



Interview Tips

In-person Interview Tips



It is natural to be a bit nervous in interviews but preparing adequately should help. This document will provide more details about what to expect, what to bring, and what to do (and not do) to be successful in an interview.

General Do's and Don'ts

Remember

- Be prepared (study the job post, think of relevant skills and experiences that match what the employer is looking for.)
- Bring relevant work search documents (cover letter, resume, references)
- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Smile and look interested
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly and concisely
- Be aware of your body language
- Think before you answer
- Answer questions honestly and completely
- Give relevant examples
- Listen actively (e.g., nodding your head)
- Ask for questions to be repeated
- Say, thank you at the end of the interview. Let the employer know that you were appreciative of the opportunity to be interviewed.
- Ask about the next steps (eg., the expected date the employer will make a decision, whether or not you can call if you do not hear from the employer).

Avoid

- Staying up late the night before
- Being late
- Dressing inappropriately
- Wearing strong scents
- Crossing your arms
- Bringing family or friends

What to Expect

Although there are no firm rules about what to expect in an interview, most interviewers will expect you to:

Come alone

In the Canadian workplace, it is not appropriate to come to an interview with anyone else. Bringing your children, friends, family members, or pets will be perceived as unprofessional.

Dress appropriately

Each workplace will have different standards and dress codes. Your research may have revealed some clues about what is typically appropriate. If following your culture or religion requires you to wear a specific type of clothing or accessory, consider consulting with others in your community to find out how they have handled particular needs and/or preferences and then make a decision that fits you.

Shake hands

In Canada, interviewers will likely expect you to shake hands and a firm handshake is best. Consider including a statement like “it is nice to meet you” or “Thanks for taking the time to meet with me today.” If handshaking is not okay in your culture, practice an alternative. For example, you could make eye contact, smile, and say, “It is not my custom to shake hands, but I am very pleased to meet you.”

Use appropriate salutation

Although Canadians are known to be easygoing, it is important to start more formally. Use an appropriate salutation (e.g., Mr., Ms.) followed by the interviewer’s last name. If you are invited to use a first name then do not hesitate to do so. If the interviewer introduces him/herself by first name (e.g., “Hello, my name is John”) that could be an indication that first names are fine, but use the last name if you are not sure. Avoid using a salutation with the interviewer’s first name (e.g., Ms. Sarah); also avoid using Sir or Madam.

What to Expect

Although there are no firm rules about what to expect in an interview, most interviewers will expect you to:

Communicate effectively

It is important that the interviewer understands what you are saying. If English is not your first language, speak slowly and clearly to ensure you get your message across. Pronunciation and accent can be an additional challenge beyond language proficiency. Your interviewer may not be used to communicating with someone with an accent. Ensure you take your time and offer to clarify key points. To ensure you understand, ask the interviewer to repeat or rephrase a question. Another approach is to repeat the question in your own words and ask for clarification (e.g., You are asking for an example of my leadership experience. Is that correct?).

Look interested

Ensure you are actively engaged in the interview. Give the interviewer your full attention and turn off your phone and/or other electronic devices.

Be careful of personal space

Canadian employers might expect more or less personal space than you are used to. Generally, leave at least one arm's length between you.

Make eye contact

Avoiding eye contact is a sign of respect in some cultures; however, in Canada, making eye contact during an interview is expected and helps to show you are confident and focused. Not making eye contact could be interpreted as a lack of confidence or that a person is not trustworthy.

What to Bring

Bring your relevant work search documents to the interview. These include:

- Resume
- Cover letter
- Copy of the job posting(if you have one)
- Portfolio with relevant samples of your work
- List of references
- Note paper and a pen. (Consider asking the interviewer if it's okay)

Do not assume that the interviewer will have a copy of your resume, cover letter, and/or application. It is helpful to have a copy of these and other work search documents with you at the interview. Be aware that the interviewer(s) may take notes. This is normal; after the interview, notes may be helpful reminders of differences between the applicants.

Before making a final decision to hire, employers often want to check references as part of the interview process. The reference list is a separate document usually given to an employer at the time of the interview

Remember

From the time you walk into the building, act as you would during the interview. Smile and be polite and respectful to everyone you meet. The receptionist you ignored when you first arrived or the individual you left behind instead of holding the elevator could both be part of the interviewer team!