



Interviews

When 100 employers were surveyed about questions they most often ask in interviews, they responded:

"Tell me about yourself." - 50/100

"What are your strengths?" - 30/100

"Why should we hire you?" - 20/100



What are the "Big Seven" questions employers love to ask?

1. Q. Tell me about yourself.

A. Employers ask this question so they can begin to assess whether you will fit in with their team. Tell the employer about the school that you attend, when you expect to graduate, a brief summary of your employment and volunteer experience and general information about your hobbies. This is not an opportunity to get personal!

2. Q. Why do you want to work for this company?

A. The employer is attempting to find out why you are interested in the position and what you have researched about the company. This is a good place to compliment the company on their reputation and point out why you personally use their service or product. In addition you should "wow" them with quality knowledge about their company culture, service guidelines, new products, who they serve, head office location, etc.

3. Q. What do you consider to be your strengths? Why should we hire you?

A. This is your opportunity to strut your stuff! Pick at least three POWER qualities about yourself and define them using specific examples of how you have displayed that quality in employment, school or team situations. For example, "I demonstrate initiative in group efforts by attempting to increase motivation with my team members."

4. Q. What are your weaknesses?

A. Trick question!! The employer is testing your ability to self evaluate. Are you able to identify a weakness, yet show how it remains to be a positive quality and how you are improving yourself? For example, if you think that you are fairly serious you might say "Although others

consider me to be somewhat serious at times, I think that I am reliable and I consider my options when making a decision.”

5. Q. Tell me about your experience with this type of work.

A. The employer wants to know about any relevant experience that you have. If you have no experience, then you need to begin volunteering your time to increase your personal portfolio. Spruce up your answer by listing transferrable skills that you have obtained at home and through school and show how they relate to the position. When summarizing previous experience, explain your experience first by stating your position title and the company name, followed by a general description of what you were responsible for and what you were particularly good at. Remember, use action oriented words to catch the employer’s attention.

6. Q. What are your long term goals? What do you hope to be doing in 5 years?

A. An employer wants to know that they have hired a student who is committed to their future and plans to make something of themselves. Be sure to tell the employer about plans for post-secondary education and occupational dreams. Also reaffirm your interest in staying with that company to increase your skill set and make a positive impact while with them.

7. Q. Do you have any questions?

A. Do not leave the interview without making a few inquiries of your own! Asking a minimum of 3 questions reinforces your interest in the position. Ask questions like:

- ✓ When will I hear from you?
- ✓ What qualities are you looking for in the successful candidate?
- ✓ What kind of training is involved?
- ✓ How did you get started in the business?
- ✓ Does this company participate in community events?
- ✓ **DON’T** ask any questions related to MONEY, benefits or time off!!!



Hints for Preparing for an Interview

1. Be optimistic.
2. Prepare for questions that the interviewer may ask.
3. Do your research. Find out before the interview the types of tasks you will be responsible for and the skills you are going to need to accomplish those tasks.
4. Know yourself. What talents, training, and personal qualities will make you the ideal candidate for the position?
5. Bring an updated copy of your resume and reference sheet and any other materials that you may need.
6. Dress for success.

7. Timing is everything. Be there at least fifteen minutes early and know how to get there. Give yourself enough time for the interview and do not book anything after in case the interview runs longer than expected.
8. The interview process doesn't always end when you walk out the door. There may be a few things you have to do to follow up.

For more interview tips, please see the attached handout from www.nextsteps.org, a job preparation website.

Activity – Interviewing Your Classmates

In pairs, you will get the opportunity to interview one another. Each person will come up with 7-10 questions to ask the other person and conduct a job interview. You will also be marking one another. When you are the interviewer, you will be marking the interviewee on their responses. When you have conducted your part of the interview, be sure to mark the person on their responses, and then the tables will turn, and the interviewer will be the interviewee.

Responding to Interview Questions

Categories	Level 1 (50 - 59%)	Level 2 (60 - 69%)	Level 3 (70 - 79%)	Level 4 (80 - 100%)
Knowledge and Understanding explain information gathered through research ____/10	explanation of information is based on limited research	explanation of information is based on some research	explanation of information is based on considerable research	explanation of information is based on thorough research
Thinking explain how personal skills will be useful in a work environment ____/10	explains how personal skills will be useful in a work environment with limited clarity	explains how personal skills will be useful in a work environment with some clarity	explains how personal skills will be useful in a work environment with considerable clarity	explains how personal skills will be useful in a work environment with a high degree of clarity
Communication communicate information effectively ____/10	communicates information with limited effectiveness	communicates information with some effectiveness	communicates information with considerable effectiveness	communicates information with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication communicate personal responses to common interview questions ____/10	communicates personal responses to common interview questions with limited clarity	communicates personal responses to common interview questions with some clarity	communicates personal responses to common interview questions with considerable clarity	communicates personal responses to common interview questions with a high degree of clarity

_____/40

Job Interview Preparation Tips








Preparation - Know the Job

One of the most important things you can do before your job interview is to find out some information about the company and the particular position for which you are applying.


If you can show the interviewers that you have "done your homework," they will assume that you would show the same kind of dedication and initiative if you were to work for them.

Of course, you don't want to be blatant about the research you have done. Only use the information you find out about the company when it fits into the conversation you are having-- don't stick it in just to impress the employer.

What kind of information should you try to find? Here are some suggestions:

-  What is the business of the employer?
-  What is the nature of the job you are applying for? (possible duties and responsibilities)
-  What are the qualifications for the position? What skills might the employer be looking for?
-  Who are the customers of the business?
-  What is the reputation of the employer?
-  What are the physical requirements for the job?
-  Who will be interviewing you? How many?

So you know what kind of information to look for. Now where do you find it?

-  **Use** the occupational profiles and other resources available at the Youth Employment Centre, or at other employment centres or libraries, to discover information about the specific job you are being interviewed for. What are the basic duties and desired qualifications for the job?

Speak to a person who works at the business: either someone you might know that works there, or someone you don't know. What can they tell you about the business, the employer, and the position?

Visit the business and observe the environment. Sample their products or merchandise. (Have lunch at the restaurant, shop at the grocery store, etc.) Being familiar with the physical layout and atmosphere of the business will also make you feel more comfortable in the actual interview.

Research the employer at the public library. Business directories, annual reports, articles and other relevant information may be available there. The Internet is also a great source for company information.

What to Take to the Interview

There are some essential things you will want to take along with you when you go for a job interview. For example, it's just common sense to take a pen and paper with you in case you have to write something down.

But you don't want to take too much along either. The interviewer won't be impressed if you have to rummage through a backpack full of junk for 10 minutes to find that pen and paper. The fewer things you have to set down or move around, the better.



The best advice is to carry with you a small folder that contains:


- ▶ Copies of your resumé, to give to the interviewer at the start of the interview and for your own reference during the interview;
- ▶ Copies of letters of recommendation, and a typed reference sheet to be given to the interviewer;
- ▶ Other material relevant to the interview;
- ▶ Pen and paper, so that you can note the name of the interviewer, times for future interviews and other pertinent information.


Dressing for the Interview


What you wear to an interview can be as important as what you say.


Clothes may not make the man or woman, but they do say a lot about who you are and how well you will fit into the company. Showing up in a kilt or lederhosen may help relieve your tension, but it's unlikely the interviewer will share your sense of humour.


Tips for all interviewees


 Always wear clean and neat clothing; make sure it is pressed. Nothing will turn an interviewer off more than an outfit that looks like it's been sitting in your laundry hamper since your last job interview.

 Wear deodorant or antiperspirant. 'Nuff said?


 Use little or no perfume or cologne. You want to smell good, but not overpowering. Also, more and more people find they are allergic to perfumes and colognes. You don't want to make the interviewer break out in a rash!


 Have fresh breath and clean teeth.


 Have clean, recently cut, and neatly brushed hair.

 If possible, before your interview find out how people dress at the place of employment. Dress as well or a little better ("one up"). But be careful, as overdressing may also turn the interviewer off.


Tips for Men


 For business, public contact and customer service positions, wear a suit jacket, dress pants, shirt and tie, socks and polished shoes. Avoid loud colours.

 For positions with less public contact, wear a sports jacket or a sweater, a shirt with a collar, dress pants (skip the jeans or sweat pants), and polished shoes.


 Facial hair should be clean-shaven or neatly-trimmed.


Tips for Women

 Go easy on makeup and fingernail polish -- avoid unusual colours, too heavy an application and extremely long nails.

 Simple clothes and quiet colours are most suitable.

 Very tight clothes, see-through tops and short skirts should be avoided.


 Nylons and low-heeled shoes are best for professional, office, sales, public contact and customer service jobs.

 Clothing and accessories do not have to be expensive to make a good impression, but they should always be in good taste and clean. They should also be toned down rather than wild or extravagant. You want the interviewer's attention to be focused on you, not on your clothes.


After the Interview


The interview process doesn't always end the minute you walk out the door. There may be a few things you have to do to follow up.

It is a good idea to find out at the end of the interview when a hiring decision will be made and what your next contact with the employer should be.

 If the employer is supposed to call you on a certain day, make sure you are home to receive the call.

- If you are not called at the time the employer set, you should make a followup call to him or her.

 If you have arranged to call the employer back, make sure you do it on the day that you agreed upon at the interview.

 If no arrangement has been made and you have not heard back from the employer in about two weeks, you can give him or her a call to find out the status of the hiring process. Many employers will only call back the successful candidate, so this may be your only way to find out for sure that you did not get the job.

Tips on calling employers after the interview:

1 Speak with the person who interviewed you.

2 Introduce yourself and remind the interviewer why you are calling. Don't assume he/she will remember.

3 The hiring process may take longer than you or they expected. If a decision has not yet been made, ask if you can call back and find out when it would be appropriate to do so. Don't harass them by phoning every day. If you don't show patience, the potential employer may not either.

4 If you do not get the job, it's perfectly alright to ask why *in a tactful and sincere manner*.

Example: "Can you tell me what would have made me a better candidate for the position?"

- a. Ask if the employer is aware of any other job openings in your line of work (this continues to show your interest).
- b. Thank them for their time and for considering you.
- c. **Don't burn any bridges.** The person they decide to hire may decline for some reason, or the employer might be hiring again in the near future. You also never know who the employer knows and if you decide to vent your frustration, the word might get around, especially if you are looking for a job or career in a small profession.

5 If you are offered the position, it is good to show your enthusiasm, but remember to get the following vital information:

- a. When you start work (you may need to negotiate this if you are currently working or going to school).
- b. Salary (you may also negotiate this -- but make sure you have done your research!).
- c. Hours of work - shifts/overtime, benefits, vacation.
- d. Dress codes/uniforms.

6 Thank the employer, even if you didn't get the job. You never know when they might hire again.