



The Student Life Centre's Interview Preparation Guide

St. James Rm 119 · www.brescia.uwo.ca/campus_life/student-life/index.html

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Prepare

The key to having a successful interview is to PREPARE. There are many things that fall into this category, from knowing the type of interview you are having, what to wear and questions to ask the employer.

No matter what type of interview you are having your first step should be to REFRESH and learn more about the company. You can do this by visiting the company website and looking at their goals, values and mission statement. You can also look at the skills, responsibilities and experiences in the job posting. This information will help you when you are practicing answers to questions.

Types of Interviews & How to Prepare

Knowing the type of interview you are having will help you better prepare for the interview and feel more confident. Each type of interview has pros and cons for the interviewee and interviewer.

Traditional Face-to-Face Interview

This type of interview is the most common and can include one or two interviewers to ten or more depending on the position. It is important in these types of interviews to be aware of your body language, eye contact, and communication to each party involved.

Tips:

- You will likely be asked a variety of interview questions, so be familiar with different types of questions. This will ensure that you can adjust your answers appropriately.
- It is important to be thoroughly prepared – know the job and know yourself.
- Make eye contact with the person asking the questions, but also to give each interviewer your attention, regardless of whether or not they ask any questions; treat them all with equal importance.
- Be aware of your body language
 - Sit straight up in the chair, no slouching
 - Don't bounce knees, twiddle fingers, swirl hair etc.
 - Make eye contact
- Use clear communication
 - Avoid filler words, i.e. Umm's, ahh's, like's, etc.
 - Take a breath or pause before you answer the question to give yourself a moment to formulate your answer in your head
 - You can ask the interviewer "Could you please repeat the question?" if you need a moment to think or did not hear the question clearly

Telephone Interview

Telephone interviews are common for screening interviews and long-distance interviews. Telephone interviews bring an added challenge as you cannot see the body language of the interviewer and they cannot see yours. Your communication and clarity become even more important in this setting.

Tips:

- Sit at a desk or table with no distractions and plan for the call. Be ready at least 10 minutes in advance.
- Wear Interview clothes even though you are at home (makes you feel more professional and ready)
- Use a landline when possible to ensure a clear connection
- Have your resume, cover letter, and application ready in front of you. Also, prepare any questions or speaking points but DON'T read your answers word for word, it is easy to detect and does not sound natural
- Be careful to not shuffle papers, it is distracting to the interviewer and makes you seem unprepared. Have paper, a pen, and your documents and the telephone all set up before the interview
- You can make notes or questions you have for the interviewer throughout the interview
- Remember to communicate clearly, but talking at your normal talking speed and answering questions in short sentences to avoid rambling paragraphs.
- Give the interviewer your undivided attention; be professional, courteous, and concise
- Know that there will be silent moments between you and the interviewer and that is a normal part of telephone interviews
- You can check in with the interviewer to show your interest i.e. 'would you like me to further expand on that?'
- Smile during the interview. It shows in your voice.
- Don't forget to ask the interviewer your prepared questions at the end of the interview and thank them for the interview opportunity

Skype Interview

Skype interviews have become more common in recent years and are a hybrid between the traditional face-to-face interview and telephone interviews. You will use the tips from both the traditional and telephone interview types but will also want to be aware of some unique Skype tips.

Tips:

- Use your webcam microphone is a practice Skype interview session to be aware of any time delay or settings that need to be adjusted. This will make you less nervous during the interview
- Find a quiet location for your interview with little distractions as webcam microphones tend to easily pick up background noise
- Pay attention to the physical background (posters on the wall? Messy room? Old take out containers?) this is your 1st impression you want to look professional and put together
- Make sure the interviewer can see you. You may need to turn a light on in front of you (not behind) depending on the time of day and room lighting
- Avoid sitting as close to the laptop as you normally do with friends. Ensure interviewers can still hear you (your practice session with a friend will help you determine this) but you want to look professional and not hunched over the laptop
- Use the highest-speed internet connection you have access to
- Remember to look at the camera not the image of the presenters, or you won't be making eye contact
- To help combat technical difficulties, have your phone readily available (but on silent or turned off) in case the interview mode has to change, keep your laptop plugged in, and turn off other programs on your laptop that make noise (i.e. email reminders)

Group Interview

During group interviews multiple applicants are interviewed at one time. It could be around a board room table with the interviewer asking questions to the group or the group could be asked to work on a task to complete. These interviewers observe how you work and interact with others; if you talk the whole time or not at all? Do you boss the other group members around? Do you balance between talking and listening?

Tips:

- Come prepared to answer questions as per any type of interview; know the company, the role, and your experiences well
- Be cognizant on how you are interacting with the group; are you contributing to the group conversation or task? Are you giving others a chance to speak? Are you working as a team player? Are you taking a leadership role?
- When preparing define what your group work style is. You may want to ask your friends and project-partners so that you have a better sense of your style.

What to Bring

- Resumes, Cover Letter, and Application (enough copies for each interviewer)
- A folder to keep all your documents neat, tidy, and professional looking
- Paper and a pen in your folder to make notes
- Business cards if you have them
- Your reference list

References

You will need to have a reference list with 3 references. Ensure you have asked your references if you can use them as a reference before you include them on your list. You do not want a reference to receive a surprise call from an employer or to include someone who is not comfortable being your reference. Your reference list is separate from your resume, but should use the same letter head. You will want to collect the following information from your references to include:

First & Last Name

Current Title

Company

Phone Number & Extension

Email Address

If your reference works at a different company then he/she did when they were your supervisor next to Current Title in brackets include (Previous Title & Company)

Directions

Make sure you know how to get to the interview and if possible take a test run to the interview location a day or two before the interview. Know where to park and if not sure leave in lots of time to find a parking location and walk to the interview. It is better to arrive early and wait in your car or at a local coffee shop until closer to the interview then to arrive late or rushing.

Check the bus schedule and plan on taking one bus earlier than you normally would. This will help avoid delays and will also help ease nerves.

How to Dress

Things to keep in mind when dressing for an interview:

- If unsure what to wear it is better to be over dressed then underdressed in an interview. A business suit is a good choice with a white blouse that can be used in multiple interviews and on the job
- Avoid perfume and fragrances
- If you wear jewellery, keep it simple and minimal
- Ensure your nails are neat without chipped or bright polish
- Wear dress shoes you can walk in
- Clothes should be clean, neat and pressed, if necessary



Questions for Employers

To demonstrate you are interested in the position and the company you will want to prepare 3-4 questions you could ask the interviewer.

Sample Questions:

- Could you describe a typical day on the job?
- What are the most challenging aspects of this job?
- What type of initial training do you offer?
- How are employees evaluated in this position?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

Practice

Feeling nervous about your interview? PRACTICE. Practicing is the best way to help build your comfort and confidence around the interview process as well it is the only way to improve your interview skills. No matter how many interviews you have had, everyone needs to practice.

Types of Questions

There are two main types of interview questions normally used in all types of interviews.

Traditional Interview Questions:

These types of questions include:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are 3 strengths of yours?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are you long-term career goals?
- What are your short-term goals?
- What three adjectives best describe you?
- What are 2-3 weaknesses you need to improve?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- What is your greatest achievement and why?
- What did you learn from your past part-time job?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- How would you define success?
- Why do you want to work for us/ work here?
- What would you bring to this position/this company?
- How would you rate your communication skills?
- What would your colleagues say about your working style?

Behavioural Interview Questions:

Interviewers use these questions, as past behaviour is the strongest indicator of future behaviour. So how your responded to a problem situation at your last job is likely the way you will respond in future jobs.

These types of questions include:

- Tell me about a situation where you were challenged.
- How have you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do?
- Tell me about the riskiest decision you have made.
- Tell me about a time on any job when you faced a stressful situation or problem.
- Give an example of a time when you had a conflict with someone and how you handled the situation.
- Tell me about a problem you faced and how you dealt with the problem/ developed a solution.
- Can you tell me about a time when you needed to work with a group to get a job done?
- Tell me about a problem that you had to analyze and what your recommendation was?
- Give me an example when you were working in a group and there was a conflict between members. How did you handle this situation? What was the outcome?

STARR Method

The STARR Method is good strategy to use when answering behavioural questions.

Situation: Give an example of a situation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.

Task: Describe the tasks involved in that situation.

Action: Talk about the various actions involved in the task.

Result: What results directly followed because of your actions?

Relate: Relate this situation to how you would apply it to the job you're interviewing for

STARR Example:

Situation: During my job last summer, I was responsible for planning staffing schedules for a summer camp.

Task: When I started, I noticed that the current schedule was difficult to read and understand. We were also unexpectedly understaffed and unable to maintain proper staff to child ratios. I needed to do something to improve this quickly.

Action: I redesigned the schedule taking into consideration staffing regulations and child to staff ratios. I collected feedback from staff and supervisors.

Results: Through this experience, I utilized some of the wonderful ideas I received and made our scheduling system more understandable, ensuring that we always maintained proper ratios.

Relate: As a result, I would apply my initiative, organization, and problem solving skills to the position by quickly adapting to new situations and completing all assignments in a thorough and attentive manner.

Post Interview

Following your interview, send a short thank you email individually to each interviewer. You may need to use the company directory to locate everyone's email addresses.

1st Paragraph:

Express your appreciation for the opportunity and your gratitude for their time. Also mention the date of your interview.

2nd Paragraph:

Personalize the letter by mentioning a strong point of your interview or you can summarize your main credentials, skill or experience that you were not able to expand upon during your contact, but remember to be brief and concise.

3rd Paragraph:

Reiterate your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for their time.

Signature:

Type your name and include your contact information.

Feedback

If after the interview the HR Personnel contact you to say you have not been chosen for the position, use this moment as an opportunity to ask for feedback on how you could improve your interview skills for the future. You will need to ask this while you have them on the phone, not through an email after the fact.

Interview Do's & Don'ts

Do's

Do...

- your homework! (on the organization and in your preparations)
- be confident
- practice! Good interview skills take practice
- ask questions that are thoughtful and intelligent
- follow up to thank interviewers within 24hrs
- take your time to think when responding to a question
- make sure to discuss how you're going to apply your skills to the job you're interviewing for
- use every interview as a learning experience. Every interview (good & bad) helps you learn and makes you better
- dress appropriately (when in doubt, overdress)
- arrive early
- make eye contact
- bring extra copies of your resume (just in case)
- bring copies of your reference list
- be aware of your nervous habits
- be concrete
- shake hands on arrival and departure
- be YOURSELF!!

Don'ts

Don't...

- be overconfident/aggressive
- ask silly questions that waste time or have an obvious answer that you would know if you did your homework
- forget to ask any questions at all
- chew gum
- fidget
- stare or avoid eye contact
- arrive late
- leave your cell phone on
- bring a coffee

References & Resources

Practice your interview skills in a real mock interview setting <http://uwo.interviewstream.com/>

Learn more about Interviews www.success.uwo.ca/careers/prepare_for_interviews/index.html

Last Minute Interview Guide <http://ssc.uwo.ca/careers/>