Congratulations, you got the interview! This is your chance to let your passion shine! It's an opportunity for the employer to learn more about you, your related skills, strengths and experiences, and whether you are a fit for them. This guide will help you learn more about interviews and whether they are a good fit for you.

Our companion guide, *Interview Techniques*, includes information about the interview purpose and process, types of interview formats, research and preparation, types of questions, preparing your responses, and follow ups.
Prepare and practice

At this stage, your interviewers are curious. They know you have the experience and skills they’re looking for – they’ve checked you out online, seen your resumé, CV, etc. Their questions now are – Will you fit with their culture? Will you excel at the job? Are you passionate about their organization and where the industry is headed?

The key is to be prepared! Here are some things to keep in mind:

What kind of interview will it be?

When they contact you, ask what type of interview (see below) they will be conducting.

Request a list of the interviewers’ names and positions. Read about them online. This information will be useful during your interview and will help to answer the question – would you like to work for them?

Do your research

- **Know yourself**, your education, your interests, and your experiences and how they give you what it takes to do the job well. Be able to articulate the skills you have and how you developed them. Let them know that you have what they’re looking for!
- **Know the position** and be able to relate your skills to the responsibilities of that position. Use concrete examples. If there is no salary listed in the posting, research the salary range for that kind of position.
- **Know the employer** – What do they do and stand for? Where are they going? How are they growing? Who are their competitors? What are their values? What are their core accomplishments? Check them out on social media and on their website. Talk to people who work in the field – they probably know the company. Get creative!
- **Research the labor market**

Anticipate their questions

- Assemble a list of potential questions and prepare answers (see below for some sample questions).
• Describe your experience(s) and use relevant examples ensuring that you are highlighting the key skills and qualities that are being asked for in the question asked. These examples can come from your volunteer, internship, extracurricular, academic and/or paid experiences. Highlight results wherever possible and show evidence that you have researched the position, organization and industry.
• Organize your responses in a succinct manner.
• Connect your skills and experiences to the needs of the position and the employer.
• Prepare a list of questions to ask them.
• Practice with a friend or family member or book a practice interview at Career Exploration & Education!

*Use the STAR method*

For some questions, including behavioral questions, you can use the STAR method to organize your answers and to create a detailed picture of your skills and experiences.

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result. Here’s an example:

**Question:**

“Tell me about a time when you were working on a team and encountered a challenge. How did you respond? What were the results?”

**Answer:**

• **Situation** – “I was working as a research assistant at the Political Science Department at Queen’s University as part of three-person team. We ran into a problem on what method to use to analyze the data we had gathered.”

• **Task** – “We were analyzing election results in electoral districts of Canada derived from demographic variants and other contemporary political topics. We needed to come to a consensus on how to analyze the data in order for the project to be completed.”

• **Action** – “I and the team acknowledged that we had different ideas on how to analyze the data. We met and each one of us presented our ideas and reasoning behind them. We decided individually to consider the various methods and their merits and to meet in a few days. We met again and discussed openly and respectfully the various methods highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each. Over two meetings, we brainstormed how to blend the valuable parts of each method and negotiated a new analysis strategy which was a combination of the methods proposed.”

• **Result** – “Our methods prevented delays in the project’s completion, maintained a collegial working relationship with team members and arrived at a method of analysis that was superior to ones proposed.”
Prepare the materials you will bring

Make sure you bring the following to the interview:

- Extra copies of your resumé or CV and cover letter
- The job posting
- List of references
- Notepad and pen

Calling all references!

When the employer is seriously considering you as a candidate, they will request references. Make sure you choose people who can talk about the skills and qualifications you have that enable you to do the job are interviewing for.

- Choose three or four people from paid or volunteer positions (choose people who have supervised you and possibly a colleague).
- You may also want to include one or two academic references (professors, T.A.s). If you’ve worked on group projects, include a student you’ve worked with.
- Ask them for permission to use their name.
- Before every interview, send them a reminder along with your application (resumé and cover letter) and the job posting (if you have one).

Include the following information on your reference list:

- Name
- Job title
- Working relationship to you
- Company/organization
- Email address
- Phone number

If you have an academic interview, you will need:

- References that include four or five faculty members, including your supervisor. Keep your referees updated on where you are applying. Hiring committees expect reference letters and will often contact referees directly.
Types of interviews

Whether you are looking for a part-time position, a summer job, or a full-time position, you will probably experience a variety of different types of interviews. Interviews vary, depending on the industry, the profession and the size of the organization. The interview process may also involve more than one type of interview.

Check with people working in your field to find out what kinds of interviews to expect, and when you’re invited for an interview, ask what format will be used and who will be conducting the interview so that you can be prepared.

Academic interviews

Academic interviews may be conducted in the ways outlined below, but they also have some unique features. Read our full section on the topic for details.

Panel, board, and committee interviews

Interviews may be conducted by a panel of three or more people.

The panel may consist of a supervisor of the department, the person you would report to, potential co-workers, supervisors of other departments, and a representative from the human resources department.

Multiple rounds interviews

The interview process often involves more than one interview.

1st interview – Interviewers are assessing whether you fit the position requirements by looking at your skills, experiences and personality.

2nd interview – Interviewers focus on making a decision between final candidates, which may involve any of the following:

- A more detailed assessment of specific skills required for the position.
- A tour of the company if you have not already had one, and introductions to other co-workers and senior staff.
• An interview may continue over lunch or dinner, in which situations you are still being assessed.

**Telephone interviews**

Telephone interviews are used to narrow down the number of applicants who will be invited for an in-person interview, or if the employer is located in another city. Telephone interviews may be pre-arranged, or they could call without arranging a time. There may also be more than one interviewer. Be in a quiet space, have a pen and paper available, and your resumé or CV and the job posting. Provide answers that are short and to the point, and “put a smile in your voice.”

**Video conferencing**

Video conferencing is usually done if the interviewer and interviewee are in different cities or locations. Make sure your equipment is charged and you have your resumé or CV in front of you. Wear clothes appropriate for your industry, smile and look straight at the camera.

**Case interviews**

Case interviews are typically used by management consulting firms. The interviewer will describe a business issue from the perspective of a client and will ask how you, as the consultant, would solve the client’s problem. The focus here is on your problem-solving and analytical skills rather than providing a predetermined right answer. Listen carefully, ask questions to clarify the problem, and draw out the critical aspects of the issue before making your recommendations.

**Other interview components**

Interviews can also feature other components that you may need to prepare for:

• **Pre-employment tests** are often included in the screening process, sometimes unannounced. Do your best to find out if there will be a test and what it will focus on so you can prepare. Some examples may include assessment of language proficiency, writing, math, computer or technical competency and/or administrative skills.
• **Presentations** — you may be required to prepare and deliver a presentation as part of the interview. Before the interview, gather information about the topic of the presentation, length, audience, and availability of audio-visual resources. Consider what, if any materials might be necessary to bring to your interview.

**Sample questions**

**Their Questions**

Whether you are interviewing for an academic or non-academic position, check with professionals who work in the field to find out the kinds of interview questions to expect! Interviews often include a mix of questions. Check out [Glassdoor](https://www.glassdoor.com) for more examples.

**Open-ended questions** – cannot be answered by *yes* or *no*.

- Tell me about yourself.
- What previous experience has prepared you for the responsibilities of this position?
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Describe a previous experience that you feel is most relevant to this position.
- What are your short-term career goals? Where do you see your career in five years?
- Why are you interested in this industry? Organization?
- What are your strengths? Describe a weakness that you have and what are you doing to improve it.
- What are your salary expectations?

**Behavioural questions** – focus on asking for specific examples of where you have demonstrated a particular skill, or how you have handled a particular situation in the past. The rationale behind such questions is that your past behaviour is a good indicator of how you will respond to the demands of the position.

- Describe a team project you have undertaken. What was your role? What did you learn?
- Give an example of a time when you demonstrated creative problem solving.
- Give an example where you demonstrated leadership qualities.
- Describe a situation where you disagreed with a supervisor. How was it resolved?
- Think of a time you faced a challenge. How did you react? What were the results?
- Discuss a major project you undertook. What were the challenges you encountered. How did you overcome them?
Situational questions – are hypothetical, problematic scenarios that require solutions. When answering these types of questions, it is important to demonstrate your critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills.

- You have been working on a project for over a month and are about to finish writing the report. Suddenly you realize some very important facts that should be included in this project have been overlooked. What would you do in this situation?
- You are working on a group project with your colleagues. While the deadline is getting closer, the group still cannot agree on how the project should be completed and one of the members is simply not doing his/her share. What would you do in this situation?
- You have heard that one of your colleagues has complained to your manager because they are dissatisfied with your work. What would you do in this situation?
- If our organization were to change its focus in terms of target client market, what target market would you suggest?

Field-specific knowledge/technical questions – are questions related to your subject matter expertise and your academic area of study. They may be technical, theoretical or situational in nature.

- Discuss three natural resources issues that Canada is currently facing and discuss their policy implications.
- In your opinion, how will Bill 125 impact the manufacturing industry?

Case interviews – are typically used by management consulting firms whereby the interviewer describes a business problem from the perspective of a client and asks how you, as the consultant, would solve the client’s problem.

- Estimate the market for basketballs in New Zealand.
- You are consulting for a small manufacturer of motorcycles. They handcraft their motorcycles and are well reputed for having some of the best quality on the market. A large multinational competitor has announced that it will begin selling high-end motorcycles incorporating the newest engine technology. What should your client do?

Your Questions

You want to make sure this organization and position is a good fit for you! You also want to show your interest in the organization. Usually the employer will give you time at the end of the interview to ask questions.

- Describe your ideal candidate for this position. What qualities would they have?
• What are your goals for the department and position?
• What are your expectations in the first three months, six months, or a year?
• Can you tell me about how will my work be evaluated?
• Describe a typical day for someone working in this position.
• What do you like most about working here?
• Are there opportunities for continued learning and growth?
• Can you please describe the opportunities for further training and continuing education.
• Would you be able to tell me which projects I would be involved in?
• Can you share with me the next steps in the process? When will you make a hiring decision?

At the interview

Non-academic and academic interviews have similarities and differences. The following can be applied to both. Find out more about the distinctive features of academic interviews.

Timing is everything

Give yourself extra time to get to the interview. Get specific directions or visit in advance to familiarize yourself with the location. Don’t arrive late and don’t arrive too early. Do not bring coffee or carry it in with you! The receptionist at the front has been notified that you will be arriving and will monitor your conduct. They may be approached for feedback.

Dress appropriately

Dress codes vary by industry and organization, but you’ll want to look professional. Dress for the position you have applied to. Different jobs have different norms for dress.

Turn off your devices

You don’t want to cause distractions. Do not use devices while you wait.

Make regular eye contact

Make eye contact, smile and speak clearly. For video conferences, look directly into the camera to make it appear to the employer that you are making direct eye contact.

Show them that you’re a fit

By this point, you are prepared. You’ve done your research about the organization and its objectives and you know how your education, interests and experiences enable you to do the job well. Be prepared to make those connections in the interview.
Seek clarification

If you do not understand a question, request clarification or ask the interviewer to repeat the question.

Ask questions

At the end of the interview ask questions. It shows your interest level, curiosity, and that you’re familiar with the organization. Ensure you find out about the next steps in the interview process, i.e., will there be second round interviews? When do they expect to reach a decision, i.e. within 24 or 48 hours, a week?

Evaluate the employer

Accepting a job offer is a big decision. Throughout the interview, you will be learning as much about the employer as they will be learning about you. Consider the questions – can I see myself working for these individuals? Does this organization and its direction match my interests and values? Will I be able to achieve my career goals by working for this organization?

Provide references

Be prepared to provide references if requested.

Thank them

As you close your conversation, thank the interviewer(s) for their time.

Follow up

Following up with the employer demonstrates your interest in the position and gives you a chance to reiterate some of your key qualities.

Send a follow-up email

Whether you aced the interview or not, always send a follow-up email to each interviewer within 24 hours. Thank them and reiterate your interest along with two or three qualities that make you a good fit.
Ask for feedback

If you are not selected for the position, ask for feedback from the interviewer(s) so you can improve your interview skills and or evaluate any gaps in your qualifications.

Review your performance

Assess your performance by reviewing what went well and areas where you can improve. This will help you develop your interview and presentation skills for future meetings with employers.

Record questions asked

Create an inventory of the types of questions you were asked and take note of your responses. Is there any way you can improve? Did you encounter questions you did not anticipate? Add these to your list for further preparation and practice.
a scholarly diatribe on how virtue should be measured. The whole point here (if such a
claim can be made in an admittedly pointless paragraph) is that this is dummy copy.
Real bullets explode with destructive intensity. Such is not the case with dummy bullets.
In fact, they don't explode at all. Duds. Dull thuds. Dudley do-wrongs. And do-wrongs
don't make a right. Why on earth are you still reading this? Haven't you realized it's just
dummy copy? How many times must you be reminded that it's really not meant to be
read? You're only wasting precious time. But be that as it may, you've got to throw in a
short paragraph from time to time. Here's a short paragraph.
Strategy Template

Subtitle 1
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Subtitle 2
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Subtitle 4
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Table Template

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Practice Makes Progress template

Subtitle

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Resources Sourced Template

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Numbered List Template

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Bulleted List Template

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