

CAREER & PLACEMENT SERVICES (CAPS)

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

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# WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

An interview is the opportunity for you to make the connection between your skills and the position, demonstrate your interest in the organization, and to give the employer the opportunity to get to know you. Remember, employers hire people, not résumés.

An interview is also the opportunity for you to find out if the organization is the right fit for you. Be sure to have a list of questions ready such as: What is the organizational culture? What does a typical day look like? Why is this position open? How do you measure success?

These are all questions that will help you ascertain whether or not the position is the right fit for you.

Remember, the selection process begins before you even start your interview. Any phone call, email, or interaction before the interview is part of the process and will be evaluated by the recruiter. Your communication, organization, and preparation skills will contribute to your success.

Be prepared and be yourself!

# TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

## TRADITIONAL

Traditional interviews are face to face and ask questions such as, tell me about your background and what are your strengths and what are your weaknesses? See the guidebook for more examples.

Traditional interviews can include many behavioural interview questions.

## BEHAVIOURAL

Many employers conduct Behavioral interviews. Behavioural interviews are based on the belief that past behavior predicts future behavior. An example of a Behavioral question would be, “Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation”. Your example should be work related and highlight your skills and abilities. Use the S.T.A.R. technique referenced in the guide to help organize your answers.

## SCREENING

A screening interview can take place on the phone or in person. The goal of the interviewer is to see if you meet the job requirements.

- Did you accurately describe your skills and abilities on your resume?
- Are you still available?
- Are you truly interested in the position? Do remember when you applied for it?

Phone Interviews and Skype Interviews can be used for screening purposes, but they can also be in depth and in some instances replace a face to face interview. Always be prepared for a full interview.

## CASE

Case interviews are used primarily by consulting firms. Interviewers are looking to test your problem solving abilities. Case interviews require a great deal of preparation. For more details on preparing for the case, go to the Career Resource Center at H440.

## PRE-INTERVIEW TESTING & GROUP INTERVIEWS

The goal of testing as part of an interview is to see if you have the technical skills requires for the job. Be sure that you clearly understand the testing instructions.

# GET PREPARED

Preparation is the most important part of the process. Although you can't anticipate every part of the interview, the following three steps can help you increase your chance of success.

- Know yourself and know the job description. Identify your skills and experiences that relate to the position
- Research the company or organization
- Practice

## KNOW YOURSELF AND KNOW THE JOB DESCRIPTION

In order to effectively persuade an employer to hire you, you need to be able to concisely communicate your transferrable skills and abilities.

- Study the job description closely to identify skills, abilities, and previous experiences that you have that are specifically relevant to the position
- Know what your strengths and weaknesses are

Identify both your hard & soft skills. Following are examples of both:

### SOFT SKILLS:

#### PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

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Interpersonal  
Communication  
Initiative  
Adaptability  
Ability to work with a team  
Leadership  
Ability to multi-task

### HARD SKILLS: SKILLS YOU HAVE ACQUIRED

#### THROUGH TRAINING

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Languages  
Computer or Technical  
Research Skills  
Data Processing  
Marketing  
Engineering  
Writing/Analytical

- Study your résumé and be prepared to talk in more detail about any experiences you have listed on your résumé, including activities and interests.
- Use the S.T.A.R. approach to organize examples of how you have utilized your hard and soft skills in various settings.

# EMPLOYER RESEARCH

It is critical that you thoroughly research the organization before going in for an interview. Researching the employer demonstrates that you are truly interested in the organization and allows you to draw a greater connection between your skills, values, and interests, and those of the employer. Following is a sample checklist of things to consider when researching the organization.

## FOR PROFIT:

- What are the major products and services this company offers?
- What position does this organization hold in the industry? Who are its competitors?
- What is the company history? What are its goals and values?
- What are the primary locations and how many employees?
- What is the structure of the organization?
- Who are the company leaders?
- Research general information about the industry.
- What is the corporate culture like?
- Are there new products, projects, or lines of business? What is the future strategy or direction of the organization?
- Have there been any recent news articles about the organization?

## NOT FOR PROFIT:

- What are the major services offered by the organization?
- What is the mission of the organization?
- What are the primary values of the organization?
- What are the primary sources of funding?
- Is this a local, national or international organization?
- Who are the leaders of the organization?
- How many employees and/ or volunteers are involved with the organization?
- With whom is this organization affiliated? Are they partnering with any other government agencies, corporations or other agencies?
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# PRACTICE

Practice as much as you can prior to the interview. Practice with friends, family, or record yourself answering sample interview questions. You can also book an appointment with CAPS for a Mock Interview and receive professional feedback.

## **COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (GENERAL)**

- Tell me about yourself (in two minutes).
- Why are you interested in our organization?
- Why do feel you will be successful in...?
- Why did you choose your major or field of study?
- What supervisory or leadership positions have you held?
- What did you learn from your part-time or summer job experience?
- What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?
- What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you deal with the pressure?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What are your long term goals?
- Why should we hire you?
- Why did you leave your current job?
- How would your last supervisor describe you?
- What trends do you see for the future of our industry?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What traits or characteristics do you think are most important for this position?
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## **COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (BEHAVIOURAL)**

- Describe a situation in which you had a conflict with another individual and how you handled it.
- Give me an example of a goal you reached and how you achieved it.
- Describe a stressful situation and how you handled it.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation.
- Tell me about a team project that you are particularly proud of and describe your contribution.

- Tell me about a problem you solved and the steps you used to solve it.
- Describe a situation in which you were criticized and how you handled it.
- When working on multiple projects, how do you set priorities?
- Tell me about a time in which you had to adapt to a difficult situation.
- Tell me about a time in which you developed an idea that was innovative or creative.
- Tell me about a time in which you demonstrated strong leadership skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to persuade an individual to see things your way.

For more sample questions: Go to the Career Resource Center in H440

# WHY ARE INTERVIEWERS ASKING ME THESE QUESTIONS?

## WHAT EMPLOYERS ASK:

## WHAT THEY WANT TO KNOW:

Tell me about yourself

Are you prepared?

Can you organize relevant information and express it correctly?

Why should I hire you?

Can you convince me that you are the right person? How persuasive are you?

What are your greatest strengths?

What important qualities and traits would you bring to this job? What is your level of maturity and self-knowledge?

What are your weaknesses?

Are you aware of your weaknesses? What is your level of maturity and self-knowledge?

Did you prepare enough to choose weaknesses that can be turned into strengths?

Why did you apply for this position?

Have you researched the organization

effectively? Can you tell them why you are interested in this particular organization? Do you know what motivates you? Do you really understand what it takes to be successful in this job?

What salary do you expect to receive?

Are you well informed about salaries in your field and target location? Do you have realistic expectations? Never ask an interviewer about salary in the first interview. If asked about specific salary expectations, try to stay in a general range until the position is offered to you.

Where do you want to be 5 years from now?

What motivates you? Are you interested in this position or will you leave at the first opportunity? Can we depend on you?



# KEEP YOUR ANSWERS FOCUSED

It can be difficult to organize your thoughts and keep your answers focused during an interview. This is why we recommend practicing answers to questions using the **S.T.A.R.** technique. The **S.T.A.R.** technique is especially helpful for answering behavioral questions. When formulating an answer to an interview question, do so using the following formula:

## **S = SITUATION**

Provide a short overview of the situation in order to provide context. (working on a class project, previous job, volunteer experience)

## **T = TASK**

What was the problem to be solved, responsibility you undertook, or goal you were attempting to reach?

## **A = ACTION**

Describe what steps were taken to solve the problem or achieve the goal and why. What was your thought process? What skills did you use?

## **R = RESULT**

What was the final result? Describe the result or action. Try to come up with examples that had positive results. If you need to use an example that had a negative result, be sure to describe what you learned from that and how you might do things differently.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Interviewers expect that you will have questions for them as well. Insightful questions can highlight your interest in the position and engagement in the process. In some cases these questions can allow you to demonstrate the research you have conducted on the organization. You will also be able to gather more information as to whether or not the organization is a fit for you.

Be sure to have a long list of questions. Interviewers may inadvertently answer some of the questions you had prepared during the interview and you should not ask about a topic that has already been discussed.

Following is a list of possible questions.

- What are the major responsibilities in the position?
- What are the major challenges facing the person who takes on this position?
- What is a typical work week for someone in this position?
- What other positions or departments would I interact with the most?
- How will I know if I'm successful in this position?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?
- Why is this position open? Is it a new position or are you replacing someone?

## ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Employers are not allowed to ask you questions about your

Age

National/ethnic origin

Sexual orientation

Marital Status

Political beliefs

Religion

Disabilities

Criminal record

# INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Most interviews are face to face and can be broken down into three parts.

## THE OPENING (3-5 MINUTES)

This is the opportunity to establish rapport with the interviewer and provide both parties the chance to “warm up” and prepare for the second stage of the interview. This is your chance to make a strong first impression.

- Greet the interviewer confidently, smile, and make eye contact.
- Shake hands firmly.
- The interviewer may use this time to explain the structure of the interview and ask a few questions about your resume.

## INFORMATION EXCHANGE (15-20 MINUTES)

This is the heart of the process. It may include:

- Traditional interview questions, or verify information on your résumé
- Behavioral questions
- Interviewers are gauging your interest in the position; this is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have done company research
- Interviewers may then offer additional information about their organization or division
- Interviewers may ask you if you have additional questions. You should always have a list prepared

## CLOSING (2-3 MINUTES)

- Candidates will learn about the next step in the process
- Candidates may be asked to provide references
- If you want the position, be sure to reiterate your interest in the job
- Be sure to thank the interviewer for their time
- Get business cards from all of the interviewers if possible
- Stay away from salary negotiations at this time

# INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

## DRESS THE PART: MEN

- Two-piece business suit (or sports jacket, pants) and tie
- Dark, polished shoes and dark socks
- Long sleeved shirt
- Well groomed hairstyle and trimmed mustache /sideburns (or clean-shaven)
- Clean, trimmed fingernails
- Professional-looking briefcase or portfolio case

## DRESS THE PART: WOMEN

- Suit, jacket, skirt or pants (depending on your industry)
- Long sleeved blouse
- Polished, moderate heeled shoes
- Wear hosiery
- Professional-looking briefcase or portfolio case and one purse
- Minimal use of makeup
- Neatly styled or pulled-back hair

These are general guidelines and some industries do not require suits. Try to get a sense of the corporate culture before the interview. Remember, no matter how casually employees may dress, you are the one being interviewed. It is preferable to overdress for an interview than to underdress.

# GUIDELINES FOR ANY SETTING

## GENERAL

- No chewing gum
- Stay away from clothes that are too tight, too short, or too low cut
- Jeans, sweatpants, and leggings are never an option
- Clean and pressed clothing
- Fresh breath (brush, floss)
- Minimal jewelry
- Minimal cologne/ perfume, if any
- Maintain good posture
- No fidgeting
- Avoid smoking before interview/ after getting dressed

## **DAY OF THE INTERVIEW**

- Bring copies of your resume, names for references, and any other applicable documents such as a portfolio
- Bring the address and the names of your interviewers. Also bring the interviewers contact information
- Bring a pen and a notebook in case you need to take notes
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Take time and relax

## **FOLLOW UP**

Be sure to follow up with a thank you letter or note. Keep it brief and this is an opportunity to reiterate your interest in the position. If you are sending the thank you letter via email, send it within 24 hours of the interview.

# COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT CAREER AND PLACEMENT SERVICES (CAPS)

## INTERVIEW WORKSHOPS

Attend one of our many interviewing workshops or set up an individual meeting with an advisor.

Visit us online at <http://cdev.concordia.ca/our-services/job-search-and-resume/>

## CAPS ONLINE JOB-BANK

Access the CAPS Online Job Bank

Follow these simple steps:

- 1) Login to your myconcordia account at: <https://www.myconcordia.ca>
- 2) Under “Student Services”, select “Counselling and Development”
- 3) Carefully read the usage Terms and Conditions and click “Accept” if you agree and wish to continue
- 4) Click on “Job Postings” under “Quick Links”.

## CAPS INTERVIEW RESOURCES

- Workshops and Individual Appointments
- Attend one of our many interviewing workshops or schedule an individual appointment with a Career Advisor for a practice interview.
- Online Resources



Perfect interview allows you to practice and develop your interviewing skills from any location! You can choose from a series of interview categories and from well over 2000 questions, all asked by professional interviewers. You must answer these questions on the spot and can review them using a webcam to see exactly how you performed. You can also share your responses and receive feedback from an Advisor at CAPS!

You will need:

- An internet connection that is fast enough to watch a YouTube video
- A computer equipped with a webcam
- Go to the CAPS website for detailed instructions.
- <http://cdev.concordia.ca/documents/CAPSDocs/NewPerfectInterviewFrCopy.pdf>
- You can access Perfect Interview at <http://www.perfectinterview.com/concordia/>



## C O N T A C T U S

Get help with Job Search Strategies, improve your Résumé and Cover Letter, perfect Job Interviewing skills, access Online Job Postings, and more!

Call us for an appointment at:

514-848-2424 ext: 7345

[caps.concordia.ca](http://caps.concordia.ca)

You can also drop-by our office and schedule an appointment. We are located at:

2070 Mackay, Ground Floor.

Room EN-109, SGW Campus

