

## INTERVIEWS – Purposes and Types

While job interviews are common, each one is different. You may experience more than one type when interviewing for program-related jobs, especially near or after graduation. Large companies may have different processes than smaller companies. Different interview types may be used at different stages of a recruiting process. Some employers may do second and third interviews with fewer and fewer candidates to find their best fit.

### Pre Interview Preparation

Typically, interviews are conducted for three purposes:

#### 1. Preliminary screening

The purpose of screening is to reduce the number of candidates invited for longer, more thorough interviews. Screening interviews are typically +/-15 minutes and confirm interest, ensure competency requirements, verify qualifications and disqualify candidates with inconsistent or misleading information. They may be done by phone or through a pre-recorded series of questions.

#### 2. Candidate comparison

This round of interviews is typically done to compare and contrast a slate of candidates to assess:

- Competency to meet the needs of the job tasks and challenges
- Adaptability and fit with corporate and work group culture
- Maturity, judgment and responsibility

#### 3. Final decision making

Second interviews are often given to one or more candidates and indicate you are a strong contender, but not necessarily the only candidate being considered. While a few questions may be about information already discussed, this interview is likely to change focus to capture different information. It is common to meet with more or different people than at earlier interviews.

## Interview Format

### Structured format

Many organizations use a structured format with the same questions asked of each candidate, allowing recruiters to compare and contrast candidates on the same criteria.

### Unstructured format

An unstructured format may be chosen by well-trained interviewers or used by individuals without formal training. In this format, candidates may be asked different questions based on experiences or gaps discussed or omitted in their resume and cover letter. Other questions which differ from candidate to candidate may spontaneously arise from examples used by the candidate when answering interview questions.

# Interview Types

## Telephone interviews

Generally used to pre-screen candidates, these interviews expand on the position, gain an impression of the candidate, clarify employment history and validate information against requirements. Your voice and words are the only cues they will have to decide if you will make it to the next stage. Telephone interviews are most often pre-arranged but may occasionally be impromptu to assess how a candidate handles unexpected situations. Whether pre-arranged or impromptu, remember other candidates will face the same challenges!

To improve outcomes:

- ✓ Once you have applied for a position, ensure relevant materials such as your resume, pen, paper and list of questions are easily accessed
- ✓ If you face an impromptu telephone interview, ask the interviewer if they would be willing to hold for a moment while you close the door and take out your resume, pen and paper
- ✓ Ensure you record the correct spelling of the interviewer's name and title
- ✓ Use a land line where possible or ensure you are in a quiet area with a strong cell signal

## One-on-one and panel interviews

In these traditional methods of interviewing, the candidate meets with a single interviewer, usually the department or supervising manager, or with up to three or more people at the same time. This panel of interviewers may be a combination of human resources staff, potential work peers, a supervisor and/or department manager and captures more perspectives.

**TIP:**

When the interview is being arranged, ask for the name(s) of the interviewers so you can research their roles and background. Arrive early for the interview, present yourself professionally, establish rapport and clarify job-related competence and fit through interview answers and your questions.

## Audition/simulation/experiential interviews

For positions such as trainers, data entry, computer programmers, medical personnel or internal/external consultants, a demonstration may be requested to assess a candidate's on-the-job competence. This may be a part of the initial interview or scheduled separately. You may be given notice when the interview is scheduled or given only a short time to prepare at the time of the interview. Typically, candidates are asked to simulate something that needs doing on the job, such as setting up a project or delivering a presentation – often with few parameters in order to assess their ability to successfully handle ambiguous situations or challenges. This simulation may be done by the candidate alone or done with other members of a team.

## Career fair interviews

Short conversations during a career fair can be used by recruiters as a screening interview, similar to a telephone interview. This is especially true if recruiters are also collecting applications/resumes or contact information at the fair.

## Pre-recorded interviews

Becoming more popular for screening or first interviews, pre-recorded video interviews are usually arranged via an email link from the company's recruiter or representative. Through the email link, each candidate responds to a series of questions, often within a time limit. These video interviews can be stored, shared, reviewed, analyzed, compared and contrasted by decision makers, even if they are at multiple locations across the country or beyond. Unfortunately, they do not provide the opportunity for the candidate to ask their own questions or connect with interviewers on a personal level.



## **Interactive remote interviews (Skype, video feed)**

These interviews may be used when candidates are out of town or when a decision maker is off site. Treat this interview like an in-person interview. Ensure equipment is working prior to the interview and clutter is removed from the camera area. If using cell service, ensure your location has a strong signal as a dropped call or poor signal is distracting and unprofessional.

## **Group interviews**

Group interviews are designed to interview two or more candidates at the same time with candidates required to discuss topics or undertake tasks together. Group interviews are often conducted to assess how you persuade, connect or work with others.

## **Carousel, circuit or multiple mini interviews (MMIs)**

In these interviews, applicants move from station to station, spending 5 to 10 minutes at each, answering a particular case-based question or discussing their response to a scenario before moving on to the next station, interviewers and scenario. Time allotted at each is usually tightly controlled. Candidates may get to read the questions/scenario immediately before meeting the interviewer(s) to briefly prepare. Each interviewer will independently score all candidates on the same scenario responses. At the end of the circuit, interviewers will pool their results and sum up each candidate's final score.

## **Internal interviews**

Interviewing for a new position where you are already employed means that your track record may be familiar to the recruiters and you are somewhat familiar with the process, the company needs and culture. Despite this, prepare for an internal interview as seriously as an external one. It is likely that you are not the only candidate. If you are applying for a different or higher level position, business issues, objectives and even the culture might be quite different. Internal interviews may be one-on-one, panel or Skype/video feed.

## **Stress interviews**

Stress interviews are rare and usually reserved for positions where the successful candidate will have to operate under extremely stressful situations as part of their day-to-day job. These interviews see how each candidate manages such situations by purposely making the interview itself stressful.

# Interview Types

No matter what type of interview you have, you will be asked specific questions to help the interviewer understand your level of competence, how you would perform the work and whether it aligns with your strengths and interests.

Questions can be:

- i. Behaviour based
- ii. Theoretical
- iii. Closed (validating) or open ended
- iv. Strengths or interests based
- v. Case based

## **i. Behaviour based**

Interviews predominantly using these questions are referred to as "Behaviour Descriptive Interviews" or "Behaviour Based Interviews" and are seen in most industries for positions from entry level to executive. Questions often begin with "Tell me about a time . . . (you handled a customer complaint successfully)" or "Give me an example of when . . . (you showed leadership under pressure)."

The purpose is to assess how a candidate is likely to perform in the future based on past performance when faced with similar challenges or opportunities. Answers provide a window which helps the interviewer 'see' a candidate tackling specific tasks similar to those needed. Well thought out examples of successfully accomplished tasks and the unique processes used to accomplish them provide a real competitive edge for a candidate.



**TIP:**

Use paid or unpaid work experiences, school projects, personal experiences or other activities to describe how you have demonstrated your job-related competencies. Do not use a hypothetical situation – they are looking for a fact-based, real-life example. Use the **STAR** formula to outline the **Situation**/challenge, the specific **Task**, **Actions** taken, and **Result**.

## ii. Theoretical

These questions outline a hypothetical situation. The candidate is asked how they would respond or act. Questions often begin with “What is the best way to . . . (sell a customer a product)” or “How would you . . . (handle a distressed person)?”

## iii. Closed (validating) or open ended

A closed question example is: “Your First Aid certification is still current, correct?” Open ended questions force the candidate to interpret the information sought and choose between many possible responses. A common open ended question is “Tell me about yourself.”

**TIP:**

Remain focused on the reason for the interview – the position, the company, their needs and what you will bring to their operation.

## iv. Strengths or interests based

This interview framework attempts to get to know a candidate and identify whether they will enjoy doing the type of work that needs doing, have a natural aptitude for that type of work, or are motivated by specific situations, challenges or opportunities. It is difficult to prepare for these questions beyond researching the company values and the strengths of people who have been successful in similar roles.

## v. Case based

Case questions are often used to evaluate ability to consult with internal or external clients or handle complex projects. They require the candidate to problem solve within the interview. Similar to an audition, case based questions ask a candidate to demonstrate soft skills such as ethical reasoning, problem solving, critical analysis and prioritizing complex or competing tasks. This might include formulating a plan rather than actually solving a problem. Interviewers are looking for how you apply what you have studied and know to a life-like situation with many unknowns or complications.

They are looking for your reasons and thought process, so ensure you include the ‘whys’ when explaining your plan. The more you are able to analyze and assess, the fuller grasp of the situation you will appear to have.

**TIP:**

Before answering, ask questions for clarity and to inform your problem-solving plan. Some employers provide key bits of information only when requested.

To prepare to interview effectively, book an appointment with a Certified Career Development Professional (CCDP) at Career Services.

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