So you have a job interview – Congratulations!! Before going to your job interview it is important that you research and rehearse.

Research the position and the organization so that you can:

1. Predict, based on the qualifications in the job advertisement, which questions may be asked during the interview
2. Highlight the skills and personal characteristics that are most relevant to the position
3. Prepare examples from your past where you have demonstrated the skills, experiences, personal characteristics and knowledge the employer is looking for
Interview Skills

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!

- Ask a friend or family member to go through some common interview questions with you
- Practice talking out loud (perhaps in front of the mirror) about your strengths, weaknesses, career goals and past experiences
- Consider signing up for a mock interview at the Career Centre - We’ll go through some tailored interview questions and provide feedback on your answers

Example

Why do you want to work for LMNOP Ltd. as a Summer Student?
Interview Skills

Example

Why do you want to work for LMNOP Ltd. as a Summer Student?

1. Well, I really need a job right now and I saw your posting on Career Vault so I applied. My friend said he liked working for you last summer and that you paid well for a summer position. I also think that it will help me get a great job when I graduate!

You’ll notice that this person has focused on what they can get out of the job rather than showing why they are a good fit for the position. It is important to show that you have done research on the company and can explain why you would be successful in the position. Have a look at the next answer:

2. I have always wanted to work for a company like LMNOP Ltd. because your success comes from a focus on collaboration and the working environment is friendly and supportive. The position is a great fit for me because it allows me to use both my creative and research skills which I feel are two of my greatest strengths. Having spoken with Janice Daga and Oleg Bourque, I know that you are looking for someone who is motivated and will learn quickly – I know that I would fulfill both these expectations.
What types of questions are asked in interviews?

1. **Factual**  
   **Example:** Do you speak French?  
   Requires a short factual answer to establish level of skill or competence required, as related to the position.

2. **Theoretical**  
   **Example:** Why is it that a heavy ocean liner doesn’t sink into the ocean?  
   Requires knowledge of the underlying theory to answer this question.

3. **Technical**  
   **Example:** Briefly describe to me the role of the condenser in a refrigerator.  
   Requires specific technical knowledge of, or practical experience with the item/process to answer the question.

4. **Scenario**  
   **Example:** You are working on a group project with a very tight deadline. Everyone comes prepared to the meeting with the section they have worked on, except for one person. What would you do?  
   Requires you to assess the situation described and determine what you would do in such a case.
What types of questions are asked in interviews?

5. Probing  
**Example:** Tell me more about your role as a course union representative.

*Requires you to provide additional data about skills or competencies demonstrated, or challenges faced and met, which relate to the employer’s needs.*

6. Role Play  
**Example:** Imagine that you are my supervisor. I have been late for work 3 times this week and 2 times last week. You call me into your office. What do you say to me?

*Requires you to take on the role of the position you are applying for and act out a potential situation you may encounter in that role.*

7. Behavioural  
Give me an example of a time you provided quality customer service.

*Requires you to speak about a real life situation in which you used the skill/competence identified by the question.*
**Behavioural Interview Questions Primer**

Use BAR (Background, Action, Result) to respond to these types of questions.

**Background**: Establish when and where you used the skill (eg. customer service)

“I work part-time at Tim Horton’s and a customer was upset because she was given cream instead of milk in her coffee.”

**Action**: Introduce what it is that you did that demonstrates the skillset (customer service)

“I immediately apologized and prepared a new coffee for her, enquiring what kind of milk she preferred. I also gave her a coupon for a free coffee, and reiterated our apologies for the mistake.”

**Result**: What was the outcome of your actions to show that what you did was successful (ie. you demonstrated quality customer service)

“The customer thanked me for being so nice about fixing someone else’s mistake, and said she’d be back tomorrow for her free coffee.”
The challenge of answering questions well

What is your most notable strength for this position?
(When asked questions about your strengths, it's important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the job. The best way to respond is to describe your skills, experience and personal attributes that directly correlate to the job you are applying for.)

I have a number of strengths that would be of value to the position.

• My time management skills are excellent and I'm very organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work. When I'm working on a project, I don't want to just meet deadlines, rather I prefer to complete, and am motivated by the challenge of both finishing the projects, and finishing them well ahead of schedule.
• I have a strong ability to resolve difficult situations in a most favourable manner for the organization.
• I am known for building relationships and have strong customer service skills. Additionally I always want to ensure that my company's clients get the best service I can provide. In my previous job I quickly established loyal and trusting relationship with key networking contacts. I've always felt that it's important, both to me personally, and for the company and the clients, to provide a positive customer experience.

Not so good answer: Colleagues tell me I have excellent communication skills, am a people person, and am a quick learner. I am sure these skills would be of value.
The challenge of answering questions well

How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team?

(In answering this question think about the employer’s work environment – are they seeking good team leaders or strong team players…or candidates who are capable of both?)

- In high school, I enjoyed playing soccer and performing with the marching band. Each required a different kind of team skill, but the overall goal of learning to be a member of a group was invaluable. I continued to grow as team member while on my debate team and through my advanced marketing class where we had numerous team assignments.
- In my last position, I was part of a software implementation team. We all worked together to plan and manage the implementation schedule, to provide customer training, and ensure a smooth transition for our customers. Our team always completed our projects ahead of schedule with very positive reviews from our clients.

Not so good answer: I am very team oriented and believe that you really can do more together than you can apart. I would make whatever contribution was needed to the team to make it happen.
**The challenge of answering questions well**

Tell me about a time you successfully resolved an issue between yourself and another person.

*This question is a bit tricky because the word ‘issue’ is a bit vague. Treat the question as an opportunity to talk about how you were able to build or maintain a good relationship with an individual who in some way created a challenge for you.*

- In my last position while working on a project, one of the group members regularly missed deadlines. When this happened, it prevented me from generating reports for my supervisor who needed them by the end of each month. Rather than blaming the other team member for not producing, I talked to him and found out that he was essentially doing the work of two people. Together we collaborated on how I could access the information myself rather than have him pull the numbers for me. Since then I have never missed my deadlines to submit the report, and I learned the importance of collaborating with colleagues.

**Not so good answer:** had a problem with my team member but solved it by talking to him.
Interview Skills

Interview Tips

1. Record the exact day, time and location of the interview. Ask with whom you will be meeting, and how much time you should reserve for the interview.

2. Be prepared that a pre-screening interview may take place over the phone, or that the full interview may be conducted by phone if great distance is an issue. Listen closely, and pay attention to your tone of voice when you answer.

3. Do your homework.
   Part 1 – closely read the position description to identify skills and competencies needed for you to get the work done
   Part 2 - research the organization/company to learn about who they are and what they do; familiarize yourself with their mission and work environment

4. Prepare for questions that will measure the skills, competencies and personal attributes identified in #3.

5. Practice your answers, but do not memorize them.

6. Arrive at the interview location well rested and properly groomed, preferably 10-15 minutes before the start of the interview.

7. Be prepared for introductions, a possible handshake, and some ‘small talk’ to ease you into the interview.
Interview Skills

Interview Tips

8. Pay close attention to the interviewer’s questions – think ‘How does this question relate to the position I am being interviewed for?’
9. If you are not sure what the interviewer is asking, politely ask for clarification.
10. Use the BAR (Background, Action, Result) formula to answer behaviour based questions.
11. Pay attention to your body language, tone of voice, eye contact and nervous mannerisms. Aim for confidence and professionalism in your actions and words.
12. Prepare a few well thought out questions to ask the interviewer.
13. After the interview send a thank-you note, especially if you are very interested in the position/company and feel you did well in the interview.
14. Do not take rejection personally, rather use the opportunity to learn how you might better prepare for future interviews

For additional assistance regarding interview preparation and practice, please visit/contact the Career Development & Employment Centre.