

# INTERVIEWS

## PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

Congratulations on scoring an interview! Now the interviewer is interested in you and wants to know more about:

1. Can you do the job? (based on your skills/experience/education)
2. Will you do the job? (based on your personality and commitment)
3. Will you fit in with their company? (based on your personality and values)

You'll need to prepare yourself to ensure you can successfully provide the company with that information.

However, interviews go two ways! You should be also interviewing them trying to find out:

1. Does this role fit with the scope of your interest and abilities? (and is there support for challenging times)
2. Will you fit in with their company? (based on their culture and values)

## PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Job postings are often called vacancies because there is a hole that needs to be filled. You should conduct a significant amount of research to know what that hole is and what the company is looking for to fill it. To do this:

1. Know the job posting thoroughly to understand:
  - What is required / what is an asset?
  - What kind of personal traits do they seek?
2. Know the company; some considerations are:
  - What are their products/services and who do they serve?
  - Know their history, mandate, values, goals
  - Where are they located and what is their structure?
  - What direction is the company moving and what are their challenges?
3. Know yourself:
  - Review your resume to easily recall your work history and skills
  - Use course outlines to help verbalize the key skills and knowledge you bring

Researching the job/company won't always guarantee you get the job, but not doing your research will likely guarantee that you don't get the job!

Good sources to use when you are trying to research a company include the internet, friends, family, teachers, previous and current employees and the resources at the Center for Career and Experiential Learning.

## TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS** – These are common interview questions that are generally open-ended and can easily be prepared for ahead of time. Common Traditional questions are:

- Tell me more about yourself? (employer is looking to connect with your story)
- Why do you want to work here? (employer wants you to connect to their story!)
- Why should we hire you? (connect your strengths - skills/experience/education - to the job/company)

These questions should be answered in a narrative format (past/present/future). Convey your information chronologically and always connect it back to how you're a good fit for this position!

- "While I was at TRU, I had the opportunity to work on X project which allowed me to develop Y skills / foster Y interest. From these reasons, I'm hoping to bring my experience/skillset to this role."
- "I understand your company is doing X project for Y reasons. I also have an interest in X and Y."

**BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS** – These questions ask you to relate examples of what you have to demonstrate your skills as they related to the job. Prepare for these questions by thinking of personal experiences sorted into these three categories: Tough Times, Highlights, and Working with Others.

Behavioural questions typically begin with:

- Tell me about a time when: (conflict with a coworker; didn't know what to do, etc)
- Describe a situation where: (your values conflicted with your role; you had to motivate yourself, etc)

These questions are best answered through the **STAR** method:

**Situation** – Explain the context of the example/event

**Task** – Describe what goal you were working towards

**Action** – Describe your actions or what took place

**Result** – Describe the outcome of your actions and what you accomplished or learned

Any scenario can make you look good to the employer with a strong learning component.

**Situation** “In my organizational behaviour class, I was working with a group of 5 other students on an 8-page research proposal”.

**Task** – “My role was to complete the introduction and conclusion and editing of the article.”

**Action** – “As it came close to submitting the assignment, several group members had not completed their parts. It was a challenge to stay calm when so much of my grade was at stake but I managed to contact each member to emphasize the importance of submitting their part early enough so I could tie everything together.”

**Result** – “I received all the pieces a few days ahead of the due date. I spent a couple long nights ensuring that everything came together. Through this project, I realized the importance of planning out all the steps of the project and building in contingencies for people with different working styles.”

**SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS** – These questions require you to respond to a hypothetical situation or problem. They can be Case Scenarios, Technical Problems, or Skill Based questions. These questions usually begin with “What would you do if...”

These questions can be difficult to anticipate often relying on you to draw on your education and experience while utilizing your best judgment. Prepare for these questions by understanding the job along with its responsibilities and revisiting your previous education and training. Talk to other people in your field to research what questions you can expect.

**DIRECTIVE QUESTIONS** – Highly structured questions that tend to tempt you to respond with “yes” or “no” answers. For examples: “Are you able to work weekends?” or “Have you designed websites?” Respond with a comprehensive answer that includes an example if possible.

They may also challenge your knowledge about a specific topic with questions starting with “What do you know about XYZ?” Prepare by doing your research!

## FINAL TIPS

- Arrive 15 before the interview and be friendly to all staff; they all have a say in the hiring decision.
- Present a professional appearance and attitude; show positive body language and remember to smile 😊
- Get the interviewer to describe the position early so you can relate your skills and experience to the position
- Watch the interviewer's body language to gauge your answers as to whether they're looking for more details
- Ask for clarification if you are unsure whether you are interpreting the question correctly
- Prepare three questions to ask the interview at the end of formal questions
- Afterwards, send a thank you email/note/card to each of the interviewers after the interview