



# Interview Skills

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

### Understand yourself

- What skills do you have? Take into account skills from all aspects of your life, work, internships, education, extra-curricular activities, community involvement and volunteer work.
- What interests you? What are you passionate about? What issues are important to you?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What are your goals, both short and long term?
- What type of work environment do you prefer?

### Understand the employer

- Research the organisation through the web, library, newspaper articles, professional associations and networking
- Learn about the position's job responsibilities.
- Brainstorm some questions to ask the employer about their organisation's environment.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. First impressions count. Try to connect with your interviewer at the beginning.
2. Greet the interviewer with a warm and confident handshake. Introduce yourself in 30seconds-40seconds.
3. Try to make the session smooth and comfortable for you and the interviewer.
4. Be polite and take instructions from the interviewers
5. Maintain good and confident eye contact with the interviewer(s) throughout the interview.
6. Smile, take a deep breath and relax. It helps you to be comfortable so you can focus on the interview and be yourself.
7. Beware of your eye contact, gestures, posture and hand movements.
8. Beware of using slang expressions or improper grammar.

## ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

1. Listen carefully to the questions before answering to make sure you fully understand what is being asked.
2. Keep your answer brief, sell yourself quickly, and keep your information relevant to the job.
3. Use real life examples in your responses. Get to the point quickly and smile along the way.
4. Emphasise positive things about yourself and give examples to demonstrate your good qualities and strengths, *Examples:*
  - a) 'I am a team player, I worked on XXXX project and performed as XXXX role in the team.'
  - b) 'I am on the committee of my University student club and I was responsible for XXXX'.
  - c) 'My experience in working with a team of XXXX professionals made me a quick learner. For example XXXX'
5. Promote yourself in an honest and confident manner. Ask interesting and work related questions.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### Following up:

- Take notes right after your interview is finished and use them to remind yourself of what was discussed in the interview
- Within 24-48 hours send a thank you letter to the interviewer(s) expressing:
  - Your appreciation for the interview & the opportunity to learn more about the company
  - Reaffirm your interest and enthusiasm about the position and qualifications
  - Email is appropriate if there is a quick turnaround time to fill the position
  - A written thank you is always preferred
- Review your performance at the interview and think of any areas for improvement.
- If you receive an offer, inform and thank everyone who helped you in the process
- If you do not receive an offer, follow up with the interviewer(s) to discuss what you could do to improve your next interview performance, send thank you email for their time.

## DO'S

- ✓ Dress in a professional conservative and neat manner
  - Men: a well-tailored suit, conservative tie, polished shoes
  - Women: a well-tailored suit with minimal makeup and jewellery
- ✓ Review your resume and work history so you are ready to speak about both
- ✓ Arrive 15 minutes before the interview
- ✓ Bring extra copies of your resume
- ✓ Smile, take a deep breath and relax, It helps you to be comfortable so you can focus on the interview and be yourself
- ✓ Beware of your eye contact, gestures, posture and hand movements
- ✓ Beware of using slang expressions or improper grammar

## DON'TS

- ✗ Don't waffle around with your answers
- ✗ Don't ask for comments on your performance during the interview
- ✗ Don't bring a friend or relative
- ✗ Don't wear heavy cologne
- ✗ Don't fidget
- ✗ Don't play with your jewellery/hair during the interview

## TYPES OF QUESTIONS

### STARTUP QUESTIONS

Rapport building questions get a better understanding of you.

- Tell me about yourself?
- Why have you applied for this role?
- Describe yourself in one word.

### RESUME RELATED QUESTIONS

- Your resume indicated that you have experience in X. Could you tell us more about that area?
- You have stated in your resume that you have completed X extra-curricular activity. How will that help you in this role?

### ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

- Tell me about the degree you have studied and why did you decide to study X?
- How will your university education benefit your future career?
- Tell us what experience and training you have that qualifies you for this position?

### TECHNICAL FAMILIARITY

Knowledge assessment and issue interpretation

- What legal issues will you need to be mindful of in this role?
- What are the technical skills you learned from your past jobs that relate to this role?
- Why do you believe you are qualified for this position?

### SKILLS ASSESSMENT

- Are you good at handling several tasks and responsibilities simultaneously?
- How good are you at solving conflicts? Can you give an example?
- Tell me about a problem you faced whilst working in a team. How did you resolve the problem?
- Describe a situation where you successfully convinced others of your ideas.

### COMPANY AWARENESS

Knowledge of the organisation

- Why do you want to work at our company?
- What do you know about our company?
- Why does this industry/job/company interest you?

### MOTIVATION AND CAREER ORIENTATION

Career goals vs. the job you are applying for

- Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- What career goals have you set yourself?

## WHAT IS BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWING?

These interviews assume that based on your past behaviour, predictions can be made on how you will behave in the future.

E.g., "Tell me about a time when..." Each question requires a detailed answer from your past. They may focus on issues such as problem solving, initiative and teamwork. Your responses need to include the situation, what was required of you, your actions, and what you learnt. Preparation is crucial for this type of interview.

## USE THE PREP-STAR MODEL TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. POINT: answer the question
2. REASON: justify your answer and link it to the role
3. EVIDENCE: provide relevant example using STAR

**SITUATION:** Describe the background of a specific experience

**TASK:** Activities needed to complete

**ACTION:** Activities you have done and how you did it. Incorporate the difficulties or problems you solved

**RESULT:** Outcome

4. POINT: re-emphasise your key skills and abilities gained and relate it back to the role

## ASK THE INTERVIEWER THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

An interview is a two way selection technique – it's just as important that you are able to make an informed decision about the company and the vacant position as it is for the company about you.

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What kind of training program is available for this role?
2. Can you tell me about your background and how and why you joined this organisation?
3. How will you assess that I'm doing a good job? What will I have achieved in 6 or 12 months?
4. What is the next step in the selection process from here and when should I expect to hear from you next?
5. What are some of the skills and abilities necessary for someone to succeed in this job?

## TOUGH QUESTIONS

### What is your understanding of the position you have applied?

Prepare for this one by reading the job description (or the job descriptions of similar roles), talking to the contact person, HR Dept. or recruitment consultant. Ask questions at the interview.

### What will you bring to this organisation?

The critical thing in answering questions about strengths is to demonstrate where you have developed and used these skills.

### How do you keep abreast of new developments in the industry/field?

As a new graduate this should be a relatively easy answer. Professional membership, reading newspapers/journals and if you really want to appear well informed, talk about a recent industry development or issue.

### What are your weaknesses?

Talk about weaknesses that are unconnected with the position, or a gap in knowledge/skills that you are in the process of learning. You need to demonstrate that you have a strategy to overcome any weaknesses.

### What are your salary expectations?

Find a benchmark – talk to people, go to the Careers homepage and look at the Graduate Destination Survey. You also need to know about 'salary packages', which include superannuation, holiday leave loading and overtime.

## PRACTICE BY TAKING A MOCK INTERVIEW AT MYMQ CAREER ZONE:

[Interview 360](#)

### FIND OUT MORE

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