Interview Preparation Steps

1. Check out the job posting!

During your prep work, you should use the employer's posted job description as a guide. The job description is a list of the qualifications, qualities and background the employer is looking for in an ideal candidate. The more you can align yourself with these details, the more the employer will be able to see that you are qualified.

2. Reflect on why you interviewing and why you want the job.

Before your interview, you should have a good understanding of why you want the job and why you're qualified. You should be prepared to explain your interest in the opportunity and why you're the best person for the role.

3. Research the company and job ahead of time.

This step will help provide context for your interview conversations, but it will also help you when preparing thoughtful questions for your interviewers.

- **Research the product or service**
  It's important to learn all you can about the product or service the company produces and promotes. You don't need to understand each and every detail, but you should have a basic understanding of the main products or services the company offers.

- **Research the role**
  It's important to read the job description carefully and make sure that you understand all the requirements and responsibilities that go along with it. If possible, research similar positions and read reviews from individuals in those positions, so you can get an idea of what the day-to-day activities will be. During the interview, ask for clarification or details about the role, so you can be sure you're ready should you receive a job offer. Researching the role before an interview will also help you to decide whether or not the position is right for you.

4. Consider your answers to common interview questions.

You might consider developing an elevator pitch that quickly describes who you are, what you do and what you want. You should also prepare to discuss your salary expectations, just in case.

Here are a few examples of common interview questions that you should be ready to answer:

- **Why do you want to work here?**
  The best way to prepare for this question is to learn about the products, services, mission, history and culture of the company. In your answer, mention the aspects of the company that appeal to you and align with your career goals.

Example: *"I'd love the opportunity to work with a company that's making a difference. Finding a company with a positive work environment and values that align with my own has remained a priority throughout my job search, and this company ranks at the top of the list."*

- **What interests you about this role?**
  Employers ask this question to make sure you understand the role, and to give you the opportunity to highlight your relevant skills. It can be helpful to compare the role requirements against your skills and experience. Choose a few things you particularly enjoy or excel at, and focus on those in your answer.

  Example: *"I've been passionate about user experience design for most of my professional career. I was excited to see this company uses Adobe products because I'm well-versed in the entire suite. Also, I'm a huge advocate for applying agile workflows to design. I think it's the most effective way to tackle large projects. I was able to successfully build and launch an agile process in my previous role as UX manager, and we saw considerable improvements in project speed."*

- **What are your greatest strengths?**
  This question gives you an opportunity to talk about both your technical and soft skills. When an interviewer asks you to describe your strengths, share qualities and personal attributes and then relate them back to the role for which you're interviewing.

  Example: *"I'm a natural problem-solver. I find it rewarding to dig deep and uncover solutions to challenges—it's like solving a puzzle. It's something I've always excelled at, and something I enjoy. Much of product development is about finding innovative solutions to challenging issues, which is what drew me to this career path in the first place."*

5. Practice your speaking voice and body language.

It's important to make a positive and lasting impression during the interview process. You can do this by practicing a confident, strong speaking voice and friendly, open body language. For online interview tips, see our tip sheet:

https://www.dlsph.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Online-Interview-Tips-1.pdf

6. Prepare several thoughtful questions for the interviewer(s).

You should take time before the interview to prepare several questions for your interviewer(s) that show you've researched the company and are well-versed about the position. Some examples of questions you could ask include:

- *What does a typical day look like for a person in this position?*
- *Why do you enjoy working here?*
- *What qualities do your most successful employees have?*
- *I've really enjoyed learning more about this opportunity. What are the next steps in the hiring process?*

7. Conduct mock interviews.

If you have friends or family to help, conduct mock interviews as much as you can. If you don't have another person, practice your questions and answers out loud. You may find that an answer sounds awkward or doesn't convey what you wish when it's spoken, so this gives you an opportunity to refine your answers and commit them to memory. The more you repeat your interview, the more confident you'll be during the real thing. You may also want to record yourself practicing your interview answers to ensure you are speaking clearly observe your body language. Check out the Career Learning Network for more resources!

https://clnx.utoronto.ca/home.htm

8. Print hard copies of your resume.

Most employers ask for digital copies of your resume with the application, but they may not have easy access to it during the interview itself. If your interview is in person, having copies to present to multiple interviewers shows that you're prepared and organized. You should have at least three copies to provide for multiple interviewers, plus one for yourself to follow along.

9. Review your resume!

During your preparation, read over your resume and rehearse explanations for any gaps that may appear or other oddities. For example, you may have taken time off work to care for a child or family member, switched careers or had other legitimate reasons for gaps. These can be a concern for employers, so it's best to prepare your explanation to show them that you're not a risk. Check out the Student Life website under "Programs" for links to some great resources to help get you started.

https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/career-exploration-education/

You may also encounter questions about your resume that are awkward. It's important to be honest but diplomatic in addressing them. For example, you may have left a job because of your supervisor or manager, or policies that you didn't agree with, but you don't want to speak negatively about a former employer. Consider these possible questions and prepare your answers in advance, so you don't accidentally say something you'll regret.

10. Sell yourself.

One of the biggest challenges in an interview is selling yourself. Most people are uncomfortable with this idea, but presenting yourself accurately and positively doesn't have to feel like a sale. The truth is that you do have skills and experiences that may set you apart from other applicants, so it's acceptable and expected for you to acknowledge them to your potential employer.

11. Get ready to follow up after the interview.

After your interview, you should prepare to follow up with the employer. Doing so reminds the employer of your conversation, shows them you are genuinely interested in the position and gives you the opportunity to bring up points you forgot to mention.

Great Resource!

https://www.livecareer.com/resources/interviews/prep/intvres

Last Updated: November 9, 2020

Office of Practicum and Professional Development