



Interview Preparation

Interview Basics

Random North Employment Services

56B Manitoba Drive

Clarenville, NL A5A 1K5

Tel: (709) 466-8116

Fax: (709) 466-8118

www.rndaemploymentservices.ca

THE INTERVIEW



JOB INTERVIEW


All of your efforts have lead to this opportunity - the interview. Now is your chance to show what you know and what you can do.

Every interview is like a test. You are being evaluated. You would not walk into a test without studying; neither should you go into an interview without preparing

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- ✓ **LEARN** as much as you can about the employer.
- ✓ **WRITE** down a few questions to ask the employer.
- ✓ **THINK** about the questions that you might be asked and how you would answer them.
- ✓ **KNOW** the name of the person who is going to interview you and **ARRIVE** a few minutes early.
- ✓ **BRING** an extra copy of your resume.

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

- ★ **Time and Location** - be certain of the time and place of the interview and the name of the interviewer. Often time candidates are so excited to get an interview that they neglect to ask the essential information. Write this information down and keep it with you until the interview. If no one tells you your interviewer's name, ask for it.
- ★ **Arrive Early** - Plan on arriving at least 15 minutes before the appointed time. Extra time will allow you to account for unforeseen delays (traffic, can not find office, etc.) Being early can also give the interviewer a good initial impression of your ability and interest.
- ★ **Notepad and Pencil** - Notepad should be small enough to fit into your pocket or purse. It's purpose is twofold. First, the interviewer may give you some information to write down. Secondly, immediately after the interview you should make notes on what occurred during the interview and what reactions were to the interviewer. This is important if you have many different interviewers, your notes will help you recall each and aid in making a choice in jobs, should that become necessary. **Don't** make notes during the interview unless the interviewer asks you to write something down.
- ★ **Remember the Interviewers Name** - if you don't know the interviewer's name prior to the interview concentrate on it when introduced and remember it. The best thing to do is to repeat the name immediately after the introduction by saying something on the order of "How do you do, Ms. Or Mr. Smith." Then repeat the name a couple of times during the first part of the interview. This repetition will help you remember the name. It will also have a pleasing effect on the interviewer. Do not call the interviewer by his or her first name unless invited to do so (which is unlikely).
- ★ **Hand Shake** - Do not offer the first move. If you do  to shake hands unless the interviewer makes the first move. If you do shake hands, make it a firm grip. While a weak handshake can be a real turn off, don't go overboard and give your superman grip.
- ★ **Seating Yourself** - Wait for the interviewer to sit down or invite you to sit down before seating yourself.

Most of these suggestions are items of common courtesy, but they are often overlooked, particularly in the context of the interview when you are nervous and think about yourself.

AT THE INTERVIEW

Lean slightly into the interview. If you sit with a slight forward lean towards the interviewer it communicates your interest in what the interviewer is saying as in the interview proceedings. Your forward lean should be so slight as to be almost imperceptible. Be careful not to overdo this.

Make frequent eye contact with the interviewer(s). Eye contact establishes rapport with the interviewer. You appear interested in what is being said and you will be perceived as more trustworthy if you will look at the interviewer as you ask and answer questions. To say someone has shifty eyes or cannot look us in the eye is to imply they may not be completely honest. To have a direct, though moderate eye gaze, in our culture conveys interest as well as trustworthiness.

Project a pleasant facial expression. A face that appears alive and interesting conveys a positive attitude. Smile enough to convey your positive attitude, but not so much that you will not be taken seriously. Certain facial expressions should be compatible with what is being discussed; avoid smiling inanely all the time. Ideally, your face should reflect honest interest in the dynamics of the interview. Give the interviewer facial feedback rather than an expressionless deadpan.

Convey interest and enthusiasm through your vocal inflections. Though not a visual component, vocal inflection is a critical element of nonverbal communication. Your tone of voice says a lot about you and how interested you are in the interview and the organization. Your voice is one of the greatest projectors of dynamism available to you. Use it effectively both in the face-to-face interview and in a telephone interview.

- ✓ Allow sufficient time for your interview.
- ✓ Arrive alone and on time.
- ✓ Get the interviewer's name correct, in advance if possible, and use it in your conversation.
- ✓ Remain standing until you are asked to be seated.
- ✓ Seat yourself comfortable, retain your poise.
- ✓ Keep your shoulders back.
- ✓ Keep your head erect.
- ✓ Avoiding folding your arms across your chest.
- ✓ Avoid sitting or standing with your arms or legs apart.

- ✓ Use gestures that enhance your verbal message.
- ✓ Nod your head affirmative at appropriate times - but do not overdo it.
- ✓ Project your voice loudly enough to be heard.
- ✓ Articulate clearly - do not mumble.
- ✓ Use good diction.
- ✓ Use pauses for emphasis.
- ✓ Watch your pace - avoid talking too fast or too slowly. Many nervous people tend to talk rapidly. Be agreeable at all times.
- ✓ Do not chew gum or smoke.
- ✓ Do not play with tie, rings, or bracelets.
- ✓ Don't place your briefcase or purse on the employer's desk. Keep them in your hands or, if necessary, put them on the floor beside your chair.
- ✓ Don't answer the question, "What can you do?", by saying, "Anything." Tell what specific skills you have.
- ✓ Answer all questions directly and truthfully.
- ✓ Be willing to take any examination requested.
- ✓ Permit the employer to carry on the interview. Remember however, that it is largely up to you to convince an employer that you are worth hiring.
- ✓ Try to get your qualifications sheet before the employer fairly early in the interview. Leave a copy of this with the employer.
- ✓ Do not gossip about or knock former employees.
- ✓ Do not lead your need for work. The employer had the right and privilege to select any applicant.
- ✓ Under all circumstances refrain from jokes, arguments, or intimacies.
- ✓ If you do not obtain the position maintain your poise. Be courteous and agreeable.

- ✓ If you obtain the position, it is your right to know what your duties are, the hours of work, rate of pay, and other pertinent facts concerning the position. Do not, however, give the impression that salary and hours of work are the only things that matter to you.
- ✓ Use correct English at all times, avoid slang such as “Yeah”, or “O.K.” or “Goodbye now.”

Dressing for Success!

Appearance is the first thing you communicate to those you meet. Before you have a chance to speak, others notice your appearance and dress and draw inferences about your character, competence and capabilities. Image has the greatest impact on the perceptions of others have on us when they have little other information on which to base judgements. This is precisely the situation the job applicant finds himself/herself in at the start of the interview.

Dressing to your advantage means that you should dress in a manner that puts you in the most favorable light and does not offend. For most positions, the safest bet is to dress conservatively. It is risky to wear trendy styles. Don't wear cloths that will detract from you as a person. You don't want the interviewer to focus on your cloths rather than your abilities. On the other hand, avoid overly packaged “dress-for-success” look. However, no matter what kind of job you're interviewing for, you should dress neatly and cleanly. This indicates enough interest in the job to take the time to dress well. It's never a plus to show up in dirty, unkept cloths, no matter what the job.

- ☺ Be sure that your fingernails are properly cut and clean.
- ☺ Ensure that your hair is neat.
- ☺ Your cloths should be neat and pressed, and your shoes should not be scuffed.
- ☺ Be careful about the amount of jewelry you wear.
- ☺ If you are bothered by bad breath, take a mint before entering the interview.
- ☺ Be sure you bathe before the interview.
- ☺ Your clothes should be fresh.

INTERVIEW TIPS - DON'TS

DON'T keep stressing your need for a job.

DON'T speak with muffled voice or indistinctly.

DON'T express your ideas on compensation, hours, etc., early in the interview.

DON'T apologize for your age.

DON'T display cocksureness.

DON'T hang around prolonging the interview when it should be over.

DON'T hedge in answering questions.

DON'T arrive late and breathless for the interview.

DON'T depend upon the phone for your job.

DON'T feel that the world owes you a living.

DON'T discuss past experience which has no application to the job.

DON'T be one of those who can be anything.

DON'T hesitate to fill out applications, give references, take physical exams, or tests on request.

DON'T be untidy in appearance.

DON'T cringe or beg for consideration.

DON'T display a feeling of inferiority.

DON'T be a know-it-all or person who can't take instructions.

DON'T make claims if you cannot deliver on the job.



COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Why did you choose your particular field of work?

What are your salary expectations?

What is your major weakness?

What is your major strength?

What did you like most about your recent job?

What did you dislike most about your most recent job?

Why should I hire you?

What are your special abilities?

Tell me about yourself.

Are you an organized person?

Do you manage your time well? Explain.

How do you go about making important decisions?

Do you work well under pressure?

How do you get along with your co-workers?

What type of people do you find most difficult to get along with?

What does the word 'success' mean to you?

How would you describe your work ethic?

What do you feel are the attributes of a good worker?

Are you willing to relocate?

Tell me a story.

What can I do for you?

Why do you feel you are qualified for this job?

What do you know about our company?

How would you describe your relationship with your last supervisor?

Did you have any problems in any of your previous jobs?

Why do you want to change jobs?

How would you handle an irrate/irrational customer?

What work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?

How would your friends describe you?

What frustrates you the most?

How well do you take criticism?

Do you like to travel?

Do you have a family?

Do you like people?

Do you work better alone or with people?

Have you always done your best?

Tell me about your present job?

Have you ever been arrested?

Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

Do you have any questions for us?

Are you tolerant of different people/opinions?

Tell me about a situation when you had to persuade another person to your point of view?

How do you motivate people?

Give an example of a situation in which you failed, and how you handled it?

Tell me about a difficult decision you have made?

Take me through a project where you demonstrated _____ skills?

What types of situations put you under pressure, and how do you deal with pressure?

Describe a leadership role of yours and tell why you committed your time to it?

INTERVIEW TYPES

ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS

Most interviewees encounter one-to-one, face-to-face interviews. The applicant and the employer meet, usually at the employer's office, and sit down to discuss the position and the applicant's skills, knowledge, and abilities as they relate to the job. At some point, though hopefully late in the interview, they discuss salary considerations as well as other benefits.

SEQUENTIAL INTERVIEWS

For many positions, especially those beyond entry-level, more than one interview will be necessary. Sequential interviews are simply a series of interviews with the decision being made to screen the candidate in or out after the interview. The candidates who are screened in or called back for additional interviews. Although each of the sequential interviews is most frequently a one-on-one interview, you could meet with more than one interviewer at the same time in any of these sessions.

You may meet with the same person in each interview, but it is more likely you will meet with new people in subsequent interview. When sequential interviews are held, many of the terms of employment issues such as salary and benefits may not e discussed in the initial interview. These considerations may be saved until later interviews - after the pool of candidates has been narrowed and the employer is getting serious about only a very few candidates. This can work to your advantage since with each interview you should have the opportunity to find out more about your position. You may also have a greater chance to demonstrate your qualifications and try to convince the interviewer(s) that you are the person for the job.

SERIES INTERVIEWS

Series interviews also consist of several interviews, one after the other. However, with serial interviews the series has been set up from the time the interview was scheduled and no decision will be made until after all the interviews have been completed. Usually each meeting is with a different person or group of people, and all the interviews will be held over a one or two day period. Following these interviews, the individuals you met with will get together to compare notes and make a collective hiring decision.



PANEL INTERVIEW

Panel interviews occur infrequently, but it is possible you could encounter a situation that included this format. As the name implies, in a panel interview you are interviewed by several people at the same time. Panel interviews, are by there very nature, more stressful than most other types. At it's very best, you are facing several people at the same time, trying to respond to the question of one panel member as you try to balance your perceptions of the other members' expectations. At it's worst, it can be a pressure-cocker atmosphere as you are subjected to a barrage of questions, some of which may seem hostile.

GROUP INTERVIEWS

Though perhaps the least common of our interview types, group interviews do take place. If you find yourself being interviewed along with several other applicant, you are in a group interview. Employers use the group setting to gain information, not thought to be readily ascertained in an one-to-one interview. In group interviews the employer will observe the interpersonal skills of applicants. How well a candidate interacts with peers - the other applicants - is thought to be an indicator of how well the individual will get along with co-workers. Often a question will be posed to the group or the group will be presented a problem to solve. If an applicant exhibits positive leadership and/or follower ship behaviors in the group setting, employers tend to believe that persons will respond in similar ways in the workplace. The employer will be looking for positive skills - the ability of an interviewee to draw other candidates into the discussion, to listen to others' points of view, to ask questions, to act as

peace maker if necessary, to summarize salient points and to keep the group focused on the task at hand and moving towards the goal.



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Don't think you are a failure because after several attempts you do not obtain a job. There is a technique to obtaining a job; learn it, practice it, discuss it with others.

An employer may not decide whether you are hired at the interview. If you feel that you have made a good impression, follow up with a call a few days later.

It is often desirable to send, on the day of an interview, a short note thanking the employer for the interview and expressing the hope that you may become an employee of the firm. If you have any additional evidence concerning your suitability for the position, mention it in the letter.

I GOT THE JOB!

- ARRIVE** at work on time.
- REMEMBER** to bring your Social Insurance Number with you. Your employer will not be able to pay you unless s/he has it.
- DO NOT SMOKE** under any circumstances. Most buildings are now "Smoke Free".
- ASK QUESTIONS** and be sure you understand what is expected of you.
- FIND OUT** who you should call in the event that you cannot come to work.
- FIND OUT** what your work hours will be including your break time and follow the rules that are in place.

- ❑ **SHOW INTEREST** in everything they say to you... have a notebook to ensure you remember everything.

- ❑ **ALLOW THEM** to show you how things are done...do not be too quick to show them a better way.