

# CIPS Alberta ICT Mentorship Program

## Interview Preparation

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**CIPS** Alberta

*GUIDING CANADIAN  
TECH CAREERS*



**ICT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM  
FOR IMMIGRANTS**

# Agenda

- Objectives
- Interview Formats
- Interview Types
- Before the Interview
- The Interview
- Close the Interview
- After the Interview
- Common Interview Mistakes
- Discussion

APPENDIX A: Sample Questions to Ask

APPENDIX B: Traditional Question Samples

APPENDIX C: Behavioral Question Samples

APPENDIX D: Sample Questions and Responses.





# Objectives

- Understand Interview Formats
- Recognize Question Types
- Prepare for your Interview
- Present your “Best Self”
- Follow-up after your Interview.



# Interview Formats

- Typically, multiple interview stages
- May progress through management levels
- May include multiple people (>2 representatives)
- May be combination of virtual and in-person

*A **psychometric test** is an assessment used to measure an individual's cognitive ability, personality, or behaviours. Often used as part of the recruitment process, psychometric testing provides a fair and objective way of assessing the potential of a candidate to perform well in a job role.*

## FORMATS

1. **Phone** – Often the first step to screen candidates
2. **Video** – A more personal follow-up if the phone interview goes well
3. May include online or in-person **technical** testing or **psychometric** testing
4. **Panel/Board** – Multiple interviewers at once, often for final rounds
5. **Group** – Not as common but can be used in certain contexts to determine fit within existing group.

# Interview Types

## Structured

- Face-to-Face with a set list of questions

## Unstructured

- May come later for a deeper dive into your experience and personality

## Behavioural

- Questions how you handled past situations
- *See **Appendix C** for examples.*



**ACTION:** Plan a mock interview with your mentor to practice in action

- Identify your job
- Schedule time
- Do full role-play Mentor-Mentee to Interviewer-Candidate

# Before the Interview

- ☐ Research the company and interviewers using social media and network connections
- ☐ Review the job description
  - Use ChatGPT CoachPilot to assess your skills to job requirements and determine relevant examples (review the Innovate Your Application workshop)
- ☐ Prepare a list of questions YOU have
- ☐ Mentally prepare examples of your work drawing from your resume experience
  - Create an Experience-Skills Matrix
- ☐ Prepare your attire for the next day
- ☐ Print 2-3 resume copies, including Reference Contacts, and bring with pen and paper for the next day!
- ☐ Know where you are going and time it takes
- ☐ Visualize your readiness

## Preparing for Your Interview



You landed an interview! Congratulations! Now it's time to prepare. Do the following to help ensure that you have a great interview.

### Do your homework

Research the company, as well as the position for which you will be interviewing. Check out the company's website and learn about their products and services. Know how you would answer the question, "Why are you interested in working here?"

### Plan your answers

There are a number of common questions that are often asked in interviews. Some examples include: *Why do you feel you're qualified for this position? What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses? How would you describe yourself?*

Practice your answers to these and other common interview questions. Also be prepared to talk about your education, interests, previous job experience, and goals.

### Figure out logistics

Look up the address of the interview location, as well as how to get there. Plan to leave early enough to get to your interview 10 minutes early.

### Know what to bring and what not to bring

Bring three copies of your resume, a notepad, and a pen. Don't bring a water bottle, an oversized purse, or another person. And before you walk into the interview, silence your phone.



# The Interview

- **First Impressions** – First 5 – 10 minutes of your interview is vital
  - Starts as you arrive; Be professional to everyone you meet as you enter
  - Be friendly and polite; They are all touchpoints with your potential future employer
- **Maintain Eye Contact, Smile, and Sit Straight!**
- **Small Talk** – Method to build rapport and chemistry with your interviewers
  - Respond to light questions about your journey to the interview, the weather, any special, local events the company may sponsor
  - Prepares for the interview conversation
  - Tests your interpersonal skills
  - *See Appendix B: Traditional Question Samples*
- **Your Powerful Story** – Respond to questions with showcases your ability
  - Respond to every question – use the **STAR** method
    - **Situation** - Share context about the situation to set the stage
    - **Task** - Explain clearly the task or project
    - **Action** - Describe your role and the actions taken to respond to the challenge
    - **Result** - Share the outcome and any lessons learned.

# The Interview cont'd

## The STAR Method



***Review Appendix D:  
Sample Questions  
and Responses.***



# Close the Interview

- Make sure all your questions asked
- Reinforce the positive
  - Prepare closing statement summarizing your job suitability
- Confirm Interviewer's questions are answered
- Express your enthusiasm for the job and company
  - Ask what are **Next Steps**
- Thank the Interviewer(s)
  - Give a firm handshake
  - Maintain confident eye contact!

# Interview Checklist

- ☐ Arrive Early
- ☐ Demonstrate Respect for each person you meet upon arrival at company
- ☐ Greet interviewers professionally, stand up, shake hands, establish eye contact and SMILE!
- ☐ Be ready for your small talk Ice-breaker
- ☐ Respond to "Tell me about Yourself"
  - ☐ Speak slowly and use about 3-5 minutes
  - ☐ Include recent work experience, even hobbies to show personal side
  - ☐ Consider your strengths or personal traits for the job
- ☐ Be prepared for questions using your STAR planning
- ☐ Be Positive (no negative talk)
- ☐ Smile, Sit Straight, Maintain Eye contact
  - ☐ Present positive body language and manners
- ☐ Ask your closing questions
- ☐ Thank Interviewer(s) and ask for Next Steps!

# After the Interview

- **EVALUATE** your experience
  - Reflect on what well and what did not
  - Make notes for improvement
  - Determine what you can address in your follow-up
- **CONTACT**
  - Inform your references about potential opportunity
  - Make sure they are informed and prepared
- **FOLLOW-UP**
  - Send a **Thank You** note to interviewer
  - Restate your interest and enthusiasm
  - Address any issues you noted.



- **CARRY ON**
  - Continue with your job search
  - A good interview is no guarantee of a job offer
  - Learn from the experience
- **DEBRIEF REQUEST**
  - *If rejected, request **interview debrief** to understand where you can improve.*

# Common Interview Mistakes

- Avoid being apathetic – Show the 3 E's – Energy, Excitement, Enthusiasm
  - Smile with a Get-Go attitude
- Avoid Negative talk – Never speak bad of your current or previous employer or colleagues
  - Be honest about difficult situations and lessons learned
  - Be professional as two sides to every story
- Avoid Talking TOO Much 😊
  - Let the interviewer lead the process and set the tone
  - Focus on active listening
  - Take time to prepare your response – ask to repeat a question – it's OK!
- Not Asking Questions
  - Ask your prepared questions to demonstrate your interest and initiative
  - Be imaginative to stand out from the other candidates
  - ***See Appendix A: Sample Questions to Ask.***





# APPENDIX A: Sample Questions to Ask

- What are the opportunities for career progression?
- What are the training opportunities?
- What are my exact responsibilities?
- Would you describe a typical day on the job?
- What are the most challenging aspects of this job?
- How are employees evaluated in this position?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

# APPENDIX B: Traditional Question Samples

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work for us?
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What is your biggest achievement, and why?
- What would you bring to this position/this company?
- How would you rate your communication skills?

# APPENDIX C: Behavioral Question Samples

- Provide an example of when you had to make a difficult decision. How did you approach it, and what kinds of criteria did you use?
- Describe a time where you faced an issue that tested your coping skills.
- Describe a situation when you had many assignments or projects with the same deadline. What steps did you take to finish them?
- Describe your leadership style and provide an example of a situation where you successfully led a group.
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you get your point across?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with someone and how you handled the situation.
- Tell me about a problem you faced and how you dealt with it and developed a solution.

# APPENDIX D: Sample Questions and Responses

## Common Questions With **A+** Answers

### Tell me about yourself

**Tip:** Decide in advance which of your skills and career highlights best fit the role

**Answer:** Share those as a personal and interesting story, showing how you got started, where you are now, and how this role is the next logical chapter

### What interests you about this position?

**Tip:** Research the company and position beforehand to find specific things you like around mission, culture, customers, and the role

**Answer:** Get specific about the impact you want to have and how your skills fit well

### What are your strengths?

**Tip:** Decide ahead of time which of your strengths best match the requirements of the role

**Answer:** Highlight just 2 to 3 and back them up with memorable stories of times you shined

### Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with that situation?

**Tip:** Demonstrate that you are humble, resilient, and growth-oriented

**Answer:** Tell a story of a setback that you quickly recovered and learned from - and then moved forward

### Describe a time you motivated others. How did you accomplish it?

**Tip:** Even if you are not in leadership, they want to see leadership here - tailoring your approach to the situation and personalities involved

**Answer:** Highlight a time when you were positive, persistent, and persuasive

### Tell me a time you had to handle multiple projects at once. How did it go?

**Tip:** Focus on your time management and reliability

**Answer:** Share an example where you used a repeatable system - prioritized in a smart way, delegated, blocked time, gave frequent updates

### Describe a time you went through a major change at work. How did you adapt?

**Tip:** Employers are looking for people who are excited about change, not just tolerant of it

**Answer:** Tell a story about a big change that impacted you directly and that you adjusted to quickly; bonus if you got others on board

### Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you ensure you achieved it?

**Tip:** Show you can Get. Things. Done. That you set clear goals and follow through

**Answer:** Pick an example where you succeeded in a replicable way - broke the goal into small steps, made progress each day, showed grit through challenges

### What's an example of a time you disagreed with a boss or colleague? How did it go?

**Tip:** Never badmouth the other person (the interviewer is imagining themselves)

**Answer:** Pick a time when you had a valid case, communicated it professionally, and reached a positive resolution

### What are your weaknesses?

**Tip:** Don't use "I care too much" or other clichés - this is about self-awareness

**Answer:** Describe 1 to 2 that aren't critical to the role, and note the ways you've been working on them

### Any questions for me?

**Tip:** The only question almost guaranteed to be asked - don't sleep on this

**Answer:** Ask questions that show you've researched the company or are focused on success (ex: What would success look like in the first 6 months of this role?)

### Anything we didn't get to discuss?

**Tip:** Don't say no! Before the interview, think about the 2 to 3 main points that you want to communicate throughout the interview

**Answer:** Use this time to reiterate those