
Effective Interview Preparation & Coaching

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1. Forms of Selection Interviews

Phone Interviews:

- Brief 'screening' interviews to establish whether they want to invite clients in for a longer in-person interview.
- Clients need to be prepared for possible interview calls and how to handle them

One-on-One Interviews:

- One person asks questions in a face-to-face meeting. Could be a part of a series of 1:1 interviews moving on to interview with more senior staff in the organization.
- Knowing the job title of the interviewer often helps the client anticipate what information they must provide during the interview.

Panel Interviews:

- Involves multiple interviewers, often requiring the candidate to adapt their communication style to address several people.
- Clients need to know who to address during this type of interview

Group Interviews:

- Where multiple candidates are interviewed together, often for assessing teamwork and interpersonal skills.
- Sometimes all applicants are asked the same question and asked to answer in front of others or separated into groups and asked to work on a task together

2. Common Interview Questions

A. Could you tell me about yourself and describe your background in brief?

What they are looking for: They want to know about you, but they also want to see how you organize your thoughts and if you can be concise.

How to Answer:

- Give an overview of your work experience, education, hard skills and soft skills. Not forgetting to mention your strong interest in and enjoyment of your work.
- Can use the **W-A-S-P** method used for the Resume Profile.

Example:

"I have three years of experience as a server in various restaurants. I completed a Diploma in Hospitality Management and a Customer Service course. I have strong skills in customer interaction, payment processing, and conflict resolution. My skills also include the ability to speak three languages: English, German and Dutch. I am passionate about providing excellent customer service and enjoy building positive relationships with customers."

B. Why should we hire you?

Other ways this question is asked: What are your strengths? or Tell me what you could bring (contribute) to the company?

What they are looking for: To find out how well you know yourself, if you are confident about your skills and how your skills fit the job.

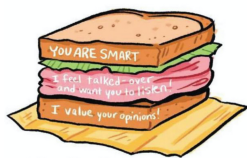
How to Answer: Mention 2-3 technical skills and/or personal qualities that match the interviewer's needs. Choose one of the skills/qualities mentioned to relate an impressive past achievement or experience.

Example:

"I have contributed in many ways to my team in my past jobs. One of my greatest strengths is that I'm well organized – I'm able to juggle tasks and find ways to work more efficiently. For example, in my last job as a Clerk, I assessed needs from different departments and set up a centralized filing system, which allowed them to store and retrieve files and records effectively. In addition, I have strong computer skills that allow me to produce work efficiently. I'm an excellent team player who communicates well with people at all levels. I am confident that I will be an asset to your team."

C. What are your weaknesses?

Other ways this question is asked: What's one area where you could improve? OR What challenges do you believe you would have with this job?



What they are looking for: to discover if you lack experience or training, teamwork or people skills etc.

How to Answer: Use the *Sandwich Method* i.e. Start with something positive, then mention the weakness and then end with something positive.

Example:

"I believe computer skills are very important in today's work environment. I have very good computer skills in MS Word and Excel. I recognize I do not have much experience working with MS PowerPoint. Therefore, I have been taking online courses and have already improved my skills from Basic to Intermediate in the last month. I will continue to improve myself and build my skills in this area."

D. Why do you want to leave your current job?

What they are looking for: to see if you will complain about your current employer and raise red flags during the interview

How to Answer: Focus not on why you want to leave, but what you want to pursue.

Example: "I actually really like my current job however I have discovered an interest in moving up into a management position and saw that opportunity available with your company."

E. What are your Short-term Goals

What they are looking for: to see if you want to grow with the company and if you are in a rush to move up

How to Answer: Focus on learning all you can about the job, becoming more efficient and then possibly growing into a higher position, if possible. Be careful about being too forceful about this.

Example: "I like the type of work I'd be doing here. I'd like to start with this position, learn to be more efficient in my duties and then gradually take on more responsibilities."

3. Behavioural & Situational Questions

Behavioral & Situational questions often focus on your ability to demonstrate "soft skills" relating to your professional relationships and ability to manage difficult situations. To anticipate these questions, clients must prepare 'Proof Stories'

Proof Stories are told in 3 parts:

- **Situation:** What situation led you to do something? Brief.
- **Action:** Describe the action you took. Clear step by step sentences.
- **Result:** Reveal the positive results that occurred when you took the action(s) you described earlier in your story. Reflect on how it affected the client, your supervisor, the company etc.

There are many types of behavioural and situational questions, it is impossible to prepare for them all. It is better to equip our clients with the knowledge of important employability skills employers expect from potential candidates. **Conference Board of Canada, Employability Skills 2022. Note: pdf provided, no longer on website in 2026**

Question Sample 1: Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with someone and how you resolved it. (Behavioural)

- **What they are looking for:** to see if you can handle conflict professionally and still be able to continue to work with your co-workers.
- **How to Answer:** Focus on misunderstandings and disagreements, not major conflict.

Example:

- **Situation:** During a team project at my previous job, I disagreed with a colleague over the approach to a task we were assigned.
- **Action:** Rather than letting the conflict escalate, I asked to have a private conversation with my colleague to understand their perspective better. I listened actively, expressing my own viewpoints respectfully.
- **Result:** Through open communication, we found common ground and compromised on a solution that incorporated both of our ideas. This not only resolved the conflict but also strengthened our working relationship and improved collaboration for the remainder of the project.

Question Sample 2: Can you tell me about a time you showed initiative in the workplace? (Behavioural)

Example:

- **Situation:** During the holiday season the bakery I worked for was busy preparing multiple Christmas Cake orders.
- **Action:** I happened to put something away in the fridge and noticed that there were many undecorated cakes in the back. I asked the kitchen about them and discovered that they were missed and still needed decorating. Although my position was as a Cashier I offered to help with some basic decorating.
- **Result:** The missed cakes were all decorated in time. The kitchen team were grateful for my help and my manager was impressed with my initiative and flexibility.

Question Sample 3: If you had 2 supervisors give you conflicting instructions, how would you handle it. (Situational)

Example:

- **Situation:** I've had a similar situation at a past job as a Server. The restaurant was very busy that day because 2 servers had called in sick. Because we were so busy the Manager and Assistant Manager were both handling table orders - and both gave me instructions to do opposite things. One told me to help with clearing plates from the tables and the other asked me go to a table to take their order.
- **Action:** I advised the 2nd manager that the other had asked me to clear plates from tables and asked if I should do that or prioritize what he just asked me to do.
- **Result:** By doing this, the 2nd manager was able to tell me to focus on what I was already told me to do and clear up any confusion.

4. Blue-Sky Questions

Blue-Sky Questions are based on 'blue-sky thinking' which is 'out-of-this-world' interview questions to test the client to see if they can think 'outside-the-box' in a way that isn't constrained by the limits of practicality.

Example Questions:

- If you had an unlimited budget, what would you use it for to increase revenue for the company?
- What would you do to improve sales if you were the Department Manager?

5. Illegal Questions

What is considered an illegal question? Questions that touch on personal characteristics that are not relevant to the job and can potentially lead to discrimination.

Examples:

- Questions about age: "How old are you?" or "What is your date of birth?"
- Gender or sexual orientation: "Are you a man or a woman?" or "What is your sexual orientation?"
- Religion: "What is your religion?" or "Do you attend church?"
- Race or ethnicity: "What is your race?" or "Where were you born?"
- National origin: "Where were you born?" or "What is your nationality?"
- Disability: "Do you have a disability?" or "How many sick days did you take in your last job?"

Suggestions on how to handle:

- Try to decide **why** the employer is asking the question.
- If you don't answer the question directly and/or politely, you might lose the job. However, if the employer is asking for the wrong reasons, you might not want the job anyway.

"Although I might be younger than many of your employees, I have a strong work ethic. I understand the importance of being at work on time, contributing effectively to a team and being willing to put in extra hours when necessary. If there is anything that I am not familiar with, I am a quick learner & I am willing to learn on my own time. I can bring my creativity, new ideas and a new set of eyes to your team."

"That's a very interesting question. I'd be happy to answer it; however, I'm wondering how this question relates to the position that I am applying for." (Some risk is involved in answering this way.)

6. Industry-specific questions

- Industry-specific questions are tailored to assess a candidate's technical skills, knowledge, and familiarity with tools, processes, or practices unique to a particular field.

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- When coaching clients, it would be beneficial for them if Career Advisors included some industry-specific questions to practice as well.
 - Industry-specific questions can be found online via a Google search or using Generative AI tools, ***ChatGPT Prompt example: "Provide 10 industry-specific interview questions for an Accounting Clerk"***

7. Interview Body Language

Many clients are unaware of the appropriate body language they should have during an interview.

Often it is good to run through all the stages of an interview and demonstrate to them how to sit, what to do with their hands, appropriate facial expressions too.

This is a video that can be shown to clients and then discussed together afterwards.

Body Language Experts Break Down Job Interview Etiquette | WIRED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2NFhwHyNhc>