

The key to having a good interview is preparation.

Researching the company and practicing answers to common interview questions can help you feel more confident. The length of the interview will vary. Usually, you are asked to meet more than one person during an interview. In addition, the employer may ask you to take a test or answer a questionnaire.

Preparation for the interview

Research the company

- The employer's products and services
- Competition
- History of the company
- Other relevant information

Review the important points you expect to cover during the interview

- Review your résumé
- Professional and personal achievements
- Problems solved.
- Questions to ask the employer
- Other information

Personal presentation

You will make a better impression if you:

- Are clean and your hair is freshly cut or styled (beard also, for men)

- Use a deodorant and mouthwash
- Have clean, manicured fingernails
- Do not wear perfume/cologne. Many companies have scent-free policies in effect.
- Are not chewing gum
- Dress in business attire even if the job you are competing for wouldn't normally require business attire.
- Turn off any electronic distractions such as cell phones.

Body Language

The image you project through your body language is just as important as your personal presentation.

- Your handshake must be firm, but not aggressive
- Have good posture
- Maintain eye contact with the person you are talking to

Attitude

The first impression is crucial.

- Adopt a straightforward, open and positive attitude.
- Be friendly, but not overly familiar
- Be articulate in your communication with simple, straightforward responses

Here are some helpful hints:

1. Listen carefully to the interviewer, making sure you have clearly understood the question before answering it. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
2. Be calm and try to avoid nervous tics.
3. Don't sit down before you are asked.
4. Be the first to extend your hand to offer a handshake.
5. Don't smoke, chew gum or accept anything to eat or drink.
6. It is an INTERVIEW not an INTERROGATION. You can ask questions as well. It should be an open dialogue.

Combat the stress associated with interviews

Interviews will always cause a certain amount of stress. The best way to control your stress level is preparation. The following are a few hints to help you relax before your next interview:

- Prepare for your interview in advance
- Two easy techniques that can help you relax are
 - I. 444 breathing: Breath in slowly for four seconds, hold your breath for four seconds, and breath out slowly for four seconds.
 - II. Try to visualize your interview from the time you arrive until the time you leave, people you will talk to, your wait, your interview, and your departure.

Questions an employer cannot legally ask you

Legally, there are certain questions the employer cannot ask in New Brunswick, according to the Human Rights Act,. An employer cannot ask you whether you are married, whether you plan to have children, your age, your religion, your sexual orientation, your marital status, your ethnic origin, your race, whether you are dependent on drugs or alcohol, or your physical or mental condition.

However, some employers still ask such questions, especially about your age, marital status, and intention to have children. You can choose not to answer.

Questions that employers frequently ask

Personal Questions

The employer will generally ask you some questions designed to get to know you on a personal level. Even though they are asked in different ways, the goal is always the same. You must bring out your points and abilities and demonstrate to the interviewer that you have the necessary qualifications to fill the position.

Examples:

“Tell me about yourself”.

What the employer wants:

- To get to know you
- To find out if you are the person he or she needs

What you should convey in your answer:

- Highlight why you would be a good employee
- Give a brief overview of who you are, your interests, your hobbies, and the type of work you have enjoyed.
- Bring out your strong points, emphasizing such things as your attention to detail, your willingness to do extra work when necessary, your ability to help in other departments, your ability to work as part of a team, etc..

“Have you ever done this type of work before”?

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you have the abilities required for the position he or she is offering

What you should convey in your answer:

- Emphasize the abilities you have that are transferrable from one job to another, even if you have never done that kind of work before.
- Point out that you learn new duties quickly

“Why should we hire you as opposed to someone else”?

What the employer wants:

- A request for you to showcase yourself and apply your unique skills and abilities to positively contributing to the workplace.
- To provide evidence that you really are interested in the organization and it is not “just another job”.

What you need to know:

- Bring out all your strong points: abilities, dedication, experience, enthusiasm, efficiency, organizational ability, pride in a job well done, team work, etc.

“What are your weak points”?

What the employer wants:

- **Trick question.** The employer does not want you to really highlight your less redeeming qualities. The employer wants to see if you have a realistic self-concept and if you can identify areas where you may want to improve yourself. It also helps to demonstrate how you dealt with adversity or a weak skill and turned it into a positive.

What you need to know:

- Mention that you have limitations like everyone, but that you are constantly striving to improve. Give an example if you have one.
- Talk about a weak point, trying to bring out the positive side in relationship to the job.

For example, for a job that requires dynamic people with lots of initiative: “I don’t like being too structured. I have a lot of initiative and I like to anticipate what the problems will be.”

Your overall “fit” or perceived benefits for the company

Some questions are designed to determine behaviour, whether you would be a good employee, whether you would be loyal to the company, and whether you would be there long enough to be of benefit to the company.

“Why do you want to work for our company”?

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you are familiar with the company and whether you would be satisfied with the position available.

What you need to know:

- Do research on the company and show that you are familiar with it
- Talk about the good reputation of the company, that it treats its employees fairly, and you know it offers the type of work you like
- Repeat in your own words what interests you about the position offered and about the company
- Be knowledgeable about the position offered and the duties attached to it.

“Why did you leave your last job”?

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you had problems in your last job and whether or not they will be repeated in his or her company

What you need to know:

- Mention positive points about your former job and your former employer, without lying
- Emphasize the fact that you work well with people

- Never say anything negative about your former employer

If you quit your last job voluntarily, you could say...

“My boss and I agreed that I could use my strong points (specify them) more effectively in another position that would better meet my expectations”

If you were discharged or fired

“I usually work well with people, but in this particular case, it didn’t work out very well.” (No need to say any more)

If your position was cut due to financial restructuring:

“My job was terminated due to company downsizing”

“What are your long-term objectives?”, “What type of job do you think you will have in 5 years?” or “How long do you plan to work for our company?”

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you are serious about the company and whether he or she should invest in you.

What you need to know:

- Assure the employer of your intention to stay with the company for a certain amount of time
- If the company offers chances for advancement, you can say that you plan to take advantage of them when the time comes.

“Do you work well under stressful conditions or with tight deadlines?”

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you could manage the stress involved in the position.

What you need to know:

- Mention circumstances (jobs or other activities) in which you had to face a stressful situation that you managed well
- If you worked while attending school, passed your courses and missed very few days of work, even during exams, mention that.

“Are you thinking about going back to school?”

What the employer wants:

- To know if you are going to quit your job if hired.

What you need to know:

- If you plan to pursue your studies on a part-time basis, tell your employer that you want to continue to develop: that is a point in your favour. Add that it will not be detrimental to your work performance in any way.

“What salary are you asking for?”

What the employer wants:

- To know whether you expect a higher salary that he or she can offer you.

What you need to know:

- The salary range for the type of position you are applying for with this particular company – Research the company prior to your interview.
- If you give a figure at this stage, it could be harmful. You can tell the employer that you will work for salary he or she feels is commensurate with your qualifications.
- If you are offered the position and the salary is not acceptable, try to negotiate.

Behaviour Related Questions

“Tell me about a time you had to resolve a problem in the workplace?”

What the employer wants:

- The steps you took to resolve the problem and what was the result – What did you do and were you effective.

What you need to know:

- Past behaviour is a predictor of future behaviour.
- If you were not effective – Tell the employer what you learned from this situation and what you have done differently to be successful.

“Have you ever had to face conflicts?”

This question is especially important because the employer knows you will have to face many conflicts and that you have little experience in managing this type of situation.

The employer may also give you a situation and you will have to find a way to solve it. For example, you could be asked: “What would you do if you had a project to complete with four (4) of your colleagues and one of them was not working?” or “What would you do if you were a manager and one of your employees was not motivated to work?”

What you need to know:

- Try to find an example of this type of situation that you experienced and explain how you solved the conflict. You will then have to analyze the resolution of the conflict: what you did right, what you should have done, and the positive results of your decision;

“What type of equipment can your work with?”

What the employer wants:

- To know your technical knowledge

What you need to know:

- Talk about all your technical knowledge, especially that which will help you in the position offered, such as knowledge about computers, communication, etc.

- If the employer asks you whether you are familiar with a particular piece of equipment and you are not, mention that you are acquainted with other similar types of equipment or that you learn quickly, etc.

Do you have any questions?

That is often the last question asked.

What the employer wants:

- To show you he or she has finished and is inviting you to clarify certain points, if necessary.

What you need to know:

- If you don't have any specific questions, you may conclude by saying, " You have given me a thorough description of the company and the position, and I can tell you that I am very interested in the position"
- Avoid asking questions about salary or benefits until you have been hired.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it may help you prepare.

Before leaving, tell the employer you would like to contact him or her in a few days to see if a decision has been made. Finally, smile, extend your hand, say thank you, and maintain eye contact.

Interview Follow-up

Before leaving, ask the employer when you can expect to hear from him or her. If the employer has not contacted you by the agreed upon date, you should call and ask if a decision has been made.

The Second Interview

Many companies call pre-selected applicants for more than one interview. You must devote the same amount of time preparing for each of these interviews as for the first. However, keep in mind that these subsequent interviews will probably be longer. Maintain a professional attitude at all times.

Evaluation of the Interview

After each interview, take a few minutes to review your performance. For example, did you answer the questions adequately? Did you look the person in the eye? Did you arrive on time? For the next interview, review your notes to improve your performance.

After The Interview:

- Send a thank-you letter
- Follow-up: Telephone and/or e-mail the employer
- Document these contacts as part of your networking
- Evaluate the interview