



**POLYTECHNIQUE  
MONTRÉAL**

TECHNOLOGICAL  
UNIVERSITY

Career Counseling Department

# JOB INTERVIEW

The job interview is a very important step in getting your career started, whether it's for an internship or permanent position and preparing in advance can make all the difference. The preparation process is the same, regardless of whether your interview will be in person, by telephone or on Skype.

*An interview is a **dialogue** that allows the employer and applicant to verify information about one another and discuss opportunities for working together.*

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

### Learn about the company

Having good knowledge about the company you're applying to will give you an edge over other applicants, since it shows the employer that you're interested and motivated. The company's mission, values, partners and projects are good lead-ins to draw attention to your qualifications, interests and goals.

### Review the job description and your résumé

Read the job description carefully. Remember the required qualifications and specifically mention which you can offer during the interview. It's also a good idea to review your résumé, as the employer may ask about anything that you include in it.

### Check the company's address and how to get there

Make sure you know how to get to the company and write down the exact address. Take into account travel time, potential traffic conditions, parking, etc.

### Dress appropriately

The employer will notice your clothing before they get a chance to hear you speak. That's why it's important to choose an appropriate outfit that is suited to the company you'll be visiting. Go for a tidy and conservative look. You should look professional and feel comfortable and confident.

### Take all important documents

Bring along extra copies of your résumé and cover letter. It might also be helpful to have a portfolio on hand with your most impressive achievements and a list of three references. Generally, references should be from former supervisors whom you've told beforehand about your job/internship search. Indicate the reference's name, role, company and contact information.

### Be prepared to answer the most frequently asked interview questions

See page 4 of this document for more details.

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

### **First impressions**

Arrive 15 minutes before your interview time. Be courteous, smile and politely greet everyone you meet on the company premises. Give a firm handshake, maintaining visual contact, with every person you meet at the interview. In North American business culture, you are expected to shake hands with both men and women as a sign of respect. Wait until you're asked to be seated. If the interview is in French, use the "vous form" until asked otherwise.

### **Answering questions**

Give concise answers backed up by specific examples relevant to the position and company. This will help the interviewer determine if you are a good fit.

### **Sensitive questions**

Some questions may be of a sensitive nature (i.e., personal weaknesses, group conflicts, termination of employment, etc.). It's important to reassure the employer by explaining what you did to improve the situation so it doesn't hinder you in your future role.

Feel free take a few seconds to plan out your answer to any question asked. Besides your answers, the employer will also be evaluating your personality, your analytical ability, your critical thinking skills, your judgement, etc. There's rarely only one right answer.

### **Discriminatory questions**

In accordance with Article 10 of the [Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms](#), you are entitled to equal treatment during hiring without discrimination on the basis of age, sexual orientation, political conviction, religion, marital status, pregnancy, etc.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### **Thank-you email**

If the interview succeeded in reaffirming your interest in the job, you should send the employer a thank-you email. Reiterate your interest in the job in light of the new information you obtained during the interview. Emphasize the tasks and responsibilities that align with your qualifications. You can also provide additional details or information that would be helpful in assessing your application.

### **Telephone follow-up**

If you haven't heard back two weeks after your interview, you should call the company to follow up. Not only will you get information and reduce feelings of uncertainty, you'll also be reaffirming your interest and motivation for the job.

## ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: TIPS AND TRICKS

1. Analyze the employer's needs and identify what they're looking for. Put yourself in their shoes: what would you want to know (about a candidate)? Imagine the questions you might get asked to confirm whether you're the right candidate for the job.
2. Evaluate your application. What sets you apart from other applicants? What are your assets, strengths and weaknesses? What do you want to draw attention to in your application?
3. Answer these questions by giving specific answers using the **CAR method**. This will help reassure the employer and equip you with detailed answers that are not too general or lacking in impact.
  - Context (What was the initial situation?)
  - Actions (What did you do?)
  - Results (What did you achieve?)
4. Writing out your answers might be a good way to help you prepare. The idea is to practice answering potential interview questions, not to memorize answers you've prepared in advance. Build up confidence so you can answer any question spontaneously on the day of the interview. If possible, rehearse the interview with someone you trust.

## USEFUL REFERENCES

### Books:

- Fry, R. (2016). *101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions*. Wayne, Career Press. 223 pages.
- Gagnon, S. (2008). *L'entrevue d'embauche : toutes les astuces pour enfin obtenir un oui!* Québec, Septembre éditeur. 118 pages.
- St-Pierre, P. (2011). *Entrevue : préparez-vous en trois étapes : méthode d'entrevue P.A.T.* Québec, Septembre éditeur. 160 pages.

### Websites:

- <https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-answer-the-31-most-common-interview-questions>
- <http://www.jobboom.com/carriere/la-base-de-l-entrevue-d-embauche/>

## EXAMPLES OF FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS AT JOB INTERVIEWS

1. Could you tell me about yourself?
2. What interests you about our company? What do you know about us?
3. Could you tell me about your course projects/master's or PhD work?
4. Why did you choose to study this particular area/specialization of engineering?
5. What are your most significant work/school experiences and how are they relevant to this position?
6. What did you like most/least in your last year of studies (or during your most recent course/project/internship/job)?
7. Could you give us an example of your skills in terms of leadership (or teamwork, customer service, communication, working independently, taking initiative, meeting deadlines, working under pressure, etc.)?
8. What is your strongest work-related skill/ability/talent?
9. What achievement are you most proud of?
10. What would your co-workers say about you?
11. What are three weaknesses that you have? / Why shouldn't we hire you?
12. Could you tell me about a time when you failed to meet work expectations?
13. Could you tell us about a conflict you've had with a co-worker?
14. **Prepare for any technical questions related to your education/experience and the position.**
15. What is your career objective (where do you see yourself) in 5 or 10 years?
16. What are your salary expectations?
17. Why should we hire you?
18. Do you have any questions?

## EXAMPLES OF UNCONVENTIONAL QUESTIONS

1. How many basketballs could fit in this room?
2. If you could be any superhero/animal, which one would you be?
3. If you had to choose among 50 projects—some easy, some average and some difficult—how many of each would you take?
4. If you were on a soccer team, what position would you play?
5. Summarize what has happened in the country over the past 10 years.

### Dealing with unusual questions

Employers sometimes ask unusual questions that are hard to prepare for. In such cases, the employer's main goal is to better assess your personality. That's because your reaction says a lot about you. Can you take the question with a sense of humour? Are you unsettled or shocked by the question? The important thing is to maintain your composure. Be creative and explain your reasoning. Don't forget that your goal is to get hired and answer the question strategically. Just like more conventional questions, there's rarely only one right answer.