



# 20 TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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## How to Prepare for Employment Interviews

Interviews can be a very intimidating process for many people. While some people “shine” during the interview process, most of us feel nervous and wonder how we could perform differently under the circumstances. The typical reason for feeling any type of fear or apprehension is that we are unprepared and do not know how to handle the unexpected. By learning more about interviews, you can better prepare yourself and increase your chances of shining!

Our resource library contains a number of print resources that provide excellent information on how to be more effective in the interview process.

## Types of Employment Interviews

Part of preparing for the interview is to understand more about the different interviewing styles you may encounter, and learn how to adapt to each one.<sup>1</sup>

- **Behavioural Based Interviews:** One of the most common types of interviews; relies on having you relate examples of the things that you have done that support your skills as they relate to the job.
- **Directive Interviews:** The interviewer obtains the information that they are looking for by asking a number of structured questions. Questions tend to be ones that will tempt you to respond with “yes” or “no” answers.
- **Traditional Interviews:** The interviewer may not stick to a strict format for questioning. They tend to ask open ended questions and prefer you respond with work related answers.
- **Stress Interviews:** Some characteristics of this format include long, uncomfortable silences, rude behaviour, and physical barriers or asking you to accomplish an impossible task. It can be a genuine effort on behalf of the employer to test your skills and abilities or to see how you perform under pressure.

*\*Most employers in Kamloops use a combination of Behavioural Based and Traditional Interviewing.*



<sup>1</sup> Taken from **Job Interviews for Dummies**, Joyce L. Kennedy  
S:\KWSC 2007\Client Resources\Bookshelf Handouts\20 Typical Interview Questions (Sept 2008).doc

## Understanding the Employers' Perspective

In order to perform successfully during an Employment Interview, you should understand what employers are looking for. Put yourself in the employer's shoes for a moment and ask yourself what you would want in a new employee. You may be looking for someone who:

- fits with your team and work environment
- will help your business generate profit, and develop a strong reputation in your community
- takes direction as needed, but shows initiative when it is appropriate
- fits the skill profile that the job requires
- demonstrates reliability and has an excellent work attitude

## Do's and Don'ts

***There is no complete magic formula that will guarantee an interview will result in a job offer. However, there are some guidelines that will certainly improve your chances.***

### DO:

- Come to the interview prepared with an array of stories about your experience that demonstrate a range of desirable traits and work abilities.
- A good way to prepare a selection of stories/experiences is to review the following 20 questions and think of relevant and appropriate answers.
- Talk about relevant experiences outside of employment, through community involvement or other responsibilities.
- Take a moment to think before you answer, this shows your rational ability to handle situations posed to you.
- Research the company prior to the interview.
- Be a few minutes early.
- Bring extra copies of resumes and reference letters.
- Bring a prepared list of questions to ask the interviewer.
- Remember the importance of body language and eye contact.
- Smile, be enthusiastic and stay positive.
- Send a thank-you note after the interview.

### DON'T:

- Arrive late for the interview.
- Appear disorganized.
- Be dishonest.
- Criticize former coworkers or supervisors.
- Discuss personal issues at the interview.
- "Brag" about what you can do without providing specific examples.
- Give typical, ordinary and rehearsed responses.
- Answer questions with long-winded "story telling".
- Give negative answers without a positive twist (for example, what you learned from the experience)

## Typical Interview Questions

The following list outlines some of the major questions that, when prepared with specific relevant information and workplace examples, can help you get ready for any type of interview.



### 1. Tell me about yourself.

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking for a summary of your work related experience and education relevant to the job you are applying for.

**Hint:** This is a question that you definitely need to prepare for. Offer the employer a summary of your relevant work history with relevant experience and education. Avoid telling your life story. Highlight the most relevant experiences as they relate to the job.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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### 2. Why do you want to work here?

**Reason:** The interviewer may be looking for evidence that you have a good knowledge of the company.

**Hint:** You must have researched the company beforehand, and formed an opinion on how and why the organization will be able to provide you with a stable and happy work environment.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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### 3. What contributions do you see yourself making to this job/company?

**Reason:** The interviewer wants you to show you've researched the company and have thought about how your skills and experience can compliment the existing team or organization.

**Hint:** Be positive. Bringing strong technical or communication skills, enthusiasm and a desire to complete tasks efficiently are good responses. Think about specific aspects of the company you see yourself contributing to.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

4. Why did you leave your last job?

**Reason:** The interviewer could be looking for possible personality traits which may have caused friction in former jobs. They may also be trying to learn more about your sense of commitment, loyalty, and what motivates you.

**Hint:** Be positive and give reasons for wanting a change. If appropriate, discuss the need for new challenges and responsibilities.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

5. Describe your personality.

**Reason:** The interviewer may be assessing whether or not your personality will blend with the existing team and enhance the company.

**Hint:** Choose 3 – 5 words or traits that describe you and be prepared with workplace examples of each. Consider what is relevant or appropriate for the position you are applying for.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. How would a friend/supervisor/coworker describe you?

**Reason:** The interviewer may be looking for a perspective of skills through the eyes of a coworker. This will also give the interviewer evidence of your interactions with others, as well as shed light on how you view yourself.

**Hint:** Think about your personal attributes and express some of your strengths through the perspective of a friend or coworker.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What is your greatest strength/weakness?

**Reason:** The interviewer gains a better understanding of how you view your work abilities and your level of confidence.

**Hint:** Consider strengths which are relevant to the position you are applying for. When asked for a weakness, offer a strength and call it a weakness. For example, "I tend to take on too many tasks at once, but I've learned to manage my time and communicate appropriately should this happen." Remember to always give workplace examples of each.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. What have you achieved that has given you the most satisfaction?

**Reason:** The interviewer could be assessing your sense of pride in the work you complete and your enthusiasm for taking initiative. They may also be looking for how you measure personal success.

**Hint:** Be prepared with a story that demonstrates your strong work abilities and makes you attractive to the interviewer.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Under what environments do you work best?

**Reason:** The interviewer is interested in whether your interests and workplace strengths are relevant to the position.

**Hint:** Tailor your example/answer to the job you are applying for. For example, Restaurant Position: "I thrive in high energy, fast paced environments. When I worked for Earls, my supervisors, coworkers and customers regularly commented on my positive energy and enthusiasm."

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you prefer to work alone or as a member of a team?

**Reason:** Depending on the position, the interviewer is determining whether you perform better in groups or individually.

**Hint:** Working as a team is one of the most important elements required in order to be successful in a job. Make sure that the interviewer is aware that you function effectively in groups. Be clear that you work equally hard whether it be independently or as part of a team. When you answer, consider whether the position requires more individual or team interactions.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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11. What have you done in the past that demonstrates your ability to work in a team?

**Reason:** The interviewer is assessing your ability to communicate effectively and work cooperatively with others.

**Hint:** The ability to work as part of a team is a very important skill to have. Pick a positive experience that illustrates this ability. Be prepared to cite specific examples of past experiences, which you have thought about in advance.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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12. Describe your style as a team player.

**Reason:** The interviewer is anxious to assess your fit with the company and depending on the position, possibly your leadership capabilities.

**Hint:** You may want to indicate the type of role that you usually assume such as problem solver, negotiator, or the one who takes care of the details.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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13. What kind of people do you prefer to work with?

**Reason:** The interviewer is assessing your adaptability and looking for your potential compatibility with the existing team.

**Hint:** Focus on the positive. Stay away from negative statements. Make it clear to the interviewer through examples that you are adaptable.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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14. Which of your jobs was the least interesting/most interesting and why?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking to see what work environments challenge or stimulate you the most and how you handle environments that are not as challenging.

**Hint:** Think of examples from former positions, particularly ones that have similar work environments to the company you are applying to. Be creative. For least interesting, present experiences that you know will not be a part of this position. Mention any favourable performance reviews.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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15. How do you normally handle criticism?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking to see if you understand that criticism or constructive feedback is useful and an important part of learning a new job and working effectively as part of a team.

**Hint:** Tell the employer that you see feedback as useful and a crucial component in the learning process. Offer an example of when you've received constructive feedback and the steps you took to improve.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

16. How do you normally handle stress/pressure?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking for your strategies for handling yourself while under pressure.

**Hint:** You should provide them with a positive example of a previous workplace situation where you were required to perform under stressful circumstances.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

17. What are your long range career goals/objectives?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking for evidence of career goals and ambitions and how this may fit with their company.

**Hint:** Be sure to highlight your long term commitment to this position. State goals that are appropriate to this company.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Why should we hire you?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking to see you have researched the company, your enthusiasm for the position, and confidence in your abilities.

**Hint:** When responding to this question you may want to be very specific. For example, you could say something like "My background in accounting has provided me with the ability to...". Stress what you have to offer the employer.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. What are your salary expectations?

**Reason:** The interviewer could be looking to see you have researched the company and are satisfied with what they have to offer financially. They may also want to get a sense of what you feel your skills are worth.

**Hint:** Research salaries in your field prior to the interview so you have a general idea of current salary range. You may be more comfortable offering the interviewer a salary range rather than stating a specific amount which could be lower than what they planned to offer.

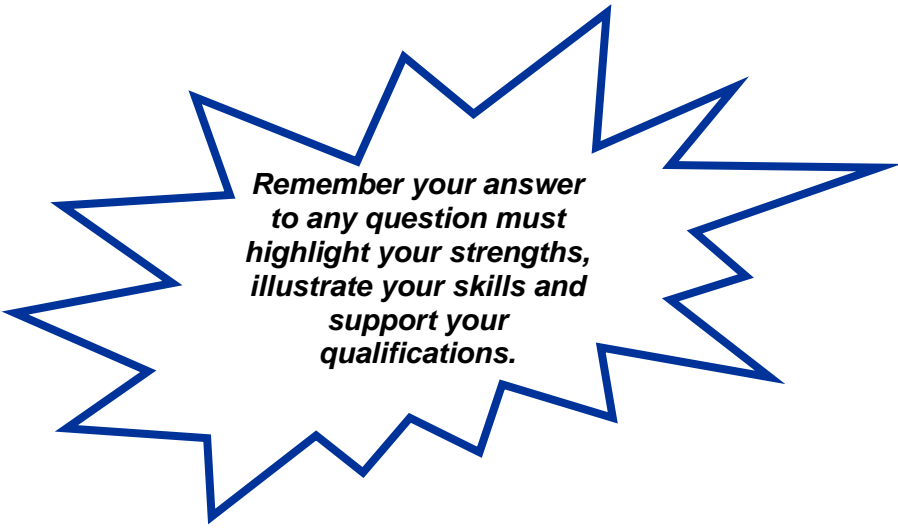
**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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20. How long do you plan to stay with this company?

**Reason:** The interviewer is looking for assurance of a long-term commitment.

**Hint:** Let the interviewer know that you plan to stay as long as you continue to learn, develop your skills, meet expectations and make a valuable contribution to the team.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



*Remember your answer to any question must highlight your strengths, illustrate your skills and support your qualifications.*

## Additional Resources

### Websites

[www.sfu.ca/hccc](http://www.sfu.ca/hccc)

[www.careerservices.uvic.ca/quicktips](http://www.careerservices.uvic.ca/quicktips)

[www.quintcareers.com](http://www.quintcareers.com)

Simon Fraser University Career Services  
University of Victoria Career Services  
Quintessential Careers

### Books (Available in our Resource Library)

**101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions**, Ron Fry

**Fearless Interviewing**, Marky Stein

**The Complete Idiots Guide to the Perfect Interview**, Marc Dorio

**The Complete Q & A Job Interview Book**, Jeffrey Allen

**The Interview Kit**, Richard H. Beatty

**Your First Interview**, Ron Fry