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# Effective Interviewing Skills

The Key to Maximizing Your  
Job Interview



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# Workshop Outcomes

Knowledge of:

- Types of interviews
- Interview preparation steps and tips
- Stages of an interview
- Common and illegal questions
- Developing effective answers

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# Types of Interviews

- Structured / non-structured
- One-on-one / panel / group
- Responsive / reactive (stress interview)
- Phone (pre-screening)
- Informational
- Traditional / Behavioural

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# What is a Behaviour Based Interview?

- A structured interviewing style based on questions designed to probe past behaviour in specific situations
- Focuses on experience, behaviours, knowledge, skills and abilities related to the position
- Used to get an idea of how an individual will manage duties based on their past behaviour

*Note: Past behavior is the best predictor of future performance*

# Behavioural Interview

Behavioural questions are more probing and more specific than traditional interview questions

**Behavioural:** “Tell me about your greatest achievement?”

**Behavioural:** “What **did** you do when...?”

# Traditional Interview

Traditional interview questions are more hypothetical rather than focusing on past events.

**Traditional:** “Tell me about yourself?”

**Traditional:** “What **would** you do if...?”

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# Examples of Behavioural Questions

If the job posting states the company is looking for a “team player”, possible interview questions could include:

- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a co-worker’s working style in order to successfully complete a project.
- Describe a situation when working with others produced better results than if you had completed the project on your own.
- Can you share with me a time when demonstrated your ability to work as an effective team member?

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# Interview Workshop - Activity

Please get into three groups; each group will receive a flip chart paper and marker

- Group One: Pre-interview

What to do **before** the interview; up to the time you reach the front door

- Group Two: Interview

What to do **during** the interview; from the moment you walk into the building to the end of the actual interview

- Group Three: Post-interview

What to do **after** the interview; from the moment you walk out of the interview room and onwards

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# Pre-interview Preparation

- Documents
- Professional Attire
- Prepare Route
- Prepare answers to possible questions



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# Documents

- Copy of resume for each interviewer +1
- Pen & paper
- Interview Agenda - your questions – remember it's a two way street to see if you fit into their organization AND if you feel comfortable there)
- Copy of job posting
- References
- Portfolio (optional depending on career)

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# Professional Attire

A day or two before the interview:

- Try on your intended outfit (fit)
- Check for stains, rips, missing button, creases, etc.
- Coordinate accessories (tie, belt, socks, shoes, jewelry, etc. )
- Set aside in a “safe” spot
- Dress one step above

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# Prepare Your Route

- Confirm address, including suite number, and interviewer's name(s)
- Print a map of the route / write directions
- Trial run (*before* day of interview)
- Check for construction signs
- Locate available parking lot options
- Set aside change/credit card (if needed)

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# Prepare Your Answers

- Use *recent* examples where you excelled
- Identify your skills throughout your response
- Use industry terms (acronyms or industry slang)
- Avoid casual language
- Be objective, not subjective...just the facts
- Include amounts, dollars, time frames, percentages, numbers, etc.
- Length: 1-3 minutes
- Practice, practice, practice!



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# Ten Common Questions to Expect

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Tell me about a time you save time or money.
- What is your greatest strength?
- Can you me about your computer skills?
- Tell me about a time where you had to handle a challenging co-worker or customer.
- Can you describe a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty?
- What do you believe is your professional weakness?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Why do you want to work for this company?



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# Use the STAR technique

- Describe the **Situation**
- Discuss the **Task** that needed to be accomplished
- What **Actions** did you take to perform your task
- What were the **Results** of your actions



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# Preparation Tips

- Be prepared to discuss **negative experiences** (choosing those that turned out well or you made the best of the situation and what you learned from it)
- There are no right or wrong answers - just give enough details to allow the interviewer to accurately assess your past accomplishments
- Keep a **record of your achievements**, use them to come up with great STAR examples for the next time you go for an interview

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# Five Stages of an Interview

1. Opening - rapport building
2. Questions about your experience and skills
3. Exploring professional style (fit)
4. Interviewee questions
5. Closing - final message



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# Tips for Your Arrival

- Be “on” *before* entering the building
- Arrive 15 minutes before appointment
- Pleasantly greet receptionist and identify yourself
- While waiting, review your answers
- Avoid fidgeting, chewing gum, talking on cell phone or texting

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# First Impressions

- Studies show that an interviewer forms judgments within *four minutes* of meeting you
- Much of the impact you create in an interview is based on your visual and non-verbal presentation

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# Your First Impression

- Greet the interviewer with a comfortably firm handshake, eager smile and direct eye contact
- Allow interviewer to indicate where to sit
- Have documents in order, and offer copy of resume to each interviewer
- Assume a receptive posture
- Breathe and try to relax...remember:  
*you are prepared!*

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# What You Say and How You Say It

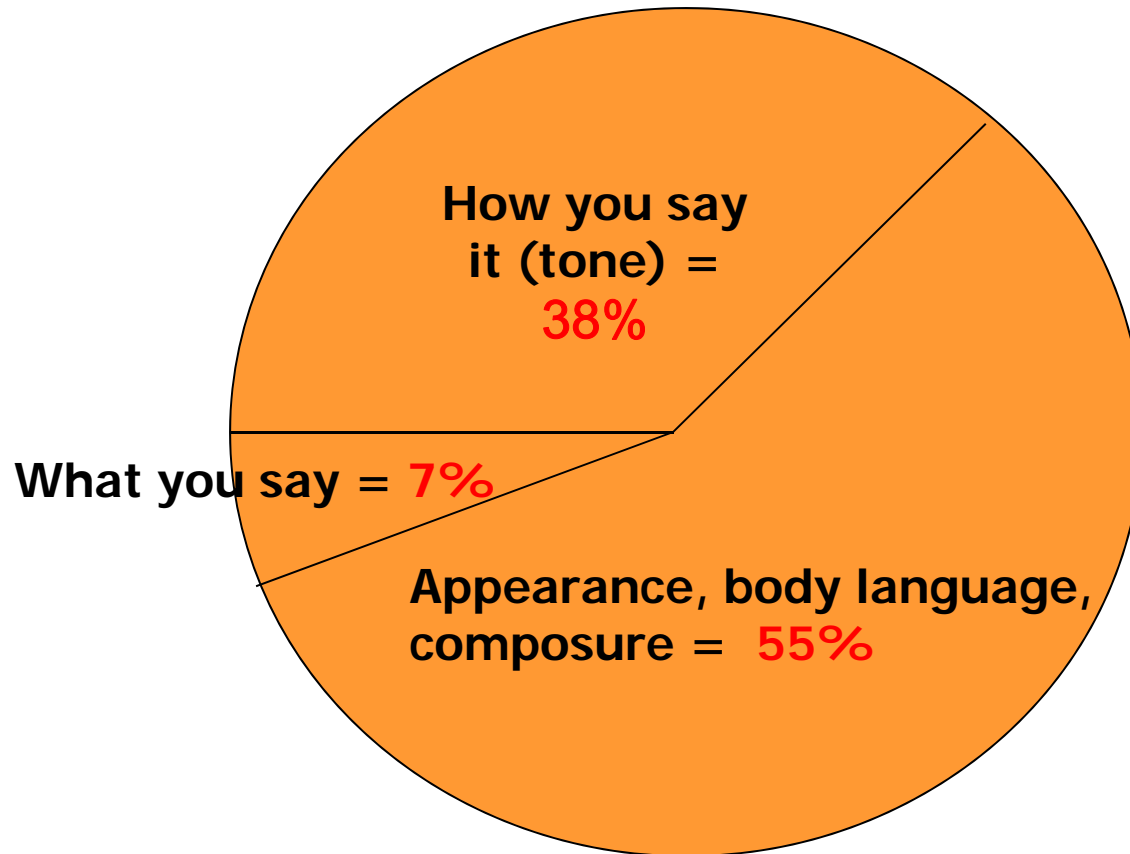
- Preparing your answers is a great start!
- Being aware of how you are presenting your answers is also important
- Verbal and non-verbal (body language) communication is important too



# What You Say:

It's not just what you say, but how you present it and yourself!

93% of information taken in by the interviewer stems from non-verbal communication (facial expression, posture, gestures, etc.)



Source: <http://actionsays.blogspot.com/>

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# Non-verbal Communication

*Non-verbal communication is composed of appearance, posture and body language.*

## Appearance:

- Personal hygiene and clothing

## Posture:

- Attentive listening position
- Avoid slouching or sitting on edge
- Make comfortable (slight) adjustments
- Avoid crossing your legs
- Allow for a personal space of about 36 inches

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# Body Language

- Your words will explain your background, but at the same time, your body language will give out a lot more information
- Becoming more aware of your own body language can increase your chances of getting the job
- Reading the interviewer's body language can be a useful tool to gauge your presentation

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# Body Language

Body language includes:

- Hands
- Handshake
- Eye contact
- Facial signals and head movements



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# Your Hands

- Hand movements can liven up an interview, but should be used in moderation, and below eye level
- Avoid crossing your arms
- Avoid unconscious hand movements (biting nails, picking at nails, adjusting tie, wringing hands, rubbing the back of your neck, hands in pockets, clicking a pen, etc.)

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# The Handshake

- Comfortably firm; 2 - 3 shakes
- Use only 1 hand and put it all the way into the interviewer's hand, with palm up
- Be aware of possible perspiration
- If you don't feel comfortable shaking hands for cultural/religious reasons, you can 'gesture' a greeting

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# Your Eyes

*Eye contact is essential and an excellent way of conveying your interest in the job*

- By looking directly at the interviewer you are giving them a sign of trust
- Allow for eye movement to avoid staring
- Avoid looking away, down, or over your glasses when answering questions
- Panel interview: focus on the person who posed the questions, and ‘sweep’ the others

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# Your Facial Signals

- Present a warm and natural smile
- Nod your head slowly in agreeance
- Avoid head bobbing
- Avoid biting / licking your lips
- Be aware if you are rubbing your nose
- Be aware of subconscious facial expressions



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# Interviewer's Body Language

- Watch the amount of hand gestures the interviewer uses to gauge your usage
- This can serve as warning sign of displeasure (shaking their head, sighing, crossing their arms, etc.)



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# Understanding the Interviewer

An interviewer must make hiring decisions. To do this THREE basic issues must be covered in the questions they ask:

1. **Can you actually do the job?** Is your experience, training, education, aptitude and interest sufficient so you would be productive for me?
  2. **Who are you?** What are you like? What characteristics and traits do you possess?
  3. **Will you fit in with the others in my company/organization?** Will you be part of a problem or part of a solution?
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# Illegal Questions

- Race / Colour / Ancestry / Place of origin
- Age
- Political beliefs
- Religion
- Marital status (children / pregnancy)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Unrelated convictions
- Addictions

(Source: Employment Standards Act

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/00e41\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/00e41_e.htm))



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# Handling Illegal Questions

- If you are asked an illegal question it is important not only to know your rights, but also to be able to respond to the question directly and with confidence
- If this is an employer you want to work for, indicate a willingness to demonstrate your suitability for the job without compromising your rights
- Respond with a counter question:
  - “Could you tell me how my (age, marital status, place of birth, etc.) might have any bearing on the job I am applying for?”
  - “That’s a very interesting question. I’d be happy to answer it if you could tell me the reason for asking it?”

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# Closing the Interview

- Provide a copy of your References
- Confirm the follow-up timeframe and phone number
- Restate your interest in the position and why you feel you are the ideal candidate
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time
- Shake the interviewer's hand
- Remember to SMILE!

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# Practice Your Interview Skills

- Pick five questions from the list of possible interview questions
  - Choose a partner and determine who will be the interviewer and who will be the interviewee first.
  - As the interviewee, decide what you would like feedback on. Be specific (body language, using the STAR correctly, nervous gestures, etc)
  - After the practice interview. The interviewer will provide feedback **ONLY** on what the interviewee requested
  - Switch places
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# Post-Interview

- Reflect on interview – note unexpected questions, or answers that need polishing
- Send a Thank You email / card (within 24 hours)
- Follow up (clarify during interview)
- Prepare for a second interview
- Continue your job search

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**Stay positive!**  
**The right opportunity is  
waiting for you!**

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# Group Discussion

Are there any interview questions that you have experienced, concerns with, or would like further assistance with answering?

Are there any other questions relating to the interview process that you may have?

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**Thank you!**

**Remember:  
Stay Positive!**