

The Interview

When preparing for your interview, take the time to thoroughly prepare — study the material as if you were taking an exam. Knowing the material can really help to alleviate pre-interview jitters!

Know Yourself. Your education, your interests and your experiences have given you a wide range of skills. Be able to articulate the skills you have, how you developed them and how you used them. You need to be able to demonstrate what you have to offer the employer. Attend the *Discover Your Skills & Career Options* workshop for more information. Sign-up is available via the Intranet.

Know the Position. Be able to relate your skills to the duties and responsibilities of that position.

Know the Organization. Research! Research! Research! Try to go beyond the obvious, easy-to-find information about the organization and its needs. For more help refer to our *Company Research* tipsheet. Here are some questions to consider in your research:

- What is the nature of the organization's business? What have they done? Where are they heading?
- Do they have competition? Who are their competitors?
- How would this organization define success? What are the organization's values?
- Are there any organizational changes occurring?
- What is the outlook for the industry?

Types of Interviews

Interviews don't come in one standard format. The most common types include *behavioural interviews*, *panel interviews* (more than one interviewer), *one-on-one interviews*, *case interviews*, and *telephone interviews*. In order to be prepared it is important to ask what format your interview will be and who will be conducting it (how many, names, titles). For more information on these different styles, consult the interview books in the *Career Resource Library* located in the Academic Advising & Career Centre (AA&CC).

Typical Questions. In most interviews, regardless of the format, there is a common underlying structure. Here are some examples of the types of questions you may encounter at each interview stage.

The Icebreaker and Introduction. A good interviewer wants you to be comfortable and relaxed. To establish this sort of atmosphere, they will ask you a few rapport-building or "small talk" questions such as:

- How are you doing today?
- Did you have any trouble finding our offices?

Questions About You. You will be asked general questions about your skills and experiences such as:

- What are your major strengths/weaknesses?
- Why did you choose your program of study at university?

You will also encounter questions that ask you to specifically relate your skills to the various duties and responsibilities of the position.

- How long would it take you to edit 2000 words?
- How would you analyze current economic and market conditions in Japan?

Behavioural Questions. This type of question is quite common. Interviewers want to determine how you react in situations that could occur in the position for which you are being interviewed.

- Describe a time when you faced a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Describe a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.

Case Interviews. Case interviews are broadly defined as an interview geared around solving problems on the spot. They are commonly used in fields like consulting and investment banking. The problem can be presented in many forms, but in every case interview, the interviewer is trying to judge for logical thought process, general business knowledge and acumen, general knowledge, comfort with quantitative analysis, creativity, and communication skills.

1) Brain Teasers

- There are eight balls, one of which is slightly heavier than the others. You have a scale that you can use for weighing but you are only allowed to use it twice. How do you find the heavier ball?

2) Market Sizing

- How many golf balls were lost in England this year?
- How many Air Canada Aeroplan miles are outstanding?

3) Project

- You are consulting for one of the largest supermarket chains in the country. This chain is considering opening its own bank branches in its supermarket locations. What is your advice?

For further information on case interviews refer to *The Fast Track* available in the *Resource Centre Library*, or visit Quintessential Careers for an excellent selection of links at www.quintcareers.com/case_interview_resources.html.

Questions Asked by You. In all types of interviews, the interviewer will give you a chance to ask some of your own questions. Ask thoughtful, intelligent questions that involve the interviewer in discussion and reflect how in-depth your company research has been. It also gives an opportunity to articulate why you are the best person for the position.

- What are the day-to-day expectations and responsibilities of this job?
- How does your firm handle recognition for a job well done?

Tips and Strategies

1. Do a practice interview first, with someone you know acting as the interviewer, to rehearse possible answers. You can also sign up for a practice interview with one of our Career Counsellors.
2. Stay calm! Arrive about 10 minutes before your scheduled time, compose yourself, take a few deep breaths and relax. This will greatly improve your performance and help make a positive first impression.
3. During the interview, you will be judged by your presentation skills and how effectively you communicate. Make frequent eye contact, smile, don't fidget, and dress appropriately.
4. Before you answer each question, take a moment to compose yourself and think about what skills the interviewer is really looking for. Ask for clarification if you are unsure what a question means.
5. Employers are limited as to the type of questions they can ask. For example, questions about marital status or country of origin are illegal in Canada. For more information visit the Human Rights Commission website at www.ohrc.on.ca.
6. Make sure you send a thank you note after the interview. This is also an opportunity for you to clarify or add to anything you said in the interview, and to re-state your interest.

Interview Resources Available at the Academic Advising & Career Centre

- Attend the *Interview Techniques to Land That Job* workshop by signing up on the Intranet.
- The AA&CC has a variety of interview books and tipsheets available in the *Career Resource Library*.
- Practice interviews with a Career Counsellor or Employment Coach.

Web Resources

Job Interview.Net. www.job-interview.net/sample/Demosamp.htm

Quintessential Careers Interview Resources. www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html

The Riley Guide. www.rileyguide.com

Work Search Tools and Tips — Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) Job Search Site.

www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/corporate/az/index.shtml

Wetfeet.com. www.wetfeet.com