

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Become familiar with various types of interviews, as you may encounter interviewers who blend styles to suit the interview objectives and to test for employment readiness.

The Behavioral Interview

In behavioral interviews, candidates are asked to respond to questions that require examples of previous activities undertaken and behaviors performed. To succeed at this type of interview, be prepared to give accounts of how you have dealt with difficulties on the job. The purpose of this type of interview is to predict future performance based on past experiences.



The Exploratory or Information Interview

The exploratory or information interview is used as a screening and fact-finding tool for you, the candidate. This interview is used to

- find out about a company as a potential place to work, including its corporate culture, organizational structure, and future growth,
- learn about an occupation, including the educational requirements, experience needed, and responsibilities involved in doing a job, and
- find out about the hiring trends, positions available, and application procedures.

The Directed Interview

The directed or directive interview involves the interviewer using an outline and asking specific questions within a certain time frame. The interviewer works from a checklist and takes notes. This type of interview is impersonal and seeks to reveal facts.

The Undirected Interview

The undirected or non-directive interview is unstructured and allows candidates to discuss their qualifications openly. This interview gives candidates a measure of control over the interview, providing for an opportunity to concentrate on strengths and to show leadership and organizational abilities.

The Panel Interview

A panel involves a number of interviewers. The composition of this panel could include:



- The supervisor
- The manager
- A union representative
- A human resources officer
- An employment equity officer
- Employees from the department that is hiring

The Group Interview

The group interview is used by some large companies or organizations for graduate intakes when several graduates are interviewed at one time. This interview can last from two hours to a day or longer and usually includes a group problem-solving exercise.

The interviewers may ask questions in an unstructured manner; therefore, the questions and comments may be unrelated to one another. This type of interview is used to:

- Observe how candidates react under pressure
- Evaluate how individuals interact with people with different personalities
- Test for communication skills
- Assess the "fit" with the group



It is wise to seek the advice of someone who has experienced this type of interview before engaging in this process.

The Sequential Interview

Some interviews are sequenced over a longer period, such as a half or full day. These interviews are used as an assessment tool. The first stage may begin with a panel interview, followed by a tour around the company (during which the assessment continues). The interview sequence may then conclude with another interview when you may be asked questions that test your creativity or your "fit" within the organization.

Further, you may be invited to more than one interview; for instance, the first may be an overall screening, followed by some form of assessment, then a post-assessment follow-up.

The Stress Interview

The stress interview intentionally creates and promotes discomfort. The interviewer may have an abrupt or brash attitude. Alternately, the interviewer may stare, be silent, and spend time taking notes. The purpose of this type of interview is to test the candidate's ability to be assertive and handle difficult situations.

The Screening Interview

Companies use screening tools to ensure that candidates meet minimum qualification requirements. Computer programs are among the tools used to weed out unqualified candidates. (This is why you need a digital resume that is screening-friendly. See our resume center for help.) Sometimes human professionals are the gatekeepers. Screening interviewers often have honed skills to determine whether there is anything that might disqualify you for the position. Remember—they do not need to know whether you are the best fit for the position, only whether you are not a match. For this reason, screeners tend to dig for dirt. Screeners will hone in on gaps in your employment history or pieces of information that look inconsistent. They also will want to know from the outset whether you will be too expensive for the company.



Some tips for maintaining confidence during screening interviews:

- Highlight your accomplishments and qualifications.
- Get into the straightforward groove. Personality is not as important to the screener as verifying your qualifications. Answer questions directly and succinctly. Save your winning personality for the person making hiring decisions!
- Be tactful about addressing income requirements. Give a range, and try to avoid giving specifics by replying, "I would be willing to consider your best offer."
- If the interview is conducted by phone, it is helpful to have note cards with your vital information sitting next to the phone. That way, whether the interviewer catches you sleeping or vacuuming the floor, you will be able to switch gears quickly.

The Meandering Style

This interview type, usually used by inexperienced interviewers, relies on you to lead the discussion. It might begin with a statement like "tell me about yourself," which you can use to your advantage. The interviewer might ask you another broad, open-ended question before falling into silence. This interview style allows you tactfully to guide the discussion in a way that best serves you.

The following strategies, which are helpful for any interview, are particularly important when interviewers use a non-directive approach:

- Come to the interview prepared with highlights and anecdotes of your skills, qualities and experiences. Do not rely on the interviewer to spark your memory-jot down some notes that you can reference throughout the interview.
- Remain alert to the interviewer. Even if you feel like you can take the driver's seat and go in any direction you wish, remain respectful of the interviewer's role. If he or she becomes more directive during the interview, adjust.
- Ask well-placed questions. Although the open format allows you significantly to shape the interview, running with your own agenda and dominating the conversation means that you run the risk of missing important information about the company and its needs.

The Audition

For some positions, such as computer programmers or trainers, companies want to see you in action before they make their decision. For this reason, they might take you through a simulation or brief exercise in order to evaluate your skills. An audition can be enormously useful to you as well, since it allows you to demonstrate your abilities in interactive ways that are likely familiar to you. The simulations and exercises should also give you a simplified sense of what the job would be like. If you sense that other candidates have an edge on you in terms of experience or other qualifications, requesting an audition can help level the playing field.

To maximize on auditions, remember to:

- Clearly understand the instructions and expectations for the exercise. Communication is half the battle in real life, and you should demonstrate to the prospective employer that you make the effort to do things right the first time by minimizing confusion.
- Treat the situation as if you are a professional with responsibility for the task laid before you. Take ownership of your work.
- Brush up on your skills before an interview if you think they might be tested.

The Tag-Team Interview

Expecting to meet with Ms. Glenn, you might find yourself in a room with four other people: Ms. Glenn, two of her staff, and the Sales Director. Companies often want to gain the insights of various people when interviewing candidates. This method of interviewing is often attractive for companies that rely heavily on team cooperation. Not only does the company want to know whether your skills balance that of the company, but also whether you can get along with the other workers. In some companies, multiple people will interview you simultaneously. In other companies, you will proceed through a series of one-on-one interviews.



Some helpful tips for maximizing on this interview format:

- Treat each person as an important individual. Gain each person's business card at the beginning of the meeting, if possible, and refer to each person by name. If there are several people in the room at once, you might wish to scribble down their names on a sheet of paper according to where each is sitting. Make eye contact with each person and speak directly to the person asking each question.
- Use the opportunity to gain as much information about the company as you can. Just as each interviewer has a different function in the company, they each have a unique perspective. When asking questions, be sensitive not to place anyone in a position that invites him to compromise confidentiality or loyalty.
- Bring at least double the anecdotes and sound-bites to the interview as you would for a traditional one-on-one interview. Be ready to illustrate your main message in a variety of ways to a variety of people.
- Prepare psychologically to expend more energy and be more alert than you would in a one-on-one interview. Stay focused and adjustable.

The Mealtime Interview

For many, interviewing over a meal sounds like a professional and digestive catastrophe in the making. If you have difficulty chewing gum while walking, this could be a challenge. With some preparation and psychological readjustment, you can enjoy the process. Meals often have a cementing social effect-breaking bread together tends to facilitate deals, marriages, friendships, and religious communion. Mealtime interviews rely on this logic, and expand it.

Particularly when your job requires interpersonal acuity, companies want to know what you are like in a social setting. Are you relaxed and charming or awkward and evasive? Companies want to observe not only how you handle a fork, but also how you treat your host, any other guests, and the serving staff.

Some basic social tips help ease the complexity of mixing food with business:

- Take cues from your interviewer, remembering that you are the guest. Do not sit down until your host does. Order something less extravagant than your interviewer. If he badly wants you to try a particular dish, oblige him. If he recommends an appetizer to you, he likely intends to order one himself. Do not begin eating until he does. If he orders coffee and dessert, do not leave him eating alone.
- If your interviewer wants to talk business, do so. If she and the other guests discuss upcoming travel plans, do not launch into business. Practice eating and discussing something important simultaneously.
- Try to set aside dietary restrictions and preferences. Remember, the interviewer is your host. It is rude to be finicky unless you absolutely must. If you must, be as tactful as you can.
- Choose manageable food items, if possible. Avoid barbeque ribs and spaghetti.
- Find a discrete way to check your teeth after eating. Excuse yourself from the table for a moment.
- Thank your interviewer for the meal.

The Follow-up Interview

Companies bring candidates back for second and sometimes third or fourth interviews for a number of reasons. Sometimes they just want to confirm that you are the amazing worker they first thought you to be. Sometimes they are having difficulty deciding between a short-list of candidates. Other times, the interviewer's supervisor or other decision makers in the company want to gain a sense of you before signing a hiring decision.

The second interview could go in a variety of directions, and you must prepare for each of them. When meeting with the same person again, you do not need to be as assertive in your communication of your skills. You can focus on cementing rapport, understanding where the company is going and how your skills mesh with the company vision and culture. Still, the interviewer should view you as the answer to their needs. You might find yourself negotiating a compensation package. Alternatively, you might find that you are starting from the beginning with a new person.

Some tips for managing second interviews:

- *Be confident. Accentuate what you have to offer and your interest in the position.*
- *Probe tactfully to discover more information about the internal company dynamics and culture.*
- *Walk through the front door with a plan for negotiating a salary.*
- *Be prepared for anything: to relax with an employer or to address the company's qualms about you.*



*****Conduct an InterviewStream virtual interview –see our Web site for details*****

