

# INTERVIEW BASICS

How to prepare for Interviews

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT  
+ WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING**  
AT EMILY CARR



# INTERVIEW BASICS

## Interview 101

Interviews allow the employer to get a better sense of what it is like to work with you. It gives them a chance to assess your interpersonal skills, test your abilities, and determine if you are a good fit within the company or organization.

Sometimes there is more than one interview during the hiring process. First interviews are often shorter and more general, in order to verify the information in your resume and cover letter. These can be in person, by telephone, or video call. Second interviews may be with an individual, or a panel, and may involve a design challenge, test, or presentation of sorts. Be prepared to demonstrate and describe your qualifications in-depth.

## How to Prepare for an Interview:

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

1. **Review the job description and your application**, and identify the skills, abilities and experience you have that meet the job requirements, so you can emphasize these points in your interview.

2. **Research the company**, check out their online presence and product or service information. During your research, take note of the following:

- The type of work/projects the company engages in and how it aligns with your practice, skills, abilities, etc.
- Anything you have questions about (you can ask them during the interview) to demonstrate you have done your research and have an interest in the company.

3. **Review your application** and be prepared to speak to any aspect it.

Bring a few copies of cover letter, resume, references, and your portfolio for reference.

### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

Interviewers do not have the right to ask you questions about certain criteria such as:

- National origin
- Religious beliefs
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Race
- Age
- Marital Status
- Political beliefs
- Health or disability

### For information consult:

BC Human Rights Code:

<http://www.bclaws.ca>

Canada Human Rights Commission:

<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/eng/content/i-want-know-more-about-human-rights>

## AT THE INTERVIEW

Arrive 5-10 min early.

Dress appropriately for the company culture and make sure that your appearance is clean and tidy overall. Be professional and friendly and make eye contact when meeting everyone involved in your interview process.

Bring your list of key qualifications and any questions you noted during your research. This can serve as your cheat sheet during the interview if you get stuck on a question.

Be prepared to match the tone that the interviewer sets, and follow the structure of the interview as outlined by the company.

It is normal to be nervous in an interview, but don't let this get in the way of your confidence. Take a deep breath and take your time and listen carefully to the questions you are being asked and feel free to clarify, if you are unsure of the question, for example: "Let me make sure I understand your question, do you mean...?"

## WHAT QUESTIONS MIGHT BE ASKED?

Be prepared to answer many types of questions during your interview including introductory, skill based, and interpersonal scenario questions.

Your answers should demonstrate how your unique set of experience, skills and abilities meet the requirements of the job by emphasizing:

- Your knowledge of and interest in the company
- Your hard skills (technical) and soft skills (interpersonal)
- Your accomplishments

## END OF INTERVIEW

At the end of the interview it is common for the interviewer to ask if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to review the questions you prepared for any that have already been answered during the interview. This is also a good time to review your notes to make sure you included everything you wanted to highlight about your suitability for the job. If you missed anything, you can add it now.

For example:

"There is one thing I wanted to add..."

"I didn't have the chance to mention my experience with..."

Send an email within 24 hours, to thank them for taking the time to meet with you and to reaffirm your interest in the position.

### ATTEND AN INTERVIEW STRATEGY SESSION WITH THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT + WIL OFFICE

Session topics and times are posted on the Career Development web page, at the Career + Professional Development Office, and on the Playlist.

## GENERAL & INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:

You will likely be asked to tell the interviewer about yourself and your interests.

### If you are stuck think of your PAWS:

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|-----------------|---|
| <b>Personal</b> | Who you are and why you're interested in this position.   |
| <b>Academic</b> | Your academic interests and how your education/training relates to the position.  |
| <b>Work</b>     | Previous relevant work or volunteer experiences you have, and what you accomplished or gained from these experiences.     |
| <b>Skills</b>   | Skills you developed or demonstrated in previous experiences and how they relate to the position you're applying for now. |

## SKILL BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Most interviews will include straight forward questions about tasks, skills, and information such as:

- Why did you choose to apply to this position?
- What skills and qualities can you bring to this position?
- Why do you think that you are the best person for the job?

## BEHAVIOURAL/SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Many interviewers use this method to assess your past and present performance in a similar situation as a predictor of your future success. It focuses on experiences, problem solving and critical thinking.

### Behavioural questions often start with phrases such as:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| • What would you do if...      | • Give me an example of...                       |
| • Describe to me...            | • Let's say that you are in a situation where... |
| • Tell me about a time when... |  |

### If you are stuck think of your STAR:

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|------------------|--|
| <b>Situation</b> | Describe the context of the example and the relevant situation.      |
| <b>Task</b>      | What was it that you needed to do specifically?                      |
| <b>Action</b>    | What did you specifically do about it?                               |
| <b>Result</b>    | What was the specific outcome of your action? Choose a positive one! |

## STRENGTHS + CHALLENGES

Everyone has strengths and challenges. The key in an interview is not to deny your areas for improvement, but to explain how your strengths are of benefit to the company. Reassure the interviewer that your individual challenges will not be a problem by providing examples, such as taking detailed notes or practicing public speaking to improve confidence.

**Tell me about yourself.**

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**What goals have you set for your career and life?**

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**What has been one of your most successful accomplishments?**

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Why did you choose to apply for this position?

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What skills and qualities can you bring to this position?

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Why are you the best person for the job?

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## Practice: Behavioural/Scenario-Based Questions

Tell me about a time when you had to work outside of your regular duties and responsibilities in order to complete a task or a project.

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Describe a situation where you worked on a project and your teammates disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

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What would you do if you found that your final work was not up to your supervisor's expectations? What action would you take?

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