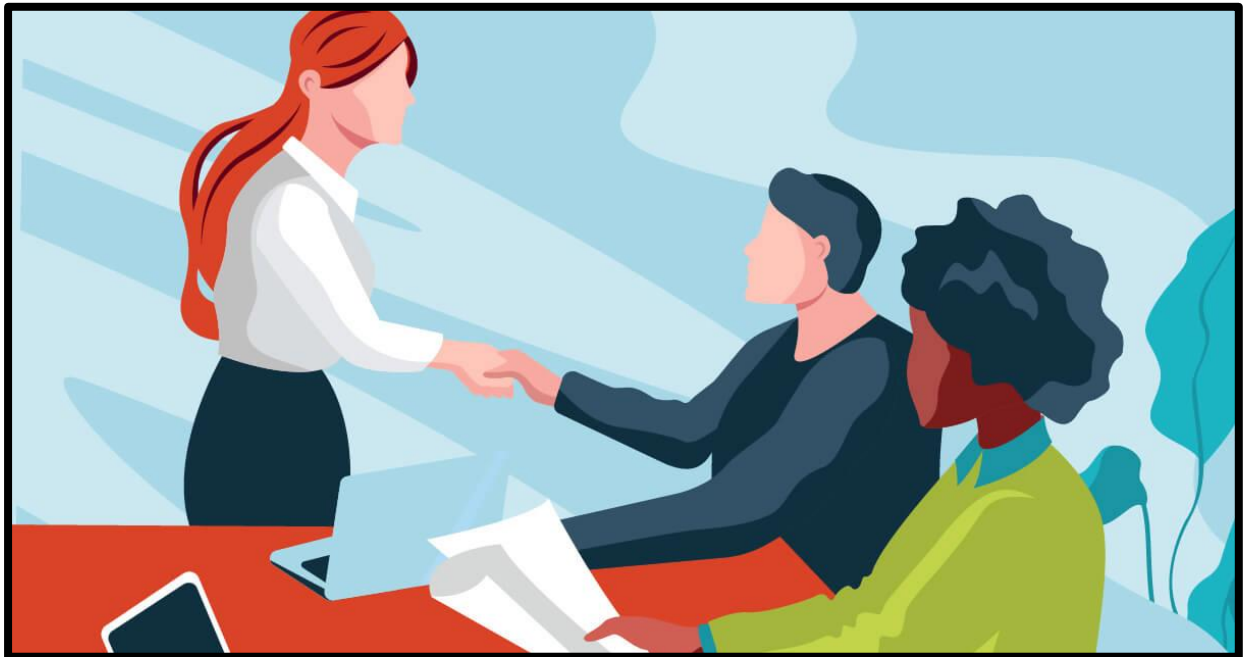


Ace That Interview!



Reference Book

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Revised October 2022

The Keys to Interview Success

You sent an application to an employer and got an interview! Getting the interview proves that you have done a good job communicating that you can do the job, and that you want to work for the organization. Congratulations!

If you are starting to panic because you don't know what questions to prepare for— relax. It's simple. Remember, you got the interview because of your targeted resume and cover letter: they highlighted your knowledge of the organization as well as your experience, skills and qualifications that relate to the job. These three documents—the job posting, the targeted resume and the targeted cover letter—along with your research of the organization are your keys to interview success.

The Job Posting:

The job posting lists the **skills, experience, and qualifications** the employer is looking for.

Interview questions will be based on the job posting.

Research:

Researching the company will help you **create answers to four typical Standard Interview questions:**

- What do you know about us?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you think this job is a good fit?

It will also help you create a list of **questions to ask the interviewer.**

Want to learn more about researching a company? Read our resource booklet

Resources for Research.



The Cover Letter:

Your cover letter provided the employer with a **summary** of your **experience, skills and qualifications relevant to the job**. At the interview you will be asked to provide more detailed information and specific examples of your skills and experience.

The Resume:

Your resume provided details about your **experience, skills, and qualifications** from previous workplaces and/or volunteer experiences. To get a better understanding of your fit for the position, **the interviewer will ask detailed questions about the information on your resume**. For example, if your resume states that you have experience working in a fast paced environment, be prepared to share two to three specific examples that demonstrate successfully working in that type of environment.

Now that you know how to determine what questions you will be asked, turn to page 2 to learn about other important considerations for the interview.

The Importance of Communication

According to Lionel Laroche, the author of *Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Culturally Different Employees*, skilled interviewers will spend:

60% of the time assessing your communication and interpersonal skills

40% of the time assessing education, technical skills and experience

Verbal communication and the ability to work with others are more important than a candidate's experience, qualifications and skills.

It Must Be Consistent

It turns out your mom wasn't psychic when she knew you were lying about the cookie jar, she just knew that your body language and tone of voice weren't congruent with your words. She believed your body language and tone of voice, not your words. To be believable, all three forms of communicating must work together, whether that's with your mom, or at an interview.

At an interview you may give the wrong impression if you haven't made interview practice a daily part of your job search. When you lack confidence, your body language and tone of voice may not convince the interviewer of you are fit for the job, even if you can speak about the experience, qualifications and skills you would bring to the job. Practicing will build your confidence, and eliminate doubt from the interviewer's mind.

People Respond To:

55 % body language

38 % tone of voice

7 % words

100 % S U C C E S S

Albert Mehrabian,
*Professor Emeritus
 of Psychology: UCLA*

Standard Interview Questions - Index

Employers usually start an interview with **Standard** interview questions. Here is a list of questions most commonly asked.

1. Tell me about yourself.	4
2. How did you prepare for this interview?	6
3. Why do you want to work for us?	6
4. Why did you leave your last job?	7
or	
Why are you looking to leave your current job?	
5. What kind of salary are you expecting?	9
6. What are the greatest strengths that you would bring to our company?	11
7. What are your weaknesses?	11
8. Where would you like to see yourself in five years?	14
9. What is the reason for the gap in your employment history?	15
10. Why should we hire you?	16



Be respectful to the receptionist.

Smile and be polite as you introduce yourself to the receptionist. Make sure your behaviour is professional while waiting for the interview. An employer will often ask the receptionist to provide feedback about a candidate after an interview.

1. Tell me about yourself.

In addition to being the **icebreaker question**, the employer will also be **assessing your communication skills**.

EQAL

You are at an interview for a job, so **provide** the **interviewer** with a **summary** of your **professional experience, qualifications, and attributes** that are **relevant to the position**. You can also provide personal information about your **interests** and/or **volunteer experience** that reinforce your experience, qualifications or attributes.

People often make the mistake of going overboard and giving too much information for this icebreaker question. This usually ends up confusing both the interviewer and interviewee. Think of Goldilocks: you want to provide just the right amount of information, not too much, and not too little. This will get the interview off on a smooth start.

By providing a framework the **EQAL** formula ensures that you stay focused and give just the right amount of information. EQAL breaks down into the following components.

E xperience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of years 2. doing what 3. where (sector(s) or specific employer)
Q ualifications: Education Skills	Education: training, certificate, on-the-job, diploma, workshop Skills: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
A tttributes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
L ife - Optional	volunteer, community involvement, interests that reinforce your skills/attributes

Turn to page 5 to see how EQAL works.

Example A

E xperience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # of years - 3 2. doing what - customer service, sales 3. where (sector(s) or specific employer) – retail
Q ualifications Education Skills	<p>Education: training, certificate, on-the-job, diploma, workshop - ongoing training customer service Sobeys</p> <p>Skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. communication 2. time management 3. supervisory
A tttributes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. quick learner 2. adaptable 3. friendly
L ife - Optional	<p>volunteer, community involvement, interests that reinforce your skills/attributes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gym - volunteering at Winnipeg Harvest

Example A

I have **three years'** experience providing **customer service** and **sales** in **retail**. My **training** in **customer service** was **ongoing** while working at **Sobeys** and I have excellent **communication**, **time management**, and **supervisory skills**. I am a **quick learner**, **adaptable** and **friendly**. I also go to the gym regularly and **volunteer** every Thursday evening at **Winnipeg Harvest**.

Example B

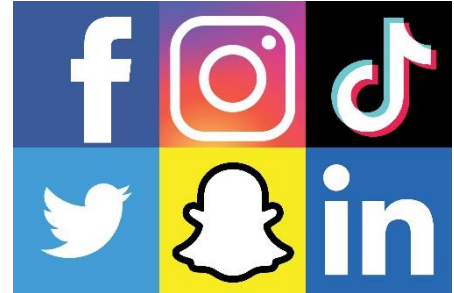
Professionally, I have extensive experience working as an Administrative Assistant working for the government and with educational institutions. My education includes an Information Technologist Certificate from the Province of Manitoba as well as a Secretarial Certificate from Nairobi, Kenya. I have excellent communication, organizational and computer skills with an accurate typing speed of 52 words per minute. I am reliable, detail oriented and personable. Personally, I also enjoy volunteering with Folklorama every year; this summer will be my 6th year in charge of coordinating volunteers.

2. How did you prepare for this interview?

This question helps the employer determine if you took the time to research the company. Show your enthusiasm for the position by sharing your knowledge of the company, and how that fits with your values and or skills.

Example

When I found this position on Indeed, I was excited because I have all the skills the position requires. To learn more, I went onto the website and researched the mission statement, news releases as well as the products and services. I also followed you on social media and googled the company to see how it rates with customers. I was happy with the results. The company is committed to its' customers which is also something that is very important to me.



3. Why do you want to work for us?

This question helps the employer evaluate your knowledge of the organization and interest in the position. It also helps to assess if you will be a “good fit” for the organization. Researching the company will provide you with information that is exciting to you. Using this information will allow you to speak enthusiastically and demonstrate you are a good fit with the company. For example, you could talk about the company’s future goals and how you can assist in meeting those goals. Or, you could speak about how the company’s values and your values are similar.

Example

During my research, I read about the company’s goal of increasing sales by five percent in the Asian market. With my expertise in marketing and fluency in Mandarin, I am confident I can help reach that goal. I am also very impressed by the friendliness and open-mindedness you displayed when I first spoke with you two weeks ago. It’s not every day that the president of a company takes the time to speak with a potential employee. This is exactly the type of company I want to be a part of.



For more information on research, review the **Resources for Research** booklet. Get your copy of the booklet at the front desk.



4. Why did you leave your last job?

OR

Why are you looking to leave your current job?

Moving from one job to another is a natural part of career development and is not necessarily seen in a negative light. However, the reason you leave a job and the way you answer this question will give the interviewer a glimpse into your values, your work ethic, your interpersonal skills and your integrity. So it's important to provide a response that demonstrates your professionalism.

Employers realize that people leave jobs for all kinds of reasons. If you are leaving because you have outgrown the position and your manager is a reference you have nothing to worry about. Other good reasons may include deciding to go back to school, or immigrating to Canada. Or maybe you left when a new manager came on board and your job description changed.

If you left because the boss wouldn't let you use his private bathroom, you will have some explaining to do. However, using **PNP (Positive * Neutral * Positive)** will help you to explain even this situation in a positive light. By showing what you learned from the situation and how you are a better person for the experience you can still win the interviewer over.

To demonstrate your professionalism: do not under any circumstances speak negatively about any person(s) or the organization; be honest and stick to the facts; tell the truth and maintain a positive attitude.

Using **PNP** ensures that you start and end on a positive note. This is important. Why? Because people remember the first and the last thing you say. Take a look at an example of **PNP** in action on page 8 - 9.



PNP

P ositive	share 3 things that you are proud of from your last job, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. reaching a sales target 2. implementing a new system 3. training all new staff
N eutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be brief and stick to the facts - do not say anything negative about the organization or any person(s) - take ownership of the decision to leave and or refer to it as a positive decision made by you and the employer
P ositive	provide 3 positives that are relevant to the position, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the new job will allow you to use more skills 2. you love the company's product 3. your manager/supervisor is a reference

Take a look at Example A below.

Example A

P ositive	share 3 things that you are proud of from your last job, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>at ABC Mechanical five years</i> 2. <i>last two years exceeded quarterly sales targets by 4%</i> 3. <i>developed marketing strategies</i>
N eutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be brief and stick to the facts • do not say anything negative about the organization or any person(s) • take ownership of the decision to leave and refer to it as a positive decision made by you and the employer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>last year new marketing manager</i> - <i>different perspectives</i> - <i>much thought, discussion, was decided I leave</i>
P ositive	provide 3 positives that are relevant to the position, for example: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>interpersonal skills - leave on good terms. manager reference</i> 2. <i>believe in product, want to be a part of its success</i> 3. <i>sales record proves ability to meet and exceed sales targets</i>

At the interview you will provide the details in a conversation. Read Example A on page 9 to see how that might sound.

Example A

I was at **ABC Mechanical** for **five years**. In the **last two years** I **exceeded** my quarterly **sales targets by 4%**, and also **developed** successful **marketing strategies**. **Last year** a **new marketing manager** came on board and we had **different perspectives**. After **much thought** and **discussion** it was decided that I **seek other opportunities**. I am excited to join DEF because I believe in the product and want to be a part of the company's continued success. My **interpersonal skills** were instrumental in my **leaving on good terms** and I'm proud to have my marketing **manager** as one of my **references**. I am excited to join DEF because I **believe in the product** and **want to be a part of** the company's continued **success**. Also my **sales record demonstrates** my **ability to meet and exceed sales targets**.

Example B

While working at Jostens for the past five years, I had the opportunity to develop my production and supervisory skills. I led a team of 10 that consistently exceeded the daily quotas. I'm also proud of the fact that we developed all of Winnipeg's school pictures for over 15 years. When Jostens amalgamated with Lifetouch I was one of 20 people laid off due to lower seniority. I am looking forward to using my supervisory skills here at ABC. I have a letter of recommendation from the President of Jostens (TURN TO PAGE IN PORTFOLIO WITH LETTER AND GIVE TO INTERVIEWER). My manager is also one of my references.

5. What kind of salary are you expecting?

While employers use this as a way to screen out candidates, they also ask this question to assess if your wage expectations are in line with the current labour market, and the organization's budget. It is important to know what your skills, experience and education are worth in the job market. Go prepared with the current salary range for the position by researching the current labour market. This includes knowing what your desired salary would be hourly, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly or annually. Sources for salary information include:

- glassdoor.ca
- payscale.ca
- jobbank.gc.ca



Robert Hellmann, a senior certified career coach at the Five O'clock Club advises, that job applicants, ought to look askance at companies that refuse to budge on the issue [of salary]. "That's a sign to me," he said, "that they're already focusing on the wrong thing" when it comes to hiring.

Source:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-job-seekers-should-negotiate-over-salary/>

Also keep in mind that **the best time to negotiate salary is when you have been offered the job**, so try to deflect the question should it arise at the interview. Ideally you want the employer to offer a salary first. Listed below are a variety of responses to this question.

Example A

Salary isn't going to be an issue. I'm sure we will be able to work something out.

Source:

Robert Hellmann | senior certified career coach - Five O'clock Club
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-job-seekers-should-negotiate-over-salary/>

Example B

What salary are you offering?

Example C

I would need more information about the job and the responsibilities before discussing salary. Could you provide me with this information along with the salary range for the position?

Example D

I would prefer to discuss salary after learning more about the job and the responsibilities. In addition, I would also require information about the position's total compensation before discussing salary. Could you provide me with this information?

Example E

In addition to having a detailed job description my salary expectations would also depend on knowing the total compensation the position offers. Is this information that you can provide at this time?

Example F

After researching the current market, the Federal Job Bank, and taking into account my years of experience, I would be happy to negotiate a salary in the range of \$42,000 to \$50,000.



The following websites will provide more ideas on how to discuss salary.

<http://www.payscale.com/salary-negotiation-guide/how-to-answer-whats-your-salary-range>

<https://biginterview.com/blog/2015/10/salary-expectations.html>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/lisaquast/2013/09/16/how-to-answer-the-interview-question-how-much-money-do-you-currently-make/#4ba126f94e7f>

6. What are your greatest strengths that you would bring to our company?

The employer asks this question to determine if you can accurately self-assess, and to see how confident you are speaking about your experience and skills. Focus on the key skills and, or attributes the job requires and demonstrate your competence with specific examples from your work experience.



Example A

One of my strengths is the ability to plan and prioritize. In my last position with ABC as the Accountant, I was extremely busy five months of each year preparing quotes for bidding on tenders. First, I prioritized all my other responsibilities. I then included all deadlines in my calendar. I also set daily and weekly goals to allow me to stay on top of things and have the flexibility to change schedules as needed. This resulted in my consistently completing all my regularly assigned duties. I was also able to set-up some systems that I used in subsequent years that streamlined the process and most importantly I never missed a deadline in my four years of working with ABC.

Example B

I enjoy helping customers. Before joining ABC as a customer service representative I had five years' experience working with the public as a cashier at the Superstore and as a server where customers would specifically ask to be seated in my section. As a customer service representative at ABC I received 10 monthly awards for processing the highest number of calls in the first 18 months. I easily handled 75-100 customer calls on a daily basis. This resulted in me being made team leader of the 10 people. I have consistently been recognized for my ability to work with people of all ages and cultural backgrounds in my evaluations, and I am currently studying to get certification in adult education so that I can help others provide top notch customer service.

7. What are your weaknesses?

The employer wants to know if you can accurately self-assess, and if you are proactive in developing your skills. Do not tell the interviewer that you are:

- a perfectionist, or
- a workaholic

While the above traits may seem like positives, employers have heard them so many times that they will give you low points for trying and probably tune you out.

Also avoid being funny. Responses like

“My weakness is potato chips and Sunday afternoon football.”

won't get you any points either.

To choose an acceptable weakness:

1. **Make sure it is not integral to job, but still related to work.**
2. **Pick a weakness that you are working on right now.**
3. **Pick a weakness that you have corrected within the last year.**

For example, if you are applying for an accounting position, you wouldn't want to use "attention to detail" as your weakness, as this is necessary for the position. Neither would you use a weakness that you have overcome five years ago as it would indicate that you are not keeping up with developing your skills.

When talking about your weakness it is very helpful to use the **STAR method**. Using this formula will help you stay focused and end on a positive note. First provide context by setting the scene. Next describe the steps you took to improve or resolve the weakness, and finally share the positive results you achieved. It's that simple. Take a look at the formula below and sample answers on pages 13-14.

STAR

S Situation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. position 2. employer or sector 3. specific incident
T Task	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
A Actions Taken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
R Result	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

Example A
Weakness: Can't use Excel

S ituation	Position	Administrative Assistant
	Employer or Sector	ABC company
	Specific Incident	Learn how to use Excel
T ask		Signed up for an evening class at RRC
A ctions Taken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Set up personal budget Watched tutorials on YouTube Treasurer for bowling league with 10 teams
R esults	1.	A knack for creating formulas
	2.	Using Excel in new job
	3.	Finish class by June 30th

Example A

When I worked as an **Administrative Assistant** for **ABC Company**, my job did not include any work with Excel. Although this position does not require this software, I want to be proactive in my career and decided to take the course. I first signed up for an **evening class** at Red River College. Next I **set up a personal budget** spreadsheet that I use weekly. I found Excel tutorials on YouTube. I also took on the **treasurer** position for the **10 teams** in my **bowling league** to practice working in Excel. I found I have a **knack for creating formulas**. I'm also looking forward to **using Excel here** at ABC whenever the opportunity comes up, and **will complete the class by June 30th**.

Example B

Working as an office manager for a property management office made me realize that delegating was difficult for me. I often did things myself because I felt I could do everything faster and better. This was not efficient. For the last two years, I have made a point of providing training to my staff. I also worked to create yearly goals for all staff. Finally, I made myself available to help staff with any concerns they had as things came up. This resulted in the staff feeling more involved in their work. I also noticed an increase in their engagement and a decline in absenteeism. Another positive outcome was my learning how to delegate and feeling more confident in my staff's capabilities.

Example C

In my previous position as an administrative assistant for Standard Aero, I spent a lot of time trying to find the ideal pictures for the company's monthly newsletter and scrambled to type the copy near the deadline. Although I always completed the newsletter on time, I needed a more efficient process. I decided to reverse the order of work and did all the keyboarding and formatting before working on the visual aspect of the newsletter. I then keyboarded the articles as they came in, rather than waiting for all the material to be submitted. I also asked people who were submitting material for the newsletter to provide pictures along with their copy. This resulted in a higher level of engagement by the contributors. Secondly I was able to comfortably meet my deadline, and lastly I received positive feedback from my employer on minimizing the time spent on the newsletter.

8. *Where do you see yourself in five years?*

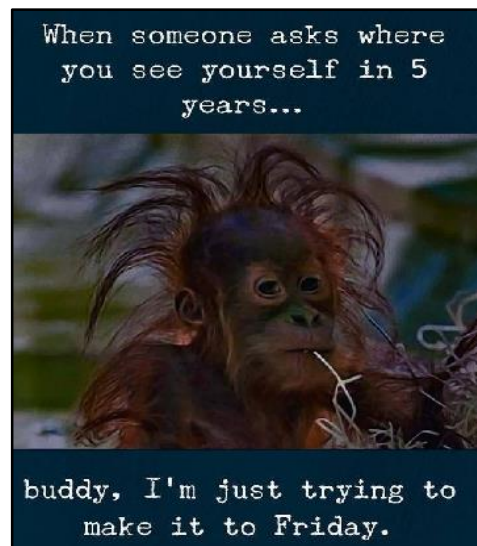
This question is asked to assess if you viewing the position as a stepping stone or as a position with long term potential. It also assesses whether or not you have realistic goals. Review the research you have gathered to determine if there are opportunities for advancement, or specific needs that you can fill. Provide this information in your answer.

Example A

I know the company would like to expand markets in Asia over the next five years. One of my long-range goals is to advance into a management role in Financial Planning. I am currently working towards my CGA designation and would like to help the company meet its expansion goals.

Example B

My long-term plans are to continue improving my skills by taking courses that will allow me to grow and contribute to the company as an Administrative Assistant.



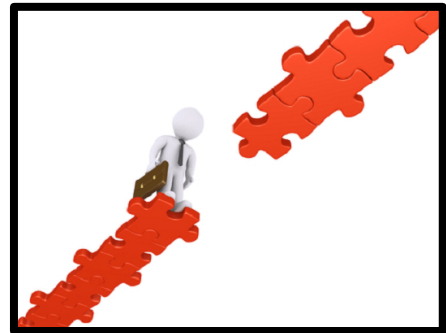
Example C

Five years from now I would like to see myself as an employee that knows all aspects of the job and can be counted on not only for my adaptability in doing what is needed, but also for my responsible attitude.

9. What is the reason for the gap in your employment history?

Employers have concerns about reliability and issues that might prevent a person from being a dependable employee. However, everyone takes time off sooner or later. This could be due to being laid off, a **medical condition**, death in the family, or taking care of elderly parents.

If the gap is due to a **medical condition**, remember you are under no obligation to disclose health-related information, whether the condition is substance abuse, a mental health issue, or medical condition. Do reassure the employer the issue has been addressed and you are eager to return to work. If you need physical accommodation or time off, it would be best for you to disclose this at the interview.

**Example A**

I took a year off to care for my elderly parent who needed constant care. During that time I was able to find an apartment for her that provided assisted living and also sell the family home. She is now doing well health-wise and loves her new home. Knowing that my mother has excellent care that I can rely on, I am looking forward to being back at work full-time.

Example B

After six years in the transportation sector, I took some time off to rethink my options. I spent some time with my family, considered my priorities and researched occupations. After talking to people in the industry I decided to pursue a position in this field, and I am excited to begin working here at _____.

Example C

As you know, it is important for both the employer and the employee to be a good fit for each other; I made a decision to not just apply for any job in order to be employed. I have been waiting for the right job opportunity and company that matches with my career goals. After doing my research I have identified ABC Company as the company I would like to work for. I am confident that my skills and qualifications would make me an excellent addition to the team and that the company culture is one that I would also fit into.

10. Why should we hire you?



This question indicates the interview is coming to an end. It is your last opportunity to sell yourself. Use the formula JEEP to show your enthusiasm and reinforce how you are an excellent fit for the position.

You can use JEEP for:

Why should we hire you?

Why do you want to work for us?

Why do you think this job would be a good fit for you?

JEEP

J ob Ad	Refer to the top 3 requirements 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
E xperience	Provide example for each requirement 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
E nthusiasm	Refer to your research or previous experience, or using new skill(s) _____ _____ _____
P ersonality	Show GREAT FIT – provide 3 relevant attributes 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Example A

J ob Ad	Refer to the top 3 requirements ✓ adaptable ✓ positive attitude in fast paced environment ✓ excellent customer service
E xperience	Provide example for each requirement ✓ assisted Dr. Smith, front desk, typed letters to doctors; ✓ 80+ patients daily, positive no matter how busy; ✓ received thank you cards from patients
E nthusiasm	Refer to your research or previous experience, or using new skill(s) ✓ exciting to be learning about cardiology
P ersonality	Show GREAT FIT - provide 3 relevant attributes ✓ conscientious ✓ quick learner ✓ prioritize

Example A

The job ad stated the need to be **adaptable**, maintain a **positive attitude in a fast paced environment** and have **excellent customer service skills**. While working at **Dr. Smith's** office I **assisted** with patients, filled in at the **front desk** when needed, and also **typed** the **letters** to be sent to other doctors. On an average day I did **80 or more patient workups** and was **known by** the **staff** and **customers** as always being in a **positive mood no matter how busy** we were. I also **received many thank you cards from patients** for my great customer service. Here are some samples in my portfolio. (Hand the portfolio to interviewer.) It is **exciting to be learning about cardiology** and I have been brushing up on the medical terminology. I am **conscientious**, a **quick learner** and able to quickly **prioritize**. I'm looking forward to using my skills in this position.

Example B

The job description stated the need for someone with initiative, creativity and good sales skills. Working at Chapters a lot of the staff didn't want to work in the children's department because they didn't have knowledge of the books. I created a staff reference manual with book title suggestions for different age groups. This helped the staff feel more comfortable and increased department sales. I also arranged creative visual displays to introduce customers to new titles. During these last six months, I have consistently achieved the highest sales in the children's section for the western region. My love of books, curiosity about people, and dedication motivated me to find the right book for each customer. I am punctual, detail-oriented and resourceful.

Behaviour Descriptive Interview Questions



Responding To Behaviour Descriptive Interview Questions

When you hear the phrases

“Tell me about a time WHEN YOU...”

or

“Give me an example of a time WHEN YOU...”

you are being asked a **Behaviour Descriptive Interview (BDI)** question. Employers use **BDI** questions for two reasons:

- a. it is the best indicator of how a person will perform on the job, and
- b. it allows the interviewer to assess your past behaviour and predict your future performance.



Answer by Telling a Story with **STAR**

Answer **BDI** questions by telling stories that show your competency. Using the **STAR** method will keep you focused and on track. It also ensures that you will demonstrate good communication skills and end on a positive note.

Situation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. position 2. employer or sector 3. specific incident
Task	
Actions Taken	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.
Result	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3.

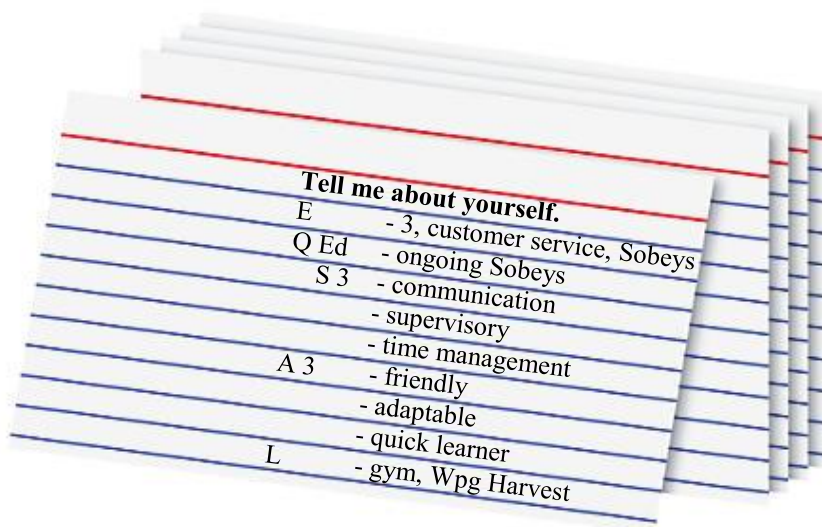
Breakdown the example into the different components of STAR | **Practice Book**, page 16

Example

Give me an example of a time when you helped someone solve a troublesome situation.

While working as an employment counsellor in the nonprofit sector, a colleague came to me asking for my advice regarding a new staff member. I listened to his concerns and his strategy for dealing with the situation. I then emphasized the need to keep emotions out of the discussion. Finally, I recommended making a list of the points he wanted to make, and to practice before meeting. He came back to me a few days later happy that he was able to get his points across. He also had a better understanding of cultural differences. He is now partnering with this individual in conducting workshops for the immigrant community.

Create index cards for your interview answers. This will make them portable so you can take them anywhere and practice while waiting in a lineup, or for an appointment.



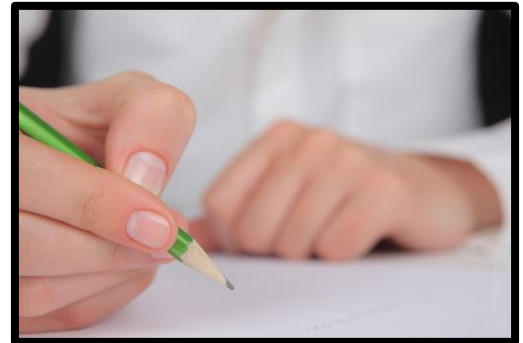
Creating A BDI Answer

1. Review the job ad and identify the competencies the job requires.
2. Choose 2 questions from each category on pages 21-22.
3. After reading the question, think of an incident that had a positive outcome.
4. When you have an incident in mind, break down your response using the **STAR Method** on page 19.

Typical BDI Questions

Communication:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully.
2. Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
3. Describe for me a situation where you persuaded team members to do things your way. What was the effect?
4. Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.



Applying Learning:

1. Tell me about a time when you had trouble learning a new method or procedure? How did you deal with the situation?
2. Describe how you keep up-to-date with new trends in your field of study.
3. Describe a time where you had to apply your theoretical or academic knowledge to a work situation. Did it improve the situation? If so, how?

Decision Making:

1. Describe for me a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
2. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation. What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision

Working Effectively with Others:

1. Give me an example that would show that you've been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, though there were differing points of view.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get the desired results.
3. Tell me about a difficult situation with a co-worker, and how you handled it.
4. Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in getting a team (or work group) back on track.

Creativity and Innovation:

1. Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
2. Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a new and better way of doing something significant.
3. Describe a time when you were able to come up with new ideas that were key to the success of some activity or project.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to bring out the creativity in others.

Thinking and Problem Solving:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced good results.
2. If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?
3. Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
4. Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.

Initiative and Follow-through:

1. Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.
2. Tell me about a goal that you set that took a long time to achieve or that you are still working towards.
3. Tell me about a time when you won (or lost) an important contract.
4. Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.

Work Quality:

1. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was well received. What do you attribute that to?
2. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was not well received. What do you attribute that to?
3. Tell me about a specific project or program that you were involved with that resulted in improvement in a major work area.
4. Tell me about a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

Ability to Work in Varying Work Conditions (stress, changing deadlines, etc.):

1. Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to change work mid-stream because of changing organizational priorities.
4. Describe for me what you do to handle stressful situations.

Situational Interview Questions



Responding to Situational Interview Questions

When you hear the phrases

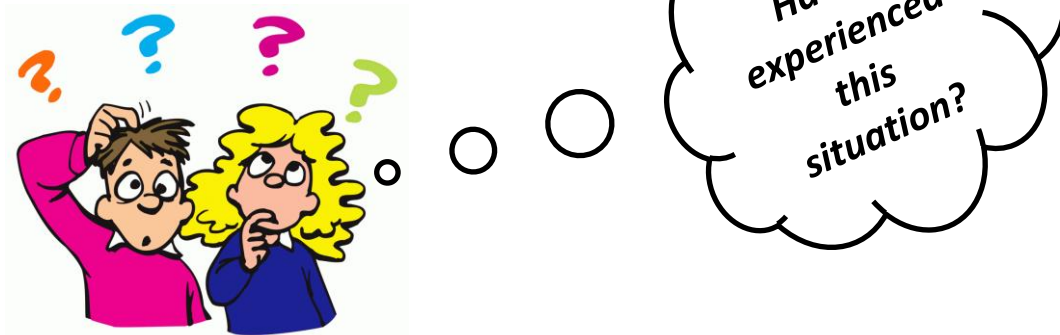
“What *WOULD YOU* do if . . .”

or

“How *WOULD YOU* handle . . .”

you are being asked a **Situational Interview** question

Employers ask ***Situational Interview*** questions to **assess** how a person would deal with a situation. To answer a situational interview question, first ask yourself:



To create feelings of empathy in the interviewer towards you, tell the interviewer if you **have**, or **have not** experienced that particular situation.

If the answer is **YES**:

- Tell the interviewer you **have experienced** the situation
- Use **STAR** to create your answer

If the answer is **NO**:

- Tell the interviewer you **have not experienced** the situation
- Describe the **TASK** you would take
- Describe the **3 ACTIONS** you would take
- Talk about the **3 RESULTS** you would hope to achieve

Turn to page 25 for examples of ways to start your situational interview answers.

Turn to page 26 to see examples for a situational interview question.



You are working on a large project. The deadline is in two days. As the date gets closer, you realize you will not be able to meet this deadline. What would you do?

Working at ABC as a sales representative in the printing department this was something that did at times happen. I remember one specific project where we getting ready to present at an international trade show and

realized that we were not going to meet our deadline. Luckily, it was a week before the project was due and I immediately scheduled a meeting with the manager. I then created an action plan for the tasks that still needed to be completed, and took this to discuss with the manager. I also assigned more staff to the project. This resulted in meeting the deadline and increasing our sales by 6% at the tradeshow. I also developed a better relationship with the manager. Working together on other projects we were able to meet target dates by designing project plans together, and updating each other more often.

You are working on a large project. The deadline is in two days. As the date gets closer, you realize you will not be able to meet this deadline. What would you do?

In my work experience to date I have not been in a position to manage large projects. However, if faced with this challenge the first thing I would do is call a meeting with the staff to get an update and identify where the slowdown might be occurring. I would then ask the staff to present me with their plan of action in two hours and discuss what assistance I could provide. Finally, I would take these findings to my manager and ask for the resources the staff identified to complete the project on time. First, I hope this would result in our ability to complete the project on time. I would also implement procedures to better assess possible hitches for future projects and minimize the risk of missing deadlines. Finally, I would use this experience to learn how to better determine the time needed for future projects.



Situational Interview Questions

1. You have been with our company now for one year. You notice one of your production team members has been arriving late and appears to have lost interest in the job. This is slowing down production and affecting everyone on the team. How would you handle this situation?
2. As an order desk person, you will be servicing the needs of customers, both in person and over the telephone. You receive a call from an irate customer who states that you promised the order would be delivered by last Friday. It is now Monday afternoon and they still haven't received it. What would you do to solve this situation and to restore the confidence of this customer?
3. You are making a first time call to a new potential account, and the customer tells you he is happy with his present supplier. He also says that he once used your company as a supplier years ago and was not happy with them. How would you deal with this situation?
4. A co-worker tells you in confidence that she plans to call in sick while actually taking a week's vacation. What would you do and why?
5. In a training session, you find that the trainer has a thick accent, and you can't understand what's being said. What would you do?



If the answer is YES:

- Tell the interviewer you **have experienced** the situation
- Use **STAR** to create your answer

If the answer is NO:

- Tell the interviewer you **have not experienced** the situation
- Describe the **TASK** you would take
- Describe the **3 ACTIONS** you would take
- Talk about the **3 RESULTS** you would hope to achieve

Preparing for the Interview



The Week Before

- Review research of the company
- Review the job ad
- Know your resume and cover letter; interviewers will base questions on it
- Write responses for interview questions
- Make interview cue cards
- **Practice, practice, practice your answers to interview questions**
- **Know what your salary expectations are: annually, monthly, biweekly, hourly**
- Call to get the names of the people that will be interviewing you
 - Research the individuals on LinkedIn and or Google
- Know the exact location and time of the interview
- Do a practice run to the location
- Get change for parking, a little notebook, thank you cards, and stamps
- Get interview clothing ready
- Send each reference a copy of your resume along with information about job you are applying for **after the interview**
- Have your folder prepared and ready to go
 - See **What to Bring - page 29**
- **Continue your job search**



The Day Before

- Practice, practice, practice your answers to interview questions
- Prepare your clothes and shoes - see **What Do I Wear? - page 30**
- Write down the name of the person(s) who will be interviewing you as well as the address and telephone number of the company in your small notebook
- List 6-10 questions to ask the interviewer in your small notebook
 - see **Do You Have Any Questions? - page 31**
- Get a good night's sleep

The Day of the Interview

- Have a good breakfast
- Review your resume, cover letter and job posting
- Bring your folder, portfolio (optional), and ID
 - **You may need ID for building Security or HR**
- **Shut off your cell phone before you enter the building**
- Arrive ten minutes early, and let the receptionist know you are there
- Leave your troubles at home and maintain a positive attitude
- **Smile**

Science has proven that when you smile your body produces endorphins. Endorphins create a feeling of happiness in your body.



What to Bring

1. Have your Folder/Portfolio ready to go with the following items:
 - References
 - Samples of your work
 - Transcripts, certificates, diplomas
 - References
 - Drivers Abstract
 - Copies of your resume
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Typing test results
 - Criminal Record Check, Child Abuse Registry Check
2. Have your questions for the interviewer ready in your notebook
3. Other essentials to bring:
 - Pen
 - Stamps
 - Thank you cards
 - Change for parking
 - Breath mints, a snack, bottled water, tissues
 - Identification



Make copies of documents the interviewer might ask to keep for their files. Your foresight will be appreciated.

What Do I Wear?

FOR MEN IN THE BUSINESS SECTOR:

- Wear a suit and a conservative tie, or
- Wear a suit jacket, shirt, tie, dress pants and leather shoes

FOR ALL MEN:

- Clean shaven, hair neatly styled
- Moustache/sideburns/beard neatly trimmed
- Ensure fingernails are properly cut and clean
- Clean, neat and pressed clothing
- Clean leather shoes, or black, lace-up runners
- Use deodorant; **no cologne**



FOR MEN IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS:

- Wear shirt, casual jacket, cardigan, vest, dress pants, belt and leather shoes

FOR WOMEN:



- Wear a suit, or suit jacket and dress pants in coordinated colours
- Ensure nails are manicured and short with neutral coloured nail polish
- Ensure shoes are clean; always wear shoes – never sandals
- Keep make-up and jewellery low key
- Ensure clothing is clean, neat and pressed
- Wear pantyhose—even in the summer
- Use deodorant; **no perfume**

75%

of employers stated that it was very important to be dressed professionally.

OVRC Recruitment Survey Questionnaire - 2009

Do You Have Any Questions?

When the interviewer asks *Do you have any questions?* it is your signal that the interview is coming to an end. Always answer with a yes. This will demonstrate that you are taking the interview seriously and want to make sure the company and the job are a good fit for you.

When an interviewer asks **Do you have any questions?** she's not just being polite. She's trying to gauge whether you're informed, interested, and engaged. Explains recruiter Angela Smith, "if an applicant doesn't have any questions for me, that's a red flag. I'm thinking that they either don't care or can't be bothered to do research about my company."

Source:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/any-questions-what-to-ask-in-an-interview>

For each interview prepare **6-10 questions** and write them in your little notebook. As the interview progresses, a number of your questions will be answered. Usually the interviewer will probably answer one or two questions, scan your list of questions first and choose two that are the most important to you. Listed below is a sampling of questions you could ask an employer.

Questions to assess whether the job and company are a good fit for you:

- What is the mentoring/coaching/training program like?
- How do you measure performance?
- What are some of the first projects I would be involved in?
- What are the goals for this position within the first 30 or 60 days?
- Can you tell me about the management style of the company?
- Where do you see your company in five years?
 - ***Illustrates the desire to understand the organization's goals and vision; also allows the interviewer(s) to assess overall compatibility, and see how you can contribute to the company goals.***
- What did you like and dislike about the way the previous person approached this position?
- What is the most important quality I need to succeed in this position?
- Would it be possible to have a tour of the workplace?
- How would you describe the culture of the workplace?
- How did this position become available?
- What is the typical career path for someone in this role?





Questions to ask if you want to know where you stand in the competition:

- How do I compare with the other candidates you've interviewed for this role?
- Do you have any concerns about my experience that I haven't addressed yet?
- This discussion has made me even more excited about this job opportunity and I would love to be the person you hire. Is there anything else you need from me before you make a decision?

If your questions have been answered during the interview:

- Make sure that you take out your notebook and scan the page quickly
- Let the interviewer know that all of your questions have been answered during the interview



Use Amy Cuddy's **Power Pose** to increase your confidence before going into an interview. Standing in the Power Pose for 2 minutes is scientifically proven to increase a person's testosterone for 30 minutes. Increased testosterone = increase confidence.

If you would like to learn more about Amy Cuddy's **Power Pose** go to:

1. Ted Talks – Amy Cuddy
2. Google the article in the Princeton Alumni Weekly called *Power to the People*



Have I Answered Your Question?

If you see a confused look on the interviewer's face, or are wondering if you answered the question to the interviewer's satisfaction, ask the interviewer:

Have I answered your question?

This will provide the interviewer with the opportunity to ask for more details, or confirm that you have answered the question.

Wrapping Up the Interview

As you and the interviewer are walking towards the door:

1. State appreciation for the interview and confirm your interest in the job
2. If you haven't already, give the interviewer your references and copies of other of documents
3. Ask:
When can I call to get the results of this interview, next _____ or _____?
4. Ask for their business card
or
5. Ask the receptionist for the interviewer(s), contact information and verify the spelling of the interviewer's name. Do not assume you know the correct spelling.



If the company has an HR department, you can contact them and ask for the mailing address and or emails of the interviewer(s).



If you are in an interview where others are also present but only one person asks the questions, it is acceptable to send the thank you card to that person only. On the other hand, if each person takes a turn asking a question, it is important to send a thank you card to each interviewer.

Illegal and Legal Interview Questions

Inquiry Area	Illegal Questions	Legal Questions
Nationality Origin/ Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you a Canadian citizen?-Where were you/your parents born? - What is your "native tongue"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Are you authorized to work in Canada? -What language do you read/speak/write fluently? (This question is okay only if this ability is relevant to the performance of the job).
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How old are you? - When did you graduate? - What's your birth date? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you between the ages of 18 and 64?
Marital Family Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's your marital status? - Do you plan to have a family? When? - How many kids do you have? - What are your child-care arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would you be willing to relocate if necessary? - Would you be able and willing to travel as needed by the job? (This question is okay if it is asked of all applicants for the job). - Would you be able and willing to work overtime as necessary? (Again, this question is okay assuming it is asked of all applicants for the job).
Affiliations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What clubs or social organizations do you belong to? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List any professional or trade groups or other organizations that you belong to that you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job.
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How tall are you? - How much do you weigh? <p>(Questions about height and weight are not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to the safe performance of the job).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you able to lift a 30 kg weight and carry it 100 metres, as that is part of the job?
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have any disabilities? - Please complete the following medical history. - Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations? (If yes, list them and give dates when these occurred). - What was the date of your last physical exam? - How's your family's health? - When did you lose your eyesight? How? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job? (This question is okay if the interviewer has thoroughly described the job). - Can you demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions? - As part of the hiring process, after a job offer has been made, you will be

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you need an accommodation to perform the job? (This question can only be asked after a job offer has been made). 	<p>required to undergo a Medical exam. (Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except medical/safety personnel may be informed if emergency medical treatment is required, and supervisors may be informed about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results).</p>
Arrest Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you ever been arrested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you ever been convicted of _____? (The crime named should be reasonably related to the performance of the job in question).
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are you male or female? What are the names and relationships of persons living with you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None
Race/Colour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your race? - What colour is your hair, eyes, or skin? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your religious affiliation or denomination? - What church do you belong to? - What is the name of your pastor, minister, or rabbi? - What religious holidays do you observe? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None (If you wish to know if an applicant is available to work Saturday or Sunday shifts, ask: "Are you available to work on Saturdays and Sundays if needed?" Make sure you ask this question of all applicants).

After Interview Checklist

Company/Address: _____

Interviewer/Position: _____

Date: _____

Items I did well on ✓

Items I would like to improve X

- Friendly with receptionist and all others
- Introduced myself to interviewer and shook hands
- Gave my resume, copies of letters of recommendation, references (and other materials)
- Had good eye contact with interviewer
- Maintained good posture and avoided nervous mannerisms
- Mentioned who referred me or friends working there (if applicable)
- Demonstrated my skills and attributes with specific work examples using formulas
- Asked when I could start
- Arranged a call back date
- Thanked the interviewer and shook hands
- Did interview follow-up: thank you card/email

Interview questions I did well on:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Interview questions I need to improve answers for:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

Did Well

Needs to Improve
