find it easier to respond effectively if you keep in mind some basic question answering strategies:

- λ You can never predict every question that you will encounter, so approach the interview with an **inventory** of important points. Make a list of the points about yourself that you want the interviewer to know. For example, if you were to apply for a job as a Sales Representative, you might want to list the products you have sold before, types of customers (by industry, age, etc.), languages spoken, personal experience in that industry and related knowledge (perhaps from your academic program).
- λ Consider each question an opportunity to provide some of this information.
- λ Don't assume anything. **You will be evaluated on your answers, not your resume.** Therefore, ensure you incorporate the relevant information from your resume in your answers.
- λ Pause a couple of seconds before you respond to each question, even if you know exactly what you want to say. Take this time to quickly plan your answer, this helps to avoid misunderstandings and produces much more concise answers.
- λ If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification. This is expected and is preferable to providing an unsuitable answer.
- λ If you need time to collect your thoughts - take it. When people are nervous they tend either to "draw a blank" or to babble. It is better to think for a few moments and make sure that your answer is doing you justice and that there is a point to what you are saying.
- λ Always expand. Never answer a question with a "yes" or "no."
- λ The interview is an opportunity for you to sell yourself. Don't be afraid to 'blow your own horn.' As long as you can back up what you are saying with examples which demonstrate that what you are saying is true, you are not bragging. Third party observations can also be mentioned. For example, *"My last employer told me that I was promoted because of how I handled conflicts with clients."*
- λ Be very positive. Don't complain about anything - from your former employer to the weather - and don't apologize for experience that you don't have. Just sell what you **do** have and let the employer decide if you have what he/she is looking for. Also, avoid negative words. For example, you would not say *"I have a **little** experience..."*, you would say *"I have experience....."*
- λ Don't be afraid to repeat important points. In fact, it is a good idea to do this.

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## **Go for a mock exercise before the real talk at the job table .....**

### **Hone your interview etiquette..... Churn the right mix of deportment, attitude and dressing skills for a great job talk !**

Never make the big mistake of treating an interview lightly. It's not an impromptu thing where you depend on your improvisation skills. An interview requires careful thought and planning before you take it. Keeping in mind some basic attitudes and presentation techniques will help you sail through it with panache.

So if you thought that going for an interview just meant pulling your best suit out of the wardrobe and updating your resume, please think again. You are forgetting the other essentials: body language, basic etiquette and attitude.

Remember that you are actually selling an entire package and the packaging, in this case, is as relevant as the product inside. Ultimately you are presenting yourself as a valuable professional to a new job environment. And you can't do that without minding the basic interview etiquette to get you ahead of the rest of the pack.

An interview is the sum total of many parts. It's not just what you say but how you say it that matters equally. So it's good to brush up on more than just your training skills when you do go in for an interview.

### **ATTIRE**

How you dress for an interview is perhaps as relevant as the way you lay out your resume. Says Nina Kochar of Upgrade Management Services, an organisation which coaches executives in the basic rules of corporate etiquette: "A person who is sloppy in appearance shows a sloppy personality, so you have to be decently dressed." Of course, decently dressed does not necessarily mean being dressed to the gills. In most cases, this would mean you would wear long sleeved shirts and a pair of formal trousers. In fact, Nina Kochar does not recommend suits, especially for younger people. "A lot of young people do not have the money to invest in suits, consequently, they wear ill-fitting or borrowed suits and that looks even worse. A tie, shirt and pant should do the trick for most junior level positions."

Most HR experts would also tell you to mind the accessories like ties, belts and shoes. To be sure, badly matched shoes and ties can have a jarring effect on an interviewer. Similarly, please avoid heavy jewellery or personal accessories as they would look incongruous on you.

### **ENTRANCE AND INTRODUCTION**

Even though most of us are primed for the basic grilling that we would face during the interview, we seldom pay attention to the way we enter an interview room or how we introduce ourselves. Says Subhashish Mitra, deputy manager, Essar Cellphones: "A lot of people do not think it important to knock properly while entering the interview room. They assume that as an interview is taking place, the panel will be expecting them. To my mind this is a very major *faux pas* which really jars."

In fact, the best way to enter an interview is to knock, ask for permission to enter and then wait for a while before you actually sit down. Few interviewees know this but the interview panel needs a little quiet time to discuss the previous candidate before they get around to the next one. So your silence till you actually get seated would be very valuable. Try and keep a bag with you for all your papers and certificates; make sure this bag is as unobtrusive as possible.

### **ATTITUDE AND RESPONSE**

This is a grey area for most interview candidates. While dressing up and resume writing are skills you can

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handle with a little practice, cultivating the right attitude as an interviewee requires a lot of patience and reading between the lines. The usual complaint of most interviewers is that few interviewees are able to strip perhaps the best thing you can do for getting your answer right. Most interviewers like to give a lead to the candidate in the way they ask the question, so it's entirely up to you to note facial expressions and the tone of the words.

**Do you show your certificates immediately to the interview panel?**

Not till you are asked actually. You might already have sent in your resume, so you shouldn't try and offload all your achievements and skills onto the panel till a turn in the interview leads to such a situation. Try and take cues from the tonal variations, facial expressions and thrust of questions from the interview panel. That in itself will give you a clue as to where this interview is heading.

**TEN THINGS THAT AN INTERVIEWER LOOKS IN YOU!**

1. Family Background
2. Education
3. Experience
4. Stability
5. Initiative
6. General Ability
7. Interpersonal Skills
8. Confidence
9. Aptitude
10. Pleasant Looks

How one wished that an interview were a simple meeting of minds and hearts. Just one casual meeting where an employee's future gets sealed. Unfortunately, it's not something as pre-ordained as you would like it to be; it's a pre-meditated exercise which fetches you dividends only if your homework is done right.

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# *Types of Interviews*

## **Panel/Board Interviews**

Candidates are interviewed by two or more individuals. This process is commonly used by governments and large organizations. It is important to maintain eye contact with the person asking the question and give an answer with an example to support it. Always acknowledge the other interviewers' presence by making eye contact while answering rotating questions. Direct your attention at the beginning and end of your response to the person who asked you that question. The questions asked in the interview are often set out in advance. The board may already have decided which answers they will accept/prefer for the questions. Ignore note-taking by board members. Obtain employers' names prior to the interview and use them during the conversation.

## **One-On-One Interviews**

Candidates are interviewed by one person. These interviews tend to be more informal, however, it always depends on the employer's style. The interviewer will often have a series of prepared questions, but may have some flexibility in their choices. It is important to maintain eye contact with the person interviewing you.

## **Impromptu Interviews**

This interview commonly occurs when employers are approached directly and tends to be very informal and unstructured. Applicants should be prepared at all times for on-the-spot interviews, especially in situations such as a job fair or a cold call. It is an ideal time for employers to ask the candidate some basic questions to determine whether he/she may be interested in formally interviewing the candidate.

## **Second Interviews or Follow-Up Interviews**

Employers invite those applicants they are seriously considering as an employee following a screening or initial interview. These interviews are generally conducted by middle or senior management, together or separately. Applicants can expect more in-depth questions, and the employer will be expecting a greater level of preparation on the part of the candidate. Applicants should continue to research the employer following the first interview, and be prepared to use any information gained through the previous interview to their advantage.

## **Dinner Interviews**

The interviews may be structured, informal, or socially situated, such as in a restaurant. Don't be the only

## Types of Interviews

one at the table to order an alcoholic drink, and if you have an alcoholic drink, stop at one. Decide what to eat quickly, some interviewers will ask you to order first (don't appear indecisive). Avoid potentially messy foods, such as spaghetti. Be prepared for the conversation to abruptly change from 'friendly chat' to direct interview questions, however, don't underestimate the value of casual discussion, some employers place a great value on it.

### **Telephone Interviews**

Have a copy of your resume and any points you want to remember to say nearby. If you are on your home telephone, make sure that all roommates or family members are aware of the interview (avoids loud stereos, etc.). Speak a bit slower than usual. It is crucial that you convey your enthusiasm verbally, since the interviewer cannot see your face. If there are pauses, don't worry, the interviewer is likely just making some notes.

### **Group Interviews**

Employers bringing several candidates together in a group situation to solve a problem are testing your ability to work in a team environment. They want to know how you will present information to other people, offer suggestions, relate to other ideas, and work to solve a problem. In short, they are testing your interpersonal skills. It is difficult to prepare for this type of interview except to remember what is being tested and to use the skills you have to be the best team player and/or leader you can be. Some employers will take you to meet the staff who would be your co-workers if hired. This is a very casual type of interview, but leaving a positive and friendly impression is no less critical.

# *Interview Preparation*

## The Interview

The interview is an opportunity for both the employer and the applicant to gather information. The employer wants to know if you, the applicant, have the skills, knowledge, self-confidence, and motivation necessary for the job. At this point you can be confident that the employer saw something of interest in your resume. He or she also wants to determine whether or not you will fit in with the organization's current employees and philosophy. Similarly, you will want to evaluate the position and the organization, and determine if they will fit into your career plans. **The interview is a two-way exchange of information.** It is an opportunity for both parties to market themselves. The employer is selling the organization to you, and you are marketing your skills, knowledge, and personality to the employer.

## Interview Preparation

Research is a critical part of preparing for an interview. If you haven't done your homework, it is going to be obvious. Spend time researching and thinking about yourself, the occupation, the organization, and questions you might ask at the end of the interview.

## Step 1: Know Yourself

The first step in preparing for an interview is to do a thorough self-assessment so that you will know what you have to offer an employer. It is very important to develop a complete inventory of skills, experience, and personal attributes that you can use to market yourself to employers at any time during the interview process.

In developing this inventory, it is easiest to start with experience. Once you have a detailed list of activities that you have done (past jobs, extra-curricular involvements, volunteer work, school projects, etc.), it is fairly easy to identify your skills. Simply go through the list, and for each item ask yourself *What could I have learned by doing this?* *What skills did I develop?* *What issues/circumstances have I learned to deal with?*

Keep in mind that skills fall into two categories - technical and generic. Technical skills are the skills required to do a specific job. For a laboratory assistant, technical skills might include knowledge of sterilization procedures, slide preparation, and scientific report writing. For an outreach worker, technical skills might include counselling skills, case management skills, or program design and evaluation skills. Generic skills are those which are transferable to many work settings. Following is a list of the ten most marketable skills. You will notice that they are all generic.

- Analytical/Problem Solving
- Flexibility/Versatility
- Interpersonal
- Oral/Written Communication
- Organization/Planning
- Time Management

## Interview Preparation

- Motivation
- Leadership
- Self-Starter/Initiative
- Team Player

Often when people think of skills, they tend to think of those they have developed in the workplace. However, skills are developed in a variety of settings. If you have ever researched and written a paper for a course, you probably have written communication skills. Team sports or group projects are a good way to develop the skills required of a team player and leader. Don't overlook ~~any~~ abilities you may have.

When doing the research on yourself, identifying your experience and skills is important, but it is not all that you need to know. Consider the answers to other questions such as:

- How have I demonstrated the skills required in this position?
- What are my strong points and weak points?
- What are my short term and long term goals?
- What can I offer this particular employer?
- What kind of environment do I like? (i.e. How do I like to be supervised? Do I like a fast pace?)
- What do I like doing?
- Apart from my skills and experience, what can I bring to this job?

## Step 2: Know the Occupation

The second step in preparing for an interview is to research the occupation. This is necessary because in order to present a convincing argument that you have the experience and skills required for that occupation, you must first know what those requirements and duties are. With this information uncovered, you can then match the skills you have (using the complete skills/experience inventory you have just prepared) with the skills you know people in that occupational field need. The resulting "shortlist" will be the one that you need to emphasize during the interview.

It is also in your best interest to identify the approximate starting salary for that position, or those similar. There are several ways to find out about an occupation:

- Acquire a copy of the job description from the employer (Human Resources/Personnel) or check with Student Employment Services. If you are responding to an advertisement, this may also supply some details.
- The [Career Resource Centre](#) has general information files on a variety of occupations. Make sure you have read through the appropriate file and are updated on the occupation.
- If you belong to a professional association related to the occupation, use its resources. These associations often publish informative newsletters and sponsor seminars. It is also a good way to meet people working in the field.
- Conduct information interviews with people working in the field.
- Read articles about people in the occupation, and articles written by people in the occupation. Sources include newspapers, magazines and the internet.
- Find out what the future trends are in the area. Is technology changing the job?

### **Step 3: Know the Organization**

The more you know about an organization, the better prepared you will be to discuss how you can meet its needs. Some of the characteristics that you should know about an organization are:

- Where is it located?
- How big is it?
- What are its products and who does it serve?
- How is the organization structured?
- What is its history?
- Have there been any recent changes, new developments?

There are a number of ways in which you can access this information. Most medium- to large-sized organizations publish information about themselves. You can access this a number of ways:

- On campus at the Student Employment Services (company literature and business directories) or at the Drake Centre Library
- The Winnipeg Centennial Library has a business microfiche with information on over 5000 Canadian companies and business directories
- Many companies have internet home pages which you can locate by searching by industry and company name
- Finally, you can visit or phone the organization and request some information on their products, services or areas of research

If the organization is fairly small, or fairly new, there may not be much information published. In this case, it will be necessary to do an information interview. Contact someone within the organization, introduce yourself, explain that you are considering moving into the field, and ask if it would be possible to meet with him/her to inquire about the company/organization and about what exactly the position would involve.

### **Step 4: Prepare Questions**

Having completed your background research, you are now ready to prepare questions to ask the interviewer(s). Try to think of questions for which the answer was not readily available in company literature. Intelligent well thought-out questions will demonstrate your genuine interest in the position. Be careful how many questions you ask, however, as too many can imply you feel the interview was not successfully run. Pick your questions with care - this is your chance to gather information, so ask about what you really want to know. Avoid sounding critical by mentioning negative information you may have discovered. This is one of the most effective ways to compare different employers, so for issues of particular importance to you (for example, whether they support staff upgrading), you should ask the same questions of each employer. Some sample questions are:

- What are the most significant factors affecting your business today?
- How have changes in technology most affected your business today?
- How has your business/industry been affected by the recession?

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- How has your company grown or changed in the last couple of years?
- What future direction do you see the company taking?
- Where is the greatest demand for your services or product?
- Where is most of the pressure from increased business felt in this company?
- Which department feels it the most?
- How do you differ from your competitors?
- How much responsibility will I be given in this position?
- What do you like about working with this organization?
- Can you tell me more about the training program?
- Have any new product lines been introduced recently?
- How much travel is normally expected?
- What criteria will be used to evaluate my performance?
- Will I work independently or as part of a team?
- How did you advance to your position?
- What are the career paths available in this organization?
- When can I expect to hear from you regarding this position?

It is very important to ask the last question because employers want to hire individuals who are interested in the position - and asking this question definitely helps to demonstrate interest on your part. Exercise judgement when asking questions to an employer. When being interviewed by a large company that has a high profile, one would not ask the question "*What is the history of your company and how was your company started?*" You can find the answer to this question in the company's annual report or articles in magazines/newspapers. However, small- and medium-sized companies do not always produce publicly available annual reports and it may be difficult to access information on the company and its role in the industry. This question is appropriate if you have exercised all other ways to find out the answer.

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## *The Interview Process*

There are many different types of interviews designed to serve different purposes or situations. Regardless of the type of interview, most will incorporate the following stages: establishing rapport, exchanging information, and closing the interview. Pay attention to the job titles of the interviewer(s). This can help you decide how much technical detail to provide in your responses.

### **Establishing Rapport**

This is a very important part of the interview because while establishing rapport, first impressions are made, and the tone of the interview is set. Some people suggest that the decision to hire is greatly influenced by the first five minutes of the interview. A good interviewer will introduce him/herself, and take the lead. Follow his or her lead - if they are chatty, be chatty; if they are formal, be formal. Some employers use what seems to be casual conversation to get to know you on a more personal level - this may be crucial to a hiring decision!

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| <b>Tips:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Smile and maintain eye contact. This is one way of communicating confidence, even if you don't feel it.</li><li>▪ If the interviewer offers his or her hand, shake it firmly. If they don't, it is appropriate to offer yours.</li><li>▪ Wait until the interviewer sits or offers you a seat before sitting down.</li><li>▪ If the interviewer is making small talk, participate. Keep your answers short and positive.</li></ul> |
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### **Exchange of Information**

This is the bulk of the interview. It is your opportunity to let the interviewer know what you have to offer, and your chance to learn more about the organization.

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| <b>Tips:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ When you answer a question, look the interviewer in the eye.</li><li>▪ Be aware of the interviewer's reactions. If he or she looks confused, ask if you can clarify anything.</li><li>▪ Be aware of what your body is saying. Avoid closed postures. Sit upright, but not stiffly. Try to find a comfortable position as that will make you feel more relaxed.</li><li>▪ Control your nervous habits. Don't swing your foot, talk with your hands (to an extreme), or</li></ul> |
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fiddle with jewellery, buttons, pens, etc.

- Show that you are interested in the job by asking questions.
- Try not to appear bored or anxious. Don't look at your watch.

### Closing the Interview

When the interviewer is done gathering the information that is needed, he or she will ask if you have anything to add, or if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to mentally review your inventory of skills and make sure that you have communicated everything that you wanted to. If any of your questions have not been addressed during the course of the interview, now is the time to ask them.

**Tips:**

- Thank the interviewer for his/her time and consideration.
- Ask when you can expect to hear from him/her.
- If it is not known when a decision will be reached, ask if you can phone in a week's time to inquire about the progress.
- If the interviewer offers his/her hand, shake it firmly. Otherwise, it is fine to offer yours first.
- If not already discussed, you can offer to leave a sample of your work, or portfolio if you have one.

<http://www.geocities.com/fresherscd>



# *Interview Questions*

## Types of Questions

Interviewers use five different types of questions - directive, non-directive, hypothetical, behaviour descriptive, and stress. Being aware of the different types can help you in the preparation stage as you build your skills inventory. It may also help you focus in on exactly what is being asked and what the employer is looking for in specific questions.

## Directive Questions

The interviewer determines the focus of your answer. The information that the interviewer wants is very clear. If you have completed the research on yourself, this type of question should be easy to answer.

**Example:**

*"What skills do you have that relate to this position?"*

*"I have very good communication and interpersonal skills that I have refined through several summer and part-time jobs working with the public. In addition, I am fluent in both English and French."*

## Non-Directive Questions

You determine the focus of your answer. The interviewer asks a general question and does not ask for specific information. The most common non-directive question is *"Tell me about yourself."* When answering the question, keep in mind that the employer is interested in knowing how your background and personality qualify you for the job. In your answer, you should cover four areas: your education, related experience, skills and abilities, and personal attributes. As you talk about these areas, relate them to the job you are seeking. Decide what your response will be before starting to speak, this helps to keep responses concise.

**Example:**

*"Tell me about yourself."*

*"I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology, and have recently completed the course in Volunteer Management through the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg. These have given me a strong background in many of the principles of human behaviour and the recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers. I have experience in working with young adults in a helping capacity, both through my position as a Peer Advisor at the University of Manitoba, and as a camp counsellor at a camp for behaviourally troubled adolescents. Both of these positions involved individual counselling, facilitating discussion groups, and teaching young people about health issues - all of which relate directly to the services which I would be training volunteers to provide within your organization. In addition, I thoroughly enjoy working with young people, and can establish rapport with them easily."*

## **Hypothetical or Scenario Questions**

When asking a hypothetical question, the interviewer describes a situation which you may encounter in the position and asks how you would react in a similar situation. This is a good way to test problem solving abilities. When answering this type of question, try applying a simple problem solving model to it - gather information, evaluate the information, prioritize the information, seek advice, weigh the alternatives, make a decision, communicate the decision, monitor the results and modify if necessary.

<b>Example:</b>	<i>"Suppose you are working your first day in our laboratory, and a fire at a nearby work station breaks out. What would you do?"</i>
	<i>"Before I start working in any laboratory, I always locate the emergency equipment, such as eye washes, fire blankets and alarms. I would also review the safety protocols. So in this situation, I would be aware of these. As soon as I noticed the fire, I would shut down my experiment and if the fire is significant, I would pull the fire alarm and help to evacuate the lab. In the case of a very small flame, I would ask the staff member at that station what I could do to help, which would vary with the type of substances involved."</i>

## **Behaviour Descriptive or Behavioural Questions**

This type of question is becoming increasingly popular in interview situations. It asks what you did in a particular situation rather than what you would do. Situations chosen usually follow the job description fairly closely. Some employers feel that examples of past performance will help them to predict future performance in similar situations. There is no right or wrong answer to this type of question, but keep in mind that you should relate the answer to the position. If you are interviewing for a research position, talk about a research project you completed.

<b>Example:</b>	<i>"Give me an example of a work situation in which you were proud of your performance."</i>
	<i>"While working as a sales representative for XYZ Company for the summer, I called on prospective clients and persuaded them of the ecological and economic benefits of recycling. I also followed up on clients to ensure that they were satisfied with the service they received. This involved both telephone and in-person contacts. I increased sales 34% over the same period in the previous year."</i>

When preparing for this type of questioning, it is crucial that you review the skills and qualities that the position would require and identify specific examples from your past which demonstrated those traits.

## **Stress Questions**

Some questions will surprise you and possibly make you feel uncomfortable during an interview. For example, *"Which do you prefer, fruits or vegetables?"* There are many reasons why an interviewer might ask such questions. They may want to see how you react in difficult situations, or they may simply be trying to test your sense of humour. Such questions may directly challenge an opinion that you have just stated or say something negative about you or a reference. Sometimes they ask seemingly irrelevant questions such as, *"If you were an animal, what type of animal would you be?"* The best way to deal with this type of question is to recognize what is happening. The interviewer is trying to elicit a reaction from

## Interview Questions

you. Stay calm, and do not become defensive. If humour comes naturally to you, you might try using it in your response, but it is important to respond to the question. What you say is not nearly as important as maintaining your composure.

**Example:**

*"Which do you like better, Lions or Tigers?"*

*"Oh, lions definately. They appear so majestic and are very sociable. To be honest, I think that seeing The Lion King four times has probably contributed to this!"*

## ***Mistakes That Cost People Jobs***

Think about the following points. Do any of them apply to you?

<b>Oversell</b>	Trying too hard to impress; bragging; acting aggressively.
<b>Undersell</b>	Failing to emphasize the fact that you have related skills; discussing experience using negative qualifiers (i.e. " <i>I have a <b>little</b> experience...</i> ").
<b>Body Language</b>	It is easy to create a negative impression without even realizing that you are doing it. Are you staring at your feet, or talking to the interviewer's shoulder? Be aware of what your actions say about you.
<b>Lack of Honesty</b>	The slightest stretching of the truth may result in you being screened out.
<b>Negative Attitude</b>	The interview is not an opportunity for you to complain about your current supervisor or co-workers (or even about 'little' things, such as the weather).
<b>Lack of Preparation</b>	You have to know about the organization and the occupation. If you don't, it will appear as though you are not interested in the position.
<b>Lack of Enthusiasm</b>	If you are not excited about the work at the interview, the employer will not assume that your attitude will improve when hired.