

# INTERVIEWING

*Communicating your skills and experience*

## General Interview Preparation Strategies

### **Confirm the details.**

Verify the date, time, length, and location of the interview (including technology requirements for virtual interviews). You can also ask about the type of interview and if there is anything you should prepare for (e.g., test or presentation).

### **Research the position and organization.**

Review the role description and learn more about the organization. Take time to understand the mission and values of the organization. This information can help you tailor your answers, explain your interest in the opportunity, and develop a list of questions for the interviewer(s).

### **Prepare answers to common interview questions.**

Drafting answers to common interview questions will help you to reflect and recall experiences that you can speak to in an interview. Review the role description to identify key skills or responsibilities and identify your relevant experiences.

### **Practice.**

Take time to practice (but not memorize) your answers to common interview questions aloud. Consider practicing in front of a mirror or recording yourself on your phone to pick up on any distracting movements or filler words you may be using. You can also practice with trusted friends and family.

### **Prepare questions to ask the interviewer(s).**

At the end of an interview, you will likely be asked, "do you have any questions for us?" It is critical that you have two or three questions prepared. This question also gives you an opportunity to learn about the organization and the culture.

### **Plan what you are going to wear in advance.**

Investigate what people typically wear at the organization and plan an outfit that is a bit more formal. It is generally a good idea to dress more formally for the interview than current staff do on a regular day. By preparing your outfit in advance, you know it is clean and ready.

### **Feel confident.**

While it can be hard to feel confident when preparing for an interview, remember that they chose to interview you and want you to succeed.

### **Send a thank you note.**

After your interview, send a thank-you note by email to everyone who participated in the interview. If you don't have the email addresses of all the interviewers, you can send the note to the person who scheduled the interview and ask them to pass it along.

## Types of Interview Questions

There are many different types of interview questions. Common types of interview questions include,

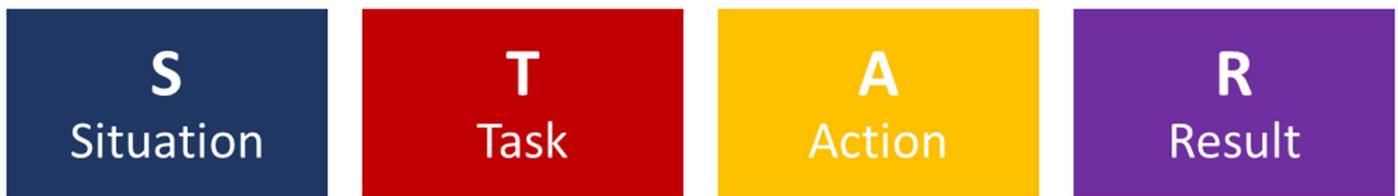
- introductory questions,
- behavioural interview questions,
- situational questions,
- questions about weaknesses and other challenges, and
- technical questions.

For more information on these types of questions and strategies for answering them, check out the [Interviewing Module on onQ](#).

## A Versatile Strategy for Answering Interview Questions

Regardless of the question you are asked, the interviewer(s) are trying to learn more about you, your experience, your approach to situations.

An effective strategy for answering any question that is asking you to describe your skills and experience is the STAR method (situation, task, action, and result).



- Begin by describing the **situation**.
  - Briefly describe the specific situation you were in, including the context, and the other people involved.
- Explain the **task**.
  - Describe what needed to be done and your responsibility or role in the situation.
- Then describe the **action**: what you did.
  - Convey your response to the situation by explaining your thought process, the options you considered, and your rationale.
- Conclude your answer with the **result**.
  - Explain what happened and how the situation resolved. Include any tangible outcomes generated by your actions.
  - Consider emphasizing what you accomplished, both qualitatively and quantitatively, or what you learned from this situation.
  - Sometimes, there isn't an explicit result. In these situations, share what you learned or what you would do if a similar situation occurred in the future.

## Commonly asked questions about answering interview questions

### What if I don't have a qualification?

If there is a specific skill or competency you are missing, plan how you can manage that gap: what knowledge do you already have, have you done something similar, what steps are you going to take to

show you are willing to learn? Remember they are interviewing you, so they have decided you are qualified.

### What if they ask something I haven't prepared for?

You cannot predict every question that will be asked in an interview. A great way to prepare is to spend time brainstorming about your experience, so that there is likely to be a situation or experience that you can draw on to answer an unexpected question. You can also ask for a moment to prepare your answer if you are caught off guard.

### What if they ask strange questions?

Some interviewers may ask questions completely outside of the job description like "sell me this water glass" or "name 7 things you could do with [random object]." These questions usually seek to test a skill like creativity or ability to persuade. Do your best to answer in a way that is honest and demonstrates the skill you believe they are seeking.

### What about salary expectations?

Be prepared in case your interviewer asks about your salary expectations. Research the market rate for similar work in the area, keeping in mind that salary is informed by your skill level and qualifications, as well as other factors such as the local cost of living and labour market demand.

### Disclosure and Accommodation

There may be times during the interview process where you need to decide whether to disclose private, personal information to an employer, and if so, when. You may also have questions about requesting accommodation during the interview process. For more information check out:

- The [Navigating Disclosure Tipsheet](#)
- Or the [Requesting Accommodation Tipsheet](#)

### What if I am asked for a pre-recorded interview?

Occasionally you may be asked to do your interview using an online platform that will ask you questions for you to respond during timed intervals of recordings (rather than live with someone online). A few tips to consider:

- Prepare your setting – have a professional background, lighting, and clothing
- Test your connection – try to use a wired connection on computer if possible
- Research the organization to be prepared for a variety of questions
- Convey energy – try to imagine you are talking to a real person to add a human touch
- Practice answering questions while being recorded to get back the camera jitters

### What about CASPER Tests?

Some graduate and professional school programs may require you to complete a CASPER test as part of the process. Casper is short for: Computer-Based Assessment for Sampling Personal Characteristics. It assesses competencies including, but not limited to professionalism, ethics, empathy, problem-solving, and collaboration. Casper has a comprehensive FAQ section and resources on their website. They are the best place to go for the correct answers to your questions. A few tips to consider:

- **Get comfortable with the format.** Take the practice tests offered by Casper. This will help you become familiar with the test format of video and written responses, and will provide you with some practice problems that will be similar to the questions you receive on the actual test day.

- **Write down experiences that have been important to you.** Many of the questions you will be asked on the test involve describing “a time that you demonstrated \_\_\_\_”. Having specific answers prepared for qualities like leadership, motivation, overcoming adversity, will help make your response time more efficient. This will allow you to focus on the important parts, which is explaining what you learned or how you overcame this experience.
- **Check out example questions:** The questions are often asked in groups of 3. The first 1 or 2 are specific to a scenario, and the third one typically asks you to apply a lesson to life more generally. Some examples are:
  - How do you stay motivated? What would you recommend to someone who is experiencing a lack of motivation? What are things you do to enjoy life?
  - What advice would you give this person? Is it your responsibility as a friend/teacher/colleague to do this? What does this quote mean to you?
- **Check out useful resources** like Casper’s tipsheet: <https://acuityinsights.app/2020/07/how-to-maximize-your-chances-of-success-on-casper>
- Be empathetic, and use non-confrontational, non-judgmental language. Do not make assumptions about people when provided with a scenario.
- The Casper test is fast-paced, and it is a good idea to practice if you are not strong at typing!
- Reading through different ethical frameworks can help guide your answers like:
  - <https://www.medicalprotection.org/uk/articles/essential-learning-law-and-ethics>
  - <https://trilliumhealthpartners.ca/aboutus/Documents/IDEA-Framework-THP.pdf>

## More questions?

If you have more questions about preparing for interviews, check out the Interviewing module in the Career Prep Modules on onQ. In the module you will find:

- Examples of answers to interview questions,
- Tips for preparing for virtual interviews,
- Guidance on what to do after an interview,
- And much more!