

CSC 290 Getting Ready for Your Job Interview:

Prepare and Practice

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Why Do Employers Interview Candidates?

- Turn to the person next to you, and in groups of 2-3, discuss why you think employers interview candidates?
- Some prompts for discussion include:
 - Why interview if the qualifications are shared through your resume?
 - Why interview if it takes a lot of human power (i.e. time)?
- 2-3 minutes then we'll debrief with the whole group

Why Do Employers Interview Candidates?

Debrief.

- Verbal communication; demonstrating you can share relevant information that is evidence-based
- Test a technical skill set (could include coding)
- Determine fit for the organization
- Chance for you to get to know the employer better as well

Skills/Qualities Demonstrated in the Computer Science Program

- **Research:** analyze and evaluate information; develop innovative systems; and develop ideas for presentation at a conference or in a journal.
- **Technical:** write, debug, and test programs and research, design and develop computer systems (e.g., new computer languages, simulations, system analysis, etc.).

Skills/Qualities Demonstrated in the Computer Science Program

- **Problem-solving:** conceptualize models; formulate, model, and solve problems from diverse areas; and collect, organize, analyze, and interpret results.
- **Communication:** articulate, explain, and teach technical information to others, as well as question and probe to diagnose computer problems.
- **Organizational:** manage time effectively and organize and maintain stored data.

Skills Needed to Succeed at Interviews

- Communication skills (written and oral)
- Listening
- Research
- Reflection (self-awareness and analysis)
- Analytical
- Organization/Time Management
- Commitment
- Curiosity (able to ask relevant questions)

Different Interview Stages



1.
Preparation



2.
Actual
Interview



3.
Follow-Up

Interview Steps Broken Down



1. Preparation

3. Follow-up

2. Interview

2. Closing

3. Follow-Up

2. Question & Answer Exchange

2. Positive Impressions & Building Rapport

1. Research, Reflect, Draft, and Practice

Interview Preparation Steps

1. **Research** the potential employer, and the requirements of the posting (responsibilities, qualifications, attitude)
2. **Reflect** on your experience, specific examples, and what you want to know more about
3. **Draft** your answers to anticipated questions, as they relate to the potential employers needs
4. **Practice** communicating your skills, knowledge and attitudes

Interview Preparation: Research

What you need to know:

- Top Skills/Qualifications Employer Needs
- A Genuine answer to Why You Want the Job and Why You are Interested in the Organization
- Anticipated questions

Tool: Planning Form, Job Description, Websites, Interview Content Builder

Interview Preparation: Job Description Review

Choose **one of the following** positions from your handout package:

- Summer Production Support Analyst, CITI
- BMO Internship Program – IT and Developer
- IT Co-op Canadian Tire

What are the top 3-5 qualifications that you would need to demonstrate at an interview?

Interview Preparation: Reflect

What you need to know:

- The content of your resume/cover letter
- Experience examples you're proud of
- Challenges you might face
- Questions to ask
- Additional information you want to share

Tool: Planning Form, Resume and Cover Letter,
Interview Content Builder

Interview Preparation: Types of Questions

Open-ended: do not have specific direction and cannot be answered by "yes" or "no". Look for how well you understand the role, and how you're communicating about you. "Tell me about yourself?"

Situational: problematic scenarios that require solutions (e.g. what would you do if). You need to demonstrate your analytical and problem solving skills in your answers.

Behavioural: focus on your past performance so employers can try to predict how effective you will be in the new position. "Can you give me an example of ..."

Interview Preparation:

Technical/Coding Interview

- Typically asked to review code or create new code
- Often, the work is done on a white board or with pen/paper

Preparation Tips

- Review “Ultimate Guide to Preparing for Coding Interview” – in following package
- Practice writing code “freestyle”
- Remember, they are looking for how you design, not necessarily perfect code.

Open-Ended Question: Tell Me About Yourself

- Present
- Past
- Future

Preparing For Tell Me About Yourself

- Use the components of your degree/ experience which are most pertinent to the position
- Choose 2 - 3 strengths that match what the employer is looking for and how you can add value
- Think about your **genuine interest** in this position.
- Keep it focused to what is relevant to the job posting and organization.
- You can also choose to mention one interest/hobby/experience that could be interesting to the employer

Draft a Tell Me About Yourself

- Turn to page 12 in your handout
- Draft some **talking points** you would like to cover in your Tell Me About Yourself response
- Make sure that your talking points relate to your handout's job posting
- Remember, these are notes that you will be using today to practice and **not a script**

Behavioural Questions

- Behavioural “Give me an example of when ...”
- 70% to 80% of employers use these.
- Emphasize your skills and results through examples (STAR technique)

STAR Technique

Situation

Task

Action

Results

STAR Example: Customer Service

Situation + Task =

Work part-time as a Sales Associate in a shoe store. A customer came in 5 minutes before we were closing and needed to find a pair of red shoes for an event in 3 days.

STAR Example Customer Service (part 2)

Actions =

I asked her what style of shoe she was looking for, heel height preference, shade of red, etc. From the info I gathered, I was able to select 3 pairs that fit her criteria. Told the customer to take her time but I had to close the doors. The one she preferred was a little too large; I suggested that she could try an insole or I could also call the other stores in the morning to see if they had her size; gave her a smaller size to try in another colour. Took down the customer's contact info and also gave her some tips to care for the shoes; wrote down product names. Called first thing the next day and was able to locate her size in one of her preferred locations.

STAR Example Customer Service (Part 3)

Results =

Customer came by a week later with a friend to thank me. She said the friend liked her shoes so much she wanted a pair too (in a different colour) and wanted to come back to this store because of the service.

Choose ONE Behavioural Question and Draft Your Answer on Page: 14

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present complex programming problem to a person that doesn't understand technical jargon.
2. Describe a time where you had to deal with two demanding projects. How did you manage time/resources while on these?
3. Describe a situation where you worked with a difficult co-worker/team member. How did you respond?
Describe a time when you used an innovative idea to improve something.

Practice Interview

Find a partner: Interviewer, Candidate

- **Candidate**: Review your STAR story and then put it aside. When ready, shake hands (if applicable) and share your Tell Me About Yourself answer.
- **Interviewer**: Ask **ONE** question as requested by your candidate (see next slide); after s/he has finished, provide feedback using the chart page 19

Switch roles & start again. 10 mins per person!

Behavioural Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present complex programming problem to a person that doesn't understand technical jargon.
2. Describe a time where you had to deal with two demanding projects. How did you manage time/resources while on these?
3. Describe a situation where you worked with a difficult co-worker/team member. How did you respond?
Describe a time when you used an innovative idea to improve something.

STAR Method Common Problems

- Answers too general
- Not enough context
- Too structured/feels rehearsed
- Skip over (or rush through) the action steps
- Forget to highlight positive results
- Too formulaic (no emotions)
- Not linked back to original question

Check-In: Anticipating Questions

- Imagine you've got a job description for a Customer Service Position at UTM's Welcome Desk
- What types of questions do you think you would be asked?
- What resources would you use?

Unexpected Questions – Strategy

- Ask for time to think about it
- Consider why the question is being asked
- Demonstrate your thought process
- Answer the question (don't evade it)
- If you are telling a story, use the STAR technique



Unexpected Questions – Example

You're at work and your coworker has thrown a pie in your face. What do you do?



Unexpected Question – Answering the Question

You're at work and your coworker has thrown a pie in your face. What do you do?

- A) Ask for time to think!
- B) Ask for more information (e.g. can you tell me more about this situation? Was this something expected? Was anyone in danger?)
- C) Answer the question while describing why you would do what you are doing

Draft Questions for Employers (Part One)

Demonstrate Interest: Use your research to develop questions, e.g. new directions or business challenges like: *“I read the firm is branching into a new business. Could you tell me more?”*

Decide “fit”: Ask about key tasks and priorities for the role; skills likely to develop; company culture, etc. For example, *“What are the key priorities for the position/dept., or the characteristics of successful people in the firm?”*

Questions to Avoid: Salary, benefits, anything easily answered by reading the job description or company website, next steps

Draft Questions for Employers (Part Two)

Re-emphasize or Re-Address Interview Points: Ask for the opportunity to revisit / reclarify a moment in the interview (not the entire interview)

More than 2: Sometimes employer will inadvertently answer some of your questions throughout the interview; it's good to come with more than 2 questions prepared

Smile Questions

Goal is to get the interviewer talking about something that interests/excites them about their job/career/organization

Examples

- What do you enjoy most about your role?
- Earlier, you were talking about how well the team works together. What types of things do you do to foster a strong team dynamic?

Actual Interview



Bring Notebook,
water bottle,
documents



Dress for
Success



Arrive
Early



Facial
Expressions
Handshake

Remember

Be relatable
Be genuine
Be human



www.vintuitive.com

 Vintuitive

Dealing with Nervousness

- **Common experience for interviewees and interviewers**
- What is your go to strategy in other high pressure situations (e.g. exams)
- Plan ahead to arrive early (but not too early)
- Water technique (10 minutes before the interview)
- Water Bottle
- Ask for time whenever you need it
- Embrace mistakes and deal with them (you are human)
- Let Go of the Outcome

Follow-up

Send a thank you note (ideally within 24 hours of the interview)

- Be genuine
- Re-confirm your interest
- Summarize key points of match

Review and evaluate your performance

Take action to improve

Reflection



Review the Interviews Checklist,
prioritize two items in the preparation
section for your next interview

PEY CO-OP

Professional Experience Year Co-op



Additional Resources

Will be e-mailed forwarded to Professor Zhang for posting. These include:

Career Centre services, a copy of today's PowerPoint, Thank You Note tips, Tips for Video and Skype Interviews, Dress for Success, Big Interview instructions, Ultimate Guide to Preparing for the Coding Interview

Evaluations & Questions

