

Effective Interviews for Graduate Students



Malou Twynam – Career Counsellor
Anne Gaiger – Assistant Director,
UTM Career Centre

Goals

- Understand what to expect in an interview
- Know how to prepare yourself for interviews
- Practice crafting and delivering answers to behavioural interview questions (using the STAR method)
- Be able to succinctly express your fit for a position
- Interviews for teaching stream and industry scientist positions

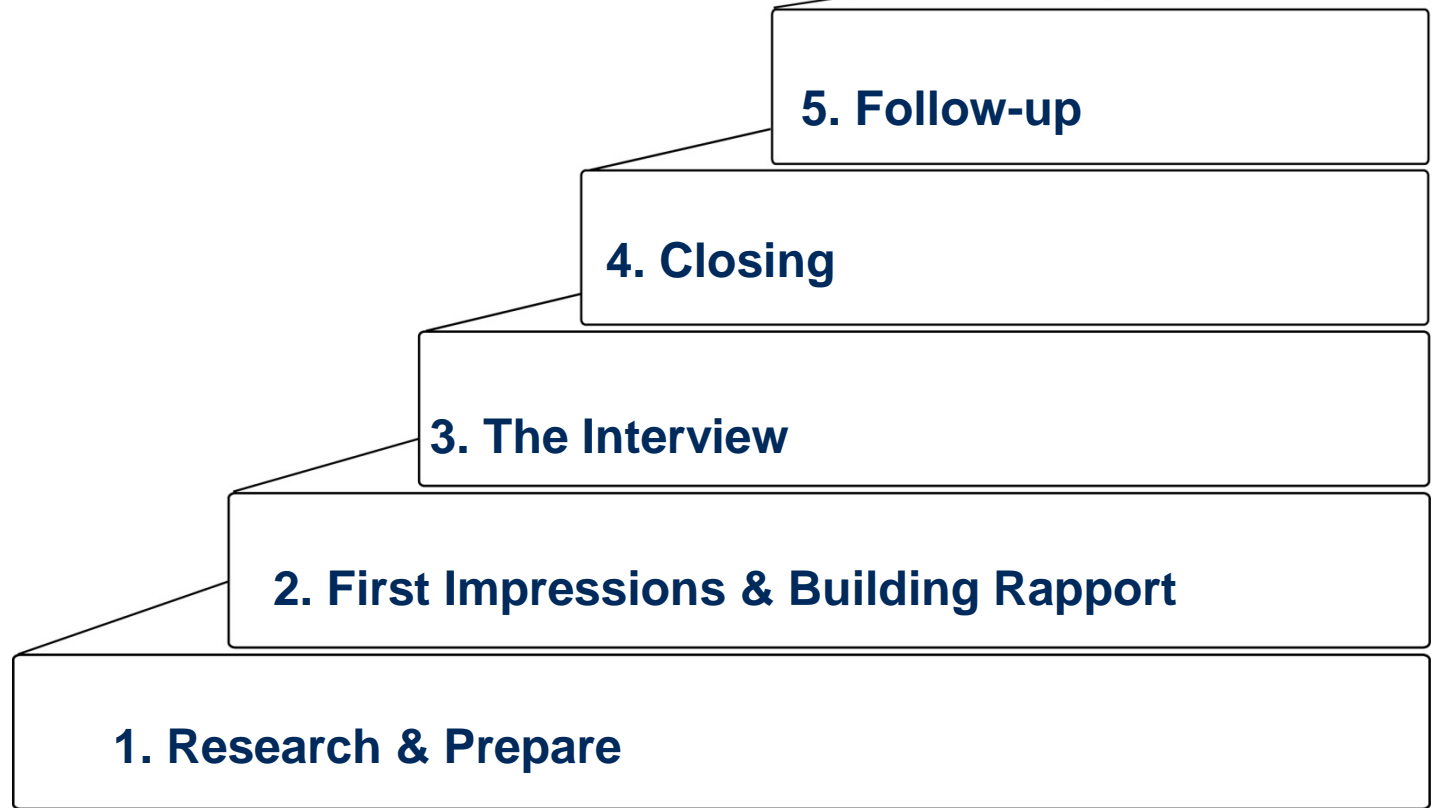
Your Interview Experience: Group Discussion

- Share your experience of an interview you had.
- What was successful and / or challenging about it?

An Interview Is...

- Your marketing opportunity
- Exchange of information (main focus on you)
- Are you a fit for the job, team, organization?
 - Technical / Hard skills
 - Soft skills
 - Personal qualities
 - Values / motivational fit
 - Your career goals?
- Are you a fit for the job, team, organization?
- Are they a good fit for your career needs?

The Process: Overview



Pre-Interview Preparation



Parts of Interview Preparation

1. Know about the potential employer
2. Understand the requirements of the position (technical and transferable skills, knowledge, attitude)
3. Anticipate the questions that might be asked
4. Know what you have to offer
5. Prepare your responses
6. Practice communicating your fit (skills, knowledge and personal qualities) to the employer

Pre-Interview: Research

The more prepared you are, the more you will project a fit with the position and organization...

- The posting
- The organization's home page
- Industry websites
- Networking / information interviews
- Glassdoor?

Understanding Thera-Business' Needs

What Employer Wants	What I have, where, how used
Interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed remote communications with PI during absences overseas by setting up a check-in schedule and GoogleDocs space for discussions. • Presented conference papers and poster presentations – award for best presentation
Work Collaboratively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated a group of 6 masters and undergraduate students working on 3 different projects • Supported PI and other PhD candidates in lab meetings and coordinated lab activities and social gatherings to build team
Work Independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debugged scientific instruments and learned bio-informatics independently using online resources under short time frames
Prioritization and Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed research on schedule with 2 publications before graduation. Managed on campus leadership, administrative committee service and teaching at same time.

Make Yourself a “S.T.A.R.”

SITUATION

TASK

ACTIONS

RESULTS

Key to success in answering behavioural interview questions!

STAR Example: Analytical Skills

S = Half way through a data analysis which was central to my research, the results I was getting were really off base.

T = I had to determine if these results were real or if they weren't, what was causing them, in order to correct them

A = -reviewed how protocols were being implemented by Masters and Undergrad RAs - OK

-Tested all machines and equipment and detected small sources of error and retested results – not significantly different

-Looked at reagents for out of date / changes in manufacture etc... found some improperly stored.

Replaced with fresh. Re-ran experiment. Results were within expected ranges!

R = Discussed lab storage issue with team and corrected. Lost minimal time on work and was able to continue promptly to produce interim report for Supervisor as planned

STAR Example: Collaboration Role played by Anne and Malou

S = Had to work in a team of 6 (2 from each U of T Campus) to develop a training day for all front line staff in all positions.

T = Each campus had different ways of working and philosophies what's important in helping students with their career development. We were far away from a consensus on what to cover

A = - Wrote down all brainstormed ideas on a flipchart and sent out to team
- I recommended we solicit ideas from frontline staff and add to the list
- We discussed ideas via email and I recommended eliminating some themes that were too big to meaningfully explore in a day
- I Proposed a conference style where each campus brings a mini training sessions and all learners can pre-register for 2 out of the 3 offerings

R = - Strong buy in from whole team and most frontline staff attendees
- Feedback was very positive. More offerings = more variety

I = - People were able to indulge their passions = better quality of training
- More staff got a chance to grow their skills facilitating sessions

Your STAR Stories

- Anticipated behavioural interview questions on next slide, and flipchart
- Choose one skill/question only
- Use STAR method to describe an example of where you showed these skills
- Take 5 minutes to prepare you're STAR story using the STAR worksheet in handout package page 5
- Try a second one if you have time...

Behavioural Questions – Thera-Business Job

- Tell me about a time when you overcame a communication challenge
- Give me an example of your collaboration skills
- Describe a time when you used an critical thinking to solve a problem
- Give me an example of when you managed multiple tasks

The Interview!



Interview Skills Practice #1



Find a partner: Interviewer, Candidate

- **Candidate**: Review your STAR story and then put it aside. When ready, shake hands and introduce yourself.
- **Interviewer**: Ask **ONE** question as requested by your candidate; after s/he has finished, provide feedback using **Observer's Form** in handout page 6.

Switch roles & start again. 4-5 mins per person!

Behavioural Questions – Thera-Business Job

- Tell me about a time when you overcame a communication challenge
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First Impressions and Rapport Building

First impressions do count!

Verbal

- what you say: small talk; manners, attitude

Non-Verbal

- dress and grooming (See handout package)
- facial expression (SMILE!) and eye contact
- handshake
- tone, speed of voice
- posture



Telephone / Skype Interview Tips

- Schedule a time when you won't be interrupted
- Prepare your interview environment
 - quiet conditions, résumé, pen, paper, etc.
- If Skype do a tech pre-test and ensure lighting and background are good
- Project enthusiasm, confidence and a positive attitude (smile as you speak 😊; posture; attire)
- Be focused and attentive- listen carefully and pay attention to cues
- Avoid any habits that may create extra noise
- If called at a bad time, arrange to call back

The Interview!



Interview Skills Practice #2



Find a new partner: Interviewer, Candidate
Use feedback from last practice and
Be aware of non verbals

- **Candidate**: Review your STAR story and then put it aside. When ready, shake hands and introduce yourself.
- **Interviewer**: Ask **ONE** question as requested by your candidate; after s/he has finished, provide feedback using **Observer's Form** in handout page 6.
- Switch roles & start again. 4-5 mins per person!

Behavioural Questions – Thera-Business Job

- Tell me about a time when you overcame a communication challenge
- Give me an example of your collaboration skills
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Debrief: Using the STAR Method

PRACTICE
makes
PROGRESS,
NOT
PERFECT.

Additional ways to use it:

- Add an I - Interpretation
- Enumerate, record your stories, and select / label
- Use cue cards for practice (out loud!)
- Save time for quick turnaround interviews

Tell us about yourself...

- Crucial question but deceptively simple
- **Code for:** What do you bring to the table / Why should we hire you?
- 4 top skills
- Always reference T-chart to prepare!!!
- Outline where how with a concrete examples and / or results
- Can be based on your top STAR stories (but much shorter versions or pieces)

Your Questions

Demonstrate Interest: Use your research to develop questions, e.g. new directions or business challenges like: *” I read the firm is branching into a new business. Could you tell me more about that?”*

Decide “fit”: Ask about key tasks and priorities for the role; skills likely to develop; company culture, etc. For example, *“What are the key priorities for the position/dept., or the characteristics of successful people in the firm?”*

Questions to Avoid: Salary, benefits

*if asked about expectations have this researched and give a range.

Salary Expectations / Negotiations

- **Do a little digging & research:** Canadian sources e.g. Career Cruising, Job Futures, Monster Salary Centre; Glassdoor; professional associations; job postings
- **Provide a salary range** (based on your research)
- **Think about what is most important to you:**
How important is the salary versus what else you might value in the position and organization
Think about “total worth” (e.g. benefits, bonuses, training, work environment, getting foot in the door)

Closing

- Re-emphasize key points
(why you would be a good “fit”)
- What are the next steps in the process?
Timeline?
- Ask for the job!
- Thank the interviewer(s)
- Business cards?

Post Interview



Follow-up



- Send a thank you note (ideally within 24 hours of the interview)
 - Re-confirm your interest
 - Summarize key points of match
 - Address concerns that may have come up
- Review and evaluate your performance
- Can ask for feedback?
- Take action to improve
- If unsuccessful, add new contacts on LinkedIn?
- Keep up with company and be persistent

Ways to Improve

- Improve your job search focus – cannot be all things to all employers!
- Better research of industry, company, interviewers
- More reflection to connect your skills and attributes to the employers needs
- More work on STAR stories, cue cards and memorize
- Live practice - more interviews and refining your skills
- Career Centre – problem solving and mock interviews

Teaching Stream Interviews

- If you are passionate about teaching! Do you have dossier?
- Ask for the agenda – what, who, where and when?
- Forget your prep for research positions
- Research the teaching philosophy of the school and its student populations
- Anticipate and prepare for open ended questions about your teaching philosophy, style, values
- Prepare for behavioural questions about teaching challenges
- Preview your engaging teaching style in all interactions
- Prepare for a teaching sample or giving a lecture
- Other possible aspects: phone interview, tours, meetings with many people, dining, and interviews and meetings with panels and individuals

Industry Scientist Interviews

- Ask for the agenda – what, who, where and when?
- Who will you be meeting with? Look for bios / LinkedIn info
- Articulate your transferrable research / innovation skills
- Industry research and knowledge
- Making link between the 2 with **results** is key!!!
- Prepare for behavioural questions about your soft skills
- Possible hypothetical questions (technical or human factors)
- Possible case / business oriented questions
- Be prepared for: phone interview; tours, meetings with many people, dining, giving a talk on your research / product pitch and interviews and meetings with panels and individuals

In Your Handouts...

- Job Ad and T-Chart
- STAR Worksheet
- Observer's Form x2
- Industry / Company Research Worksheet and links
- Tips: Dressing for your Interview
- Tell me about yourself... Worksheet
- Sample Questions
- Interview Checklist
- Teaching Stream sample job ad from U of T
- Five teaching Stream Profs tell their story (feat. Fiona Rawle)
- Interviewing at a Teaching Focussed University
- Good Interview Q's for Faculty
- Sample itinerary for Shortlisted Candidates for Faculty positions from the U of T Academic Administrative Procedures Manual
- Cornell University advice for post-docs and grad students on Interviewing for Industry positions (solid advice for anyone!)
- First Encounters with Behavioural Interviewing (Science focus but applies to anyone)
- Tooling up: On Interview Day...great advice for anyone

Career Centre Resources and Services

- Employment Advising Appointments
- Career Counselling Appointments
- The Grad Pages: Sections on Investigate Careers (Industry and company Research)
- Networking and Job Search Sections
- Interview preparation and mock interviews
- Events – Networking (next step in company research)
- CLN

Thanks you!
Feedback Please...

