

Interview Tips 2: Top 8 Suggestions for Interview Practice

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Interviewing is a learned skill, and the more you practice, the better you will perform. Before your interview, have a friend or family member ask you some of the questions you've prepared answers for, or practice delivering your answers in front of a mirror – it is important to verbalize your answers. The most common types of interview questions you can expect include:

- 1. Direct:** Questions require specific answers. Information should be clear and specific. These should be easy if you are self-aware and have done some research. Be sure to elaborate as some questions can be answered with a simple yes or no. Examples include: *Describe your past work experience. What are your job-related skills? What do you know about our products or services? Tell us about your competency with xx software.*
- 2. Open Ended:** General and do not ask for specific information. You determine the focus of your answer. Your response should be relevant to the position. When answering, focus on four areas: education, experience, skills and personal attributes. Keep answers succinct, typically less than two minutes and where appropriate include examples. Common questions include: *Tell me about yourself. What do you consider your greatest strengths/weaknesses? How might these affect your performance? Where do you see yourself in 5 years?*
- 3. Behavioural Descriptive Interview (BDI) Questions:** The most common question type; these touch on how you handled situations in the past, which is a good predictor of how you will handle similar situations in the future. BDI questions go beyond whether you can do the job. They focus on whether you will do the job well. These usually begin with phrases such as: *Tell me about a time... Describe a situation in which... Recall an instance when... Give an example of...* The most effective way to answer BDI questions is with the "STAR" method. Use specific examples from past experience – those that are unique to you.
 - Describe the **Situation**: What was the occasion? Who was involved?
 - Discuss your **Task**: What needed fixing or improving? What was the problem or opportunity?
 - Explain the specific **Action(s)** you took (not what the group or others did): How did you solve the problem? What techniques or skills did you use?
 - Finish with the end **Result**: How did your solution affect the situation? How was the organization impacted? What did you learn?
- 4. Hypothetical or Situational:** Similar to BDI because they assess ability to handle work situations; however, they differ as they're about what you would do rather than what you have done. Questions test thought process and logical thinking. You might be asked: *What would you do if you were going to miss a project deadline? How would you handle a disagreement with a co-worker? How would you market this product?*
- 5. Technical:** Focus on information specific to a job or industry. Can be accounting specific or IT related.
- 6. Tricky:** These are unpredictable and are usually asked to reveal 'hidden' problems or to show a candidate's authenticity. The interviewer may ask: *If you're employed, how do you manage time for interviews? If you won the lottery, would you still work? If you wrote an autobiography, what would the title be?*
- 7. Salary:** If you 'name your salary' and it is considered too high by the employer, you risk taking yourself out of the competition. On the other hand, if you quote a low salary, you may undersell and under-represent yourself. The best advice is to ask the employer about their 'range' so you know what the organization supports. You can refrain from providing a number and ask for further discussion if an offer is made. You can also answer without giving a number, saying, "Money is only a factor in the overall compensation package."
- 8. Illegal:** Requires you to provide information that has no bearing on the position. Questions related to age, religion, family status, disability and gender orientation are illegal. You can choose to answer or not, or better yet ask how this would relate to your ability to fill the position.

Practicing your answers – both content and delivery – will develop confidence going into the interview, which in turn will help you relax and perform to your true potential on the day of the meeting. See Tip Sheet #3 for ideas on excelling in the interview.