

# Ace the Interview!

This person  
sounds perfect  
for the job!

But, are they  
the type of  
person who will  
fit in here?

**...think like  
an employer!**

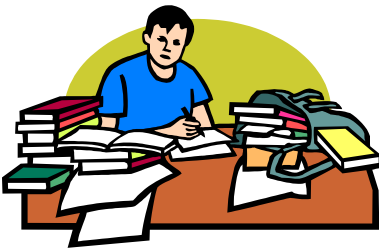


# Before the Interview

## 1

### Research the Company

An employer will be impressed to hear what you know about the company because it demonstrates a sincere interest.



**Ask:** friends, relatives, network contacts, professional organizations, or do library research (using Business Directories / Web Sites) to find out:

THE ORGANIZATION - Size, number of employees, major products or services, reputation, values, major weaknesses, major changes in policies or status

Or Even (optionally)...  
THE INTERVIEWER - level and area of responsibility, what sort of boss (s)he is, management style

THE POSITION - does an opening exist?, salary range and benefits, duties and responsibilities

## 2

### Plan your Transportation

You don't want to arrive late for your interview, so make sure you know the exact location of the organization and how long it will take to get there. Make sure that you take the right bus, or that your vehicle has enough gas to get you there.

## 3

### Practice what you are going to say

Rehearse the interview out loud to someone and practice the difficult questions as well as communicating your achievements and skills. Also, don't forget to prepare some questions to ask the interviewer.

## 4

### Review your Resume and Phone your References

Why? Make sure you are familiar with all the information on your current resume. If you haven't spoken to your references in a while, phone them to let them know where you are going for an interview and what type of position it is.

# 5

## Plan what to Wear

Your interviewer is looking for someone who “looks” like they would fit in. Carefully consider the impression your clothing will make on the interviewer. Consider what other employees wear and dress “one step up” from that.

- Plan your clothing in advance (make sure it’s clean and fits you well)
- Appear well-groomed
- Be conservative
- Wear a minimum of jewelry, make-up and cologne



# 6

## Take with you:

Take a folder/envelope/portfolio that contains:

- Extra copies of your resume and reference sheet
- Company address, phone number and name(s) of the interviewer(s)
- Paper and pen for notes
- Copies of pertinent certificates/diplomas
- Company information you have gathered
- Three to five relevant questions you have prepared

# 7

## Prepare a List of Questions for Your Interviewer

You want to make sure that this is the right job for you. Make sure that you have 3 – 5 questions prepared for the interviewer and write them down so you don’t forget. If they answer your questions before you have a chance to ask, mention that they have done a thorough job at answering all your questions. Also, make sure you know when they will be making their decision and contacting you, and ask if you can follow up if you do not hear from them by the date they give you.

# At the Interview

## Think Like an Employer as You Prepare for Your Interview.

As in every other job search step, put yourself in the place of the employer and think about what you would want to see sitting across the desk from you for the interview.

As an employer, answer these questions before you go to your next interview:

- What would the applicant be wearing?
- How would they be sitting?
- What would they have with them?
- What would they know?
- How would they speak to me?

### **Some things to consider at your interview:**


- Don't slouch or lean on the interviewer's desk
- Don't cross your arms across your chest
- Never swear, chew gum or smoke - and do not smoke right before the interview
- Never argue with the interviewer or get visibly upset
- Don't bring up personal problems, e.g. family or financial issues
- Smile when you introduce yourself - it makes you appear friendly
- Maintain eye contact - it shows you have nothing to hide
- Show up 5 - 10 minutes early for your interview
- Treat the secretary / receptionist with courtesy and respect
- Listen to the interviewer - think about your answers carefully and be sure you understand the question.

# 10 Common Interview Questions & Strategies for Effective Answers

## 1. Tell me about yourself.


**Tip:** Don't offer personal information about your family or personal situation

**Employer** ⇨ Wants to learn more about who you are and why they should hire you

 **Answer** ⇨ Focus on 4 – 6 main points you want the employer to know and remember about you including: key skills, achievements, experience, training, & education


## 2. What is your greatest weakness?

**Employer** ⇨ Are you genuine? Are you self-aware?

 **Answer** ⇨ Consider the job you are applying for and choose your weakness accordingly. Sound sincere. Too many applicants use the same “weakness” and employers are not fooled. Turn a negative into a positive or show how you’ve learned to compensate for this weakness. But be careful to not state something that would be seen as critical to the job. E.g. “I am a poor speller, however, I always keep a dictionary at my desk”.


## 3. Why do you think you're the right person for the job? Why should I hire you?

**Employer** ⇨ The employer can tell how well you cope with stress

 **Answer** ⇨ This is your chance to PROVE YOURSELF!  
Match their requirements to your qualifications. For example, from your research of the position and the company, state the qualifications and skills that you have to offer that most closely match what they are looking for in their “Ideal” candidate.


#### 4. Describe your relationship with your last boss.

**Employer** ⇨ Do you respond well to authority? Are you an employee who can get along well with others – and especially those who supervise you?

 **Answer** ⇨ Stay positive about your past experiences. Even if your last employer was difficult to work with, do not say negative things about them as it will only make YOU look bad.


#### 5. Why are you currently not working? What have you been doing since your last job? Why did you leave your last job?

**Employer** ⇨ The employer wants to know if there are any past problems in your work history that may affect your ability to do the job you are applying for.

 **Answer** ⇨ The secret is to be HONEST without going into too much detail. Expand on the positive and be brief on the negative. State briefly what you have been doing since your last paid employment, e.g. volunteer work or training/upgrading.

#### 6. Tell me about a situation on a past job where you were able to identify a problem. Then explain what you did about it.

**Employer** ⇨ Employers want to know how FLEXIBLE you are and if you adapt to different kinds of people and situations

 **Answer** ⇨ Organize your thoughts like this to keep you focused on your answer:


1. **Situation** – briefly describe the situation
2. **Action** – describe the action YOU took in the situation
3. **Result** – what positive outcome resulted because of YOUR actions in the situation

#### 7. You're overqualified for this position. Why would you want this position, when you could be doing a job with a higher level of responsibility?

Be prepared for this question if the following applies to you:


- a) You are new to Canada with professional education and experience outside of Canada.
- b) You are a recent graduate of an accredited college or university
- c) You have the education, experience and skills for a higher paying position, but because of current circumstances, you are willing to accept a lower paying position at this time.

**Employer** ➡ The employer does not want to invest time and money into an employee who is going to leave after a short time because they find a job more closely matching their qualifications.

 **Answer** ➡ Reinforce that you will be a strong team player and have the skills to do an excellent job.


## 8. What did you like most or least about your previous job?

**Employer** ➡ Hoping to discover what type of atmosphere the applicant flourishes in, what duties you EXCEL in or are good at.

 **Answer** ➡ MOST – use an area that would be part of the position you are interviewing for  
LEAST – use an area that is not going to be a large part of this position you are interviewing for.


## 9. Why are you changing careers? What skills or experiences from your previous career do you feel are applicable to those required in this job?

**Employer** ➡ Do you have the necessary skills & experience that are required to do this job?

 **Answer** ➡ Be prepared to state all of the relevant skills & experience that you have obtained that relate to the specific position you are interviewing for. To do this, try and find out as much as you can about the position and the key requirements and responsibilities.

## 10. Describe a time when you took the initiative – that is, when you did something that you were not expected to do or asked by your boss.

**Employer** ➡ Are you going to be an employee that can see when there's something that needs to be done and does it without having to be asked?

 **Answer** ➡ Be prepared with an example of ways that you took initiative in a past job and speak about how your boss appreciated this quality in you.

# After the Interview

What is a thank you  
letter? &  
Why do I need one?



## Thank You Letter

A thank you letter sent to your interviewer(s) is a gesture which shows your interest in the position and also shows you are courteous.

*A Thank you letter should:*

- be sent to the employer within 24 hours of the interview
- be short and friendly
- include thanks for actual things they did:
  - taking the time to interview you
  - taking you on a company tour
  - providing you with additional information about the job
  - introducing you to other personnel

It will further reinforce the memory of your meeting and may prompt them to take immediate action and decide in your favour. This will also give you one more opportunity to restate your interest in the position as well as the company.

# Sharon Stone

5555 Hollywood Blvd. Guelph, Ontario N1S 1S1 (519) 555-1212

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## Tip:

Make your thank you letter match the style of your resume & cover letter.

December 5, 2001

Brad Pitt  
Executive Director  
ABC Corporation  
111 Everywhere Street  
Guelph, Ontario N1H 2H5

### Opening Paragraph

Thank the employer for the interview and reiterate your interest in the position.

Dear Mr. Pitt:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the interview on Monday morning at ABC Corporation, and to confirm my strong interest in the marketing position with your company.

As we discussed, I feel that my education and background have provided me with a sound understanding of marketing options which will prove to be an asset to your company. Additionally, I have always been considered a hard worker and a dependable, loyal employee. I am confident that I can make a valuable contribution to your marketing department.

Sincerely,

Sharon Stone

### Second Paragraph

Remind the employer of your top skills and what would make you the best choice for the position. Include a few personal qualities that would make you a success on the job and a great employee.

## Sample Thank You Letter

**For more sample questions, visit one of these websites:**

1. **Mock Job Interviews** - select a career field and answer questions to a mock interview

<http://www.job-interview.net/sample/Demosamp.htm>

2. **Acing the Interview** - examples of interview questions and other interview pointers

[http://www.worksearch.gc.ca/content\\_pieces.jsp?category\\_id=300&crumb=1241&crumb=80&crumb=146](http://www.worksearch.gc.ca/content_pieces.jsp?category_id=300&crumb=1241&crumb=80&crumb=146)

**Consider attending an Interview Workshop for more information and an opportunity to practice your interview skills.**

Workshops are offered once a month at The Employment Resource Centre, 21 Douglas Street in Guelph. **Register** by calling 823-7887 ext. 360, or at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Employment in person or by calling 823-2440.