

Interview Candidate's Handbook

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Introduction

If you have submitted an online application, and meet the minimum requirements for the position, you may be selected to interview for that position.

This document is intended to assist you in your preparation for this event and provides guidance on how to review a job description, update your curriculum vitae (CV) -- also known as a résumé -- and prepare for an interview.

Getting Started

If you receive notification that you have been selected for an interview, you may be given a high-level job description comprising key responsibilities/accountabilities, and the key capabilities and experience required for the position. You may also receive a separate, additional list of competencies for the position.

> Detailed information will not be available about the grade or compensation package for your job at this time.

You may be asked to send in your CV to confirm your interest in the position. Before you do this, it is advisable to review your CV in light of the job description and to tailor it to the position, wherever possible. (For guidance on how to update your CV, refer to "Updating Your CV (Résumé)")

As you begin to prepare for the interview, you may realise that you first need to gain more clarity about what is important to you in a job, what skills you have and prefer to use, and whether this is the right job for you.

Reviewing the Job Description

If you have decided to interview for a job, begin your preparation by reviewing the job description provided which should have two key elements: the "Key Responsibilities/Accountabilities" and the "Key Capabilities and Experience."

Reviewing Key Responsibilities/Accountabilities

Your first task is to review the key responsibilities/accountabilities for the job. Consider how this job fits into the overall organisational structure, and how it interfaces with other groups. Think about how you would do this job. Consider ideas you may have that you have always wanted to put into action. Now may be your opportunity to realise these ideas!

Then evaluate how the job compares with your current job and identify what is the same and what is different. Decide how you are going to address any differences to reduce concern about your ability to do this job. Identify experiences from previous positions you have held on which you can draw. For example, if the position requires you to manage an international group and your current role is limited to managing employees located in a single country, you may be able to identify examples of when you worked internationally in a prior role that demonstrate you are capable of this particular responsibility.

> If it would be helpful and you have time, identify other people with whom you could talk about this job to gain greater insights and more ideas to help you with your preparation.

You may also want to list your key professional achievements so that you can talk confidently about these, if asked. If appropriate, think about your role as the leader of a successful, achieving team and recognise your achievements - think about what you did to direct, inspire, make or enable this to happen.

Reviewing Key Capabilities and Experience

The key capabilities and experience listed in the job description are those required for the job. Review these to identify which of the capabilities and experience you possess. You will want to emphasise these matches during the interview by using examples of your work to illustrate that you possess these. Where you see gaps, consider how you will address these. Note that you will need to complete the same exercise with any additional competencies that may be provided with the job description.

Finally, you may want to list your questions about the job so that you can ask these of the interviewer.

Once you have reviewed the job description, you may choose to update your CV to emphasise your current and prior responsibilities and achievements to tailor these to job for which you are interviewing.

Updating your CV (Résumé)

A CV (or résumé) is a useful, easy-to-read summary of your education, qualifications, work history, competence and career achievements. Treat it as a marketing communication that is designed to convince the interviewer that you are a serious candidate worthy of being interviewed. You may wish to tailor your CV to the job for which you are applying, placing specific emphasis on areas that are relevant to the position.

While CVs come in many shapes and sizes depending on individual preferences, there are some commonly accepted elements regarding content and format that are recommended for inclusion. These are provided in the following two sections.

Content (in order of appearance)

- **Your full name**
 - **Your home address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address**
 - **An objective statement tailored to the particular job for which you are applying** (optional)
 - **Full work history, starting with most recent job**
 - **Educational and professional qualifications including key, relevant training**
 - **Full work history, starting with most recent job, including all dates and explanations for any gaps**
- **For each job, include job title, key responsibilities (including for budget and people), and career achievements**
- **Professional affiliations** (e.g., American Chemical Society)
 - **One or two leisure interests** (optional)
 - **Publications** (use a consistent, "journal-acceptable" format)

Format

- Easy-to-read, with information relevant to the job and which can be easily understood by the interviewer
 - be careful not to include too much on one page
- Normally written in third person
- Three pages maximum
 - most interviewers spend less than a minute reading each CV, searching for key information
- When looking through a CV, most interviewers will be searching for key information
- Minimise underlining; stick to bold, italic, and capital letters for emphasis or headings and sub-headings. Before you apply online for a position, be sure you read any instruction on that site regarding formatting. Formatting a CV for the web is very different from formatting a CV to take to an interview.
- Spell-check and review the final version for errors

Preparing for the Interview

A type of interviewing technique you may encounter is competency-based interviewing. This technique focuses on your behavioural and technical competencies – in other words, the knowledge, skills and abilities that you possess. Competency-based interviewing is based on the principle that past behaviour predicts future behaviour.

- You may be asked to relate past job-related experiences in the context of the specific capabilities or competencies that are required for the job. When you are relating these experiences, the interviewer is looking for a specific situation or task, the actions you took, and the results you obtained.

Refer back to the job description to remind you of which capabilities (and competencies, as appropriate) are required for the job. You will be questioned about some or all of these. In order to prepare for this section of the interview, for each capability/competency:

- Identify two job-related situations that occurred in the last two years that will demonstrate that you possess the capability/competency
 - Stay focused on you - say what you did, not what "John" or "we" did
 - Plan to take five to ten minutes to relate each situation, giving the highlights rather than every detail
 - Be sure to convey the actions you took in the light of the situation and clearly indicate the results of your actions
 - Practice, practice, practice - in front of the mirror, with your significant other or pet, or plan a mock interview with a friend or colleague
- > **Avoid making vague statements that may sound good but provide no specific information about what you did, such as "the project team created a plan....."**
- > **Avoid giving your opinions about a situation or task as these provide no information about what you did**
- > **Avoid making theoretical statements such as, "I would do...", or "I always..." as these provide no information about what you actually did**

In addition, be prepared to answer some questions about your educational background and work history, including your current role.

Final Preparations

In order to ensure you have made your final preparations, be sure you:

- Know who is going to interview you, and his or her position in the company
- Know when and where the interview is being held, and how to get there
- Know what you need to bring to the interview (a copy of your CV is recommended)
- Get plenty of rest

Day of the Interview

Physical and Mental Preparation

The day of the interview arrives at last! It is important to be physically and mentally prepared before you step through the door into the interview room. Here are some tips to help you create the optimum physical and mental state for your interview:

- Arrive ten minutes early
- Think positive thoughts – you are looking and feeling great!
- Take a couple of deep breaths to help you relax

Introductions

When you meet the interviewer, remember that first impressions are lasting impressions. Be positive and enthusiastic! This is the time to sell yourself!

Aim to:

- Relax, smile, and look poised and confident as you enter the room
- Shake hands firmly if the interviewer offers his or her hand, and introduce yourself
- Wait until the interviewer invites you to sit down
- Make eye contact – naturally
- Be yourself!

> If the interviewer initiates some initial small talk about the weather, your journey or a topical issue, be responsive -- this is part of the interview and the initial impression you make.

Key Background Review

When you have completed the introductions and the interviewer has explained the format for the interview, you may be asked specific questions about your educational background and work history, including your current role.

The Interview

Aim to:

- Listen carefully to the question
- Take a second or two to compose your thoughts before you answer
- Ask for clarification if you need to -- be sure you really understand what the interviewer is asking
- Speak succinctly and clearly, minimise jargon, eliminate slang
- Watch the 'landings' – notice how your words impact the interviewer and his or her body language
- Try to vary your examples – though it is okay (and sometimes efficient) to use the same example to illustrate different competencies

Your Turn

Once the interviewer has satisfactorily elicited all the information he or she requires, you may be given an opportunity to ask your questions. Make a mental note during the interview of any additional questions that arise during the discussion. Be aware, however, that the interviewer may not have all the answers about the job. In addition to asking your questions, you may wish to:

- Jot down key points you want to remember
- Ask what the next steps will be
- Confirm your enthusiasm for the job
- Thank the interviewer for his or her time