

Interview Basics



Osborne Village
RESOURCE CENTRE

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Last Edited: Mar 27, 2025

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2 WHY ARE INTERVIEWS HARD?

Interviews cause more confusion than almost any other part of the job search process.

Clients regularly come to us asking what they are going to get asked.

In essence, an interview is a **conversation**, with a **purpose**, between you and a potential employer. The purpose of the interview is to determine:

From the employer's side:

- If you have the skills to be successful in the role,
- If you have the personality to be successful on the team,
- If you have the right cultural fit to be effective in the company

From your side:

- If the skills described in the job ad are accurate and fit your talents,
- What the company culture and expectations are like,
- If there are opportunities for growth and development in the role

You are both there to learn from each other. It is a discussion, not an interrogation.

Yes, it is fundamentally a “pass-fail test” in the sense that you have to have answers that make sense to them. However, if you approach it as something you can fail at, you're going to have a lot more anxiety and you're not going to be able to focus on what they are trying to tell you about their organization.

Interview questions mostly come in one of three types:

- Standard or Background Questions (your history, education, etc.)
- Behavioral Questions (what you did in a specific example – stories)
- Knowledge Questions (technical or specific skill related questions)

Most people have little to no trouble answering knowledge questions. After all, whether or not you know how to use Microsoft Excel or operate a punch press is a pretty specific sort of thing and there's no room for misunderstanding.

Where people get lost is in the Standard questions (because they often involve personal ambiguity or challenges with relationships) or Behavioral questions (because they struggle with selecting good examples or telling clear, concise stories).

This workbook focuses on the first two types of questions because of that.

3 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.

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 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.

4 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

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

- 60% on communication and interpersonal skills
- 40% on 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.

4.1 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 if 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 % SUCCESS

Albert Mehrabian,
*Professor Emeritus
of Psychology: UCLA*

4.2 IT MUST BE CONCISE (SHORT AND CLEAR)

Especially when we are answering situational questions, it is very easy to get lost in the tiny details of a story and take too long to tell it or lose the listener along the way.

It can be helpful to think in terms of toothpaste when answering questions in an interview. A little will go a long way. After all, we don't get cleaner teeth by squirting in the whole tube at once.

Keep your responses fairly brief. Most questions can be answered effectively in one to three minutes. Remember, if they want more detail, they can (and will) ask, but if you've bored them or confused them, it can be hard to recover from that.

5 READING A TYPICAL JOB AD (“WHAT WILL THEY ASK ME?”)

Here is a job ad for an administrative role with the City of Winnipeg, which is a common and representative example of the kind of position we get asked for help figuring out “what they are going to ask at the interview?” The posting has been simplified:

Job Profile

Under the general supervision of the Manager of the Decision-Making Process, the Clerk B in the Committees Division provides clerical support to the Committees of Council by assisting the Committee Clerk in the preparation of committee documents such as agendas, minutes, dispositions, as well as preparing the meeting room. The Clerk B also provides assistance to the Senior Election Official in the conduct of civic elections.

As the Committee Support Clerk, you will:

- Prepares agendas, minutes and dispositions for Committees of Council.
- Prepares orders, items for council and correspondence for Committees of Council.
- Publishes committee documents on the City Clerk’s Decision Making Information System (DMIS).
- Answers inquiries from the public and the administration.
- Completes work accurately and efficiently, to meet assigned deadlines.
- Assists the Clerk, as required, with the operation of video conferencing software and other audio/visual equipment used for committee meetings.
- Prepares meeting room and attends committee meetings as required.
- Assists the Senior Election Official in the conduct of civic elections and by-elections.
- Performs other related duties, consistent with the classification, as assigned by the Manager.

Your education and qualifications include:

- High school graduation supplemented by formal training in business office procedures or an equivalent combination of training and experience.
- Ability to type accurately at 20 w.p.m.
- Proficiency in the use of various software applications including Microsoft Word, Outlook and Excel.
- Ability to communicate verbally effectively.
- Ability to communicate effectively in written correspondence.
- Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with colleagues and managers, and work cooperatively in a team environment.
- Ability to work in an organized manner.
- Ability to work independently, prioritize tasks, and meet established deadlines.
- Ability to maintain professional behavior and confidentiality at all times.
- Ability to follow written/oral instructions, exercising sound judgment and discretion.
- Ability to develop new skills and perform new duties consistent with the classification.

5.1 FINDING THE HARD SKILLS:

Hard skills are job related tasks that have specific outcomes. They are usually things you physically do in some way. Examples of hard skills would be answering a phone, typing a report, cleaning a room, making food, painting a car, punching a piece of metal, cutting a board and so on.

What are three HARD SKILLS you see in the job ad on the previous page?

1

2

3

5.2 FINDING THE SOFT SKILLS:

Soft skills are about things which are more mental or emotional in nature. They're not usually skills you would go to school for, but the kind of interpersonal skills you learn on the job or by interacting with others. Communication is the primary soft skill for most roles, but others can include following directions, prioritizing work, and learning skills from other departments so you can help out.

What are three SOFT SKILLS you see in the job ad on the previous page?

1

2

3

5.3 FINDING THE ATTRIBUTES:

Attributes and soft skills often get mixed up. The primary difference is that skills are learned while attributes are more personality traits and just reflect how you are. Attributes include traits like being organized, people-oriented, calm, resourceful or professional in tough situations. (If you can put the words "I am...." in front, it's probably an attribute.) There are some blurry points between soft skills and attributes, so if this one is a little harder, that's okay.

What are three ATTRIBUTES you see in the job ad on the previous page?

1

2

3

Once you know how to read the job ad, it's easier to "guess" what they will ask you.

EXERCISE: What are one or two questions you might ask if you were the interviewer, based on what skills you found?

1

2

PRO TIP: Try using your favorite AI to help you find the key terms by using this prompt and copy and pasting the job ad in:

What are some hard skills, soft skills, and attributes that I would be asked about in a job interview based on this job ad? Tell me why they would ask the question and what are they listening for when I answer?

HARD SKILLS:
 Preparing business correspondence and meeting minutes
 Answering phone calls and emails
 Meeting deadlines and ensuring work is accurate
 Setting up the meeting room and attending meetings
 Setting up and audiovisual equipment and video call
 Software (e.g. Zoom)
 Typing at least 20 wpm
 Proficient with Microsoft Office (Word, Outlook, Excel)

SOFT SKILLS:
 Effective verbal and written communication skills
 Able to prioritize workload / organize tasks
 Managing time effectively
 Follows written and verbal instructions effectively
 Cooperating with others as part of a team
 Able to learn new skills to meet department needs
 Maintain confidentiality about sensitive information
 Being attentive to detail

ATTRIBUTES:
 Professional
 Self-motivated
 Accurate
 Reliable

6 STANDARD / BACKGROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: INDEX

These are questions asked to get a sense of your professional background and what you've already accomplished as well as your expectations for the role. They are asked to try and uncover problem areas that may affect your ability to be effective in the role.

Questions that are reviewed in the workshop are **bolded** in the list.

Tell me about yourself (background information)

Why do you want to work for us?

What is your greatest weakness?

or What is a challenge you have overcome?

Why did you leave your last job? (PNP)

What kind of salary are you expecting?

Where would you like to see yourself in five years?

What are your greatest strengths?

or What do you bring to this role?

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



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

6.1 TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF (TWO WAYS)

Depending on your communication style, work history, and career goals, we're going to present two different ways to talk about your professional journey.

This question is asked to assess your communication skills.

For people who just want “a formula they can learn”, we present EQAL – four sentences you can memorize to have a well-rounded professional story that hits what they are listening for.

6.1.1 EQAL (Equal, but without you, because U are already there)

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. (Or toothpaste; remember that you can't get it back in the tube if you overshare.)



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:

Experience

1. # of years
2. doing what
3. where (sector(s) or specific employer)

Qualifications:

Education: training, certificate, on-the-job, diploma, workshop

Job-Specific Skills: technology, equipment

Attributes (Personality Traits):

Up to three that you feel represent you

Life - Optional

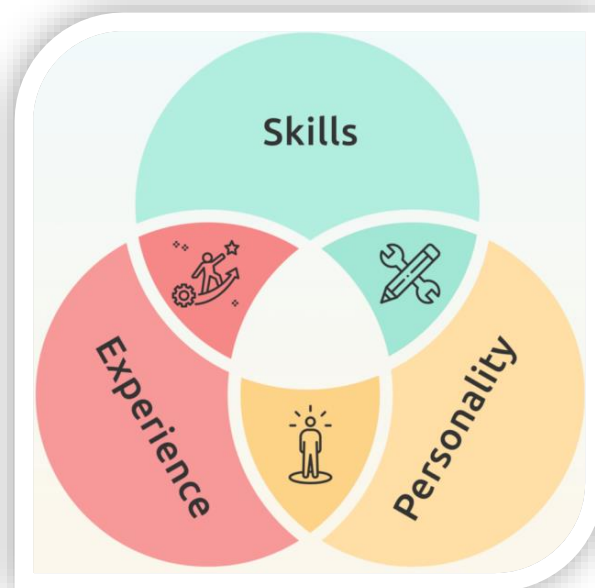
volunteer, community involvement, interests that reinforce your skills/attributes

6.1.1.1 This sounds a lot like my Personal Brand?!

You are absolutely correct. If you have taken our Personal Brand workshop, you can use a slightly expanded version of your personal brand to build your EQAL statement.

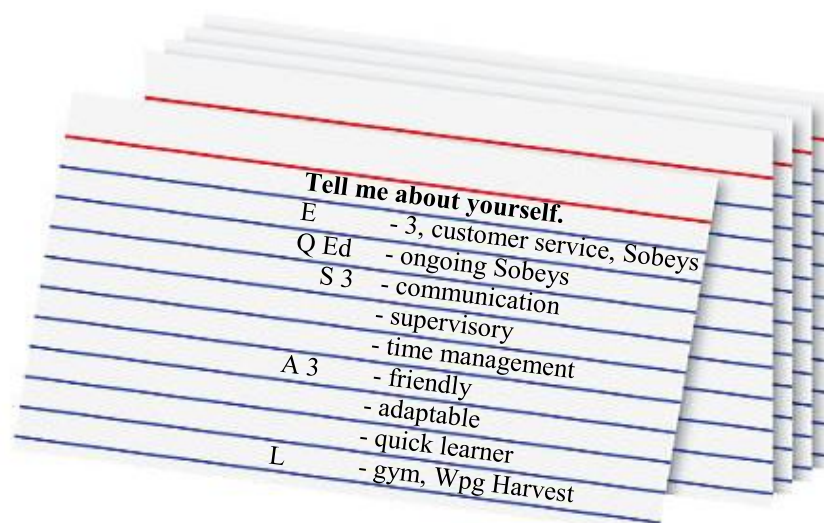
What people will often do is revise the brand like this – the first line is the same. (Industry, experience, education). Then the second and third lines will be ALL THREE of your skills and attributes (I am good at A B and C because I am D E and F). Leave out the values for now and add a sentence about your hobbies or passions.

You're welcome. 😊



6.1.1.2 Write it out: EQAL

Experience	# of Years?
	Doing What?
	Where?
Qualifications	Education
	Skill 1
	Skill 2
	Skill 3
Attributes	Attr. 1
	Attr. 2
	Attr. 3
Life (opt.)	



6.1.2 Past Present Future (Storytelling Model)

Sometimes EQAL doesn't work for every client. For a variety of reasons, including not liking the idea of a formula, or having a complex work history (especially high level managerial roles), or just being more of a storyteller. This model is well explained by Don Georgevich and basically gives a framework to tell your professional story – from the past through the present and then relating what you know to the work you want to do going forward.

A word of caution – just because you're telling a story doesn't mean you get to ramble! A professional introduction should not exceed more than two minutes if done well. They can ask for more detail, but if you bore them, you've lost the momentum in the interview.

Note that all of the basic requirements are still there, just broken up a little differently.

Past: One or two sentences about your professional past. This can include information about why you chose to get into your field, what training you have, or notable projects you have worked on that show your professional expertise. Share your excitement about how you chose your career path. (Experience and Qualifications)

Present: One or two sentences about what you are doing currently, or about your recent work and what you have learned from it to improve your professional expertise. This can also include project work but should be specific to your most recent role, volunteering, or education. (Skills and Attributes)

Future: How do you want to use what you've been talking about – your professional expertise and strongest skills – in the role you are interviewing for? Help them connect the dots and understand what you are bringing to the table. This is **ESPECIALLY** important if you are making a substantial career shift (e.g. from working in health care into a trade).



6.1.2.1 Write it Out: Past Present Future

Past	
Present	
Future	

How to Answer Tell Me about Yourself (detailed):

- <https://tinyurl.com/yznzw4y>
- (content © Dan Georgevich)



Also check out this guide by Will McTighe (quoted above):

- <https://tinyurl.com/2s3cuxxu>

Example A (EQAL)

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 (EQAL)

Professionally, I have extensive experience working as an Administrative Assistant working in government and education. 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 a 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.

Example C (PPF) © Dan Georgevitch)

I became interested in business at an early age having started my first business at age ten – it was a lemonade stand. I remember saving-up enough money to buy a new video game and it was at that moment that I knew I loved business. From there, I had several other small businesses throughout high school where I made mini websites for students and teachers. After graduation, I went to Harvard to study business where I received my degree in business. Over the summers, I worked as an intern at Hearst publishing company. Working in the publishing industry is fascinating. I really enjoyed the challenging, fast-paced environment, which is something that appeals to me about the idea of working here. Down the road, I'm hoping to be in a position where I'm responsible for growing a sales territory or expanding a department.

Example D (Five Steps - edited) © Will McTighe

I found my passion for customer service when I helped a frustrated customer and it turned their experience around. It made me realize how much I love helping people. Now I'm a Junior Manager at XYZ Retail leading a team of 20 to boost customer experience and sales. Before this, I managed operations at ABC Retail and cut stock outages by 15% with a new inventory system. These roles taught me to lead with empathy and compassion, use data smartly, and turn challenges into wins. I'm ready to bring these skills to a senior manager role, driving even bigger results and aligning with the company's goals. In the future I want to be a leader in the customer service field by creating processes to serve as many happy customers as possible.

6.2 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.

Sometimes a good way to think of the answer is in three parts:

- 1) What is the most important skill (or two) they need?
 - a. You should have been able to get this from the job ad; here we might focus on a primary hard skill rather than a soft skill. Explain what you see as the most important part of the role in a sentence or two.
- 2) What do you have to offer the team / company?
 - a. This might be how you address the skills you already talked about. It may be a sentence or two about something you bring that you think they need, based on your read of the job ad.
- 3) How do you fit into their story?
 - a. This is closely related to the idea of cultural fit, or interest in a particular project or direction the company is going. The research you've done will be very helpful here.

What (skill)	
Have (strength)	
Fit (culture / research)	

Example A

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.

Example B

In the job ad, you mentioned you were looking for someone with a passion for plants, and I have been working to grow and improve my own garden with a focus on locally sourced plants for several years now. I have retail experience from other positions I have had, and I am already a very happy Shelmerdine's customer. I appreciate the relaxed, friendly, low pressure sales environment the store has, and want to help others have the same experience.

6.3 WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES?

May also be: *What is a challenge you have overcome? What is something you have had to work on to improve? What is something you have struggled with?*

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.

IMPORTANT: If English is not your primary language, you may **NOT** want to bring up struggling with the language as your weakness. It can plant the seed in the mind of the interviewer that you won't be able to communicate with their clients effectively.

- If you choose to use your challenges in learning English, be sure you can clearly state the specific steps you have taken, such as advanced English courses or deliberately volunteering in roles requiring English.

Also, avoid being flippant or disrespectful. Responses like:

"My weakness is potato chips and Hockey Night in Canada."

won't get you any points either.

To choose an acceptable weakness or challenge:

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

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 ten years ago as it would indicate that you are not keeping up with developing your skills.

Define the Problem	
Tools / Techniques / Actions	
Learning / Improvement	

Example A (technical skill)

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 (delegating)

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 feeling more comfortable with delegating tasks because I felt more confident in my staff's capabilities.

Example C (overcommitting)

In the past I've had issues with taking on too much responsibility for the team because I want to help. This has led to delays and problems with keeping up with my core responsibilities. To prevent this, I have started to keep a detailed list of my primary job duties and roughly how much time they take up. This way when someone asks me to take on a large task, we can negotiate and possibly delegate things if needed. For day to day things (mostly technical requests), I will try to take time to teach the skill so I can empower my colleague to do it themselves going forward.

6.4 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 of a personality conflict, or you were dismissed for cause, that's a different issue, and that can be more of a challenge.

In that case, we recommend the Sandwich Method (Positive – Neutral – Positive). 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.

Trying to explain your side of the story or justify your behaviour will just lead to uncomfortable silences and defensiveness. DON'T do it. It's like digging a hole.

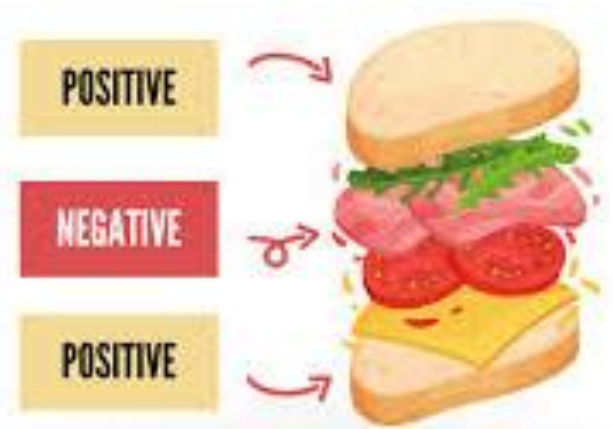
Using PNP ensures that you start and end on a positive note. This is important. Why? Because people remember the first and the last thing you say.

6.4.1 The Sandwich Method (Positive – Neutral – Positive)

Positive

Share up to three (3) things that you are proud of from your last job, for example:

1. reaching a sales target
2. implementing a new system
3. training all new staff



Neutral / Negative

- 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

Positive

Provide up to three (3) positives that are relevant to the position, for example:

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

Positive	
Neutral / Negative	
Positive	

Example A (mutual decision)

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 (layoff)

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.

Example C (dismissal)

I worked at Arbor Florists for six years and really appreciated the opportunity to learn more about plants that are native to Manitoba and improve my flower arranging skills. During a heated interaction with a customer I said something that was against organizational policy and the leadership team decided I was no longer a good fit. I've taken some time to think about my actions and determine what I could have done differently, and I am excited about being able to use my sales and relationship building skills in a new role.

Example D (incarcerated)

The last position I had was working as a heavy equipment operator – mostly skid steer – for a local snow removal company. In 2021 I was incarcerated and spent those years working on myself and getting my entry level carpentry ticket. I have done a lot of personal work during that time to understand my role and my responsibility in what happened and I am very much looking forward to using my trade skills in a new job. Working as a carpenter with you will allow me to have a fresh start – and I do still have my heavy equipment operator experience which will be useful on job sites.

6.5 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

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?

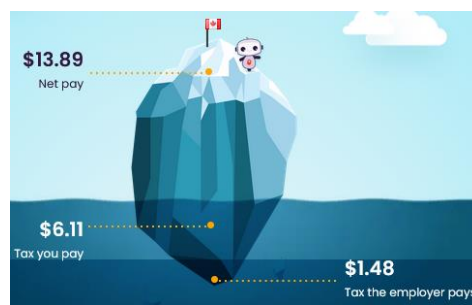
Example F

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.

6.5.1 But I don't know what I should suggest??

If you need to figure out what range you should have in mind:

1. What do you ABSOLUTELY need to survive?
 - Sometimes when people are desperate they will get gaslit into taking a job that will not even allow them to meet their basic financial needs.
2. Once you have that number, add some padding – nobody wants to just survive!
 - 15-30% is usually a good start for most people – this may be less than you were making in your last job and we'll deal with that issue later
3. Third, let's check what the market will bear – jobbank.gc.ca
 - Labour Market Information / Job Title / Location
4. Come up with a range (typically around \$5,000) based on your math
 - e.g. \$35,000 - \$40,000 per year
5. Always offer to negotiate! Remember to factor “total compensation” in.
 - people forget to allow for benefits (this adds 30% to the cost of a hire)
 - you may get more than the standard number of vacation days or flexible scheduling or hybrid work, all of which affect your expenses
 - different tax brackets may mean more take-home income than you think!
 - <https://ca.talent.com/tax-calculator>



It's also important to remember that your starting salary may not be where you end up. There will be opportunities for advancement and raises once you get through your probationary period and employee evaluations. Salary increases are easier to get once you've proven your worth.

NOTE: Remember though, that you usually want to try and get them to tell you what range they have in mind *before* you volunteer anything. Every company is trying to save money and they must have a salary in mind because they need to budget.

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

Survival Budget	
Comfortable Budget	
Labour Market Value	
Target Range (Annual)	

6.6 WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

It costs a lot to train a new hire, both in terms of cost (\$5,000 - \$10,000) and lost time for whoever is training you. Most positions are not fully integrated until near the end of their probation (usually 90 days). Employers are legitimately concerned about making sure you are a good long term investment. You need to reassure them that you are going to be around long enough to be able to contribute.

Employers also want to know that you are willing to learn, cross-train, and grow in the role. Workplaces are dynamic and ever-changing, and this has become particularly important since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 - 2023. **Hiring an employee who isn't willing to adapt is going to be a bad long term fit in most companies.**

Therefore this question is assessing both loyalty and being willing to learn on the job.

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.

6.7 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.

To develop your response to this question, you may want to use the STAR method that we apply to behavioral questions – situation, task, action, result.

Using the STAR method will keep you focused and on track. It also ensures that you will demonstrate good communication skills and ends on a positive note.

For this response, start by saying what your strength is, and then provide a story that shows how you used the strength in a specific example using STAR. (The percentages are a guide – some people may want to focus more on outcomes, for example.)

- Situation (20%), explain the situation so that your interviewer understands the context of your example, they do not need to know every detail!
- Task (10%), talk about the task that you took responsibility for completing or the goal of your efforts.
- Action (60%), describe the actions that you personally took to complete the task or reach the end goal. Highlight skills or character traits addressed in the question.

- Result (10%), explain the positive outcomes or results generated by your actions or efforts. Here, it is important to highlight quantifiable results. You may also want to emphasize what you learned from the experience or your key takeaways.

SOURCE: <https://capd.mit.edu/resources/the-star-method-for-behavioral-interviews/>

Situation <i>(strength)</i>	Position or Role _____ Employer _____ <i>(volunteering or school also counts!)</i> What Happened? _____
Task	Task or Goal _____
Action	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
Result	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

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.

6.8 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 being laid off, a medical condition, death in the family, or taking care of elderly parents.

Sometimes it can be helpful to talk about transferrable skills you picked up while you were away from the traditional workforce. For example, if you were a stay at home parent, talk about multitasking, scheduling, budgeting, safety training, and communication skills. Maybe you took some courses online while you were off from your construction job to learn better computer skills and maybe get a promotion. An absence from the workforce doesn't mean an absence from growth, so make sure you reflect on what you bring to the table!

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.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: Workplace absences during 2020 – 2023 due to circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic do not require any complex or special explanation. Many industries were profoundly and negatively impacted by business decisions for safety reasons (e.g. education, hospitality, health care, tourism). If you were laid off due to the pandemic, just say that and reassure them that you are eager to be back at work.

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 _____.

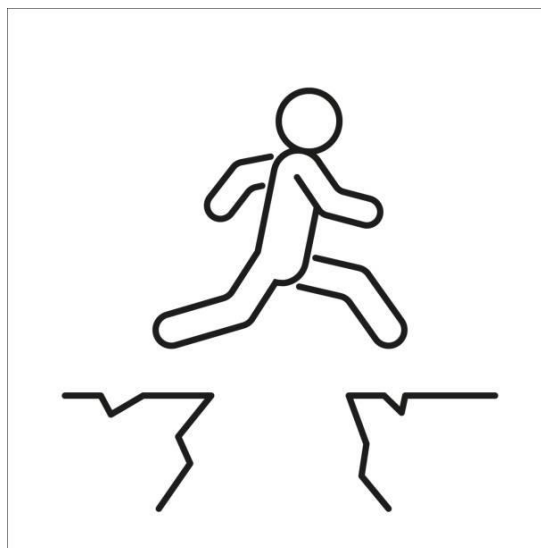
Example C

While I really enjoyed working for my last employer, I was experiencing some health related issues and we both agreed it would be best for me to take some time to focus on that. My medical team has cleared me to return to work and I am very excited about being able to contribute to your team and provide exceptional client service.

(What health issues?)

They have been resolved and will not impact my ability to contribute to your team.

NOTE: If you have questions about your legal rights around health disclosure contact the Manitoba Labour Board. *OVRC is not qualified to answer legal questions.*



7 BEHAVIORAL / DESCRIPTIVE 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:

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

The STAR (Situation – Task – Action – Result) method is a way of telling a story about something that happened or that you did that will show important skills you will need in the role. STAR is useful because it allows us to tell a story that has a specific structure and it prevents too much rambling or getting lost in minor details that are not important at this moment in time.

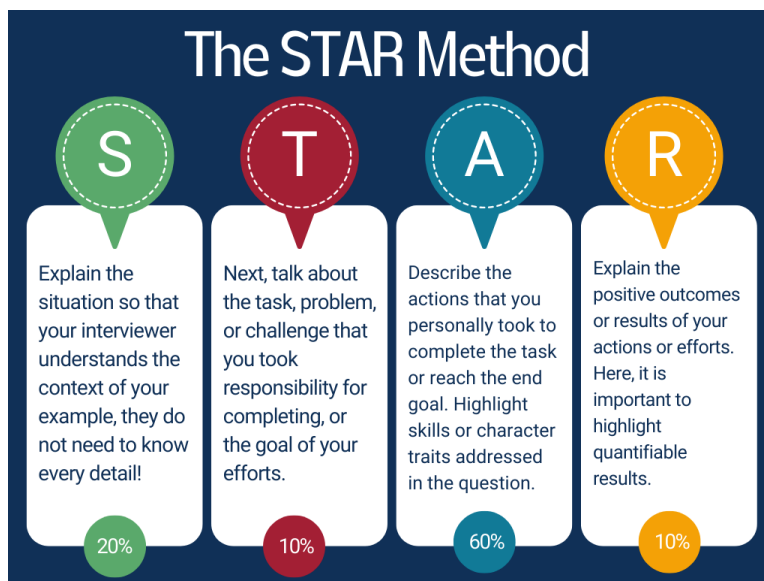
Using the STAR method will keep you focused and on track. It also ensures that you will demonstrate good communication skills and ends on a positive note. Remember: the percentages are a guide – put the focus where you think it is important.

- Situation (20%), explain the situation so that your interviewer understands the context of your example, they do not need to know every detail!
- Task (10%), talk about the task that you took responsibility for completing or the goal of your efforts.
- Action (60%), describe the actions that you took to complete the task or reach the end goal. Highlight skills or character traits addressed in the question.
- Result (10%), explain the positive outcomes or results generated by your actions or efforts. Here, it is important to highlight quantifiable results. You may also want to emphasize what you learned from the experience or your key takeaways.

Some specific tips:

- **Focus your responses on actual behaviors and emotions.** It can be tempting to say what you think will help you get the job, but bending the truth in a job interview can be risky. What you say, if not truthful, can come across as disingenuous to an interviewer, and may not match up with your application materials or what a referral has shared about you.
- **Describe your role in past situations.** When it comes to sharing your experiences with a potential employer, it is important to show ownership of accomplishments by using “I” statements. This can be especially tricky when giving examples of teamwork or collaboration, but using “we” statements can make it difficult for an employer to have a clear understanding of what your skills are. Instead, focus your response on how you contributed to the outcomes of the team efforts.
- **Provide specific examples of your actions.** Avoid giving answers that are too generalized. When responding to behavioral interview questions, it is important to share specific and clear examples that can give your interviewer insight to your potential as a candidate.
- **Reveal your skills related to the job.** Your interviewer will prepare questions that will relate directly to the responsibilities of the role. For example, if the target role requires supervision of others or working in a team-based environment, you may be asked to share examples of times when you demonstrated effective leadership or collaboration. The ability to communicate effectively, work well with others, and think creatively are a few common skills asked for in postings.

SOURCE: <https://capd.mit.edu/resources/the-star-method-for-behavioral-interviews/>



7.1 TELL ME WHEN YOU *WORKED ON A TEAM* AND WHAT MADE IT SUCCESSFUL?

This question is asked to determine your interpersonal and collaboration skills when you have to work with others. Use STAR to develop your response (Situation-Task-Action-Result)

- **SITUATION:** Where were you working, what was your role, how did you become part of the team.
- **TASK:** What did you have to do with the team, how did you have to collaborate, what was a challenge you were facing with the team.
- **ACTION:** Include up to three things you did to overcome the challenge
- **RESULTS:** Up to three positive outcomes from the experience and/or learning opportunities.

Situation <i>(team)</i>	Position or Role _____ Employer _____ <i>(volunteering or school also counts!)</i> What Happened? _____
Task	Task or Goal _____
Action	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
Result	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

7.2 TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD TO CHANGE WORK MIDSTREAM BECAUSE OF *CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES*?

This question is asked to determine how you deal with change or adjust to modifications to a task after you had already agreed on outcomes. Use STAR to develop your response (Situation-Task-Action-Result)

- **SITUATION:** Where were you working, what was your role, what was the project or task you were a part of and what was the original expectation.
- **TASK:** How did you have to change what you were doing to adapt to the new request? Who else was involved in that process?
- **ACTION:** Include up to three things you did to overcome the challenge
- **RESULTS:** Up to three positive outcomes from the experience and/or learning opportunities.

Situation <i>(priorities)</i>	Position or Role _____ Employer _____ <i>(volunteering or school also counts!)</i> What Happened? _____
Task	Task or Goal _____
Action	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
Result	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

7.3 GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF A TIME YOU HELPED SOLVE A TROUBLESOME SITUATION.

This question is asked to determine your problem-solving and troubleshooting abilities in situations where there is no clear policy. Use STAR to develop your response (Situation-Task-Action-Result)

- **SITUATION:** Where were you working, what was your role, what was the scope of your responsibility in that role and how did it matter in this situation.
- **TASK:** Explain the circumstances or the nature of the problem and why it didn't fit into the established instructions, policies, or guidelines you had.
- **ACTION:** Include up to three things you did to overcome the challenge
- **RESULTS:** Up to three positive outcomes from the experience and/or learning opportunities.

Situation <i>(problem)</i>	Position or Role _____ Employer _____ <i>(volunteering or school also counts!)</i> What Happened? _____
Task	Task or Goal _____
Action	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
Result	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Example (Teamwork)

I was a technical writer for an international internet service provider, working with a team split between Canada and the USA. During a key project, a team member from the US didn't complete their tasks on time. My goal was to ensure the documentation was finished on schedule and at a high quality, despite the missing work from the US team member. I worked closely with my team in Canada, dividing the remaining tasks. We held regular check-ins to stay aligned and help each other out. I took on extra work to make up for the missing contributions and made sure we communicated clearly to avoid delays. We completed the project on time, delivering high-quality documentation. Despite the challenges, the team's cooperation and flexibility allowed us to meet our deadline successfully. This experience taught me the value of strong communication and teamwork, even when things don't go as planned.

Example (Changing Priorities)

As an event planner at a mid-sized facility, I had a full summer of events scheduled when the executive team decided to host an international conference at our venue. I had to find alternate venues for all my booked events and prevent any cancellations due to the schedule change. I contacted each client to explain the situation, offering new venues and additional services or discounts to keep them satisfied. I made sure to stay in touch and address any concerns they had. I successfully rescheduled all events without any cancellations. Clients were happy with the alternatives and appreciated the added services. The conference went smoothly, and I maintained positive relationships with all clients. This experience showed me how to adapt to unexpected changes and keep clients happy, even under pressure.

Example (Troublesome Situation)

Working as a production assistant at Build Stuff Industries, I was having difficulty keeping up with production quotas as a punch press operator. My role was to punch out sheet metal to specifications and to do that, we had a particular jig, or pre-cut template, that we used on my station. The problem was that another station used the same jig a little farther along the process, so they would "borrow" ours and not bring it back. During a performance assessment, my manager brought up my quota issue and I explained about the jig. My manager went to the engineering team and got a second one made up, which resolved the problem and meant I could keep working on time without delays.

PRO TIP: Create index cards for your interview answers with point form notes of what you want to say. This will make them portable so you can take them anywhere and practice while waiting in a lineup, or for an appointment.

If you feel like your stories are a little too long, try using your favorite AI to help you sum it up more concisely. Try posting your answer along with the following query:

Please revise this answer to be 200 words or less so it is easier to remember. Break out each part of the STAR response into its own line so I can clearly see that all of them have been addressed. Use a grade eight reading level.

7.4 WHAT IF THEY ASK ABOUT SOMETHING I'VE NEVER EXPERIENCED?

In that case, be honest that you don't have experience with that situation and use the AR part of STAR (Action – Result) to explain what you WOULD do and how you hope the outcomes would work out.

No Experience?	“I have not been in that situation, however what I would do is....”
Action	<div>1. _____</div> <div>2. _____</div> <div>3. _____</div>
Result	<div>1. _____</div> <div>2. _____</div> <div>3. _____</div>

7.5 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
5. 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.

8 RESPONDING TO SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

“What WOULD YOU do if . . .”

or

“How WOULD YOU handle . . .”

Employers ask Situational Interview questions to assess how a person would deal with a situation. They are often questions about ethics, fairness, or honesty in difficult situations. To answer a situational interview question, first ask yourself:

Have you experienced the situation they are asking about?

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

- **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.



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.

8.1 SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – EXAMPLES

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?



9 STRANGE OR IRRELEVANT QUESTIONS

Please note this is different than illegal questions or questions that could be used to discriminate against a client.

Sometimes interviewers will throw you a curveball and ask you a question that doesn't seem to have anything to do with the job or why you applied. These are usually asked to "break the pattern" and see how you are at thinking on your feet.

There are a lot of ways this can be handled, some people question the whole thing and that might work for them. (i.e. why are you asking that?)

Most of the time, we encourage people to just think about an honest answer and be a little creative. This list is not even remotely inclusive of everything that falls under this category, but may give you some ideas:

- If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be and why?
- If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be and why?
- If peace was a food, what would it be and why?
- What superpower would you like to have and why?
- If you could have a dinner party with anyone, who would it be and why?
- Sell me this pen / mug / book....
- What's the last book topic you read?
- Describe yourself in one word.
- How do you define success?
- Do you consider yourself lucky?
- Why are you memorable?

10 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.

For each interview prepare 6-10 questions and write them in your notebook before the interview. As the interview progresses, a number of your questions will be answered. 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. You may add questions based on how the conversation goes.

Listed below is a sampling of questions you could ask an employer.

10.1 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?
- What did you like or dislike about how the previous person approached the role?
- Is this a new role or replacing an existing role in the organization?
- Where do you see your company in five years?

10.2 QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZATION'S GOALS AND VISION:

- 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?

10.3 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- What is the best part of working here?
- What kind of team-building activities do you organize?
- What kind of personality types tend to do well here?
- What does work-life balance mean to you?
- How do you acknowledge employee success?
- What is the dress code here? (*especially post covid / hybrid work!*)
- What are the policies for remote working?

10.4 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?

“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>

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

Even if they answered ALL of your questions, you should STILL be asking about next steps in the process!

11 REFERENCES

At the end of the interview, the employer may ask for professional or personal references. The usual standard is to provide your previous manager. However, there may be reasons that is not practical or possible:

1. They left or transferred or retired, or passed away
2. It didn’t end well and they may not be the best person to talk about you
3. The organization has a no-reference policy (i.e. call HR)

Other acceptable options include:

- A. manager from a different department who had a good relationship with you
- B. colleague, coworker, or client, if they are willing
- C. leadership from another part of your life (e.g. volunteering)

For a more in depth explanation of references, what they may ask, and who makes a good reference, please refer to our **Making Smart References Choices** guidebook.

12 PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW AND FOLLOWING UP

The interview's coming! It's Practically HERE!! (Best heard in the Grinch's voice.)

12.1 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 *OUT LOUD*
- Know what your salary expectations are: annually, monthly, biweekly, hourly
- Know the exact location and time of the interview
- Do a practice run to the location (parking, bus, bike locks)
- Get change for parking, a notebook, thank you cards, and stamps
 - If it's virtual make sure your software works
- Get your interview clothing ready and laid out
- Send each reference a copy of your resume and cover letter along with information about the job you are applying for after the interview
- Have your folder prepared and ready to go
 - See What to Bring list
- **Continue your job search** – until you have an offer, you're not done!!



If you can, this is helpful:

- Call to get the names of the people that will be interviewing you
- Research the individuals on LinkedIn and or Google

12.2 WHAT TO BRING

Have your Folder/Portfolio ready to go with the following items:

References	Copies of your resume
Samples of your work	Letters of recommendation
Transcripts, certificates, diplomas	Typing test results
References	Drivers Abstract
Criminal Record Check, Child Abuse Registry Check <i>if needed</i>	
<i>Have your questions for the interviewer ready in your notebook</i>	



12.2.1 Other essentials to bring:

Pen	Stamps
Breath mints, bottled water	Tissues
Thank you cards	Identification
Change for parking	

12.3 THE DAY BEFORE

- Practice, practice, practice your answers to interview questions
- Prepare your clothes and shoes (see *What Do I Wear?*)
- 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 notebook
- List 6-10 questions to ask the interviewer in your notebook (see *Do You Have Any Questions?*)
- Get a good night's sleep



The Dress for the Job You Want
Also available in Spider-Man.

Don't DRL-MAJIK

12.4 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



We know it can be a LOT to remember so hopefully, these checklists will help put your mind at ease. And of course, you ARE practicing every day so you know your stories.

Just relax into the experience and remember you're there to learn too.

13 WHAT TO WEAR

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

Management Academic Retail Labour



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 MEN IN OTHER OCCUPATIONS:

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

FOR ALL WOMEN:

- Wear a suit, or suit jacket and dress pants in coordinated colours
- Ensure nails are manicured and short with neutral coloured (or no) 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 with skirts — even in the summer
- Use deodorant; no perfume

Academic Office Management Retail



VERY IMPORTANT: If you are applying for retail fashion (men's or women's), make sure you are up to date on the fashion trends that apply to that store. Dress to match up to their "look" so they know you are aware of their style.

14 BODY LANGUAGE AND VOICE TONE

Some basic tips on body language and voice tone:

- Make sure you sit up straight
 - (if you slouch, you crush your diaphragm and voicebox)
- Avoid crossing your arms
- Make eye contact with the interviewer
 - Every couple of sentences is good (no need to stare)
 - Looking at the hairline or forehead is close enough
- Keep your hands away from your mouth
 - (it will muffle your voice and make you hard to understand)
- Don't tap your feet / bounce your leg
- Or click your pen, play with your hair etc.
 - If you are a fidgeter, try putting your hands flat on the table

People Respond To:

55 % body language

38 % tone of voice

7 % words

100 % SUCCESS

Albert Mehrabian,
*Professor Emeritus
of Psychology: UCLA*

You're probably going to be a little nervous, so:

- Slow down a little when you talk
- Speak a little louder than you normally would

PRO TIP: In Toastmasters, to get people to slow down enough to be understood, sometimes coaches will suggest making sure to pronounce all the consonants – hard sounds like T and K and P – in your words very clearly. This will slow you down a little bit but not enough to be obvious.

Services like:

- Google Interview Warmup: <https://grow.google/certificates/interview-warmup/>
- LinkedIn Interview Warmup: <https://www.linkedin.com/interview-prep>

... will allow you to record answers and get some basic feedback on how you're doing.

15 WRAPPING UP THE INTERVIEW

Remember all interviews are good training, even if you think you didn't do well. It's an opportunity to learn what you can do better, to decide if the company is right for you, and practice your professional communication skills.

Therefore, always – ALWAYS – take a moment to express your gratitude for the experience. Even if you don't even want the job. Winnipeg is a very large small town and you don't know if they may know someone who CAN help you. Make sure you leave a good first impression.

As you and the interviewer are wrapping up the session:

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 documents (if they ask)
3. Ask: When can I call to get the results of this interview? OR What are the next steps in the process?
4. Ask for their business card OR Ask the receptionist for the interviewer(s), contact information and verify the spelling of the interviewer's name.
 - a. 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).

PRO TIP: 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.

IMPORTANT: It is perfectly acceptable to send an email or call them to thank them. However, a thank you card is a permanent, tangible reminder of your interaction and it will not get deleted like electronic communications do.

- Ask if you can connect to the people interviewing you on LinkedIn if you have an account there to stay in touch.

If they have given you a follow up date, add a couple of business days before you respond so that they have time to deal with it if they're running a little behind.

16 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

16.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS I DID WELL ON:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

16.2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS I NEED TO IMPROVE ANSWERS FOR:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

17 ILLEGAL AND LEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Here are some areas to watch out for, what can be asked legally (and when and why if there are specific circumstances that apply) and what can't.

A lot of these questions end up in the realm of “small talk” so sometimes people aren't even aware they're crossing a line. Remember, most people interviewing you may not be seasoned Human Resources professionals. Be kind, redirect, and try asking one of the legal questions to determine what their concern is.

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 languages do you read/speak/write fluently? (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? (Not acceptable unless minimum standards are essential to the safe performance of the job). 	<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? – Do you need an accommodation to perform the job? (ONLY asked after a job offer has been made). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are you able to perform the essential functions of this 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 required to undergo a medical exam. <i>(Exam results must be kept strictly confidential, except to inform supervisors about necessary job accommodations, based on exam results).</i>
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 related to the function of the job)
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?" of all applicants).

18 AND THAT'S IT – YOU MADE IT!

Congratulations on successfully preparing for your interview.

In a one day workshop (or a single booklet) we can't possibly cover every single thing that could come up. So if you feel like you need some more directed help with refining your answers or something that you didn't understand, please call the office at 204-989-6503 to schedule an appointment.

Now go forth and be your amazing self – and don't forget to tell us all the details when you get the awesome new job!

