University of Windsor | Career Centre

Interview Tip Sheet – Interview Tips to Impress Your Future Employer

Congratulations!
You were chosen for an interview! Your goal at the interview will be to demonstrate how your experience, education, skills, and personality fit the position. Here are some tips to help you prepare.

1. **Know what you have to offer**
   The job interview is your opportunity to sell yourself to a potential employer by sharing the skills, education and experiences that are relevant to the position. If you cannot clearly demonstrate your fit for the job, you will not be hired. Think of it this way: would you buy a car from a salesperson who couldn't tell you about the features of a car? You wouldn't. It's the same for an employer. You must clearly communicate what you have to offer the employer.
   Before going to the interview, identify the skills and qualities that make you a good fit for the job. Next, think of examples (from your work or volunteer and/or academic experiences) that show how your skills, experience and qualities will benefit the employer.

2. **Know the company**
   Research the company, its competitors and the industry. If you are given the name of the interviewer, use social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Google), or the company website to research the person. This will help you feel more comfortable at the interview and also give you a better understanding of the organization's needs.

3. **Use PAWS to introduce yourself**
   Interviewers typically start off an interview with the question "Tell me about yourself." Use PAWS to stay on track and provide the information the employer wants to know. Here are the four components of PAWS:
   Personal: Tell the interviewer why you want the position
   Academic: Talk about your educational background and/or relevant training
   Work: Highlight your related work, volunteer, or extra-curricular experience
   Skills: Indicate the skills you have developed that are relevant to the position

NOTE: While it is essential to include all four components of PAWS in your answer, the order of PAWS is interchangeable. We recommend starting with your strongest asset.

Here is another strategy to use to answer this question. This strategy breaks down into three steps:

- Briefly highlight your education and relevant work/volunteer experiences
- Discuss relevant skills and achievements
- Describe why you are excited to be interviewing for that position

4. **Use STAR to answer behavioural questions**
   For employers, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. To assess your past behaviour, employers use behavioural questions, which ask you to provide examples from your past. To prepare for this type of question, think about your academic studies as well as your work, volunteer, and extra-curricular experiences. Identify which would be best to illustrate the skills required for the position. Use STAR to structure your answer. The four components of STAR are:
   Situation: Create a picture in the interviewer's mind by telling the employer what your job title was, who the employer was, or in what sector you worked in, and briefly describing the situation.
   Task: Describe what you needed to do
   Action: To demonstrate your logic and problem-solving abilities, tell the employer the steps you took to deal with the task
   Result: Tell the employer the positive results from your actions and quantify the results when possible.
   Positive results could include:
   a. The immediate positive impact of your actions (e.g. completing an assignment before the deadline, meeting a sales quota, turning an angry customer to a satisfied customer);
   b. Lessons you learned from the experience (e.g. realizing the need to improve a skill, or develop a new skill)
   c. Any skills you gained (e.g. learning a new software program, developing stronger grammar or presentation skills)

5. **Prepare questions for the interviewer**
   You will probably have questions about the job, or the workplace culture, or the training you will receive. Go to the interview with 3-5 questions for the interviewer. This will demonstrate your interest in the position to the interviewer. However, be prepared for the interviewer to only answer 1 or 2 questions. When the interviewer asks, "Do you have any questions for me?" quickly scan your list of questions and ask the question that is most important to you.

Whenever possible, prepare questions that demonstrate your research of the organization. Be sure to research information in e-newsletters, blogs, or in media posts and ask questions about information that interests you. For example, if a company has noted the start of a new production line in the near future and you have expertise that would be helpful, it would be appropriate to ask if this position would allow you to be part of the team that would implement the new line.

Ask questions that are important for you to decide whether to accept or decline the position. Consider your values and career aspirations when creating questions.

You can also ask questions that can provide more information about the job itself. Listed below are a few examples:

- Is there anything about the position that wasn't in the job posting that I should be aware of?
- Will the job evolve as I continue to work here?
- How will my performance be evaluated? Are there reviews?
- Can you tell me what the career paths are for this department and what sort of advancements I could work towards?
- Will I be working with a team and if I am, can you tell me a little about each of them?
- Can you tell me about my direct supervisor, and is there anything I should know about this person that will make working with them a smooth process?

If you get the feeling that the interviewer has some concerns, you can ask the interviewer:

- Is there anything else I can provide you with to help you with your decision?
  OR
- Do you have any questions or concerns about my qualifications that I could clarify before this interview ends?

Do ask "What are the next steps in the hiring process?"; By asking this question you will:

a. learn about the hiring process,
b. know when the interviewer plans to get back to you,
c. identify your official contact person and how to reach them,
d. find out when you will get the results of the interview.

Do not ask about salary, benefits, or vacation; these questions are best dealt with when you have received a job offer.

6. **Practice, Practice, Practice**
   Find people to practice with. This will help you identify the questions you are answering well and which answers to questions need to be improved upon. It will also provide the opportunity to detect poor body language, common filler sounds (uhm, ah, you know, like), and other areas of weakness. Another excellent tool is your computer. Use your webcam to interview yourself and review the results.

7. **Arrive on time, prepared and professional**
   Arrive approximately 10-15 minutes before your scheduled interview. Bring additional copies of your resume (one for each interviewer) along with your references, portfolio (if relevant), and a pen. Dress in a manner that is professionally appropriate for the position you are applying for and avoid perfume, cologne, or any other strong scents.

8. **Be confident**
   Demonstrate your confidence by providing strong examples of your skills, experience and knowledge. You can also show confidence by smiling, shaking the interviewer's hand during introductions, and maintaining eye contact during the interview.

9. **Follow up with a thank-you email**
   Following up with a thank-you email is a courteous gesture that can set you apart from other equally qualified candidates. It is also your last chance to sell yourself by stating what makes you a great fit and why you are excited about the position. Be sure to follow up within 24 hours.