



ApprenticeSearch.com's Interviews

Resource Guide

If you would like to take a deeper dive into interviewing, and gain access to downloadable tools and templates, see the eLift Careers online job search courses available for purchase.

What is an Interview and the Key to Success?

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1. WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

An interview is an opportunity for 2 (or more) people to meet to decide if they want to work together. It is simply a business meeting where both parties have some decisions to make; the interviewer to decide if they want to offer you a position and you as the job seeker to decide if you want to work for them. You may have between 1 and 3 interviews for a position. Always remember, if you have been selected for an interview, the interviewer already feels you could be a great match for them so approach it with confidence.

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2. GOALS OF THE INTERVIEWER

- Get to know the real you. It's therefore important to be prepared but not to sound scripted or fake with your answers
- Determine if you are a good fit for this role and their organization
- Compare and rank you against other candidates so that they can select the best one
- Sell their organization to you so that you will accept an offer

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3. GOALS OF THE JOB SEEKER

- Sell yourself to the interviewer by sharing information about your skills, background, education and achievements
- Build rapport with the interviewer
- Gather information about the role and the organization



Keys to Success

Interviewing is not rocket science.
The key to success is:

PREPARE

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental

PRACTICE

- Practice your answers
- Do a mock interview

PERFORM

- First impression
- Building rapport
- Confidence

LAND

- Get the offer!



Types of Interviews

There are 4 main types of interviews. Let's look at some common features and tips for each one:



Phone Interviews

COMMON FEATURES

- The phone interview is commonly used by employers as a pre-screening tool to identify which candidates they will invite to the next stage of the process
- Phone interviews are usually fairly short lasting between 15 and 30 minutes.
- They can be scheduled or unscheduled so you may need to be ready at a moment's notice. Avoid picking up your cell phone when you are somewhere noisy or it's a bad time, if you suspect it could be a potential employer, let it go to voicemail and call them back promptly when you are better placed to do well
- The questions will focus on determining whether or not you have the necessary skills and experience for the job. You can expect some "typical" questions as well as questions probing your interest in the company and the job, and your motivation for applying
- Don't be surprised if you are asked about salary expectations at this stage of the process. Employers want to know that you are roughly in the same ballpark as them before proceeding any further

TIPS

- Try to make the call from home in a quiet spot and make sure other members of your household know not to disturb you
- Check your cell phone to ensure excellent reception and test out your headset / earphones; it is best to be hands free if possible so that you can make notes and access relevant documents more easily
- Prepare well as you would for any interview. This will be covered below
- Print out relevant materials e.g. job posting, resume, cover letter, research etc. and have them at eye level to avoid looking down and negatively impacting your voice projection
- When answering the phone, state your name, then quickly mention their name after they introduce themselves e.g. "Very nice to speak to you Liz, thanks for the call". This will help to establish and build rapport
- Sit up straight to help with voice projection
- Smile when you speak; the employer will be able to hear that in your voice and it demonstrates confidence and enthusiasm

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Skype, Video, In-Person Interviews

COMMON FEATURES

- Skype and/or video-based interviewing is becoming more and more common as a pre-screening tool or for remote interviewing and sometimes is used instead of an in-person interview. However, in the trades it is likely that in-person interviews will still take place at some stage of the process as these are jobs that must be done in person. There are some common features of both these types of interview listed below
- These interviews can typically last between 30 minutes and 1 hour
- The interview could be with HR, the hiring manager, another manager in the company, a peer, or a recruiter from an employment agency
- Depending on the role of the interviewer you may be asked common or typical questions, behavioural questions, and technical questions

TIPS

- Try to find out the name and job title of the interviewer in advance as this will help guide your preparation. Review your resume and know it inside out! Prepare and practice your answers to all types of question and study up on any technical aspects of your job
- One way to stand out is to prepare questions you want to ask the interviewer –more tips on this later in this guide
- Remember, first impressions count, so dress professionally (one level up from the daily norm), switch off your cell before the start of the meeting and if it's in-person, be ready to shake hands with a medium firm handshake (during a pandemic or flu season, handshakes will not be done and a quick nod as you introduce yourself is a good replacement)
- Smile and use their name to build rapport and show enthusiasm for the role
- Be organized; for in-person interviews take a folder with you containing your resume, cover letter, pad, pen, reference sheet and any other relevant examples of your work. For virtual interviews try to place any documents at eye level just behind / above your computer to avoid looking down at your notes and documents
- During the interview watch your body language: make eye contact, sit up straight and smile! Remember to use their name occasionally during the interview to build rapport



SPECIAL TIPS

- Familiarize yourself with the various technologies that employers might use such as Google Meetings, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype etc.
- Make sure you read any instructions carefully before you start. They can be live interviews or pre-recorded videos that you need to complete and send back. Some pre-recorded versions allow you to have multiple attempts before finalizing them, others just one
- If the employer uses Skype, make sure you have a professional Skype username and photo. If you do not have a Skype account, consider setting one up early in your search process so you are ready at a moment's notice
- Check your surroundings to ensure they are tidy, organized, and professional. Remove any personal photos or items from view
- Dress to impress –make sure there is good contrast between what you are wearing and the background colour
- Look at the camera, not the screen, to ensure direct eye contact
- Close other programs on your computer and switch off other devices e.g., cell
- Use a headset or inbuilt mic and check audio and video in advance
- Finally, practice using the technology with a friend or family member beforehand



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Technical Interviews

COMMON FEATURES

- Depending on your goal job you may be asked technical questions designed to ensure you know your stuff. These interviews are typically 30 minutes to 1 hour in length and are commonly with the hiring manager, a peer or sometimes HR
- The questions may be scenario-based or practical in nature depending on the role e.g., you may be asked to show them how you would repair a piece of machinery etc. if relevant to the job
- Don't panic if you don't know an answer. They are often looking for problem-solving skills, tenacity, and persistence as well as technical know-how. If you don't know an answer, be honest and talk them through the process you would go through to solve this problem. Another great tip is to include the answer in your follow-up thank you note to show great follow-through and persistence to find a solution

TIPS

- Prepare as you would for any interview as they may ask more regular questions as well as technical ones. In addition, research the technical aspects and skills requirements of the job and brush up on any rusty skills and learn new skills. Consider taking some online video courses on areas that are new or technical aspects that are missing from your knowledge/experience. YouTube can be a job seeker's friend!
- When faced with a question about a technical skill that is missing, be honest but share with them a story about a time when you quickly learned new technology/technical skills. This will give the interviewer the confidence that you would quickly get up-to-speed and are prepared to learn. If you can combine this with telling them that you have already started learning in anticipation of this interview, you will really impress them!
- Make sure you demonstrate recent and relevant learning to show the interviewer that you are up-to-date in your field of work
- Finally, communicate clearly and appropriately for the target audience avoiding any jargon that would be unfamiliar or confusing

Typical Questions

The following questions are fairly typical in most interview situations.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This is your 2-minute professional introduction customized to the role, company and interviewer, and should include how you match the job requirements based on your skills, knowledge and experience. You can use relevant work, internship, college projects, volunteering, courses etc. Try to highlight transferable skills and their relevance to the job.

EXAMPLE ANSWER:

"I'm a High School Graduate and over the past 4 years I have been building my experience within the building trade through a variety of experiences including a co-op placement with ABC builders, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity and helping my uncle out with his pool business in the summer months. Through these experiences I have developed strong skills in teamwork, communication, and attention to detail. I have also gained knowledge of health and safety regulations and protocols relating to this industry. I received commendations from my co-op supervisor on my positive attitude and flexibility as we had many projects on the go at one time and things quickly changed day to day. One thing I enjoyed about my time there was working with a diverse group of people where we all relied on each other to achieve our daily targets. I applied for this role as I can see from the job ad that you are looking for someone with this type of experience and skill set and I would love the opportunity to learn and grow within your team so that I can contribute to their continued success."

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS ROLE/COMPANY?

Employers want to know that it is this job and company you really want to work in. Use your research on the company and the role to find a connection e.g. it could be shared values, passion for their product or services, a strong match with your skills or something you have heard about the team that attracts you to the company

EXAMPLE ANSWER:

“There are so many things! Since a very young age I have enjoyed building things and would take toys apart just for the fun of putting them back together again. This practical, hands-on approach has continued throughout my teenage years and so I’ve set my sights on a career in this field. When I first read the details of the job in your posting, I was curious to find out more about your company and so I did some research and was really impressed by the great work you do in the community. This really fits with my own personal values and giving back to the community is something I have been doing for many years with my volunteer work with Habitat for Humanity and the homeless. I’d love the opportunity to be a part of this work as a member of your team.”

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

Review the job posting in advance noting down the key skills requirements for the position such as organizational skills, analytical skills, communication, influencing, problem-solving and so on. Then identify which of these are your top strengths and use these to answer the question. BUT don't just list them; instead, provide an example to back them up that demonstrates how you have used these skills well in the past. Unless specified in the question, give them 3 top strengths.

EXAMPLE ANSWER:

"One of my strengths is my organizational ability. When I worked at ABC Company my role had many components and I often had conflicting demands on my time, each important and each urgent. By using my organization and prioritization skills I was able to ensure I completed all tasks on time". A second strength is my problem-solving ability which I had to use on a regular basis when dealing with customer issues. Finally, my excellent communication skills have enabled me to quickly fit into teams and work well with people of all backgrounds. "

WHAT IS YOUR WEAKNESS?

This is a question many job seekers dread. However, employers are looking for self-awareness; they are not trying to make you look bad. Highlight a genuine weakness that is not a core competency for the position for which you've applied (e.g. a receptionist could talk about a weakness in math). After you've mentioned your weakness, tell the interviewer what you are doing to improve in this area.

EXAMPLE ANSWER:

"One of the things I've been working on recently is my computer skills. While it is not something I have needed for the jobs I have done, I recognized that it was a useful skill set for today's world and especially for job search. So, I decided to take some online courses to brush up on my Word, email and internet browsing skills. As a result, I am able to create more polished looking documents and feel much more confident using these platforms to communicate with others."

WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY EXPECTATIONS?

This may well be published already in the job ad but if it is not, you may be asked this question.

STRATEGY 1:

Deflect: Ask the interviewer what salary they have in mind for the position. This prevents you from having to go first and reveal your hand. Sometimes you will get away with deflection but be prepared for them to push back and ask you directly what salary you are looking for. That's where Strategy #2 comes in

STRATEGY 2:

Reveal a Range: Use your research. You need to know what the salary range is for this type of job in this industry, in this location and size of company. Check out Glassdoor, Payscale, Google search, Recruiter reports etc. Then offer the employer a range. "Based on my research and the requirements of the role I would be looking for something in the range of \$x - \$y. (Give a range for an hourly rate e.g. "between \$15 and \$17 per hour"). Finish up by asking how that fits with what they have in mind. (Be realistic in your expectations. It is likely that the role will be entry level and this will be reflected in the pay. Consider the longer term opportunities and value you will get from the training and experience as well as the salary).

WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST EMPLOYER?

This question needs to be handled very carefully and the key to success is to focus on the positives and explain why you are looking for a new opportunity. It's important never to bad mouth a former employer as this will be a red flag for the employer and may prompt the question "Would your employer hire you back?"

Examples of acceptable reasons could include:

- Looking for a change of career
- Went back to school to get a qualification
- Opportunity to grow and learn
- Had a great experience but it was time to move on
- Lay off

EXAMPLE ANSWER – OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND LEARN:

"Working at ABC company as a packager on the line was a great experience. I learned a lot about working in a manufacturing environment and collaborating as part of a team. However it was time for me to move on and pursue my goal of training as a machinist. When I saw your ad I was really excited about the opportunity to join your team as a trainee machinist and I'm looking forward to learning more about it."

EXAMPLE ANSWER – LAY OFF:

"My company was badly impacted by the pandemic. With this change, over 180 employees were laid off. I really enjoyed my time working with the company and was able to develop some new skills and meet some great people. I am really excited about this opportunity to use my skills within your organization and I'm looking forward to our meeting today."

Behavioural Questions

Behavioural questions will often form part of an interview. Employers use them to try to understand how you have operated in the past in certain situations to see if that would be a fit for their team.

Example behavioural questions are shown below:

ABILITY TO CHANGE

- Tell me about a time you had to learn a new skill. How did you approach it?
- Tell me about a time you had to join a new team

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

- Tell me about a time you had to explain a technically complex procedure to a non-technical person
- Can you describe a time when someone misunderstood you, how did you handle that?

CLIENT/CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Tell me about a time you delivered an exceptional customer experience
- Describe for me the most difficult customer you had to deal with and how you handled it

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- Describe a time when you came up with a new approach to solving a problem
- Describe a challenging problem you had to deal with and how you handled it

TEAM SKILLS

- Tell me about a team project you had to work on. What was your contribution?
- Describe a time when you went above and beyond for the team

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Tell me about a disagreement you had with a co-worker or team mate. How did you resolve it?
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with your manager or teacher



S.T.A.R Stories

The STAR framework will help you to answer behavioural questions with impact. A STAR Story should be genuine, memorable and answer the question posed. People remember great stories so make yours shine! Create 8–10 stories to share at the interview using the STAR framework shown below.

SITUATION – Describe the background of the situation

When I think of all the team situations that I've been in, the one that stands out the most for me was when I was doing my final year project at college. This project was worth 60% of the final grade and so it was extremely important. 3 weeks before completion of the project one of the team members became very ill and was unable to complete their assigned responsibilities.

TASK – Describe your role and task


So, what I had to do was find a way to ensure that the team got everything completed and handed in on time without impacting the quality of the work and the final result.

ACTION – Describe the actions you took using "I" statements

So, what I did was, I called an emergency team meeting with the remaining 3 members to discuss and agree the way forward. I prepared a document showing progress to date and outlining all outstanding items and current responsibilities. I highlighted in red all those currently assigned to the sick team member. Together we worked out the number of hours required for each of the red items and reassigned them evenly among the team members. We quickly agreed on the new responsibilities and I made sure to keep communication open via text and Google Drive to collaborate, identify any issues and address them immediately by assisting other team members.

RESULT – The outcome / result is the most important piece!

As a result of this cooperation, my initiative and organizational skills, we were able to produce a quality result despite the setback. Our project achieved a final grade of 89% which was one of the highest in the program.



Employers will often ask you if you have any questions for them and this is yet another opportunity for you to shine. Focus your questions on the position, the team, and the organization. Try to make them unique, use your research on the company and make sure you ask some questions to demonstrate interest in the opportunity. Here are some examples to get you started:

- Is this a new position, or would I be replacing someone?
- Can you describe the duties and responsibilities of the job/position to me?
- Does this position require shift work, OR what are the standard hours?
- What would you say are the biggest challenges for someone in this position?
- What are the major systems, processes, equipment used for this position?
- To whom does this position report? Would there be an opportunity to meet this person?
- What do you love about working here?
- What type of training is provided?
- How long have most employees worked for this company?
- Is this a unionized position? Which union and what local?
- When will the first performance review be? After the first month, or 3 months?
- When will you be making a final decision on this position?

Additional Covid-19 related questions you may want to ask:

- What are the company's biggest challenges right now?
- What additional health and safety precautions are in place relating to the pandemic?
- Have there been any Covid-19 outbreaks at this location?

Interview Preparation



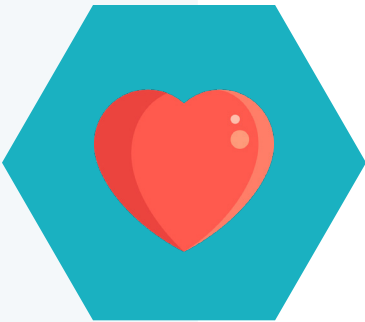
PHYSICAL

- Dress to impress – 1 level up from daily norm – make sure it's clean. Think about safety if a tour is likely.
- Get a great night's sleep 2 nights before
- Be on time; research the route and leave in plenty of time
- Practice greeting
- Gather your materials: 3 spare copies of resume and cover letter, pad, pen, reference list, work samples and licences if appropriate, and hand sanitizer/mask if in person
- On arrival: check appearance, switch off cell, leave drinks and gum behind



MENTAL

- Research the interviewer, role, salary, company and the industry: LinkedIn, Google, Glassdoor, Rate My Employer etc.
- Prepare a list of questions
- Review the job ad and your resume – know them both!
- Anticipate the questions and practice your responses
- Think about your qualities and what makes you unique



EMOTIONAL

- Eat: try to eat something, even a banana can help control pre-interview jitters
- Exercise beforehand to get rid of excess energy and calm yourself
- Yoga / Meditation / Breathing exercises
- Listen to music
- Visualization exercises
- Positive self-talk!
- Power Poses to boost confidence
- Remember they want to meet you!



After the Interview

- After an interview it's important that you do the following:
- Make some notes on what went well in the interview, things you'd change for future interviews, next steps that the interviewer discussed with you and any other important information that you don't want to forget
- Mark your calendar with any follow up activities and the date on which you should do this. For example, if the interviewer told you that you'd hear back from them by the 20th of the month, mark your calendar with that date and if you don't hear from them call them the very next day to show enthusiasm and good follow up
- If you were asked for your reference list during the interview and you provided that to the interviewer, contact your references to let them know to expect a call
- Within 24 hours of the interview, send a thank-you note to the interviewer

EMAIL THANK YOU NOTE

Subject: Great Meeting Thank You! – Assembly Line Position

Dear Arun,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me yesterday and for sharing your insights into your Assembly Line position. I was excited to learn more about the opportunity and your recent success with the ABC Contract which I'm sure will keep you all extremely busy!

I am keen to continue our discussions and based on our conversation, the key strengths I would bring to your team are:

*Strong production line skills gained in a similar facility here in Ontario
Excellent team skills and experience working with a diverse group of people*

A strong work ethic and the desire to learn from your team members so that I can make the best contribution possible to the success of your business

I am excited about this opportunity and will follow up with you towards the end of next week as agreed.

Regards,

Tom Clarke

Assembly Line Assistant

Email: tclarke@email.com

Tel: 123 456 7890

Job Offer Evaluation Tool

Once you have been offered a position, you will need to compare the offer to your list of “Nice to Haves” and “Must Haves”. How closely does the job match your criteria? This will help you to make the right decisions about your offers.

Goal Job Criteria Considerations	My Preferences	Must-Have or Nice-to-Have? (M / N)	Job Offering this? Yes or No? (Y / N)
Position			
1. The opportunity I am focused on:	The job title(s) I am targeting: My preferred responsibilities and duties are:		
2. The industry or industries I am targeting:			
3. The location I would like to find			
Lifestyle			
4. The days/hours of week I am available:			
5. The physical work environment / conditions that are most important to me:			
6. My realistic commute time to work each way is (Consider access to transportation and family/life commitments):			
Position			
7. Based on my research, my pay / hourly rate is:			
8. The other compensation criteria that are most important to me are (e.g. Health benefits):			
9. Other goal job criteria that are			



About ApprenticeSearch.com

ApprenticeSearch.com, powered by HIEC, has successfully connected apprentices and employers in Ontario for the past 20 years, using both technology and a people-centered approach that helps job seekers find employment and employers grow their workforce. The service supports over 20,000 Apprentice applicants who are looking for work in the skilled trades, and upwards of 5,000 employers who are looking to recruit new talent.



About eLoft Careers

eLoft Careers utilizes their in-depth job search expertise to support job market success. By focusing on developing job search skills that work, the organization maximizes job seeker success in today's job market in order to build fulfilling careers and successful futures. Their solutions ensure that job seekers will walk away engaged and ready to perform at their best!