

# PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

## What is an Interview?

- Formal, in-depth conversation conducted to evaluate the applicant's acceptability for a position
- Most widely used selection technique
  - Allows a personal impression
  - Opportunity to sell a job to a candidate
  - Opportunity to answer candidate's questions
  - Effective public relations tool
  - Popular due to flexibility and creates two-way exchange

## Types of Interviews:

- Interviews may be conducted one-to-one, panel, or group interview
- *Unstructured interviews*
  - Few if any planned questions
  - Lacks the reliability of a structured interview
- *Structured interviews*
  - Pre-determined set of questions
  - May improve reliability and validity over traditional unstructured interviews

## Types of Interview Questions:

- *Behavioural Description Interviews*
  - Based on principle that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour
- *Situational Interviews*
  - Focus on situations likely to arise on the job
  - Applicants asked what they would do
- *Open-ended*
  - Questions that do not have a specific direction and cannot be answered by a "yes" or "no"

## Stages of an Interview:

- *Interview Preparation*
  - Questions are created based on the job posting and how to evaluate success in the position
- *Creation of Rapport*
  - Interviewer and candidate establish a rapport with each other – housekeeping items, meeting each member of the panel, highlighting the selection process, etc.
- *Information Exchange*
  - Heart of the interview – employer will ask the candidate questions and the candidate will respond
- *Drawing the Session to a Close*
  - The employer will indicate the next steps and any follow-up the candidate is required after the interview (e.g. references).
- *Evaluation*
  - The employer will evaluate all candidates to determine which individual will continue through the next steps of the selection process.

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## Understanding the Employer:

It is very important to research the employer to get an understanding of them. At the very least, try and answer these questions:

1. What does this organization/company do?
2. What are they all about?
3. What makes them different than their competition?

The best way to find these answers are using the Internet and visiting the organization/company's website. The 'About Us' section is a very good start and it should only take 15-20 minutes to answer these questions. Very important to understand the organization/company's mission, vision, and values.

It would be very beneficial to review any documents, which could include:

- Strategic Plan
- Report to the Community
- Road Map to the Future

Another great option to find out about an employer is reviewing their social media platforms (for example, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). You will be able to also see how staff members carry themselves around the office and what the norms and culture are like (e.g., dress code).

## Studying the Job Posting/Description

Whenever you apply to a job, it is in your best practice to ensure you save a copy of the job posting or description. This is because it will be a very useful tool in preparing for your interview and formulating answers to questions, as well as what key skills to focus on.

Go through the posting and picture yourself doing the job and ask yourself these questions:

1. What would the challenges be?
2. What would you bring to the role?
3. What is their need and how do you meet it?

From there, you want to review the skills and qualifications and determine examples of times you have done the same tasks/duties or a transferrable experience to really showcase you fit the position.

*Hint: try and pretend the job posting is a rubric and to get an 'A' grade (or interview) you need to figure out how your experiences (school, work, volunteering, etc.) fit/match the position.*

## Common Interview Questions:

1. Why did you leave your last job? (Or why are you thinking about leaving your current job?)
2. What interests you about this opening? (Or why do you want to work for us?)
3. Tell me about your experience at \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in past job.)
4. Tell me about your strengths.
5. What experience do you have doing \_\_\_\_\_? (Fill in each of the major responsibilities of the job.)

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6. Tell me about a time when... (Fill in with situations relevant to the position. For instance: Tell me about when you had to take initiative ... you had to deal with a difficult customer ... you had to respond to a crisis ... you had to give difficult feedback to an employee ... ).
7. Describe how your education, training and/or experience has prepared you for this position?
8. What are some characteristics of a good team member? Describe how you have applied these in your employment and/or educational experiences?
9. Tell me about a challenge or conflict you have faced at work and/ or school and how you dealt with it?
10. Given an example of when you had to work with little or no supervision and what did you need to function effectively in this type of environment?
11. Describe a situation where you inspired others to meet a common goal?
12. How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly within this new team environment?
13. What would be the most challenging role in this position for you and how would you over-come this?
14. Why should we hire you for this position?

## **You might be asked (bonus points if you practice these too):**

1. What things are most important to you in a new position?
2. How does this position fit in with the career path you're taking?
3. How would the people around you describe you?
4. What has your biggest achievement been at \_\_\_? What results there that you produced are you most proud of?
5. What were your major goals last year? How did you settle on those? To what extent did you meet them?
6. If I spoke with your previous boss, what areas would they say you should work on improving in?
7. What are the first five things you would do if you got this position?

## **SAMPLE QUESTION: *Tell me about yourself?***

- **Present:** Talk about your current role, the scope and showcase an accomplishment (I created X and it resulted in Y)

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- **Past:** Tell the interview panel how you got to your current role and mention experience that is relevant to the role you're interviewing for
- **Future:** Discuss your goals and how they fit into this role – basically why you're interested in this role

*Remember...*

- **Do not** rehash your resume – be succinct
- **Be** professional – focus on your professional experiences – they are not asking about your hobbies
- **They** are asking the question to get a better idea on who you are. What are your goals and priorities
- **Your** answer can shed light on your confidence and how you would deal with colleagues, clients, patients, etc.

## **SAMPLE QUESTION: *What are your strengths?***

1. One of my strengths are [insert the strength here]– remember to ensure it matches the job posting. This is why it is important to do your “homework”.
2. Now give them an example of when you performed that skill well and cover:
  - What was the problem
  - 2-3 ways you solved it
  - Discuss the outcome
3. Tell them how you will do this on the job (e.g., This is what you can expect from me)

## **Typical Interviewee Errors**

- May be trying to cover job-related weaknesses or nervousness
- Examples include:
  - Playing games (e.g., acting nonchalant)
  - Talking too much
  - Boasting
  - Not listening
  - Being unprepared

## **Questions to Ask in an Interview**

Here are some examples of good questions to ask. (You might not have time for all of these, so pick the ones you *genuinely* want to hear the answer to, not just the ones you think will sound good.)

1. What are the biggest challenges the person in this position will face?
2. Can you describe a typical day or week in the position?
3. What would a successful first year in the position look like?

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4. How will the success of the person in this position be measured?
5. How would you describe the culture here?
6. How would you describe your management style?
7. Thinking to the person who you've seen do this job best, what made their performance so outstanding?
8. Are there any reservations you have about my fit for the position that I could address? *(This is a great way to give yourself the chance to tackle any doubts they might have about you—as well as for you to consider whether those doubts might be reasonable and point to a bad fit.)*
9. When do you expect to make a hiring decision?

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT STUDENT CAREER SERVICES (SCS)**  
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