



University of
Lethbridge



Interview Tips and Techniques

Strategies & information to assist you in confidently preparing for job interviews

Career & Employment Services
www.uleth.ca/ross/ces

+ Preparing for Interviews

Preparing for interviews ahead of time will help you to be ready to describe how you have the technical, transferable, and personal skills the employer is seeking. Research the company, know yourself (your skills and experience), use real work, life, and school examples as proof of your abilities, and if possible, bring samples of your work to further demonstrate the real world quality and evidence of your performance.

For the employer, the main purpose of the job interview is:

- A way to gain and confirm more direct information and understanding of applicants. This assists in determining each person's 'fit' with the organization, its values, and its employees, as well as their ability to perform required duties and maintain the work integrity required for the position.
- A chance for them to 'tell and sell' you on their company and entice you to work for them if an offer is made.

For the applicant, the main purpose of the job interview is:

- A way to market their abilities, experience, skills, and 'fit' with the organization in a direct, in-person manner.
- A way to gather valuable information about the company and position to help make decisions if offered a position.

A job interview is a business meeting where both the applicant and the employer are considering making a mutually beneficial deal.

It is a 2-way opportunity – YOU have the skills to offer and THEY require someone to fill a need that exists in their organization, their team, and their success.

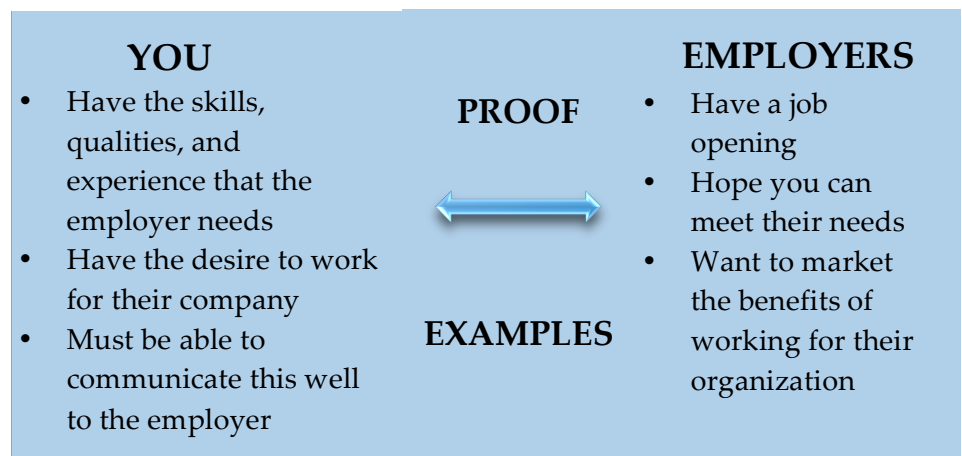
*BE that person! BE prepared!
BE ready for their questions and
KNOW your information!*

To help reduce your nerves, remember that the employer asked you to interview with them because they feel you have something to offer!

Consider yourself to be a knowledgeable consultant or resource person who is meeting at the company's request to describe what you have to offer and how you can assist/fit with their company.

Treat each job interview as an opportunity to:

- Learn something about yourself, the interview process, the world, etc..
- Learn something about the company, the position, the work atmosphere, the location, and so on.
- Improve your interview confidence and skills by gaining first-hand experience in the process.





3 Steps for Interview Success

1. Gather Information

- Review your skills, experience, abilities, knowledge, education, training, goals, and aspirations to help you understand yourself and to speak naturally about your ability to perform in the position and fit with their company and values.
- Research the company's website, read the company's annual report or other important documents, talk with people who have worked for them or who know about them, review the position description, and understand their corporate projects, organizational structure, and values to help you evaluate your level of interest in the position and company.
- Anticipate questions and prepare strong responses. Be ready to answer behavioral description questions by using examples of your own experience in similar situations, utilizing required skill sets, working on similar tasks, and succeeding in challenging situations.
- Consider practicing your interview skills out loud, with a friend, with a career advisor, or on videotape to observe your responses, body language and tone of voice.
- Attend a [CES Interview Workshop](#) for help in preparing.



2. Prepare for the 3 Main Stages of the Interview Process

1. Establishing Rapport

Make a good impression during the introduction phase. Smile, show confidence, be energetic, offer a firm handshake, establish eye contact, and don't be afraid to make small talk. Use deep calming breaths and positive self-talk during the interview to remind yourself that you are prepared, confident, and relaxed!

2. Exchanging Information

The employer will ask you a variety of questions, each with a deliberate purpose that will assist them in their decision-making and hiring process.

Interview Questions:

- Questions about your background, previous experience, education, strengths, weaknesses, work habits, commitment to the job, and skills sets that make you qualified for the position.
- Questions that reveal insight into your personality, interests, activities, values, long term goals, volunteer/community involvement, interest in the organization, etc., that might indicate an apparent fit with the team and organization in general.
- Questions about your ability to perform specific duties required in the position, knowledge of & experience in technical areas, how you cope with supervision, expectations of the organization, etc..
- Questions that reveal what you *would do* in hypothetical situations (situational questions- "what would you do if...").
- Questions that reveal what you *have done* in past situations of a similar nature (behavioral descriptive questions).

Interview Responses:

- Focus on your strengths and provide concrete examples of skills and successes in your past.
- Know yourself, your skills, the company, the job description, and your goals. Be sincere, be positive, and be yourself!
- Make answers brief and clear, usually 1-2 minutes maximum. Prepare in advance for relevant interview questions and rehearse responses for easier recall under pressure. Avoid rambling and vague responses. Focus on your strengths and ask for clarification if needed.
- Take your time in answering questions. Pacing your interview responses and speaking slowly can add to the impact and clarity of your responses. It is acceptable to take a moment to think out your response and even take a small pause in between thoughts as needed.

3. Closing Transition

The employer has finished questioning and invites you to ask any questions you may have.

- You should always have strong questions ready to ask. Employers expect you to have questions and this shows you have personal initiative, intelligence, and noticeable interest in the position and company.
- Ask questions about aspects you have a sincere interest in, as these will be more natural to remember and will show your confidence.
- Typical questions may include: whether training is provided; what, if any, performance measures or reviews are in place; how the company views professional development; or where the company sees growth in the future

3. Present Yourself in Strong & Positive Ways

Present yourself professionally. Plan your attire the night before. If you are unsure about the suitability of an outfit, err on the side of being more conservative and business-appropriate. Avoid wearing any strong scents (e.g. heavily scented perfumes or deodorants), jangling jewelry, facial piercings, and anything that may distract the interviewer from your answers. DO NOT bring your cell phone into an interview!!

Be organized and know what to bring to the interview. It's a good idea to bring a simple folder with: one or several copies of your resume and cover letter, application forms (if any), transcripts, any reference letters you would like to offer, paper & pen to write notes if needed, and several copies of your references' contact information if they were not included in your resume.

You may also choose to bring samples of your work that demonstrate your strengths and past skill successes. These can be integrated into relevant responses to questions or can be left with interviewers for a period of time. If prepared for and used well, a portfolio of work samples can make a positive impression on employers. If you would like more information on creating a portfolio, attend a [CES Portfolio workshop](#).

Arrive early and know the location of your interview. Consider checking out the office location, bus routes, parking, and travel time in advance to ensure a stress free experience on the day of the interview. Interact positively with the receptionist and any other staff you meet, as their impressions are often sought.

After the interview, take time to write down your impressions of the experience, the questions and responses given, and the areas and questions to prepare for in a second interview or in other job interviews.

Consider sending a thank you email or hand-written card to each member of the interview panel. This is a very impressive job search strategy that may set you apart from other interviewed candidates. A thank you note might be comprised of 2 or 3 short sentences thanking them for their time and mentioning your interest in the company and your fit with the position.

Declining or Withdrawing from Interviews

Withdrawing from or declining interviews should only be done under extenuating circumstances and as early as possible. This will allow time to adjust schedules and perhaps even provide other applicants with an opportunity to interview. If you must cancel an interview, contact the person who scheduled your interview as soon as possible.

+

We're Here to Help!

Call, email, or drop in anytime!

University of
Lethbridge



+

Career & Employment Services

Office Location: Anderson Hall, AH154

Phone: 403-329-2187

Email: ces.students@uleth.ca; ces.graduates@uleth.ca

www.uleth.ca/ross/ces