

PIONEER EXPLORER INNOVATOR PIONEER VISIONARY TRAILBLAZER

CAREER SERVICES

INTERVIEW



University
of Manitoba

Career Services

Your interview

Congratulations! You've impressed an employer with your resumé and cover letter and they've invited you for an interview. The interview is an opportunity for both the employer and the applicant to gather information and evaluate each other. You have the chance to evaluate the position and the organization and determine if they will fit into your career plans. Likewise, the employer will be trying to determine if you fit with the team and have the required skills and enthusiasm for the role. It is an opportunity for both parties to market themselves. The employer is promoting the organization to you, and you are marketing your skills, knowledge, and attributes to the employer.

Employers want a person who:



Use the tips in this workbook to get ready for your interview – research and preparation are the keys to success.

Step 1: Research

Know the job and the required skills

The first step in preparing for an interview is to research the job. To convince the employer you have the necessary experience and skills, you must first know what those requirements and duties are. Sometimes there might only be a few days of notice for your interview, so you will need to prioritize your preparation. Understanding the occupation will help you effectively prepare for interviews in general, so begin building your knowledge base early if you can. You can do your homework even before getting the interview by researching the profession as you prepare your resumé. If you are reading this with limited time to research, focus on strategies that make sense for your timeline.

There are several ways to find out about an occupation:

1. Find the job description

Request a copy of the job description from the employer when you're offered an interview.

2. Informational interviews

Interview an employee in the field to gain valuable information.

3. Use career services

Research the occupation through the **Exploring Occupations** library or **drop in** to talk with a Career Consultant.

4. Professional associations

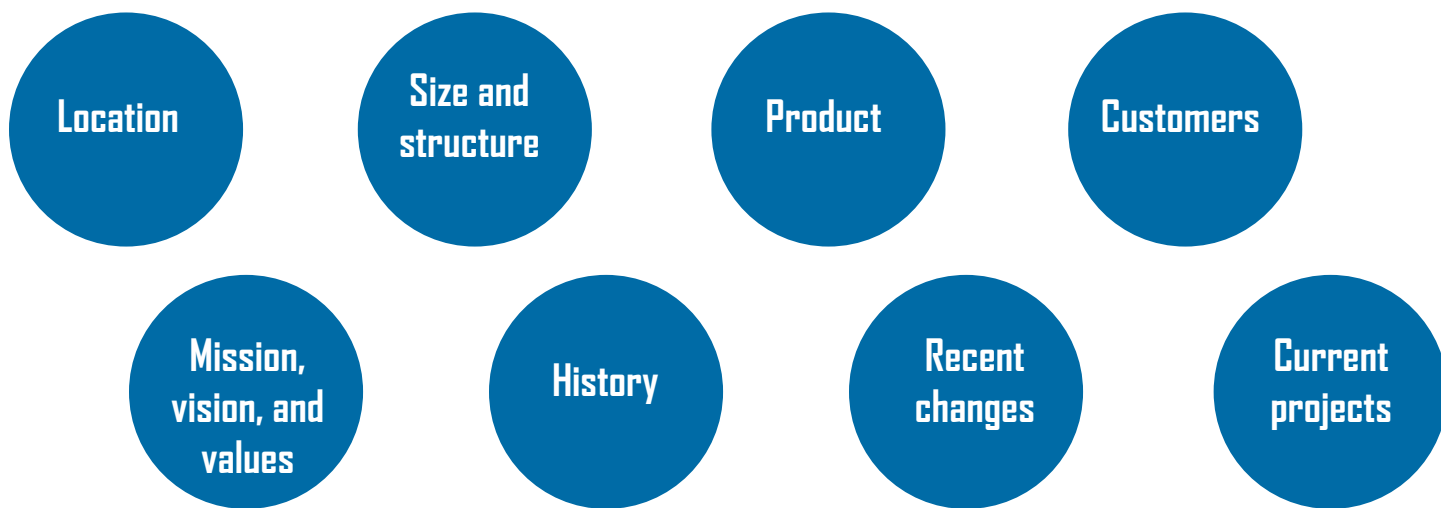
If you belong to a professional association, access its resources, such as newsletters and seminars to learn about the industry.

5. Read articles

Read articles about the profession to better understand the industry.

Know the organization

The more you know about an organization, the better prepared you will be to discuss how you can meet its needs. Some of the characteristics that you should know about an organization are:



Most organizations publish information about themselves, which can be accessed in a variety of ways:



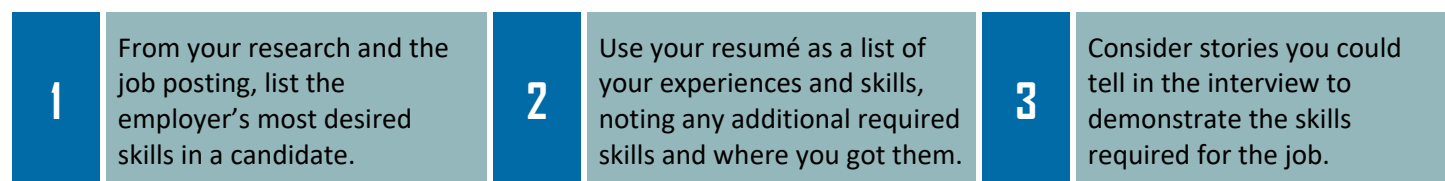
Step 2: Match your skills to the employer's needs

The second step in preparing for an interview is to thoroughly assess your skills in relation to the job you are interviewing for. You identified and demonstrated your skills that match the job requirements when **writing your resumé**; use the same techniques when preparing for the interview.

Tip:

Start by studying your resumé: it got you the interview after all. Consider which skills, experiences, and attributes you will want to expand upon in your interview.

Here is a brief overview of the process of reflecting on your skills as they apply to the position you are interviewing for (see [Appendix A](#) for a full explanation):



If you haven't used our resumé resources or would like a refresher, use [Appendix A: Deconstructing a Posting Worksheet](#) or [Come Talk to Us](#).

Skills employers value

Employers are going to be interested in a wide variety of specific skills which differ by workplace and industry, but there are many skills that the majority of employers value. The Conference Board of Canada identified skills which employers of all kinds seek in their workers. Check out [Employability Skills 2000+](#).

Tip:

Think broadly: skills are developed everywhere. Researching and writing a paper develops your written communication skills. Sports or group projects use your teamwork and leadership skills. Don't overlook any abilities you have. For a skills assessment, use [Appendix B](#) or [come talk to us](#).

When doing self-reflection, identifying your experiences and skills is important, but it is not all that you need to know.

Consider the answer to these questions:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How have I demonstrated the skills required in this position? ▪ Apart from my skills and experience, what can I bring to this job? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are my short term and long-term goals? ▪ What can I offer this particular employer? ▪ What are my strong points and weak points? |
|---|---|

Tip:

Make a list of your key strengths that you want the interviewer to know. These points should relate to the skills you know the employer will want from you. Be sure to incorporate these in your answers.

Step 3: Anticipate and practice interview questions

You can never predict every question that you will encounter. What you can do is use the job posting and your research to anticipate what skills or competencies interest an employer and develop possible questions from there.

Types of questions

Being aware of the many question types can help you to focus your answers to the skills the employer is looking for.

Three types of interview questions are:

1. Traditional questions

2. Behaviour descriptive questions

3. Hypothetical questions

Traditional Questions

Employers will ask you questions about specific skills related to the position or ask more general questions where you will need to be sure to tie in examples of specific skills you know the employer needs.

Example

“What skills do you have that relate to this position?”

“I have very good communication and interpersonal skills that I have refined through several summer and part-time jobs working with the public. For example, in my time working for Parks Canada, I communicated with visitors in both English and French, listening to their needs, providing them appropriate information, and ensuring that they have the best experience possible. Using these skills, I will be able to communicate effectively with your customers and my colleagues in this position.”

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This is one of the most common interview questions. An acronym to remember how to answer this question is E.S.P.

E Education	Discuss your education and training. Explain why your education will help you excel in the position.
S Skills	Share 3 skills that you have which are central to the job and meet the employer’s needs. Be sure to demonstrate how you gained them with specific examples.
P Personal	Share something personal about yourself: an interest, an activity, a hobby. If possible, share something related to the positions or company culture. Make sure what you share is work appropriate!

Remember: E.S.P. – Power of 3’s, Education, Skills, Experience

Example

“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.”

E

I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology, and have recently completed the course in Volunteer Management through the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg. These have given me a strong background in many of the principles of human behaviour and the recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers.

S

I have counselling and coaching skills and experience (1) gained through my volunteer work at the Youville Clinic. My part-time job at Moxie’s has provided me the opportunity to further develop my communication skills (2) where I supervise and train staff, serve customers, and work in a team environment. I had the opportunity to plan events as a volunteer in non-profit organizations and have gained some valuable planning and organizational skills (3). These skills would be beneficial in the role of volunteer manager at your organization, not only to ensure events would be planned and organized, but also to allow me to act as an effective leader to a team of volunteers.

P

In my spare time, I play soccer and I am involved in a vocal jazz group which I really enjoy and further demonstrate my commitment to teamwork.

Behaviour Descriptive Questions:

This type of question asks what you did in a particular situation, typically related to the job description. The logic is that examples of past performance can help to predict future performance. There is no right or wrong answer, but you should relate the answer to the position. For example, if you are interviewing for a research position, talk about a research project. A strategy for answering behaviour descriptive questions is to tell the story using the “STAR” method.

SITUATION	Explain the situation: set the scene with where and when the story took place.
TASK	Describe the task, problem, or challenge you encountered.
ACTION	What did you do? What actions did you take? Outline the specific steps you took to address the problem. This is the most important piece of your answer and should take up the most time.
RESULT	What was the end result? Did you receive any feedback or learn anything that can be applied to this position? Focus on the positives!

Remember: STAR – Situation, Task, Action, Result

EXAMPLE

“Tell me about a time you worked effectively as a team member.”

Situation Last term, I took a Marketing class which had a significant group project.

Task The assignment required we meet with a company and create a marketing plan based on our knowledge and what we learned from our client.

Action To begin, we met as a group and decided on our timeline and goals for the project. We then met collectively with a company representative to assess their needs. Afterwards, we met as a team to determine our next steps. I suggested that each team member share their strengths and preferred role or tasks they wanted to manage for the project. Based on this information, we assigned work and set check in dates and a deadline for each piece of the project.

Result Having clear expectations regarding responsibilities and timeline helped us to complete the project prior to the deadline. Allowing people to work on sections they were passionate about allowed us to create a much stronger project that the client was pleased with and did implement within the organization.

When preparing for this type of questioning, it is crucial that you review the skills and qualities that the position would require and identify specific examples from your past which demonstrated those traits.

Tip:

If you are asked to describe a situation you have never encountered, answer the question hypothetically, explaining what you would do in that situation and what the expected result would be.

Hypothetical or scenario questions

When asking a hypothetical question, the interviewer describes a situation which you may encounter in the position and asks how you would react. In your answer, include the following:

Explain how you would gather information

Describe your actions

Demonstrate the skills needed in the job

Discuss expected results & appropriate follow up

If you have encountered a similar scenario in the past, be sure to reference this in your answer.

EXAMPLE

“SUPPOSE YOU ARE WORKING YOUR FIRST DAY IN OUR LABORATORY, AND A FIRE BREAKS OUT. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?”

“Before I start my work in any laboratory, I always locate the emergency equipment, such as eye washes, fire blankets and alarms. I also review the safety protocols. So in this situation, I would be aware of these. As soon as I notice the fire, I would shut down my experiment and if the fire was significant, I would pull the fire alarm and help to evacuate the lab. In the case of a very small flame, I would ask the staff member at that station what I could do to help, which would vary with the type of substances involved.”

Creating your own practice questions

Look at the job posting through the lens of the interviewer: what questions might the interviewer ask to determine if you have the skills to do the job? Create a list of practice questions for yourself that ask about the required skills in different ways: behaviour descriptive questions, hypothetical questions, and direct questions about specific skills or experiences. For more inspiration, Google “interview questions” and your field or job title, to see if anyone has posted examples from their own experience online.

If you find a gap in your knowledge that might be important in the interview, take the time to familiarize yourself with that information: look up policy, legislation, or a theory that might be asked about in the interview. In a way, you’re studying to ace the interview, the way you’ve prepared as a student so many times before.

Answering interview questions

Regardless of what type of question you are asked, you will find it easier to respond effectively if you keep in mind some basic question answering strategies:

<p>1. Use your resumé</p> <p>Reviewing your resumé before the interview can remind you of the skills you plan to market to the employer. Do not leave anything out: never assume the employer has your resumé memorized.</p>	<p>2. Pause</p> <p>Pausing before answering allows you to quickly plan a thoughtful, concise answer. If you're going off track in your answer or draw a blank, stop to think for a moment before continuing.</p>	<p>3. Ask for clarification</p> <p>If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification. This is perfectly acceptable and normal.</p>	<p>4. Be honest</p> <p>The slightest stretching of the truth may result in you being screened out.</p>	<p>5. Expand</p> <p>Never answer a question with simply a "yes" or "no." Always expand; it shows enthusiasm.</p>
<p>6. Repeat points</p> <p>Don't be afraid to repeat important points. In fact, it is a great idea to do this.</p>	<p>7. Be confident</p> <p>It's good to be confident. As long as you can back up what you are saying with examples which demonstrate that what you are saying is true, you are not bragging.</p>	<p>8. Be positive</p> <p>Be very positive. Don't complain about anything - from your former employer to the weather. Positivity and enthusiasm are best.</p>	<p>9. Sell what you have</p> <p>Don't apologize for experience that you don't have. Sell what you do have and let the employer decide. For example, instead of "I have a little experience..." say "I have experience...."</p>	<p>10. Body language</p> <p>Sit with an open posture. Avoid crossed arms, staring at your feet, or talking to the interviewer's shoulder.</p>

Tip:

Feel awkward selling your skills? Third party observations can also be mentioned. For example, "My last employer told me that I was promoted because of how I handled conflicts with clients."

Difficult interview questions

The following are common interview questions which people often have difficulty answering and an explanation of how to handle them.

Negative Questions

Illegal Questions

Salary questions

Negative Questions

In a negative question, the employer asks you to identify a weakness in yourself or to describe a situation in which you performed poorly.

If you are asked a negative question:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Be honest 	<p>Be honest, but always turn it around and end on a positive note.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Be strategic 	<p>If you are asked to identify a weakness, you do have to identify one. Be sure to choose a weakness that is not central to the job. If you do, this may eliminate you from the competition.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overcome 	<p>Always state what you have done or are doing to overcome the weakness or demonstrate how it's not such a bad thing after all.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learn from it 	<p>Be sure to reflect on what you learned from your mistake and how you would handle the situation differently next time.</p>

Check out these examples of how to handle negative questions:

Example

"What is your greatest weakness?"

"I feel a little self-conscious when I speak in front of groups. However, to develop my confidence and public speaking ability, I have joined Toastmasters International. I have given numerous speeches over the past five months and have already noticed a big improvement."

Example

"Give me an example of a work situation in which you were not proud of your performance."

"Once while I was working as a salesperson in a lumber and hardware store a customer came in and began complaining about the prices. He wanted me to give him a large discount on some merchandise. I explained that I did not have the authority to do that and suggested he speak with the manager, who was unfortunately not in that evening. The customer was disappointed with this suggestion and left the store. Looking back, I think that I could have taken more responsibility in ensuring the customer's needs were met by taking his name and number, and promising to have the manager phone him, for example, and I also learned that every customer is valuable to any business. Now, given the same situation, I would take the time to understand the person's needs - perhaps a similar, less expensive product would have done the job and would have ensured that the customer felt valued by the company."

Example

“Your GPA is rather low, why is that?”

“If you look over the last two years, you’ll see that it has dramatically improved over that time. As I got into this area of study, I became much more focused, and my marks reflect this. The overall GPA however, is pulled down by my first two years.”

Illegal questions

Sometimes employers ask questions that violate the Canadian federal or provincial Human Rights legislation relating to employment. For more information, you can:

- 1) Contact the [**Manitoba Human Rights Commission**](#)
- 2) Contact the [**Canadian Human Rights Commission**](#)

Often, employers may not be aware that they are breaking the law, thinking that they are simply making conversation. You have every right to refuse to answer an illegal question, but be aware that if you do refuse to answer in a confrontational manner, it may have an impact on the interviewer's impression of you.

Protected subjects include:

Race	Religion	Age	Marital status	Gender
Pregnancy	Sexual orientation	Family status	Ethnic/national origin	Disability

Some people feel comfortable answering questions that touch on these topics. Others find it best to work around the question, answering more broadly without specifically referring to the illegal subject.

Concerned about illegal questions?

Come Talk to Us – we can explore ideas for how to handle situations like these.

Salary questions

Being well-researched and flexible goes a long way when stating your salary expectations. If you know the salary of similar positions, you can back up your request with that information. Always suggest a range. Remember, organizations may offer other opportunities (such as training, benefits, or potential advancement) that may make it worthwhile to accept less than you normally would.

Example

“What kind of salary are you looking for?”

“Current labour market reports show most entry level roles in this field start anywhere between \$35,000 and \$45,000 per year. I would like to earn towards the upper end of that range based on my three summers experience in the field and high marks in my academic program, but I am also interested in what opportunities the position offers.”

Salary negotiations

When entering into discussions of salary and benefits, it is crucial that you know your market value. Use salary surveys from professional associations or check out [Canadian Job Bank](#) or [PayScale](#) statistics. You can also speak with people working in the industry, including your classmates who have recently begun work, and ask for a range (don't ask individuals for their specific salary). Prior to negotiations, consider your lowest acceptable salary, keeping in mind factors such as the cost of living. Be prepared to justify any salary you suggest: cite your relevant experience, training, and past achievements as in the above example. Finally, if your negotiations involve bonuses, profit sharing or something similar, it is fine to ask for details such as, “In the past, how have people in this or similar positions benefited from these? Such programs would certainly affect my desired salary.”

Tip:

The more you practice, the better you will be at interviewing. Use the example interview questions in [Appendix C](#): practice in front of the mirror, record yourself, or work with a friend.

Step 4: Prepare questions to ask the employer

Having completed your background research, you are now ready to prepare questions to ask the interviewer. Try to think of questions you can't answer with a Google search. Intelligent, well thought-out questions will demonstrate your genuine interest in the position. Avoid sounding critical by mentioning negative information you may have discovered – always use your best judgment when choosing your questions. This is one of the most effective ways to compare different employers, so for issues of particular importance to you, you should ask the same questions of each employer.

Sample questions for the interviewer

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the most significant factors affecting your business today? ▪ How has your company grown or changed in the last couple of years? ▪ What direction do you see the company taking? ▪ What do you like most about working here? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have any new product lines been introduced recently? ▪ How much travel is normally expected? ▪ Will I work independently or as part of a team? ▪ What are the career paths available in this company? ▪ When can I expect to hear from you regarding this position? |
|--|---|

Step 5: Nail the interview

In addition to doing research and practicing your answers to common interview questions, you should be aware of general interview etiquette.

<p>■ Review your resumé</p> <p>Make sure that you can explain everything on your resumé. Use direct examples from your experience as proof of your skills.</p>	<p>■ Be 10 minutes early</p> <p>Give yourself an opportunity to collect your thoughts and relax. If you rush in, an employer may doubt your ability to arrive on time for work.</p>	<p>■ Get a good sleep</p> <p>You will think more effectively in the interview if you are rested. Beyond this, yawning will not impress anyone.</p>	<p>■ Eat beforehand</p> <p>If you are worried about your stomach growling, you will not be able to concentrate. Have fresh breath: stay away from strong smelling foods.</p>
<p>■ Dress appropriately</p> <p>Dress for the position that you are applying to. If you are unsure, always dress more conservatively. You want the employer to notice you for what you say, not what you wear.</p>	<p>■ Look your best</p> <p>Make sure that you are clean, neat, and well groomed. Interviewers do notice your appearance, and first impressions are critical in an interview.</p>	<p>■ Come prepared</p> <p>Bring a copy of your resumé, transcript, references (see appendix G), and perhaps work samples. Bring a pen and paper to record important information.</p>	<p>■ Turn off your phone</p> <p>It needs to be off, not on vibrate.</p>

Dealing with nerves

It is completely normal to feel nervous going into an interview, especially early on in your career. Many people say that interviewing becomes easier with practice. **Make an appointment** with Career Services for one-on-one interview prep: this can be a great opportunity to build your confidence and hopefully alleviate some of your nervousness. If your fear of interviews is impacting your ability to get a job, sometimes **counselling** is another option.

The interview process

There are many different types of interviews designed to serve different purposes or situations. Regardless of the type of interview, most will incorporate the following stages: establishing rapport, exchanging information, and closing the interview.

Tip:

Pay attention to the job titles of the interviewers. This can help you decide how much technical detail to provide in your responses.

1. Establish rapport

As soon as you walk in the door, first impressions are made and the tone of the interview is set. Follow the interviewer's lead - if they are chatty, be chatty; if they are formal, be formal. Some employers use casual conversation to get to know you on a more personal level - this may be crucial to a hiring decision!

Tips:

Smile and make eye contact.

Shake hands.

Wait until the interviewer sits or offers you a seat before sitting down.

If the interviewer is making small talk, participate. Be positive.

2. Exchange information

This is the bulk of the interview. It is your opportunity to let the interviewer know what you have to offer, and your chance to learn more about the organization.

Tips:

If he or she looks confused, ask if you can clarify anything.

Sit up straight and comfortably.

Ask questions to show interest

Use body language and facial expressions to demonstrate interest and engagement.

Control your nervous habits. Don't swing your foot, talk with your hands (to an extreme), or fiddle with jewelry, buttons, pens, etc.

3. Close the interview

When the interviewer is done gathering information, you will be asked if you have anything to add, or if you have any questions. This is your opportunity to make sure that you have communicated everything that you wanted to.

Tips:

Ask the questions that you prepared.

Thank the interviewers for their time and ask for their business card so you can follow up later.

If it is not known when a decision will be reached, ask if you can phone in a week's time to inquire.

Offer a sample of your work or portfolio if you have one.

Give the interviewer your references.

Shake hands.

Types of interviews

Employers have various styles of evaluating candidates. Here is an overview:

Type of interview	Description:
Panel interviews	Two or more individuals interview candidates. When answering, make eye contact with the person who asked the question but also look at the others. Ignore note taking by panel members.
One-on-one interviews	Candidates are interviewed by one person. The interviewer will often have a series of prepared questions. It is important to maintain eye contact with the person interviewing you.
Impromptu interviews	An informal interview might occur during a job fair or a cold call. The employer asks basic questions to decide if they will formally interview you.
Follow-up interviews	You might be invited to a second interview led by management. Prepare for in-depth questions by further researching the firm. Use information gained at the last interview to your advantage.
Telephone interviews	Have your resumé and notes nearby. If you are home, make sure it is quiet and distraction free. Smile: they can tell even on the phone. Speak slowly and convey your enthusiasm verbally since the interviewer can't see your face.
Skype interviews	If given the choice, this is typically superior to a telephone interview because the employer can see you. Dress professionally. Be sure to eliminate background distractions (including pets).
Dinner interviews	Don't be the only one to order alcohol, and if you do, stop at one. Decide what to eat quickly, avoid messy foods, and take small bites. The discussion may abruptly change from friendly chat to direct interview questions.
Group interviews	Group interviews test your ability to work in a team. Employers want to see your interpersonal skills in action. Remember what is being tested: be the best team player or leader you can be.

Other methods of evaluation

Employers might also evaluate your skills in additional ways:

Written segments	A written exercise allows employers to test written communication. You may be asked to write a letter, memo, or review and summarize a document. Read the instructions carefully, manage your time wisely, and be sure to check your work for errors.
Role plays	An employer may fabricate a situation to see how you may use your skills. You and another person, most likely one of the interviewers, will act out the situation. Show off the skills that the employer would be most interested in.

Skills test	Some employers will administer tests to evaluate the technical skills required for the job. For example, you may be tested on computer programs.
Portfolios/ Work samples	A portfolio with samples of your work related to the position is expected in artistic fields. An employer relies heavily on a portfolio to evaluate a candidate's work. In other professions, a portfolio is an asset to highlight related projects. Use the portfolio to support your answers and provide "proof" of skills to the employer.
Presentations	An employer may ask you to prepare a presentation, providing instructions days before your interview. Follow instructions carefully and show off the skills and knowledge required for the position by thoroughly preparing an engaging presentation.

Step 6: Following up after the interview

Reflect

After every interview, evaluate your performance to learn from your experiences. Consider the following questions:

- What positive impressions did I make? Negative? Why did I make these impressions?
- Was there anything I wanted to say or ask about but didn't?
- What questions would I have answered differently? How would I have changed my answers?
- How do I feel about the interview?

Tip:

Write down the questions you were asked and your responses after the interview. This reflection can help you to prepare for future interviews and improve how you tackle similar questions.

Thank you notes or emails

It is very important to send a thank you note or email following the interview within 24 hours. If you send it any later, you have missed your window of opportunity to impress the employer and thank them for their time. Ensure you request a business card at the end of the interview so that you have the correct contact information to send your letter or email. It is a good opportunity to communicate anything that you forgot in the interview, and to reinforce your interest in the position. An example of a thank you letter is included in [Appendix D](#).

Accepting or rejecting a position

Depending on the employer, the hiring decision might be made quickly or it might take a few weeks for all parties to meet and agree upon a candidate. If you are the chosen applicant, congratulations! Now you have a decision to make. Once you receive the call, it is appropriate to ask for 24 hours to think before accepting the offer, if you need it. See [Appendix E: Letter of Decline](#) and [Appendix F: Letter of Acceptance](#) for examples of how to accept and decline a job offer in writing.

Not getting the job

Keep in mind that rejection is a normal part of every job search. For every position, if 100 people apply, 99 will be rejected. This does not mean that you are not a good applicant. It simply means that you were not the best applicant for that particular job at that particular time. Don't get discouraged. Rejection happens to everyone and you can treat it as a learning opportunity. Consider each new application a new opportunity.

Six major banks rejected Walt Disney's idea for Disneyland. They said no one would come.

A record company rejected the Beatles. They felt that electric guitar music was only a phase.

Tip:

Didn't get the job? Ask the interviewer for feedback so that you can improve. Compliment the organization and make it clear you are still interested in the organization for the future. Try asking, "How can I improve my skills or presentation to be competitive for the next opening?"

In conclusion

Keep practicing and keep preparing. Your interview skills will continue to improve throughout the job search process. Getting an interview is an accomplishment in and of itself, and if you keep at it, the rewards of a great job will follow.

Interviewing is hard and Career Services is here to support you. If you need help, **call** to book an Interview Preparation appointment with a Career Consultant.

Appendix A: Preparing for an interview: how to analyze a job posting

1 st print	Print off the job posting for the position you are interested in.
No posting?	<p>If the job posting is very minimal, research the skills required for similar jobs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at related job postings • Speak with contacts in the field • Research professionals on LinkedIn • Use the National Occupational Classification (NOC) to obtain a generic duty listing
2 nd highlight	Highlight the required qualifications as well as the skills and abilities (sometimes called competencies). Colour code to stay organized. For example, yellow may indicate skills.
What's important?	Employers often list the most important qualifications or skills and abilities higher on the job posting.
3 rd You	Document where and how you have gained the skills asked for in the job posting, writing them out for your reference.
Focus your answers.	You have now identified the skills the employer cares about and how you meet that need. This will allow you to anticipate questions as well as focus your answers toward the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are of interest to the employer.

Now that you have a clear understanding of what skills the employer is looking for and how you meet that criteria, use the sheet on the following page to organize that information.

Preparing for an Interview: How to Deconstruct a Job Posting

Qualifications

How do you meet the criteria?

Skills, abilities or duties

How do you meet the criteria?

Fill out this table and use it as a checklist for what needs to be emphasized in your interview. Consider the questions the employer might ask to determine if you have these skills. When formulating your answers, keep these skills in the back of your mind.

Appendix B: Skills matching worksheet

Written communication	I use this skill when...
Condense information/produce concise summary notes accurately with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.	
Write letters and reports that are logically structured and contain all relevant information.	
Adapt writing style in consideration of different audiences.	
Oral communication	I use this skill when...
Ask and answer questions, clarify, and summarize what others are communicating.	
Provide clear explanations and directions while instructing, educating and providing feedback.	
Communicate with others using a variety of communication strategies to negotiate, mediate, resolve difficult issues and sell ideas.	
Teamwork	I use this skill when...
Demonstrate respect and care. Is open and supportive of the thoughts, opinions, and contributions of others.	
Actively contribute to team projects/tasks; fulfils required roles, participates in discussion to improve effectiveness.	
Accept and share responsibility. Learn from constructive criticism and give positive and constructive feedback.	
Leadership	I use this skill when...
Accept responsibility for decisions and display a positive attitude and perseverance.	
Models a strong desire to succeed by demonstrating adaptability to achieve goals.	
Take initiative in leading, supporting and motivating others in developing individual skills or tasks to achieve goals.	
Planning and organizing	I use this skill when...
Effectively apply organizing and planning skills to manage work.	
Work effectively to complete deadlines when under pressure.	
Proactively plans and manages work; monitors results through to successfully complete plans.	
Problem solving skills	I use this skill when...
Make decisions in accordance to accepted practices and guidelines.	
Use problem-solving strategies to identify and resolve problems, issues and determine solutions.	
Recognize inconsistencies in reasoning. Makes decisions in situations that fall outside established guidelines.	

Analysis and research	I use this skill when...
Gather relevant secondary data and organize information in a logical manner.	
Collect primary data and/or assist in carrying out surveys, focus groups, and lab analysis.	
Analyze samples/surveys for quantitative/qualitative research.	
Numeracy: able to carry out arithmetic operations/understand data	I use this skill when...
Perform calculations for adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing, and converting between fractions and decimals.	
Perform complex calculations and operations that require using advanced multi-step mathematical strategies.	
Analyze or compare numerical data to identify trends or compare statistics.	
Digital technology skills	I use this skill when...
Performs basic computer tasks, such as creating documents, saving files, and sending email.	
Design web pages and a wide range of software skills.	
Demonstrate in depth knowledge of computer software and information technology systems.	
Presentation skills	I use this skill when...
Present basic information to one or more people using appropriate resources, vocabulary, and non-verbal language.	
Prepare and present advanced information with clarity with the ability to respond to questions in a timely manner.	
Facilitate interactive presentations of advanced information customized to the interests and needs of the audience.	
Personal management	I use this skill when...
Demonstrate professionalism in recognizing expectations in work culture to maximize success in the workplace.	
Embrace new opportunities, learn continuously, and identify importance in every job/task.	
Anticipate the unexpected and respond quickly to sudden changes in circumstances.	
Other	I use this skill when...

Appendix C: Sample interview questions

Reviewing common interview questions can be an effective part of your preparation. Instead of trying to memorize ‘the best’ answers you can think of, we suggest putting yourself in the position of the employer, and imagining what type of a response would impress you. A question may be phrased in any number of ways so memorizing responses to specific questions may leave you unable to generalize your personal information to an unexpected question. Your best strategy is to review such questions, and become comfortable discussing yourself and your related skills.

Consider the answer to these questions:

1. What do you see yourself doing five years from now? (This really means, what are your goals within this organization? They want someone who is willing to stay and grow within their organization)
2. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
3. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company? (Remember the Power of 3's - tell them your 3 most relevant skills you can contribute to their company!)
4. Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your ability in “X” skill or area?
5. What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?
6. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
7. Why are you seeking a position with this company?
8. What do you know about this company?
9. What are your strengths? What is your greatest weakness?
10. How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
11. In what type of position are you most interested?
12. What jobs have you held? How were they obtained and why did you leave?
13. What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
14. Do you prefer any specific geographic location? Why?
15. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
16. What interests you about our product (or service)?
17. Define co-operation.
18. What jobs have you enjoyed the most? What jobs have you enjoyed the least? Why?
19. What are your own special abilities?
20. What job in our company do you want to work toward?
21. What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
22. Why should I hire you?
23. Give me an example of a work situation in which you were not proud of your performance. What did you learn from this mistake?
24. Tell me about a conflict with a co-worker, and how you resolved it.

Appendix D: Thank you note

Sending a thank you note by email is a great way to show your appreciation to your interviewers and make sure they continue to think of you in a positive light. This should be done within 24 hours, otherwise it may be too late to impact their decision. Some job seekers prefer to send a handwritten note or card. This can be effective, but be sure this arrives in a timely manner and is not tied up in the postal system. Especially if you are applying to a high tech or newer industry, an email is usually your best bet.

Dear Ms. Habit:

I would like to thank you and Mr. Larbit for granting me the opportunity to discuss the research assistant position with you. The interview was both thorough and informative and increased my interest in this position.

I am especially interested in assisting with the development of preventative vaccines. My experience as a research assistant at the University of Manitoba Animal Research Labs, and my Agriculture Degree in animal science have provided me with the skills and knowledge required to succeed in this position. The combination of working with animals and conducting research in a team atmosphere constitute an excellent work environment for me, one in which I excel.

Thank you again for your time. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

John Mack

Appendix E: Letter of decline

Dear Ms. Chau:

It was indeed a pleasure meeting with you and your staff to discuss your needs for an Engineer in Training. Our time together was most enjoyable and informative.

After careful consideration, I have decided to withdraw from consideration for this position. My decision is based upon the fact that I have accepted a position elsewhere that is very suited to my qualifications and experiences.

I want to thank you for interviewing me and giving me the opportunity to learn more about your facility. You have a fine team and I would have enjoyed working with you.

Best wishes to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Karen Redmond

Appendix F: Letter of acceptance

Dear Ms. Smith:

I would like to express my appreciation for you letter offering me the position of Architect in your Design Department at a starting salary of \$xxx per month. I was very impressed with the personnel and facilities at your plant in Thompson and am writing to confirm my acceptance of your offer. As requested, I am able to start work on May 1, 2017.

Let me once again express my appreciation for your offer and my excitement about joining your team. I look forward to my association with Canadian Construction Limited and feel my contributions will be in line with your goals of growth and continued success for the company.

Sincerely,

Robert Obi



Appendix G: References

Employment References

References are people who can speak on behalf of your character and work ethic. Your references can be, but are not limited to, your current or past supervisors, coworkers, peers, professors, instructors, and community leaders (e.g., your sports coach). In an employment context, a candidate would typically provide contact information for their references and the potential employer would call them via phone. Reference letters are less common.

Be sure to bring a Reference List which includes approximately three references to the interview (unless otherwise requested by the employer). Ideally, you want your references to be people who have observed your performance in a supervisor or leadership role and can describe your work ethic, skills, and character. When choosing a reference, make sure to choose someone who knows you well and can speak positively about your experience, skills, and abilities.

When asking someone to be your reference, it is important to do so in a polite and professional manner. Here are some tips to consider:

- **Ask for their permission.** Before listing someone as a reference, ask for their permission to share their contact info with a potential employer. You can do this through a phone call, email or in person.
- **Provide them with a copy of your resume, cover letter, a copy of the job posting that you are applying for.** You may also want to advise them about the date and time of the interview. This will help your references prepare for a reference call from a potential employer.
- **“Coach” your references.** You can ask your references to speak about specific skills that you would like them to highlight to a potential employer. Remember: you are an expert on what you have to offer, but your reference may not remember or be aware of everything you have done.
- **Be gracious.** Be sure to thank your reference for supporting you in this way!
- **Keep them informed on your job search progress** and let them know when you are offered a position.

When your reference is informed and prepared to receive a potential call from an employer, they will be best able to highlight your strengths and abilities to help you succeed in getting the job!

Sample email for a reference request:

Dear [Name],

I hope all is well with you. I am reaching out to ask if you would be willing to serve as a reference for me in my job search. I am applying for a [position title] at [company name], and I believe that your perspective on my skills and abilities would be valuable to potential employers. I would appreciate if you can talk about my skills in [skill], [skill], and [skill]. I will be interviewed for this position on [date at time].

If you're able to serve as a reference, I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my resume, cover letter and the job posting for the position. I understand that this may take up some of your time, and I want you to know how much I appreciate your help.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

Academic Application References

An academic written reference is a letter written typically by a professor, instructor, or mentor that provides recognition for your academic achievements, intellectual abilities, and character. Some reasons why you might need an academic written reference include:

- Graduate school admissions
- Scholarships and grants
- Professional program admissions

When asking someone to provide a written academic reference here are some tips:

- Choose someone who knows you well, and that you have a good relationship with. You want the person to be able to speak positively about you.
- Ask them as far in advance as possible (2-3 months if possible) and follow-up with a reminder 2 weeks before it is due.
- Start by explaining the purpose of the reference letter and why you are selecting them to be your reference. Ask them politely if they would be willing to be your academic reference.
- Inform the person of the deadline for submission, evaluation criteria, and any guidelines that they are to follow (e.g., length, format, etc.).
- Provide the person with your resume, transcript, a sample of your work from their course and/or any other related information that could help them provide a meaningful reference for you.
- Express appreciation for their time and effort in writing the reference letter.

If you are feeling uneasy about asking a professor to act as a reference for you, rest assured that professors are there to assist their students in achieving their academic objectives.

Sample email for an academic written reference request:

Dear [Name],

I hope you've been well since we last spoke. I am applying for [opportunity] and I would greatly appreciate it if you could write a reference letter for me. I have always admired your opinion and expertise, and I believe that your backing would make me a strong candidate.

The reference letter is due on [date], and the guidelines require that it be [length/ format/ other guidelines]. I have attached my resume and transcript for your reference. If you require anything else from me, please let me know.

Your willingness to consider my request and offer your support and guidance is deeply appreciated.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

Sample Reference list:

Dustin Johnstone

123 Linden Way • Winnipeg, Manitoba • R3B 3A5
Phone: (204) 287-1313 • E-mail: dustinjohnstone@escape.ca

REFERENCES:

Judy Smith

Engineering Manager
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(204) 555-7575
Judy.smith@philiptemro.com

Frank Mann

Supervisor
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Frank.mann@shaw.ca

Terry Peterson

Coach
Twins AA Hockey, South Winnipeg Hockey Association
(204) 555-6768
terrypeterson@hotmail.com