

Interviewing in Canada

Applications, Resumes, Interviews and Following Up

Pathways to Success



Introduction

After learning how to apply for jobs, build a resume, tailor a resume, and write a cover letter, the next step is learning how to prepare for interviews.

An interview is a live conversation with an employer to assess whether you may be a good fit for the role. Interviews may happen in person, by phone, or through a video call. Some employers may only have one interview, while others may have multiple rounds.

The interview is the employer's chance to meet you, understand your experience, and see how you communicate. It is also your chance to learn more about the employer, the workplace, and the role.

During an interview, employers may ask questions about your experience, skills, strengths, availability, or interest in the position. They may also give you a scenario and ask how you would respond. Some employers may ask you to complete a work sample, test, presentation, or other task connected to the job.

A resume shows what you have done. A cover letter explains why your experience matters. An interview shows how you communicate, think, solve problems, and present yourself in real time.

A cover letter should usually be short and focused. In most cases, one page is enough. The goal is not to explain your full life story. The goal is to choose the experiences that best connect to the job and explain why they matter.

Your cover letter should be professional, clear, and easy to read. Use full sentences and short paragraphs. Avoid overly casual language, slang, or jokes. The tone should be respectful and confident, but not exaggerated.

You should usually adjust your cover letter for each job. You may reuse some parts, but the letter should still connect to the specific role, employer, and job posting. If the same cover letter could be sent to any employer, it is probably too general.

If you know the hiring manager's name, you can use it in the greeting. If you do not know the name, you can use a general professional greeting such as "Dear Hiring Manager" or "Dear Selection Committee."

Before submitting, check that the employer's name, job title, department, date, and your contact information are correct.

Interview Steps and Screening

Interviews can happen in different ways. Some interviews are simple and informal. Others may involve several steps before the employer makes a decision.

Some employers may begin with **screening** before the interview. Screening may be a short phone call, email, or form. The employer may use screening to confirm your contact information, availability, interest in the position, work eligibility, or whether you meet basic requirements.

Common interview formats include phone interviews, video interviews, in-person interviews, panel interviews, group interviews, and recorded or asynchronous interviews.

A **phone interview** happens over the phone. A **video interview** happens through a platform such as Teams, Zoom, or another online meeting tool. An **in-person interview** happens at the workplace or another meeting location. A **panel interview** means more than one person is interviewing you. A **group interview** may include multiple candidates at the same time. A **recorded or asynchronous interview** may ask you to record answers to questions instead of speaking with an interviewer live.

Employers may also use different interview styles. Some questions may be general. Others may be behavioural, scenario-based, technical, or skills-based. Some employers may ask for a work sample, test, or presentation.

Some hiring processes include multiple rounds. Later rounds may involve managers, team members, or more detailed questions. After the interview, the employer may request references, documents, or follow-up information.

Interviewing From the Employer's Perspective

To prepare well, it helps to understand what employers are looking for during an interview.

Employers are not only listening to the information in your answers. They are also watching how you communicate, how you think, and how you respond in a professional conversation.

Employers may pay attention to:

Communication:

Can you answer clearly and professionally?

Preparation:

Do you understand the role, the employer, and your own experience?

Judgment:

Can you think through workplace situations and make reasonable decisions?

Confidence and attitude:

Can you present yourself respectfully without seeming careless, uninterested, or overconfident?

Listening and adaptability:

Can you listen to the question, respond to follow-up questions, and adjust your answer when needed?

Professional behaviour:

Do you arrive on time, use respectful body language, speak with an appropriate tone, and handle pressure professionally?

The interview helps employers understand how you may act in the workplace. This is why preparation matters. Strong answers are important, but professional behaviour also matters.

Preparing for an Interview

Good interview preparation helps you answer clearly, show confidence, and connect your experience to the job. The goal is not to memorize a script. The goal is to understand the role, prepare strong examples, and practice explaining your experience clearly.

Start by reviewing the job posting. Look for the main duties, skills, requirements, and qualities the employer mentions. Think about which parts of your experience connect most clearly to the role.

Next, research the employer. Try to understand what the organization does, who they serve, where they are located, and why the role matters. You do not need to know everything about the employer, but you should understand the basics.

Then prepare examples from your own experience. These examples can come from work, school, volunteering, placements, projects, community involvement, or life experience. Choose examples that show skills the employer may value, such as communication, teamwork, customer service, problem-solving, organization, leadership, reliability, or professionalism.

You should also practice common interview questions. Practice answering questions about yourself, your experience, your strengths, challenges you have handled, your availability, and why you are interested in the job.

Before the interview, prepare two or three thoughtful questions to ask the employer. This shows that you are interested and thinking seriously about the role.

Finally, check the details. Confirm the interview time, location, meeting link, clothing, documents, transportation, and anything else you need before the interview.

Example Practice Questions

Employers may ask different types of questions during an interview. Practicing common questions can help you feel more prepared.

General questions may ask about who you are and why you are interested in the role. For example:

“Tell me about yourself.”

“Why are you interested in this position?”

“What do you know about our company or organization?”

Experience and skills questions ask about your background and what you can bring to the role. For example:

“What experience do you have that relates to this job?”

“What are your strengths?”

“What is a skill you are currently working to improve?”

Behavioural questions ask you to describe something you have done in the past. For example:

“Tell me about a time you worked as part of a team.”

“Tell me about a time you dealt with a difficult customer, classmate, or coworker.”

“Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem.”

Scenario questions ask what you would do in a possible workplace situation. For example:

“What would you do if you were unsure how to complete a task?”

“What would you do if a customer or client was upset?”

“How would you handle multiple tasks at the same time?”

Closing questions often happen near the end of the interview. For example:

“Why should we hire you?”

“Do you have any questions for us?”

When practicing, do not try to memorize every answer word-for-word. Instead, prepare examples and practice explaining them clearly.

Interview Etiquette

Interview etiquette means acting professionally before, during, and after the interview. Professional etiquette shows the employer that you are respectful, prepared, and ready for the workplace.

Be ready 10 to 15 minutes before the interview. For an in-person interview, this means arriving early enough that you are not rushed. For an online interview, this means opening the meeting link early, checking your camera and microphone, and making sure your internet connection is working.

Greet the interviewer professionally. Smile, say hello, introduce yourself, and thank them for meeting with you.

Communicate clearly during the interview. Let the interviewer finish speaking before you answer. If you do not understand a question, it is okay to ask for clarification. Give complete answers instead of one-word responses. Speak at a steady pace and show that you are paying attention.

Use professional body language, eye contact, and tone. For video interviews, look at the camera when possible, sit upright, and avoid distractions. For phone interviews, make sure you are in a quiet place where you can focus.

At the end of the interview, ask about next steps if the employer has not already explained them. Thank the interviewer for their time before leaving or ending the call.

Dressing for an Interview

Interview clothing should be clean, neat, and appropriate for the workplace. Different jobs may have different expectations, but it is usually better to be a little overdressed than too casual.

For office roles, business formal or business-casual clothing is often appropriate. For customer service, trades, casual workplaces, or part-time jobs, the clothing may be less formal, but it should still look clean and professional.

Keep your clothing simple. Wear clean clothes and clean shoes. Avoid clothing that is distracting, wrinkled, or inappropriate for the workplace. Make sure you are clean and avoid strong smells from perfume, cologne, smoke, or other odours.

For online interviews, dress professionally even if you are at home. Also check your background, lighting, camera, and microphone. A messy background, poor lighting, or bad audio can distract from your answers.

If you are unsure what to wear, choose something neat, simple, and respectful for the workplace.

Casual Attire

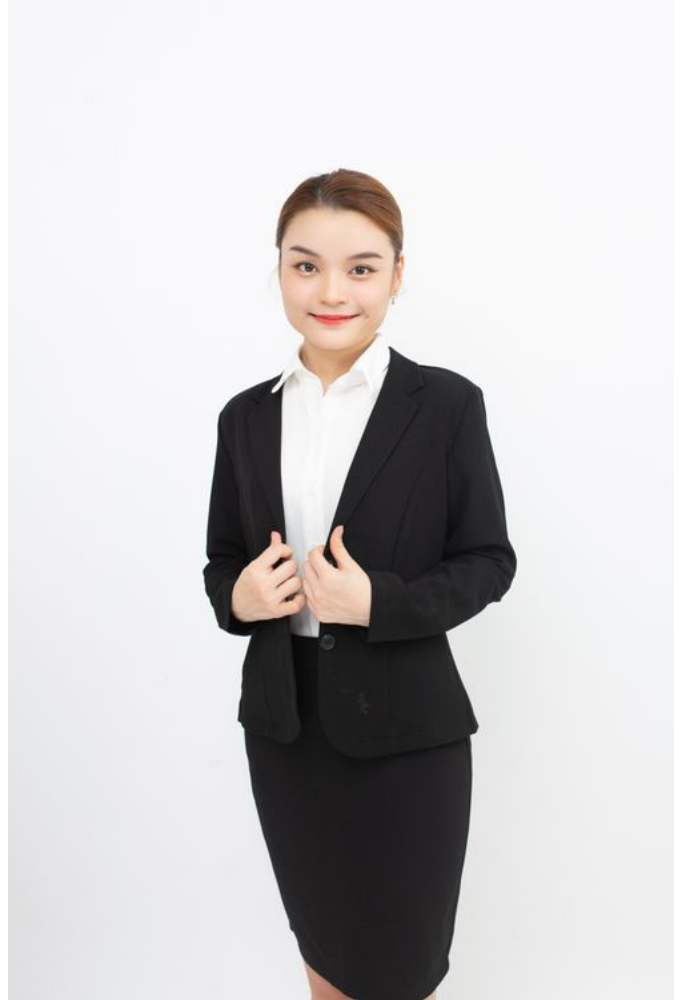


Business casual Attire





Business Formal Attire



*Examples of workplace attire

Work Samples and Portfolios

Some employers may ask you to show or complete examples of your work during the hiring process. This is more common for some jobs than others, but it can happen in many fields.

A **work sample** is a specific example of work that shows your skills. This could include a writing sample, design work, code, spreadsheet, presentation, project, customer service response, or another example connected to the job.

A **portfolio** is a collection of your best work. It may be a website, PDF, folder, or set of links.

If an employer asks for a work sample or portfolio, choose examples that connect to the job. Make sure links and files work before sending them. Remove private, confidential, or sensitive information before sharing anything.

Be ready to explain your work. You may need to explain the goal of the project, your role, the tools or skills you used, and what the final result was.

Asking the Employer Questions

At the end of most interviews, employers will ask if you have any questions. You should prepare two or three thoughtful questions before the interview. Good questions show that you are prepared, interested, and thinking seriously about the role.

You can ask about the role. For example:

“What does a typical day in this position look like?”

“What would success look like in the first few months?”

You can ask about training and support. For example:

“What training is provided for new employees?”

“How does the team support someone who is new to the role?”

You can ask about the workplace. For example:

“What are the busiest or most important parts of this role?”

You can also ask about next steps. For example:

“What are the next steps in the hiring process?”

Avoid asking questions that were already clearly answered in the job posting. Also avoid asking only about pay, vacation, or benefits as your first question unless the employer brings those topics up or the situation requires it. Your questions should show that you are thinking about the work, the team, and how to succeed in the role.

What Should You Do Next?

Before moving to the next video, look at a job you are thinking of applying to. Try to think about what questions the employer might ask you in an interview. Prepare some responses to those questions.

Start by reviewing the job posting. Identify the main skills, duties, and requirements. Then prepare examples from your own experience that connect to those points.

You should also prepare two or three questions to ask the employer. These questions should show that you understand the role and are thinking seriously about the opportunity.

The next section is **Following Up With Employers**. That section will explain how to communicate professionally after applying, interviewing, or speaking with an employer.