

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

WORKSHEET: RESEARCH THE POSITION / ORGANIZATION

Description of position, skills and qualifications (Use T-Chart)

Products and services of employer:

Industry information (e.g. competitors, trends):

Organization's history:

Other information (e.g. organizational values, challenges faced):

Summary of key employer needs:

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SOME RECOMMENDED SITES FOR COMPANY / INDUSTRY RESEARCH

A step by step guide on how to do industry and company research with links to sites. Found in the Grad Pages under Careers Outside Academia:

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/resources-for-graduate-students/careers-outside-academia/investigate-careers-various-sectors/>

Canada Newswire

<http://www.newswire.ca/en/>

Contact Canada (Pharma & BioPharma)

<http://www.contactcanada.com/>

Globe Investor - Company Snapshots

<http://www.globeinvestor.com/static/hubs/company-snapshot.html>

Industry Canada: Company Directories

http://www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/ic1.nsf/en/h_00070e.html?OpenDocument&

Mississauga - Business Profiles and Facts

<http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/business/profilefactsandmaps>

Service Canada Labour Market Information

<http://www.labourmarketinformation.ca>

Questions to ask interviewer based on knowledge of the company and position. To reflect well on your interest in the positions and company, knowledge base and business mindset:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF” WORKSHEET

Top 5 skills / qualities needed for this position (taken from T-chart / job ad):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

3 - 5 key points (bullet form) that summarize how my skills and experience match employer's needs listed above. Should be based on your most compelling examples and include: how skills were used and a bit about results (can be taken from T-Chart jot notes). Always start the conversation with a recap of your education and or brief outline of your research.

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Tips From the Recruiters:

What Distinguishes the Best-Dressed Candidates?

NOTE: These are tips only! Please adapt for the company context and your own personal style

Men & Women

- Two-piece business suit (navy or other dark colour)
- Consistent look; avoid wearing a business suit with sandals or sneakers
- Well-groomed hairstyle; avoid unusual styles or colors
- Minimal cologne or perfume
- No visible body piercing, including multiple earrings in one ear
- No more than one ring on each hand; wedding/engagement ring acceptable
- No visible body art; cover tattoos with clothing if possible
- Breath mints; use one before greeting recruiter

Women

- White, off-white, or neutral-coloured blouse with a conservative neckline
- Suit blazer with a skirt or pants
- Avoid ill-fitting (short, tight, clingy, or slit) skirts; no higher than one to two inches above the knee when standing
- Closed-toe leather pumps with low to medium heels avoid open-toe strappy high heels, sandals, or shoes with decorations
- Natural, skin-coloured hosiery
- Briefcase or portfolio
- Conservative nail polish; avoid unusual colours, e.g. green, blue
- Understated makeup
- Understated classic accessories
Note: follow "rule13"- more than 13 things going on with your outfit can be distracting (e.g. rings, earrings, necklace, chunky buttons, watch, hair accessories, etc.).
- Small stud earrings instead of dangling or oversized earrings
- Long hair pulled back in neat, simple style; no "big hair" or elaborate styles

Men

- Long-sleeved dress shirt in white or light blue or neutral colour
- Conservative necktie in colour and pattern; avoid cartoon characters, less than serious graphics, or theme ties
- High-fitting dark socks; avoid light coloured socks with a dark suit
- Business-style leather shoes
- Match shoe and belt colour; don't mix black and brown
- Briefcase or portfolio, no backpack

**Taken from UCLA Career Centre's Business Attire Survey, 2003*

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S.T.A.R. (I.)

A Technique for Articulating Your Skills and Accomplishments for Behavioural Interview Questions

- A. Choose ONE of the questions from the slide and fill in an example of a past experience using the S.T.A.R. method.

Situation

Task

Actions

Results

Insights / Interpretation (optional)

- B. Have one partner ("the interviewer") ask the selected question from the slide; and, using the S.T.A.R. method, have the other partner ("the candidate") answer the question.
- C. After "the candidate" has given his/her response, "the interviewer" should provide feedback to "the candidate" using the observer form as a guide.
- D. Switch roles and repeat the process.

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OBSERVER'S FORM FOR PEER PRACTICE INTERVIEW

Candidate Name: _____

1. Did the candidate:

Y / N Shake hands firmly

Y / N Make and maintain eye contact with interviewer?

Y / N Display positive body language: smile, not fidgeting, sitting straight

Y / N Speak at an even pace (not too quickly or slowly)?

Y / N Use variety in speaking tone? (vs. monotone)

Y / N Speak too quietly?

Y / N Speak fluently (i.e. not too many pauses, ummm, difficulty finding right word)?

Y / N Provide acceptable answers to the questions? Stay on track?

Y / N Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method to identify examples of specific skills?

Y / N Was there sufficient detail in the example to illustrate the skill or the knowledge?

Y / N Give too long or too short an answer?

Suggestions re: how to improve?

2. Overall, what TWO areas were most impressive about the candidate's behaviour AND/OR responses in the interview?

3. Overall, what TWO areas would you suggest the candidate work on?

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OBSERVER'S FORM FOR PEER PRACTICE INTERVIEW

Candidate Name: _____

4. Did the candidate:

Y / N Shake hands firmly

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Y / N Display positive body language: smile, not fidgeting, sitting straight

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Suggestions re: how to improve?

5. Overall, what TWO areas were most impressive about the candidate's behaviour AND/OR responses in the interview?

6. Overall, what TWO areas would you suggest the candidate work on?

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There are numerous types of questions employers could ask you in an interview. However, these questions can be categorized into three main types such as **Open-ended, Behavioural and Situational**.

Open-ended questions are those that do not have specific direction and cannot be answered by "yes" or "no". An example of an open-ended question is "Tell me about yourself?"

Behavioural questions focus on your past performance such as "Can you give an example of how you dealt with _____ in the past?" Based on the past behaviour and "proven track record", employers try to predict how effective the candidate would be in the new position.

Sometimes employers present problematic scenarios that require solutions. These are referred to as **Situational** questions. You need to demonstrate your analytical and problem solving skills in your answers.

In business setting **Case** questions are common. They give you a realistic scenario with limited data and ask you to take them through your reasoning to come up with a solution. You should have good general knowledge to fill in missing data and be able to think on your feet.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

NOTE: Understanding the requirements and anticipating questions is the your best strategy!

Your Qualifications and Experience

1. Tell me about yourself. (Open)
2. What previous experience has prepared you for the duties and responsibilities of this position?
3. Tell me about the position you had at _____. How has this prepared you for this position?
4. Describe the experience that you feel is most relevant to this position.
5. Describe a team project that you have undertaken. What was your role? What did you learn from this experience? (Behavioural)
6. 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? (Situational)
7. Give an example of a time when you demonstrated creative problem solving. (Behavioural)
8. Give an example of where you have demonstrated leadership qualities.
9. 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 share. What would you do in this situation? (Situational)
10. Volvo claims it is the safest car in the world because fewer people die in a Volvo than in a car made by any other manufacturer in the world. What's wrong with this conclusion? (Case)
11. Your nephew runs a lemonade stand. Yesterday was Monday and he was open from 2pm - 5pm, and sold 2 cups. What should he do differently tomorrow? (Case)

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Knowledge of Industry / Organization / Position

12. Why are you interested in the industry, our company, this position? (Open)
13. A client (customer) has been using the products and services of our company (organization) for three years and noticed some changes in the way business is being conducted in our field. The client is making an inquiry about these changes. What would you tell this client? (Situational)
14. What can you contribute to our organization?
15. What questions do you have about our company?
16. What is your salary expectation?
17. What kind of references can you provide?

Goals / Personal Attitudes / Values

16. What was the process you went through in deciding to leave your last position?
17. Why do you want this job? (Choose reasons relating to your professional growth or challenges) (Open)
18. What do you like best/least about your present (or last) job? Why?
19. What does taking initiative mean to you? Can you give an example where you have demonstrated your initiative? (Behavioural)
20. Is there anything you want us to know that we haven't had a chance to ask you?
21. What are your short/ long-term goals in this field?
22. How would you improve your GPA if you had a chance to do it again?
23. If I talked to your co-workers, how would they describe you?
24. You have heard that one of your clients has complained to your supervisor because he is dissatisfied with your work. What would you do in that situation? (Situational)
25. Describe a situation in which you had a disagreement with a supervisor. How was it resolved? (Behavioural)
26. How do you maintain enthusiasm on the job, despite certain aspects of the work you don't enjoy?
27. What are your strengths/weaknesses? Give an example.
28. Since you've graduated, what effort have you made to continue your learning?

Be Specific - Give Examples To Support Your Answers!

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INTERVIEW TIPS CHECKLIST

The key is preparation and practice!

Before the Interview

- Research the position, organization, and industry
- Anticipate the types of skills/qualities the employer is looking for
 - Identify specific examples for each skill or quality (STAR method)
- Review your resume (anything on it is fair game for the interviewer to ask)
- Practice answering common interview questions including about your weaknesses
- Make sure you are aware of any specific types of interview questions that may be used in your industry of interest and techniques for responding to them (e.g. case interview questions are common in the management consulting industry)
- Anticipate any concerns the employer may have about your qualifications and prepare a strategy for how to address this in the interview
- Prepare a few questions to ask the interviewer
- Get a good night's sleep
- Dress appropriately and look professional (appearance and grooming)
- Bring extra copies of your resume, list of references, a notepad and pen, etc.
- Arrive early
- Be courteous to everyone and aware of your manners from the second you step into the building
- Engage in small talk to build rapport

During the Interview

- Shake hands firmly
- Smile
- Maintain eye contact with (all) interviewer(s)
- Display positive body language (good posture, no fidgeting)
- Listen attentively to questions and ask for clarification if needed
- Take time to think through a question before answering
- Speak in a clear, concise and confident manner (even pace, vary tone of voice)
- Link your skills and experience to the position and provide relevant examples
- Demonstrate that you've researched the position, organization, and industry
- Convey enthusiasm and interest by asking well-prepared questions
- At the end of the interview, ask about next steps and thank the interviewer(s)

After the Interview

- Send a thank-you letter or email (opportunity to add/re-emphasize key points) within a reasonable timeframe (ideally within 24 hours after your interview)
- Treat each interview as a learning process
 - What went well?
 - What can you do to improve next time?
 - Note down any questions that you had difficulty with
- Consider following up if you don't hear back in the expected timeframe
- If you are not selected, ask politely for feedback from the interviewer