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INTERVIEW GUIDE

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Job interviews can be a source of concern, or even downright nerve-racking if you have no experience with them. To help you prepare and feel more confident when it comes to explaining your qualifications, use the following Interview Guide well in advance of your interview.

Research the Company



The first step in your preparation for an interview is to ensure you have researched the company and industry. You should have already started this process when you created your cover letter and resume so you can expand on that initial research to include competitors, recent news events, locations, and names of key individuals.

Information may be available from the company website, from individuals you may know who are currently working in the company, or from the business pages in various newspapers and/or company annual reports.

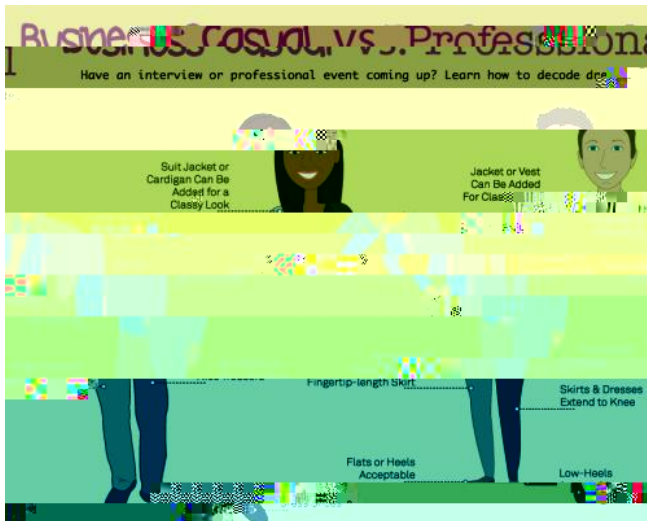
Being well prepared for the interview in this manner will set you apart from other candidates and allow you to make a positive impression on that particular company.

Analyze the Job Posting

In addition to gaining a solid understanding of the company, you want to ensure you have analyzed the job posting to assess what key skills, strengths, abilities, and experiences they are looking for. Again, you should have done this when preparing your job application, so review those key competencies so that you can begin to anticipate interview questions based on those competencies.



What to Wear?



Wearing appropriate attire for your interview is key to making a good first impression. The majority of employers prefer candidates to dress in professional business attire or business casual attire; however, attire will be different in different types of industries and some employers will be more casual than others. Match your attire to that of the most senior individuals you would be interacting with if successful in obtaining the position and if in doubt, dress professionally. At least a day prior to your interview, select and prepare what you will wear (i.e. ensure your outfit is clean, ironed, and there are no stains, holes, etc.)



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- x Shake hands with both the receptionist as well as your interviewer(s) and make sure you introduce yourself clearly with your first and last name. Ensure you have heard the interviewer's name correctly.
- x Do not smoke or chew gum.
- x Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s) and try not to fidget as it will distract the interviewer from what you are saying.
- x Let the interviewer take the lead and do not interrupt when he/she is talking.
- x Listen carefully to the questions and ask the interviewer to restate a question if needed.
- x Answer questions quickly or too slowly. Be concise, stay focused and to the point, and be clear. Speaking goes a long way in terms of making sure the tone of your voice is positive.
- x At the end of the interview, smile and make eye contact with each interviewer and send a thank you note/email to each (see the Thank You Note/Email section within this Interview Guide).





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Preparing for Interview Questions

Common Interview Questions

There are a number of interview questions that are fairly common; therefore, preparing your answers to these questions in advance will help put you at ease and make you feel more confident

1. Tell me about yourself. (This is often an icebreaker question. Keep your answer job or skill related. For example, you could provide an overview of your education and experience and then list two or three of your main strengths relevant to the position.)
2. What do you know about the type of work we do? (This is your chance to tell what you know from the research you completed ahead of time.)
3. What is your weakness? (Avoid stating a weakness that might be a requirement for the position. Try to be genuine in your response and focus on the positive in terms of what you have done or are doing to deal with or overcome that weakness. For example, "My spelling is not always perfect, so I always use a spell checker.")
4. What are your strengths? (Select two or three skills that are relevant to the position and will show you are a strong candidate for the position at the company. Provide a specific example to demonstrate each strength that you mention.)
5. Why did you leave your last job? (Answer with a positive statement. Try not to say: "I was fired," "terminated," "quit," "had no babysitter," or "couldn't get along with coworkers or supervisor". You can say: "new job," "contract ended," "seasonal," "temporary," "career change," "returned to school," "to raise a family," or "relocated.")
6. Why have you been unemployed for such a long time? (Tell the truth. Emphasize that you were looking for a good company where you can settle and make a contribution and that you were pursuing your Certificate/Diploma/Degree (whichever may be the case).)
7. Why should we hire you? (Make a positive statement, such as

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Situation: Provide the background context for the start of your example (i.e. Where is the example coming from? Was it from a particular position you held? Was it when you were pursuing your Certificate/Diploma/Degree? Remember to include **who**, what, where, and when.



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Here is an example of a behavioral interview question on teamwork and a response using the S.T.A.R. method

Interviewer Question: How do you demonstrate your teamwork ability?



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Sample Interview Questions

In addition to the most common interview questions listed previously the following is a list of additional sample interview questions based on Education and Career Plans, Experience & Skills, Job Specific/Technical Questions, and Personality/Personal Characteristics Questions. Use these sample questions as a means of practicing your responses to the interview.

Education and Career Plans

- x Why did you choose to study _____?
- x What is the objective of the Okanagan College _____ program?
- x What are you enjoying most about the program? Why?
- x Why did you get involved with the _____ program at Okanagan College? What do you hope to get out of participating in the _____ program?
- x How well are you doing in your courses/What are your grades like? (If not good, why?)
- x Which courses do you enjoy best? Least? Why?
- x Which area(s) of the _____ field interests you most? Why?
- x What do you think it takes to succeed in the _____ field?
- x How do you see your career path in the _____ field over the next five years?

Experience & Skills

- x Which past jobs have you enjoyed the most/least? Why?
- x Under what circumstances did you leave your last job?
- x Describe your working relationship with your last supervisor.
- x Are you currently working part-time? If yes, do you plan to continue working the part-time position?



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- x This position requires someone with strong interpersonal communication skills. Give me an example from your past experience to demonstrate that you have this ability. (This is a behavioral question use the STAR method to respond)
- x What salary are you expecting during your first work term? Why?
- x How would you summarize your overall knowledge and skills in the _____ field? (Mention strengths and areas of special interest).

Employers will likely ask some technical questions to test your professional level of expertise. Occasionally there may be written tests. Depending on the position you may be asked to construct a brief business letter or memo to demonstrate your business writing skills. You may also be asked to provide a portfolio.

Personal

- x What are your strengths/weaknesses (think of areas for improvement. Mention what you are doing to deal with or overcome the weakness)? How do you know? Please provide examples of each (relate to work environment or, if no prior work experience, relate to your education).
- x Which three adjectives best describe you? (i.e. reliable, collaborative, etc.)
- x Please provide an example of how you have shown initiative in a past job or volunteer experience. (This is a behavioral question use the STAR method to respond)
- x What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Why?
- x Do you prefer working on your own or in a team? Why?
- x What are some of your leisure interests?
- x Do you have a car or some other reliable form of transportation?
- x Are you willing to relocate for Co-op/permanent employment?

Questions to Ask the Employer

Always be prepared to ask the interviewer(s) questions as well. If you do not



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- x What would be the most important assignments that need to be accomplished in the first few months in this position?
- x How will success be measured in the position?
- x Would there be any training provided or available?
- x Can you tell me a little bit about your leadership style interviewing with the individual you will be reporting to?
- x What sort of opportunities are there for advancement within the company?
- x What is the biggest challenge the successful candidate will face in the position?
- x What type of employees are most successful at this company?
- x What will the next step in the hiring process be?

At the End of the Interview

At the end of the interview, be sure to reiterate your interest in the position, bring up any additional skill interview questions asked), request a business card from each interviewer if you do not have his/her contact information (so you can send a thank you note later), and thank each interviewer for his/her time (with a firm handshake).

Thank



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other desirable positions and try to maintain an optimistic outlook.

Be sure to ask what or how you could improve (either over the phone or via email), ask the employer to keep your resume on file for future opportunities, and thank them for their time and it is important to not burn the bridge by expressing your anger.

If you feel you could use some extra assistance with interview preparation, please reach out to us in the Student, Graduate, & Coop Employment office by emailing coop@okanagan.bc.ca

Offered the Position?

Congratulations! All of your interview preparation and hard work has paid off!

If you are thrilled about the opportunity and happy with the compensation package, you can accept the offer immediately; however, even if you are fairly certain you want the job, you do have the option of taking the time to evaluate the job offer to be absolutely certain that the position is right for you. You can express your gratitude and thank the employer for some time to consider the offer (usually 24 to 48 hours).

During the decision-making process, evaluate the offer by considering the entire compensation package not just the salary. Think about the benefits and perks, travel time, the hours, and the company culture. Take the time to review all the pros and cons so that you can make an informed decision.

If you have evaluated the offer and are interested in the position but feel the offer could be stronger, you can consider negotiating. In order to negotiate effectively, make sure you have researched average salaries for the type of position and consider what combination of salary and additional benefits would work for you. This will become your counter offer. **You have to know when to stop negotiating and either accept or decline the offer.

If you require assistance with the decision-making process or salary negotiation, please contact the Student, Graduate, & Coop Employment office at coop@okanagan.bc.ca