

Interview Toolkit



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Applied Science

CO-OP | Engineering
Co-operative
Education

5 Parts to A Successful Job Interview

Reading Time: 20 Minutes

Step 1: Understand the common type of interviews

Understand the purpose of an interview and the different types of interviews.

Step 2: Preparation, preparation, preparation

Guidelines that make sure you are well-prepared for your interview.

Step 3: At the interview

General tips and what to avoid during the interview.

Step 4: Follow up

Make sure you send a thank you email to leave a long-lasting impression on the employer.

Step 5: Reflection

Take time to reflect and review on your interview performance.

Step 6: Resources

Tips from employers, checklists, and interview cheat sheets to help you ace your next interview.

STEP 1

Understand the common types of interviews

Purpose of an Interview

Interviews allow for an exchange of information between you - the prospective candidate - and the employer. This meeting provides the employer with an opportunity to obtain more detailed information about your skills, interests, and qualifications. It is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the job and the employer to assess whether the position is in line with your personal goals and interests.

For many people, interviews can be a nerve-wracking experience. However, it's important to remember that the recruiters are already impressed with your skills and experience. If they did not think you could do the job, they would not take the time to meet with you!

Different Types of Interviews

There are six types of interviews. The following describes each type of interview and tips to succeed with each interview type.

One-to-One

This is the most common interview type, where employers meet with each candidate individually.

- Demonstrate confidence: make good eye contact, give a firm handshake, and smile often.
- Be prepared, punctual, polished, and professional.
- Listen carefully and be cognizant of both positive and negative body language.

Group

Multiple candidates are interviewed at the same time. Employers often employ these types of interviews to save time and to be able to better identify candidates who work well together. As such, these interviews often include a group activity that requires all candidates to work together to solve a problem or complete a task.

- Be prepared to introduce yourself to the interviewers and the other interviewees.
- Listen not only to questions being asked, but your fellow interviewees' responses too, so you are in tune with where the conversation is headed and can respond appropriately when it is your turn to speak.
- Don't view the other candidates as your competition, but rather an opportunity to demonstrate to the prospective employer your leadership skills, how you interact with others, and work as part of a team.

Panel

Two or more interviewers take turn asking questions. Oftentimes interviewers are from different departments of the company (e.g., human resources and engineering) and thus their questions will be framed from a different perspective.

- Make eye contact with all interviewers, not just the interviewer who asked the question – you don't know who will ultimately be making the hiring decision.

Telephone

Typically used for pre-screening purposes or if the interviewee is not in close proximity to interview location. Verbal communication skills are especially important during a phone interview as the employer cannot see your facial expressions or gestures.

- Find a quiet, comfortable spot, with good reception (if using a cell) that is free from distractions.
- Smile when speaking in order to convey your interest and enthusiasm.
- Dress as though it was an in-person interview in order to put yourself in the right mindset for the interview.

Live Video

Similar to a one-to-one interview, but conducted over the internet using video chat software such as Skype or Google Hangouts.

- Ensure your computer equipment (internet connection, camera, and microphone) are all functioning well and the settings are correct (test your set-up with a friend).
- Close any applications or windows on your computer that could interrupt the interview or slow the connection.
- Dress as though you were meeting the employer in person.
- Be at eye level with the camera – not looking up or staring down – with a simple background behind you.
- When listening, feel free to nod and smile as appropriate to further demonstrate that you are following along.
- Make eye contact with the interviewer by looking at the camera, not the screen.
- Conduct the interview in a quiet, well lit environment, free of loud noises, possible disturbances, including other people or pets.

Taped Video

Like a telephone interview, more and more employers are opting to employ a taped video interview as a means to pre-screen candidates. In a taped interview, candidates are given a set of interview questions and asked to record themselves answering these questions. Typically candidates are given 20-30 seconds to read the question and prepare a response. After that, candidates will be given about three minutes to record a response.

- Dress appropriately. Although this is pre-screening interview, treat it like a real in-person interview.
- Many employers provide practice questions for candidates to try in order to become comfortable with their software and its interface. Use this as an opportunity to verify that your computer's settings (i.e., your speaker and microphone volume levels) are set appropriately. You will also be able to watch your practice responses so you can look more polished, prepared, and professional when answering the real questions.

STEP 2

Preparation, preparation, preparation

Get the Details

Once you receive an interview request, you'll want to find the answers to the following questions:

1. *Who will be conducting the interview?*

If the position of the interviewer is not known, search the interviewer's name on LinkedIn to determine if they are a human resources professional, a technical manager, or engineer.

Human resources professionals usually have significant training and experience in conducting interviews. The questions they will ask will most likely be of the non-technical variety. Conversely, interviews conducted by engineers or technical managers will generally be technically focussed as they are most interested in your technical skills and how quickly you can become productive, however that is not to say that the interview won't include non-technical questions as well.

2. *How long will the interview be?*

Typical interviews are 30 to 60 minutes in length. Shorter interviews may be a sign that it is simply a pre-screening interview, while longer interviews afford more time for in depth discussion and candidate assessment and thus, may be the one and only interview.

3. *What should I bring?*

Aside from copies of your resume, your employer may request you bring examples of your work, a writing sample, a reference list, your driver's licence, or proof of citizenship to the interview.

Remember the Employer's Goals

Employers use the interview to determine that you **can, want,** and **fit** the position. As such, you should expect questions from each of these three themes. For example:

CAN you do the work? *(Do you have the skills, abilities, and experience required?)*

- How have you developed and applied your problem solving abilities?
- Can you tell me about a time when you demonstrated effective communication skills?
- What were your main duties in your previous job? What did you learn?

Do you **WANT** the job? *(Are your interests, career goals and future plans in line with the job opening, company's direction, and industry expectations?)*

- Why did you apply for this job?
- How does this job contribute to your goals?

Are you a *FIT* for the position, team, company and/or industry? (Do you fit the company's organizational culture and get along with others?)

- How would you describe your relationship with your past supervisors? With co-workers?
- Tell me about some activities you were involved in that required teamwork.
- Under what conditions do you work most and least effectively?



TIP When providing examples of your work and accomplishments from a team experience, e.g. engineering student team, ensure to outline what were your contributions, accomplishments, and learnings. It is fine to acknowledge the success and challenges of the team, but you must remember the interviewer is looking to hire you, not your team.

Know Yourself

- Take the time to evaluate your goals, interests, strengths and weaknesses. Be sure complete the [How to Answer the Strengths and Weaknesses Question](#) worksheet.
- Review the position posting and identify the specific skills, qualifications, training, experience, and/or personal qualities required.
- Complete a [Skills Matrix](#) in order to better articulate your skills and experiences when answering interview questions.

Do Your Research

Learn as much as you can about the company and its industry prior to the interview. Time spent researching will go a long way to helping you answer possible interview questions, thus enabling you to stand out amongst other less prepared candidates.

- Visit the company's website to gain a better understanding of who they are and what they do; review their mission statement and learn about their products, services and client base; and check any social media pages they may have.
- Search online for articles and reviews to learn what others say about the company.
- Use tools like [British Columbia's WorkBC Labour Market and Industry reports](#), the federal government's [Market Research and Statistics from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#), or [UBC Library's Industry & Market Research](#) resources to learn more about the industry.
- Reflect on what most interests you about the position, the organization, or industry.
- Prepare questions to ask about the company or the position based on your research at the end of the interview.



IMPORTANT Be prepared to answer these key questions at any interview you attend:

1. Why do you want to work for us?
2. What do you know about this company?
3. What do you know about this industry?

Plan Ahead

Be clear on the location and duration of your interview. If the interview is taking place off campus, plan your route and travel time beforehand. Make sure you know where to park and have the company's telephone number and name of interviewer on hand.

Aim to arrive at reception no more than 10 minutes before the start of your interview. Arriving too early can be bothersome for employers who may have other meetings or interviews in progress, moreover, arriving too early can also increase your nervousness.

Always leave extra time to arrive at a job interview in case you lose your way or get stuck in traffic. If you are running late, call the employer as you soon as you become aware of the possibility that you may not be able to arrive on time.

Practice

Interviewing is a learned skill. Take the time to practice responding to a variety of interview questions with a friend or family member.

There are five main types of interview questions:

1. **Traditional** - These questions are often general and are asked to discover information about your history or communication skills. For example, "Tell me about yourself" or "What is your greatest strength"?
2. **Situational** - These questions focus on hypothetical situations. They answer "What If" questions. Situational questions are meant to draw out your analytical and problem-solving abilities and allow the interviewer to assess how you would handle a particular situation if presented in the workplace. For example, an interviewer may ask "What would you do if the priorities on a project you were assigned suddenly changed?"
3. **Technical** - Employers ask technical questions to assess your technical skill set, analytical, and problem solving skills. These questions are used to assist in determining if you have the right skills and knowledge required for the position. These types of questions are specific to each discipline.
4. **Unconventional** - Be prepared for unusual, innovative or non-traditional questions. You may be asked questions to assess your ability in handling the unexpected, problem solving, or thinking under pressure. For example, "Why are manhole covers round?", "How many windows are there in Vancouver?" or "How are M&Ms made?"



TIP It is important when answering these types of questions to keep in mind that you are being assessed on your ability to think your way through the problem posed, and not the answer itself. There are often no “right” answers to these types of questions. Your answer should demonstrate your thought process; what assumptions you are making, and how you are arriving at your answer.

- 5. Behavioural-Based** - Behavioural-based questions are used to assess your past actions to predict your future behaviour. You will be asked to provide specific examples from your past experience(s) that demonstrate particular criteria an interviewer is seeking. An example is “Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer.”

The best way to answer a behavioural-based question is to use the **START Technique**. The way you respond to behavioural-based interview questions makes the difference between an average answer and a great answer. In other words, employing the START Technique could mean the difference between successfully securing a job and being the runner-up.

START Technique

The START Technique stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult, and **T**ransfer.

- **Situation** - Provide a very brief description of the situation so the employer has some context for your answer.
- **Task** - Summarize what your tasks and responsibilities were as related to this situation.
- **Action** - Explain what action you took to remedy, improve, or change the situation.
- **Result** - Use specific, qualitative and quantitative details, to explain the results of your actions.
- **Transfer** - Explain what personal or professional insights (i.e., what you learned) or skills you gained that you will transfer to the position you are being interviewed for.

Here are two interview questions that demonstrate the difference between an average response and the START response.

Question 1

“ We’re looking for a student who is willing to work hard and help the team in any way they can. Can you give me an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to help a team? ”

Average Response

When I was working at Milestones as a waiter, I often had to take responsibility for extra tables or work longer hours when co-workers did not show up for their shifts. It was really hard work but it helped keep the customers happy and took the pressure off other servers who were new to our restaurant and couldn't handle any more tables.

START Response

I'm definitely not afraid of hard work and I like helping out my team when it comes to work and school. When I was working at Milestones as a waiter **(Situation)**, I often had to take responsibility for extra tables or work longer hours when coworkers did not show up for their shifts **(Task)**. I developed a system so I could take the same parts of the order for different tables at the same time. For example, I got all the drinks orders at once so I'd only have to go up to the bar one time **(Action)**. Because of this system, I was able to handle a section that had three more tables than other servers **(Result)**. Therefore, whether it's working extra hours to make sure we get a game out the door on time, or helping a co-worker debug difficult code, I am prepared to work hard to get the job done **(Transfer)**.

Question 2

“How do you get your peers to accept your ideas and contributions?”

Average Response

I try to present my ideas as convincingly as I can by focusing on the facts of my ideas and persuading people that my idea or solution is the best. If there are people who have different ideas about the way things should be done, I don't ever put their ideas down but instead I focus on my ideas being better suited to the problem at hand.

START Response

Last year, I was responsible for fundraising at my local church because I was President of the Youth Group **(Situation)**. My team and I were responsible for coming up with a new way to raise at least \$2,000 within our congregation for a village we wanted to sponsor in Africa **(Task)**. Many in the group wanted to sell tickets to a raffle but I didn't think this was the best idea because there were so many up-front, fixed costs that we could possibly lose money. I went to talk to the pastor and learned that four years ago the church ran a raffle and lost money. I then updated my team at the next meeting, provided financial reports from the last raffle, and presented them with my fundraising idea **(Action)**. Because I used facts and had the support of my pastor, everyone decided to go with my idea instead **(Result)**. Although I am still developing my work experience and engineering knowledge compared to more senior workers, my team members at XYZ Company can expect me to contribute ideas, and I will have to support my suggestions with facts to help establish credibility within your company **(Transfer)**.

Sample Questions

Behavioural-based questions require you to tell a “story” from your past experiences to demonstrate how you handled a particular situation. Therefore, you need to have a few “stories” at the ready in order to respond to questions like the above examples. You can find [more examples of behavioural-based questions](#) at the end of this toolkit and you should practice responding to these questions using the START Technique. Your [skills matrix](#), found at the end of this toolkit, can also be helpful in preparation for behavioural-based interviews.

Dress for Success

First impressions count! Be prepared and dress the part. Do some research to determine the company culture and typical attire, or speak with a former co-op student. If in doubt, dress more formally. Be sure to view the dress code tip sheet **(coming soon!)** for more details on different forms of company dress.

Prepare Questions to Ask

Be sure to end your interview by asking some intelligent questions to the interviewer in order to further demonstrate your preparation and interest in the position.

Prepare a list of at least 10 to 15 questions as you may find that answers to a number of your questions are provided over the course of the interview. By preparing an ample list of questions ahead of time, you ensure that you are left with at least two to three solid questions you can ask the interviewer at the conclusion of the interview.

Use your pre-interview research to identify the areas you wish to ask about at the end of the interview. You can also use this as an opportunity to determine if this position and organization is a good fit for you. Some possible questions to consider are:

- What is the most important aspect of this position?
- How would you describe the culture of your company?
- How would you measure my success, and what could I do to exceed your expectations?
- Which part of the position has the steepest learning curve? What can I do in order to get up to speed quickly?
- What are your expectations for this role during the first 30 days, 60 days, 4 months (or first term)?
- Is there a training or orientation program for new employees?
- What is the most challenging aspect of the job?
- What is your favourite part of working here?
- What are the biggest challenges or opportunities facing the company or team?

Go Prepared

Bring the following to each interview:

1. A pen and notepad – to jot down names, company information, or questions that arise during the interview. These items can also demonstrate you're prepared and organized. However, if you are tempted to fidget with the pen and note pad rather than use them effectively, simply leave them at home.
2. Copies of your resume – one for each interviewer and yourself.
3. A list of references – see the Reference List Toolkit.
4. List of questions to ask.
5. Samples of your work (optional).
6. Other items that may have been requested by the employer when scheduling your interview (e.g., driver's licence, proof of citizenship, etc.).

STEP 3

At the interview

Each interview generally starts with introductions and the interviewers often provide a brief overview of the company and/or position and the format of the interview. Be prepared to introduce yourself too! This will be followed by formal questions and then an opportunity for you to ask questions to the interviewer(s).

It is possible, if you are at the employer's site, to be given a tour of the facility or site as part of the interview or there may be an assignment as a component of the interview. Often you will be advised of this before the interview or in the overview portion of the interview.

General Tips

- Introduce yourself to the interviewer(s) with a firm handshake, good eye contact, and a smile.
- Be aware of the positive and negative body language you may be conveying. Have good and consistent eye contact with the interviewer(s). Sit up straight and project your voice, using a positive tone. It is important to be enthusiastic.
- Maintain a professional and courteous manner at all times.
- Avoid using casual expressions such as "yeah", "ya know", "stuff", and filler words such as "like" or "umm".
- Answer questions honestly.
- Interviewers may tell you about their company and the position. Listen closely and consider questions you may want to ask later.
- Listen carefully to the questions. If you are not sure what they are asking, request a clarification. Take a moment to mentally prepare your answer before you begin speaking.
- Stay focused on the question and avoid long and meandering responses. If you get off-track during your response, stop and tell the interviewer you would like to start your answer over again.
- Shake hands before leaving. Thank the office staff on your way out, because the impression you leave with others in the work environment may influence the interviewers.

Illegal Questions

The Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits questions pertaining to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability, or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

If an interviewer asks for any of this information, politely request clarification as to the relationship between the question and the job requirements.

STEP 4

Follow up

After every interview send a personalized and tailored thank you email to each of your interviewers within 24 hours of the interview as it shows both courtesy and respect. Sending a thank you email can also help you stand out amongst other interviewed candidates who did not send a thank you, provides you another opportunity to showcase your communication skills, and keeps you at the top of the interviewer's mind.

Your thank you should be short, professional, and contain some or all of the following elements:

- Thank the interviewer for taking the time to speak with you. Include the date of the interview and acknowledge something you learned about their industry, company or work.
- Reaffirm your interest in the company.
- Remind the interviewer why you are the best candidate by highlighting the key skills and the experience you possess that match the position.
- Address any areas that you did not get the opportunity to discuss at the interview or provide further details on other skills or experiences you did discuss.
- If necessary, dispel any concerns you feel the interviewer may have about your suitability for the position.
- Close the letter with a final thank you and a reminder that you look forward to hearing from them soon.



IMPORTANT

If the interview was scheduled via the Co-op Program and you did not receive the interviewer's business card at the interview, the Co-op Program **can not** disclose the interviewer's contact information, nor can the Program forward your thank you email to the interviewer on your behalf. In these instances, seek out the interviewer's contact information from the company website or send them a message via LinkedIn.

STEP 5

Reflect

After every interview, take time to reflect on your interview performance. Write down key points from the interview.

- What did you do well?
- Where could you improve?
- What issues, facts or general information arose during the interview that you would like to prepare for or avoid in future interviews?

If you did not perform well in the interview, arrange to meet with your Co-op Coordinator to discuss your performance to develop strategies to help you improve for your next interview.

STEP 6

Resources

Tips from employers

Below are some tips we have received from our co-op employers regarding interviews:

1. Be punctual!
2. Dress professionally – appropriate for the work environment you are interviewing for
3. Know the company – research the company and projects thoroughly
4. Know your resume inside and out – be prepared to give detailed explanations, including failures, overcoming difficulties, etc.
5. If a white boarding exercise is required, follow a logical thought process and be ready to communicate it
6. Closely match your technical skills to the job requirements – applied experience (no theory)
7. Have previous experience in a non-technical position? – Show the ability to adapt to different environments
8. Be curious – show the ability to ask interesting and relevant questions
9. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know", but offer to research and get back with an answer!
10. Have prepared stories that follow the START Technique
11. Have several questions prepared to ask at the end of the interview

Examples of behavioural-based interview questions

Your ability to influence others

- Tell me about a time when you were able to overcome resistance to your ideas. Describe the situation. Who was involved? What was the outcome?
- How do you get your peers to accept your ideas and contributions?
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

Interpersonal skills

- Tell me about the most frustrating person with whom you have worked. What made this experience difficult? How did you resolve the situation with this person?
- Tell me about a positive experience you had while working in a group. Why did the group work so well?
- Describe a team project that was unsuccessful. What problems were encountered and why did they arise? What did you do to try to solve the problems?

Ability to grow and adapt

- Tell me about the last time you were criticized by a supervisor/professor? How did you respond to the criticism? Do you feel the criticism was valid? What did you learn from the situation?
- Describe a high-pressure situation you had to handle at work or school. Who was involved and how did you relieve the pressure?
- Give me an example of a time in which you had to make a relatively quick decision about an important issue.

Communication skills

- Tell me about a time when you had to work hard in order to fully understand what another person was saying to you. What was the situation? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person who did not like you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about the most difficult customer service experience you ever had to handle – perhaps an angry or irate customer. What did you do or say to try to calm the person down? What was the outcome?

Level of commitment and motivation

- Describe a time when you faced obstacles in reaching your objectives. What were the obstacles you encountered? What did you do to surmount or remove them?
- What specific goals have you established for your co-op career? What will it take to attain your goals and what steps have you taken toward attaining them?
- Tell me about a time when you had to go “above and beyond the call of duty” in order to get a job done.

Organizational ability

- What do you do to ensure that you meet project deadlines? How do you monitor and track your progress? How satisfied are you with your system of controls?
- Describe a project that was unsuccessful because of bad planning or organizing. What did you learn from this experience?
- Have you found ways to make school or a job easier, more rewarding, or to make yourself more effective?

Problem-solving and decision-making

- Tell me about the most difficult problem or decision you have faced at work. How did you decide what action to take? What was the outcome?
- Solving problems requires more than good plans; it takes action. Give me an example of a time when you were able to take meaningful action to solve a practical problem.
- We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of how you’ve done this.

Examples of traditional interview questions

- How would you describe yourself?
- Please describe the ideal job for you following graduation.
- What influenced you to choose this career?
- What specific goals have you established for your career?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this career field?
- What has been your most rewarding accomplishment thus far?
- How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a team member?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- What attracted you to this job posting? What can you tell me about our company?
- Given the investment the company will make in hiring and training you, can you give me a reason why I should hire you?
- Can you describe your long term goals and objectives?
- Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?
- What personal quality or attribute do you feel will most contribute to your career success?
- Which courses at UBC did you like the best and why?
- Describe the type of professor that has created the most beneficial learning experience for you?
- Do you think that your grades are an indication of your academic achievement?
- Before you can make a productive contribution to the company, what degree of training do you feel you will require?
- Describe the characteristics of a successful manager?
- Tell me what you know about our company
- Would it be a problem for you to relocate?
- What is the biggest mistake you have every made?
- Tell me something about yourself that is not on your resume.
- What do you expect to be doing in 5 years? 10 years?

How to answer the strengths and weaknesses question

One of the most common interview questions is “describe your strengths and one weakness”. To determine your own strengths and weaknesses you must first do some self-reflection. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I really good at?
- What would your best friend identify as your top 3 strengths? Your weaknesses?
- Think of a time when you were working on a group project for a course. What was your role on that team? What were your positive contributions?
- What motivates you?
- What have you enjoyed most about any of your past work or volunteer experiences? What did you not like?
- What are your favourite hobbies and activities outside of work and school?
- What was my favourite job? What was my least favourite job? Why?
- What are the skills and abilities that I need to improve on?

Based on your answers to the questions, build out a list of 10 strengths. Use the words below or add your own:

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical | <input type="checkbox"/> Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable | <input type="checkbox"/> Detail-oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Innovative | <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambitious | <input type="checkbox"/> Decision making | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Resourceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive | <input type="checkbox"/> Logical | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assertive | <input type="checkbox"/> Takes initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> Good listener | <input type="checkbox"/> Focused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Meticulous | <input type="checkbox"/> Motivated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Able to prioritize | <input type="checkbox"/> Versatile | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-tasking | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-awareness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate | <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive | <input type="checkbox"/> Open minded | <input type="checkbox"/> Straightforward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Efficient | <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong work ethic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathic | <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Supportive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Committed | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Organized | <input type="checkbox"/> Team player |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicative | <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurial | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenacious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Fast learner | <input type="checkbox"/> Persevering | <input type="checkbox"/> Thorough |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible | <input type="checkbox"/> Patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated | <input type="checkbox"/> Good judgement | <input type="checkbox"/> Proactive | <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship building | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solver | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Work well under stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Process focused | |

- From the 10, select your top 3 strengths.
- Now, using the START technique, build out a story about each of your strengths.

Example

Strength: Verbal Communication

How does this strength represent me?

- I am very good at explaining problems to colleagues and superiors
- I am able to simplify the problem and describe it in plain terms
- I am also good at communicating with my project teams, and I do regular and thoughtfully timed check-ins about the status of my work

START Technique - build an example to prove that you have this strength:

Situation	In a recent group project, I took on the role of team lead of a project that lasted for one month and involved solving several complex engineering problems.
Task	As the team lead, I was responsible for ensuring that team members were on task and that we all understood the deliverables of the project; in addition to managing my own portion of the project. One week before our deadline, we hit a roadblock on the last portion of our project, and email/online communication was no longer effective in helping us solve the problem.
Action	<p>I realized that as an effective team leader in order to help the team overcome this problem in an efficient manner, face-to-face verbal communication was the best way to make sure that all the information was expressed and heard by each team member, and also to ensure that my team members feel supported by me and each other.</p> <p>Prior to this upcoming meeting, I met or FaceTimed with each team member individually to let them know the purpose of our next team meeting, and to ask them to be prepared to share ideas on how we can solve the current issue. I also used this opportunity in these 1-on-1 meetings make sure that we are all still working on the same page, and that everyone knows the status of other member's portions of the project.</p> <p>At our team meeting, as the facilitator I described our team progress and all the positive contributions thus far, as well as other minor challenges we have overcome in the last couple of weeks. Then I moved into outlining our biggest challenge yet of our project. After this, I took a moment to make sure to ask my team members if they had any questions so far so that they could be addressed. I then facilitated a brainstorming session for us to find a solution to our problem.</p>
Result	Even though it was quite a complex issue, my team members told me that I was able to summarize and verbalize the main issue of our situation, without any unnecessary information, which made it very easy and clear for everyone to understand. They also let me know that I was clear with letting everyone know our objectives and action items on how we will work through this challenge. Due to this, we all worked even better in the final week and we were able to fix the issue and get our project completed on time. We made a presentation in our class and received a great review from our professor.

Transfer

Ever since this experience in order to be an effective communicator, I have continued to make sure that I explain complex issues and problems in a clear and concise manner to my peers and superiors. I also understand the importance of having open communication with my colleagues and superiors, especially if we are working on a project so that we are all on the same page to help the project move forward effectively. As well, verbal communication in many circumstances is the best way of communication to ensure that the information given and received is understood clearly by all parties. In these cases, I also make sure to write an email to summarize the discussion afterwards.

Weakness

One of the skills that I have to work on is my **presentation** and **public-speaking** skills. When I have to speak with team members as part of our small group sessions, presenting my ideas does not faze me at all. However, when I am tasked to present in front of a large group, where sometimes all my superiors are present, I find it very nerve-wracking and tend to slip up, avoid all eye contact, forget what I am supposed to say, and ultimately not give a good impression at all on my overall presentation and communication skills. To combat this weakness, I have since joined Toastmasters, an organization that provides a safe and supportive environment for all types of individuals with different experiences to practice and gain more effective communication and presentation skills. I have also taken more opportunities at work, participating and running Lunch & Learns for my colleagues to practice my public speaking skills. After each session, I ask my colleagues for immediate feedback so that I can utilize and learn for next time. Since all this practice over the last 6 months, I have successfully given a large presentation for the company, and was even congratulated by our vice-president of the branch. I will keep going with Toastmasters as well as take on different opportunities for presentations. Next time, I will challenge myself to making a presentation outside of my organization.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination | <input type="checkbox"/> Strict | <input type="checkbox"/> Too straightforward - blunt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of focus | <input type="checkbox"/> Blames others | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Works too much | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Critical of others | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-critical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsive | <input type="checkbox"/> Unorganized |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impatient | <input type="checkbox"/> Easily bored | <input type="checkbox"/> Does not like pressure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passive | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong willed | <input type="checkbox"/> Indecisive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict-avoidant | <input type="checkbox"/> Shy | <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Short sighted | <input type="checkbox"/> Detail oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionist |

The key is to talk about how you are working to improve your weakness.

Skills Matrix

Identify experiences from your work, volunteer, projects or labs, community involvement or clubs/professional associations/sports that you can use to demonstrate that you possess the skills the employer is seeking. Each row is an experience that can form the basis of a good "story" you can relate, using the START Technique, in response to a behavioural-based interview question.

Skills(s)/ Attribute(s) *	Type of Experience Can be either work, volunteer, academic (projects/labs), or extracurriculars (clubs, sports, etc.)	S - Situation The 5 Ws - who, what, where, when, and why	T - Task The assignment or responsibilities to be completed or actioned	A - Action The steps you took and the skills you used to remedy, improve, or change the situation	R - Result The outcome as a result of your actions	T - Transfer The personal or professional insights or skills you gained that you can bring to the available position

*Examples of desired skill(s)/attribute(s) are: ability to influence others, adaptability, analytical, attention to detail, communication, decision-making, interpersonal, leadership, organizational, problem solving, project management, self-motivation, teamwork, etc.

Interview Checklist

Before the interview

- ❑ Select an interview outfit, and ensure it is neat, clean, pressed, and professional.
- ❑ Conduct research on the company and become familiar with their most recent projects. Check their website and industry-specific publications to learn more about the company and its industry.
- ❑ Prepare intelligent questions to ask to further demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the company.
- ❑ Research your interviewers on LinkedIn.
- ❑ Practice answering a variety of 'typical' interview questions. Ensure your responses to behavioural-based interview questions follow the START technique.
- ❑ Practice with a mock interview. Make a mock interview appointment with your Co-op Coordinator or practice with friends or family.
- ❑ Determine your travel logistics. When do you need to leave? What mode will you take? What are the directions? If driving, where will you park? Be sure to include a buffer to account for possible traffic delays or getting lost in unfamiliar territory. Consider taking a dry run.
- ❑ Complete your Interview Cheat Sheet.
- ❑ Prepare a reference list with names and full contact details for ideally three professional contacts.
- ❑ Print several copies of your resume for the interviewers, and if required, other items requested by the interviewer.
- ❑ Pack a bag that contains the following: resumes, phone charger, wallet, note pad, pen, tissues, portfolio (if required), and phone number for company contact.
- ❑ Get a good night's sleep.

During the interview

- ❑ Aim to arrive at the interview location no more than 10 minutes early.
- ❑ Put your phone in 'Do Not Disturb' mode.
- ❑ Do not chew gum or have candy/mints in your mouth. Avoid wearing perfume/cologne due to potential allergies.
- ❑ Be polite and friendly to the receptionist or whomever greets you at the interview location.
- ❑ Introduce yourself to the interviewers with a firm handshake, smile, and good eye contact.
- ❑ Answer questions honestly.
- ❑ Listen carefully to all questions and engage with all interviewers. Be cognizant of both positive and negative body language. Remember to smile.
- ❑ Ask your prepared questions at the end of the interview.
- ❑ Finish the interview by thanking the interviewers by reaffirming your interest in the role, ask what the next steps will be, and when a final decision is expected to be made.
- ❑ Request business cards from all interviewers so you have their contact information for follow up.

After the interview

- ❑ Write down key points from the interview. What did you do well? Where could you improve? What issues, facts or general information arose during the interview that you would like to prepare for or avoid in future interviews?
- ❑ Send a personalized thank you email to each of the interviewers within 24 hours. Use this as a final opportunity to convey your interest in the role and to highlight the key skills and areas of your background that match the position. *(This is only possible if you have the contact information for your interviewer. If your interview was scheduled via the Co-op Program, the Program cannot disclose the interviewer's contact information, nor can they forward your thank you note on your behalf. Look up your interviewer on the company website or via LinkedIn.)*
- ❑ If you have not heard from the employer within the time frame discussed in the interview and your interview was arranged via the Co-op Program, follow up with your Co-op Coordinator. Otherwise, follow up with the employer.

Interview Cheat Sheet

Interview Details

Company Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer Details

Interviewer #1 Name: _____
Job Title: _____
Contact Info: _____

Interviewer #2 Name: _____
Job Title: _____
Contact Info: _____

Interviewer #3 Name: _____
Job Title: _____
Contact Info: _____

Key Skills and Attributes Required for Position

Review the job description. Make a list of the key skills and attributes the employer is looking for in their ideal candidate.

Information About Company

Learn about the company from its website to learn more about who they are and what they do. Review their mission statement and social media pages (if available). Look for recent press release or online articles to learn about current company news, and look to reviews to get an outside perspective on the company.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Review the job description and your list of the key skills and attributes the employer is looking for. What are your strengths and weaknesses relative to the role?

Key Interview Questions

Be prepared to answer these three questions:

1 Why do you want to work for us?

2 What do you know about this company?

3 What do you know about the industry?

Accomplishments

Identify examples from your work experience, volunteer, extracurricular or academics that you can use to demonstrate that you possess the key skills, qualifications, training, experience or personal qualities required to succeed in this role.

Accomplishment #1:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Transfer

Accomplishment #2:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Transfer

Accomplishment #3:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

Transfer

Questions for the Interviewer(s)

1.

2.

3.

4.



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