

Interview Guide

Top Interview Tips

Preparing for the Interview

- Reflect on your personal interests, skills, qualifications and goals; this will enhance your ability to communicate how and why you would be a good fit for the position
- Do your research on the organization and the position so that you can better respond to questions asked of you in the interview and so that you can clarify anything that you do not understand
- Practice a variety of questions prior to the interview either on your own, with a friend or online; register for InterviewTalks or book a mock interview at the Student Employment and Career Centre (SECC)
- Reconnect with your references to update them on the position you are interviewing for; ensure they each have a copy of your resume
- Dress one step above the appropriate attire for the job; pay attention to personal grooming

What to Take to an Interview

- Extra copies of your resume; a list of your references; letters of recommendation (if you have them); questions that you have prepared to ask at the interview; a business folder including paper and a pen

During the Interview

- Take a deep breath to focus and provide clear, concise answers; remember the interviewer was in your position at one point as well!
- Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat a question or ask if you can come back to a question if you need additional time to prepare your answer
- If you are asked about your weaknesses, turn them into a potential strength or explain how you have learned to compensate for the weakness; think of a weakness as a challenge to overcome by identifying how you are specifically working on it

After the Interview

- Reflect on how you felt the interview went and identify areas where you feel you could improve
- Send a brief thank you note or email indicating your interest in the position; if after reflecting on your interview, you wanted to clarify any responses, you may do so briefly in this note or email
- Consider writing down the questions that the interviewer asked so that you can practice your answers to them in the future

Social Media and Your Job Search

- Review all of your social media accounts and privacy settings
- Consider creating a LinkedIn profile which allows you to upload your resume content and connect with professionals locally and around the world
- Using Social Media to network is a great way to conduct career information interviews where you will learn more about organizations and/or potential career opportunities
- For tips on how to build a professional student LinkedIn profile, check out [Leverage LinkedIn students.usask.ca/articles/linkedin.php](https://students.usask.ca/articles/linkedin.php)

Interviewing 101

The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are right for the job and whether the job is right for you; think of the interview as a conversation between you and the employer where you are both learning about each other. Most interviews are either held one-on-one or in a panel setting with multiple interviewers.

Interview Types:

- **Basic/Traditional** – typically include open-ended questions designed to get to know you better
- **Behavioural Based** – builds upon the premise that future performance is best predicted by past behaviour; questions focus on real-life experiences and actions

One technique for formulating strong answers to behavioural questions is the **STAR** technique.

SITUATION | Provide a brief overview of the situation

TASK | Outline the specific task or responsibility that you were asked to accomplish

ACTION | Explain the action or activities you took and why

RESULT | Describe the positive result or outcome of your actions; if you are asked about a negative situation, indicate what you learned and/or how you would act differently

- **Case Style** – allows interviewers to see how you respond to situations that may arise, especially those that require problem solving; can be done individually or in a group setting; critical thinking, creativity and presentation are the most important skills to showcase
- **Assessment/Testing** – this can be administered prior, during or following an interview; they can be used as an assessment tool or to complement your interview
- **Second and Subsequent Interviews** – once you get to the second interview you are one step closer to receiving the job offer; the second interview can be more intense as you may meet with more people involved in the hiring decision; they may be longer and you may need to travel
- **Telephone/Teleconference** – one job seeker and one or more interviewers over the phone; these can be used as screening tools to narrow down a pool of applicants; the challenge is to gain rapport with the interviewer when you cannot see their non-verbal reactions and cues nor can they see your enthusiasm or appearance; speaking confidently and clearly is of utmost importance
- **Presentation** – job seeker is asked to prepare a presentation (usually in advance) which is then presented
- **Reception/Dining** – one or more job seekers and one or more interviewers; conducted over a meal or beverages
- **Group** – groups of candidates are placed together during the interview process and are observed with regards to their ability to network, role play and stand out from other applicants
- **Role Play** – the job seeker participates in a fictional situation which replicates a scenario that might occur in the position sought
- **Video Conference (Skype)** – one job seeker and one or more interviewers with interview via camera and monitor; be sure to check your webcam and microphone prior to your interview and ensure that the space you are in is free of distractions

Interview Structure:

Introduction

- You'll want to establish a positive rapport with the interviewers within the first few minutes; be friendly, smile, make eye contact and make sure you have a firm handshake
- Interviews often begin with a few minutes of small talk to help break the ice
- Remember the PAWS acronym when answering the "Tell me about yourself" question
P – Personal **A** – Academics **W** – Work experience **S** – Skills

Overview

- Interviewers will often provide some structure for the interview process; show your interest by listening attentively

Questions

- The length of this section of the interview can vary quite a bit and may include a variety of different types of questions to assess your competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities) and behaviours or attitude towards the position

Closing

- Interviewers will typically explain next steps in the hiring process and ask you if you have any questions for them; have some prepared

Prepare and Polish:

- Keep in mind this is a competition where the company is potentially interviewing many top candidates, so you want to ensure you present yourself in a way that makes you stand out positively
- Knowing how you will answer questions will help you to feel and appear more confident
- Come prepared with questions that you will ask at the interview to help you better understand the position and to show the interviewer(s) that you are interested and knowledgeable about their organization
- Develop a strategy to deal with inappropriate questions such as those that pertain to your nationality, age, religious affiliation, political views, gender, etc. Your options are:
 - Answer the question by addressing what you believe are the underlying concerns
 - Ask for clarification on how the information being asked relates to the position
 - Answer the question, but remember that you are providing information that is not relevant and may cost you the position if you provide what is deemed to be an incorrect answer
 - Refuse to answer the question; this may harm your chances of getting the position
- Reconnect with your references to update them on the status of the position for which you are interviewing
- Polishing up your communication skills is essential to effectively showcasing your skills and abilities during the interview; using industry-specific language is helpful

Checklist



Preparing for the Interview

- Can you comfortably articulate your values, knowledge, skills, abilities and interests as they relate to the position and company you are interviewing with?
- Did you perform an adequate amount of research on the prospective employer?
- Have you prepared knowledgeable and insightful questions to ask at the interview?
- Did you familiarize yourself with the various interview formats?
- In order to prepare yourself for a behavioural based interview, did you familiarize yourself with the STAR technique?
- Have you reviewed possible questions interviewers might ask and prepare responses to them?
- Do you know what strategy you will use to approach inappropriate questions?
- Is the outfit you've chosen to wear clean and well pressed? Did you shine your shoes?

During the Interview

- Did you arrive at least 10-15 minutes early for your interview?
- Were you friendly and courteous, even from the moment you arrived?
- Did you address the employer by their formal name (i.e. Mr. Job or Ms. Employer)?
- Did you answer the employer's questions using the STAR format when appropriate?
- Did you reference the job posting or the organization as it relates to your background, skills, values, knowledge or abilities?
- Did you sit up straight and speak clearly?
- Did you shake the employer's hand with a firm grip while making eye contact?

Following the Interview

- Did you follow up with the employer to send a thank you note or email within 48 hours?
- Did you contact the interviewer directly to check on the status of the position within seven days?

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