

Behavioural Based Interviewing Tips

What to expect

From the employer's perspective, the purpose of the interview is to evaluate you and your capabilities, to assess your ability to contribute to the organisation and to see how well you might fit into the organisation. The employer also wants to present the organisation to you so that you will accept the job if it is offered to you.

Remember that the interview is a two-way selection process. So your purpose is to exchange as much information as possible. Planning and preparation for your interview are therefore vital.

There are four stages in a typical job interview:

- Breaking the ice - introductions and 'chit-chat' designed to help you relax and feel comfortable
- Exchanging information - questions that focus on the organisation and the job and your interest in them
- Expanding the focus - specific questions about you and how well you will be able to do the job
- Wrapping up - time for clarifying, asking questions and final comments

Preparing for an interview

- Find out as much as you can about the organisation and the areas of work that you may be interested in.
- Keep in touch with 'current affairs' about what's happening in the industry.
- Understand your own skills and abilities and how they match the employer's requirements. Know which of your skills you want to mention before the end of the interview.
- Know what questions you may still want to ask after doing your research.

Make a good impression

Part of planning for the interview is deciding what you are going to wear, where you have to go and how to get there at the specified time.

Before you attend the interview, ask about the dress code. If you aren't sure, lean towards the conservative.

Not knowing where to go is no excuse for being late. Take all the correspondence about the job with you, including a copy of your cover letter, your resume or application form, your list of questions and a notepad and pen. If you have a portfolio, you may want to take some or all of that too.

Remember that the interviewers are on your side and want you to do well in your interview. So smile, be polite and friendly and shake hands when you first meet them. You could be working together in the future!

Answering interview questions

In reality, human factors like emotions, imagination, humour and all those other unquantifiable qualities are far more important in interviews. Besides, an employer would get very tired of hearing the same 'right' answer repeated 30 times. The important thing when you're answering interview questions is not whether you get it right or wrong, but **how well** you answer.

Behavioural based questions

These days, interviewers often ask behaviour based or [behavioural interview questions](#). In other words, they ask you to describe how you have acted or responded in similar situations. Good preparation before the interview can make answering these questions much easier.

Preparing answers

You can't literally prepare your interview answers ahead of time. You can make answering the questions much easier, however, by thinking carefully and fully about the skills and experiences you have and how they relate to the job and organisation. You need to do this before the interview takes place.

Below are some areas you should think about, and some example interview questions you might be asked:

Interests outside of study

Are you a well-rounded person with interests outside of study? Think about all the different areas of activity in your life, e.g. study, family, work, sport, hobbies, etc. Possible interview questions:

- What activities, organisations or sports have you been involved in during your time at university?
- What interests do you have outside of study?

Initiative and leadership

Think about the things you've done that made you stand out from the crowd. Think about the times when you led a group project, and whether you found it easy or difficult. Possible interview questions:

- Have you ever taken on a role that involved leading or co-ordinating the activities of a group?
- How comfortable are you in taking a leadership role?
- Can you give me a recent example of when you have volunteered to lead a group?

Team activities and involvement

Think about team projects you've been involved in; how you operate as a team member; what kinds of problems arose; and how you dealt with them individually and as a group. Possible interview questions:

- Tell me about a recent team project that you were involved in.
- Have you ever been part of a team where the group had a problem?
- What steps did you and the team take to rectify the problem?

Interest in and knowledge of the company

Find out about the organisation before you go for an interview with them. Find out what kind of work they do overall, and where you might fit in. Think about what you have to offer the organisation. Possible interview questions:

- What is your understanding of the type of work we do?
- What are your expectations of the type of work you'd do in our company?

Motivation

Think about what motivates you to work in your chosen career, and what keeps you goal-oriented. Possible interview questions:

- What made you decide on [whatever your field is] as a career?
- What are your most important considerations when choosing a job?
- Why did you choose to study at UTS?

Practising interview skills

Now you're ready to put it all together. An excellent way to prepare for an interview is to practice. Get a friend or someone in your family to ask you a few questions the night before the interview. It can sometimes be quite uncomfortable to talk about yourself, especially in a positive way. If you've practised recently with a few questions, it will feel more familiar and you won't be so nervous on the day.

Get your friend to ask one or two 'icebreaker' questions, then move on to some general behavioural questions, followed by questions aimed at assessing your ability in more specific areas. With the exception of answering 'icebreaker' questions at the start of your interview, make a habit of talking for 30 seconds to a minute for each question. Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer.

Behavioural interviewing questions

The behaviourally-based interview, is entirely focused on an applicant's previous job "behaviours" in a similar position. These are the typical questions you can be asked in a behavioural interview:

1. Could you tell me about a time when you were really busy with study or work or other commitments? How did you handle it? What did you do?
2. Have you ever been in a position where you were organising/managing something and others helping you? How did you delegate? What happened?
3. Tell me about any people orientated or customer service roles you have held? How did you feel? How did they respond?
4. Were you ever involved with a group of people and a problem arose? What caused the problem? How did you approach it? How was it solved?
5. Tell me about a time when you've worked closely with someone at a higher or lower level? Describe the situation? What was the outcome?
6. What was the most difficult work or university problem you ever faced? How did you address the problem? What were the results?
7. Tell me about a time when you had to apply some newly acquired knowledge or skill?
8. Describe a situation when you had to turn to someone for help. To whom did you turn to? What happened?
9. Tell me about a time when you had to break away from the crowd and instigate doing something different. What did you do? What was the result?
10. Describe a time when you had to assimilate a lot of new knowledge and apply it? How did you apply the knowledge?
11. Tell me about a time when someone misunderstood something you said. How did you make yourself clear? What was the outcome?
12. Tell me about a time when a friend sought you out as a confidant. What skills did you utilise in this role? How could you apply these skills in the work place?
13. Describe a situation where you kept persevering with a task even though everyone else had given up? Why did you keep going? What was the result?
14. Have you ever done any work in a customer orientated or community service organisation? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Some more questions the interviewer may ask:

1. Tell me something about yourself.
2. What kind of job are you looking for?
3. Why did you apply for this position?
4. Why have you chosen this particular vocation?
5. What are your qualifications?
6. What are your short term and long term goals?
7. What is your career objective?
8. Describe your strengths and weaknesses.
9. What do you know about the company and what it does?
10. Why would you like to work for our organisation?
11. What do you think will be your main contributions to this position/organisation?
12. What does teamwork mean to you?
13. Tell me about a time when you demonstrated leadership/negotiation/teamwork skills.
14. What have you done that shows initiative in your career?
15. What do you see yourself doing in five years from now?
16. What style of management gets the best from you?
17. How do you handle stress?
18. Can we reference check with previous employers?
19. What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
20. Which part of the job did you enjoy most?
21. What was the size of your last salary review/bonus?
22. What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?

Questions which you might ask:

1. Can you give me a detailed description of the position?
2. Why the position has become available?
3. What are the induction, anticipated induction and training programs for the position?
4. Are advanced training courses available for those who demonstrate outstanding ability?
5. Please explain the company growth plans?
6. What is the company culture?
7. What are the best selling products and services?
8. What are the future expectations of this position?