

## INTERVIEWS – Questions

### **The interview is the audition stage of your job search**

In the interview, a select number of candidates are given the opportunity to explain how their unique competencies meet the needs of the job and to demonstrate their fit with the organization. No matter what education or experience you have or who you know, the ability to interview well is key to success in any job search.

Many interview questions can be anticipated. Like any competition, those who prepare perform better than those who do not. Preparing will improve your performance and reduce stress at your next interview.

### **But you need some answers, too!**

The interviewer is not the only person to ask questions during an interview. Interviewers expect you to ask questions that help ensure you will be happy in the job. Intelligent and thoughtful questions will leave a positive impression and help set you apart from other candidates. Answers you get will provide valuable information when deciding if this is the right opportunity for you.

### **Common interviewer questions**

1. Tell me about yourself. Tell me how this job fits into your career trajectory.
2. Define co-operation. What was the most successful team project you worked on? What was your personal contribution?
3. Describe a situation in which you had to handle a variety of projects simultaneously. How did you stay on top of them? What did you do to manage your time well?
4. Describe a situation when you were put on the spot and felt unsure of yourself. How did you respond?
5. Describe a specific situation in which you solved a problem or took charge of an emergency. Explain what you did that showed leadership during a challenging situation.
6. Describe how you discovered a need and met it or an instance in which you developed an idea.
7. Describe how you have been able to apply something you learned from your program to a real-life or work-related situation.
8. Are your grades a good indication of your ability in... (a competency needed for this job)? Why or why not?
9. Give me an example of your ability to assist or calm down an irate customer or client.
10. How do you influence someone to agree with your ideas? What did you do to influence them? Tell me about your 'biggest sale.' When did your communication skills improve a situation?
11. How do you make important decisions?
12. Describe a time you took on something new and had little or no guidance. How did you handle it? How did you determine if you were successful?

13. In what situations are you competitive? In what situations do you feel most like yourself?
14. Tell me about a time you achieved a goal by following instructions.
15. What challenges are you looking for? What industry trends are most interesting to you? Why?
16. Under what circumstances do you typically make mistakes? Tell me about a time you failed at something and how you dealt with that.
17. What do you think are the biggest challenges you will face in this position? How do you see yourself contributing to our organization? What would motivate you to stay in this position long-term?
18. Besides your studies, what have you been involved in during University that you are most proud of?
19. Tell me about the biggest change you have had to deal with. How did you adapt?
20. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Your greatest disappointment?
21. What did you dislike most about your previous job? Supervisor? Company?
22. What did you do during the gap in your employment history?
23. What do you consider your major weaknesses? Provide specific examples. How could they affect your on-the-job performance?
24. What do you see as your greatest strengths? Provide specific examples. What tasks come easily?
25. What experiences did you gain from your (previous/current) employer? What did you do particularly well in your last job?
26. What is your experience in ... (main tasks/content of the work you are applying to do)?
27. What is your scope of competence using ... (required/desired) computer program?
28. What would your past supervisors tell me about your performance?
29. What always seems to be left on your to-do list?
30. What do you know about our company (product/service/customers)? How did you find out?
31. Tell me a time a supervisor criticized your work. How did you deal with that?
32. How has your education prepared you for this position? What do you think your academic studies will add to this position that experience alone will not? Why did you choose this field?
33. How did you prepare for this interview? How are you conducting your job search?
34. What are the most important characteristics you are looking for in a job? Why? How much do you know about this job?
35. What areas of this field are you most interested in? Why?
36. I see from your resume you have only minimal experience for this position. Why should I hire you?
37. If I hired you for this position, what components of the job do you most look forward to doing? Least? What are three things you want to get out of this job?
38. Describe the best supervisor you've worked with. What was their management style and why did it appeal to you?
39. Is there anything that would prevent you from doing this job?
40. What can you say to convince me to hire you for this position instead of another candidate? What can you do for us that other applicants cannot?



## Possible interview questions to ask at the interview

On a separate page you take with you to the interview, list some of these and other questions you have that you would like to ask. Asking three to five questions at an interview is typically appropriate.

1. What is the overall purpose of this role? Would you describe what a typical day on the job would look like? What assignments could I expect in the first 6 months?
2. Does the position involve working with other parts of the organization? In what ways?
3. What are critical responsibilities of the position? What are top priorities the successful candidate will need to focus on? What is the first problem that would need attention? What problems/challenges are associated with the position? What would you like to say about the new hire's achievements a year from now?
4. What are other things to be done by the successful candidate that are not a formal part of the job?
5. What do you track or report on? How is performance measured? What is the process for reviewing and evaluating performance?
6. What strengths are you looking for now that might not have been as important the last time this position was filled? How would you like to see this job done differently than it was before?
7. What type of initial training is provided (structured/informal/mentoring, etc.)? What are some typical examples of professional development activities of people who have been doing this type of work for a while? How is this supported by management?
8. How much autonomy or collaboration is typically associated with this position? Once the probation period is over, what decisions will I have authority over? Do employees feel empowered to make decisions? What is your process for handling employee ideas? How does the team communicate?
9. Why is this position vacant? What is the reason the last person who held this position left it? How much turnover is there in this position? Are positions filled from within or outside the department/company?
10. How would you describe your ideal employee? What kind of personal characteristics are you looking for (risk-taking, entrepreneurial, team player, competitiveness, etc.)? What does teamwork look like?
11. Can you describe the environment? What does management value and show support for?
12. What kinds of employee achievements are recognized by the work group/department/company? How are successes celebrated?
13. In what ways has the department changed in the past few years? Why? What would you say is the strength of the work group and where does it need to be stronger?
14. What significant changes do you see in the company/industry in the future? What are important issues and opportunities the organization expects to face in the next few years? In what ways might this impact the department and this position? Who are the company's competitors?
15. Typically, how long do people stay in this position? Where is the person who previously held this position? What career paths are available for someone in this position?
16. As the successful candidate, who would I be reporting to? Who are their/your leadership role models?
17. In what way is a career in this company better than with one of your competitors? Give an example of something that happens here that wouldn't happen anywhere else.
18. What is the next step in the process? When do you expect to make a decision on the successful candidate?
19. Do you have any reservations about my qualifications? Do you have any doubts about my suitability for this job? Can I clarify anything more for you about my skills, education or experience.



# Interview Question Tips

- Consider each question asked as an opportunity to provide information on your suitability for this job. Listen to questions carefully. Try to understand how they relate to the position for which you are interviewing.
  - » When answering, take a moment to consider what example and message you want to convey in order to stay on topic.
- Prior to your interview, prepare and practice answers to questions you find challenging. Thoughtful preparation will improve your “on-the-spot” responses if and when similar questions are asked. No need to memorize answers.
  - » By preparing and practicing, you will know the details you want to share – and those you don’t.
- Use behavior-based answers to questions asked. Use specific examples. Demonstrate how you have applied your skills – in school, work or volunteer settings. Don’t be afraid to repeat and expand on important points from your resume. This allows you to help the interviewer understand how you are likely to perform at this job by showing them how you have performed in related situations in the past.
  - » To do this, use the **STAR** formula: succinctly stating the **Situation** and **Task**, outlining your **Action** steps in tackling the task, and the **Result** or outcome.
- It is very acceptable to prepare and bring your own list of three to five questions. Write these in order of priority so that if time runs short, you ensure you ask those most important first.
  - » Asking your own questions demonstrates an interest in the job, the work group, and the company.
- Relax! Remember that you were invited to interview for a particular position because the company believes you are one of a select few who may have the knowledge, skills and attributes to be successful.
  - » Focus on showcasing your competencies – and therefore yourself – positively and confidently using specific, real-life examples.

## TIP:

If you are a Mount Royal undergraduate or graduate expecting to interview for a part-time, full-time or summer job soon and would like to discuss interview strategies, questions or responses, contact Career Services today.

## Career Services can help you:

Research occupations, careers  
and related programs

Develop effective, professional  
job search tools

Find relevant part-time, summer  
and post-graduation work

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