
INTERVIEWS



Durham College Career Development
hired.durhamcollege.ca

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

RESEARCH THE COMPANY AND POSITION

Find out all that you can about the company

- Visit the company's website and LinkedIn page (if available)
- Learn about company locations, products and services, the management team, recent news announcements, and the company's vision, mission and values

Review the posting

- Review the key qualifications and be ready to discuss how your skills meet the needs of the employer

Know where the interview is to take place

- Ensure that you are aware of location and the travel time, and account for any possible travel delays (e.g. weather, accidents, construction, rush hour)

Ask about the interview structure

- How many people will you be meeting with? How long is the interview? Is there a presentation, or a technical, communication or aptitude test?

Research salary information

- If not included on the job posting, you may be asked about salary. Use sites such as the [Job Bank](http://www.jobbank.gc.ca) (www.jobbank.gc.ca) to determine an appropriate salary range for similar positions in your region.

Scan through your social media

- Be prepared to explain anything you or your connections have posted. If you don't want employers to see it, make it private.

BE READY TO DISCUSS HOW YOU WILL BENEFIT THE EMPLOYER

Be prepared to discuss all the points on your resumé.

- Consider a couple of examples that show how you have gained or used each skill that you have included.

Review the Course Specific Learning Outcomes section of your course outlines

- Get comfortable with your skills and the language you can use to describe those skills to an employer.

Be ready to demonstrate your accomplishments

- Rehearse relevant stories about school, work, and volunteer experiences.

YOUR INTERVIEW

And The Industry-Specific Skills You'll Be Tested On

Below, we've collected the expertise
you'll need to show off when you're speaking
to a future employer



USE THE JOB LISTING TO
MAKE A QUALIFIED LIST OF
THE TOP 2-3 SKILLS NEEDED
FOR THE ROLE



REVIEW THE COMPANY'S
PRODUCT IN YOUR INDUSTRY
– WHETHER THAT IS
MARKETING MATERIALS, A
NEW APP OR THEIR TEAM PAGE



RESEARCH RECENT PRESS
COVERAGE AND COMPANY
ANNOUNCEMENTS



CHECK OUT THE
COMPANY'S SOCIAL MEDIA
FOR CULTURE CLUES

Infographic courtesy of: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/common-interview-questions-by-industry>

WHAT TO BRING AND WHAT TO WEAR

GATHER YOUR DOCUMENTS

Plan to bring a notepad and pen.

- Just like any other meeting, you may want to take notes.

Print additional copies of your resumé and cover letter

- Have additional resúms and cover letters in case one of your interviewers needs an extra copy.

Print out your list of references

- Try to enlist former supervisors or professors as references. Ask for their permission and supply them with a copy of your resumé and the job posting. You may wish to remind them of the key attributes you would like them to focus upon. See page 11 for more information

Make a list of meaningful questions

- Come prepared with a list of questions that you would like to have answered by the employer. See page 10 for tips on how to handle this part of the interview.

PLAN YOUR WARDROBE, BE PREPARED AND TRY TO RELAX

Be positive and confident and look your best

- A clean and neat appearance is critical to the interview process. Try to get a good night's sleep so that you feel rested for the interview.

Shower and take great care in your personal hygiene

- Avoid perfume, cologne, and/or excessive make-up.

Dress appropriately for the position

- Business attire is best, but for some positions business casual clothing may be appropriate. Be conscious of how visible tattoos and/or piercings may appear to a potential employer.

Arrive to the interview 10 to 15 minutes early

- Don't be late, but don't arrive too early either as your interviewer(s) might not be ready to meet you.

Treat the receptionist with due respect

- They may be asked about the initial impression you made.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION

- Greet the interviewer(s) with a smile, a firm handshake, and direct eye contact. Wait to be seated. You may have several interviewers; be prepared to shake all hands.
- It is normal to feel nervous in interviews, so be prepared and do the best you can.

LISTEN CAREFULLY, ASK FOR CLARIFICATION, TAKE NOTES IF NEEDED

- If you are not sure what the interviewer is asking, politely ask for clarification.
- If a question seems to have multiple components, you may answer the first part and ask to have the second part repeated.
- If you feel your answer was rambling, ask the interviewer if you have answered the question adequately. If not, have the question restated.

TAKE TIME TO ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS

- It is okay to pause a moment to think about an answer. The extra time will translate into a better answer, and will demonstrate to the employer that you have the confidence to think things through.

BE READY TO MARKET YOURSELF, YOUR SKILLS AND YOUR PERSONALITY

- Some questions may seem unusual. Try to think like the employer to better gauge what they are trying to find out. Remember to focus on your skills and how they relate to the job.
- Demonstrate your accomplishments by telling well thought out stories from your school, work, sport and volunteer experiences (see page 8 for more information). Book a mock interview with a Career Development coach to practice answering common questions.
- When applicable, mention that you have a portfolio and ask for permission to showcase it.

BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

- Make direct eye contact with each interviewer during every answer you give
- Maintain good posture, a smile, and try not to fidget
- Speak clearly and loudly enough so that everyone in the room can easily hear your answers.

INTERVIEW FORMATS

PANEL INTERVIEW

- Panel interviews involve two or more interviewers who take turns asking questions.
- Having more than one interviewer is a good thing, as a panel tends to be more objective in providing more than one opinion on the hiring decision.
- Ensure that you make eye contact with each panel member, starting with the person who asked the question and looking at each interviewer throughout the rest of your answer.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

- Follow the same tips for a telephone interview as a face-to-face interview, and:
 - Conduct your telephone interview in a quiet place
 - Keep your resumé and your list of questions to ask at hand
 - Have a pen and paper available to note any questions you may want to follow up on

GROUP INTERVIEW

- Group interviews are common for retail, hospitality, law enforcement, sales and other service positions where you deal directly with the public. In these cases, many candidates are interviewed at the same time, by one or more interviewers.
- In a group interview:
 - Interact professionally and positively with all other candidates
 - Be prepared to think quickly to formulate your answers
 - You may be required to work in a group to complete some kind of task; this is done to assess your problem solving, teamwork, and / or leadership skills

VIDEO OR SKYPE INTERVIEW

- Select a quiet location to participate in your interview, and ensure you follow all of the same tips as a face-to-face interview as you will be visible to the interviewer(s)
- Make sure that the camera is focused on your head and shoulders, the room is well lit, and that the background is organized and not distracting to the interviewer(s)
- Test the technology you will be using, and ensure you will not be interrupted

EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING TO ANSWER 4 KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why are you here?

Examples of interview questions that may be asked include:

- Why are you interested in working for this company/what do you know about this company?
- Why are you leaving your current position?

2. Can you do the job?

Examples of interview questions that may be asked include:

- If you were the candidate selected, what three tasks would you seek to accomplish first?
- Based on your knowledge of our company, what challenges do you see impacting us in the future?

3. Can you work well with our team?

Examples of interview questions that may be asked include:

- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict and how you resolved the situation.
- What kinds of roles have you played on various teams? What role do you prefer?

4. Why should we hire you?

Examples of interview questions that may be asked include:

- Why do you want to work in the _____ field?
- What skills / experiences do you have that separate you from others with similar training?

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

There are four main types of interview questions that you may be asked during an interview:

- **Open ended questions** are used to determine how well you think on your feet and how quickly you can focus on the topic at hand. Stay focused on your skills and how they will benefit the employer.
- **Behavioural questions** are used to gather examples of your past behaviour to predict your future behaviour as their employee. Use the job posting to try to determine what skills the employer will ask about.
- **Situational questions** are potential situations used by employers to see how you would handle real-world problems.
- **Stress questions** happen when the interviewer tries to see how you well you react under pressure with questions that are rarely related to the job posting qualifications.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND TIPS:

1. Tell me about yourself.

- Focus on your professional achievements, not personal ones, and summarize your education, why you chose this field, your work experience, and give some insight to your personality.

2. What do you know about our organization?

- Do your research; this is where you can demonstrate what you know.
- Tie your skills and experience to the organization, show your value.

3. What is your biggest strength / weakness?

- The employer wants you to demonstrate self-awareness.
- Your biggest strength should be something related to the job. This is an opportunity to sell yourself.
- Your biggest weakness should be something that you have worked to improve and/or something that is not critical to success on the job.

4. What courses did you like best / least? Why?

- The employer could be looking to discover your areas of strength, and how you handled negative situations. Talk about how and what you learned from the situation.

5. What did you learn from your field placement / part-time / summer experiences?

- The employer wants you to relate your practical experience to the position.
- Be positive and discuss how your practical experience enhances the concepts you learned in the classroom.

For assistance in preparing for questions like these, book an appointment with Career Development:

Oshawa campus: Student Services building, SSB 212

Whitby campus: Coaching and Support Centre, Room 180

Pickering Learning Site: Access the campus location most convenient for you

Book an appointment online at [Hired](http://hired.durhamcollege.ca) (<http://hired.durhamcollege.ca>)

BEHAVIOURAL QUESTIONS

The STAR / SPAR strategy is a useful tool to prepare for and effectively answer behavioural questions:

Situation	Task / Problem	Action	Result
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe the background of a job or project so that the interviewer(s) can understand the situation.Ensure you are specific, not general, in your answer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What was the task you had to complete, or the problem you had to deal with?Be specific and provide details on how the problem began.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe the action you took to deal with the problem.Describe your role in handling and / or resolving the problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adding in the result is one of the most important pieces.How did the situation end? If the outcome was negative, let the employer know how you would handle it differently in the future.What did you learn?
60% of your response time		25% of your response time	15% of your response time

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about a time you disagreed with your boss. How did you handle it?
2. Give an example of the most creative project that you have worked on. How did it turn out?
3. Tell me about a time when you had competing priorities, and how did you manage those?
4. Describe a time when you lacked a certain skill to accomplish a job. What did you do about it?
5. Give me an example of when there was a problem at work that was caused by a lack of communication. What steps did you take to resolve it?
6. Tell me about a situation when your technical skills were needed to solve a problem.
7. Give an example of a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you handle it?

TIPS:

- Use the job posting to try to determine what skills the employer will ask you about.
- Make a list of the stories that you would like to tell that demonstrate those skills. You may find that one story can illustrate a number of different skills.
- When you are asked a behavioural question, take a moment to figure out what story best fits the question and use it in your answer.

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

Similar to a behavioural question, the interviewer provides a potential situation and asks you to describe how you **would** respond. Occasionally, you may be asked to role-play the scenario with the interviewer. Think like the employer, and try to figure out what he or she is attempting to discover about your skills or judgment.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. How would you resolve a conflict with an upset customer?
2. You feel a fellow co-worker is not “pulling their weight”(e.g. they are not doing their share of the work). How would you handle this?
3. You are working in a very busy office. The phones are ringing constantly, and there is a long line-up of customers waiting for your help. How would you handle this situation?

TIPS:

- Use common sense and talk about how you **would** handle the problem.
- Employers are looking to explore your logical problem solving skills, and whether you refer to company policies and procedures to help deal with the situation.

STRESS QUESTIONS

SAMPLE TECHNIQUES AND QUESTIONS:

1. Staring at you and saying nothing for the first few minutes of the interview.
2. Playing “good cop, bad cop” with another interviewer when you respond to a question.
3. Several interruptions such as cell phone notifications or staff members entering or leaving.
4. What would you say if I told you your interview isn’t going very well right now?
5. If you could be a fruit, what fruit would you be and why?
6. You have 2 minutes to impress me. Go.

TIPS:

- Do not get angry or upset as the interviewer is intentionally trying to stress you out. Stay calm while thinking of your answer.

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

Canada's Human Rights Code precludes interviewers from directly asking questions about:

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status
- Gender identity, gender expression
- Record of criminal offences
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only)
- Sex, including pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Sexual orientation

There are some exemptions. Speak with a Career Coach for more information.

TIPS:

- Redirect back to the skills you have that they would be most interested in hearing about, or inquire about relevance to the job.
- Think about the motivation behind the question, and reassure them that you have the skills to do what they need you to do.
- You can highlight the illegal nature of the question, keeping in mind that you may take yourself out of the running for the job.
- You can answer the question, if you're comfortable doing so.

QUESTIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER

It is helpful to remember that an interview is an opportunity to assess whether the company is a good fit for you - where you can apply what you know, and continue to learn and grow.

TIPS:

- Pay attention to the interviewer(s) and ask yourself if you would like to work for them.
- Does the company culture seem appealing to you?
- Can you do the job and will it provide meaningful challenges for you?

Most interviews end with the opportunity to ask questions. You should always seize this opportunity and ask questions that should focus on the job itself, the company, management and feedback, and next steps in the hiring process. It is not appropriate to discuss salary at this point unless the interviewer brings it up first.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. What would a typical day be like?
2. How would you define success for someone in this role after three months/six months?
3. What are the immediate priorities for someone coming into this role?
4. Can you tell me about the team I will be working with?
5. Is there a training manual or any resource material that I could read before starting?
6. What are the common characteristics of your most successful employees?
7. What industry trends do you anticipate affecting this position in the next year?
8. What additional courses or training do employees in this role tend to benefit from taking?

TIPS:

- Avoid asking questions you can answer by consulting the company's website or the job posting
- Research industry trends and company projects so you can ask about their impacts on your role
- Prepare up to 10 questions, but expect to ask 3 or 4 of your most urgent questions

CONCLUDING THE INTERVIEW

- If applicable, and if you have not already done so, introduce your portfolio.
- Express interest in the position by showing enthusiasm.
- Shake hands with each interviewer and ask for business cards to send thank you emails.
- Offer your list of references.
- Find out the next steps in the process, and when they expect to make their final decision.
- If you think of any other questions once the interview is concluded, do not ask them. Include them in a thank you email instead.

REFERENCES

Your reference page should be ready to submit at an interview unless otherwise requested. Use the same heading as you did with your resumé and cover letter. Try to have at least three references and list them in order of importance with your best reference first. Include the relationship if the reference's job title does not clearly indicate their relationship to you.

While reference letters are good to collect for your portfolio, chances are the employer will want to speak to the reference directly in order to ask questions and probe more deeply. Use "professional" references as opposed to friends and family. Managers (current and former), professors, or coaches would be suitable but be sure to ask for their permission. Provide each with an updated copy of your resumé and the job posting, and let them know that they may expect a reference call and from whom.

REFERENCES FOR KELLY STEVENS

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E: dot.rainbow@deloitteandtouche.com

Relationship: Supervising Manager

Required information:

- Contact name
- Their job title
- Company name
- Phone number
- Email address

The mailing address for your reference is optional to include.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Make notes for yourself highlighting what you think went well and what could have been improved.
- Write a thank you email and send it within 12 hours of your interview. Sending your thank you by email helps the interviewer(s) receive it before the hiring decision is made.

INTERVIEW THANK YOU EMAIL

A thank you email is a brief, thoughtful message sent after you have been interviewed. In addition to being a professional courtesy, the thank you email serves to make a final contact with the potential employer at the critical moment in the process when a hiring decision is being made.

Because so few job candidates remember to send thank you emails, those who do tend to stand out favourably among the competition.

REMEMBER:

1. **Timing is critical** - write a thank you email immediately after the interview and send it within 12 hours. However, don't follow up **too** quickly – wait until you're on a laptop or computer at home or work to properly write this email (i.e. not on your phone).
2. **Tone is equally important** - regardless of how anxious you may be for the job, focus on summarizing your strengths for the position in a professional manner.
3. **Try to have something new to say** - mention an additional benefit for the employer if you were to be hired or include a relevant accomplishment that you may have forgotten to mention. Keep it brief.

INTERVIEW THANK YOU EMAIL TEMPLATE

For email subject: Job position and posting #

Dear Mr. / Ms Surname of Employer:

In this paragraph, thank the interviewer and express your appreciation for the opportunity to meet with them to discuss the position. Refer to your positive impressions of the company.

In this paragraph, offer some new information, perhaps a point that you didn't mention in the interview that would make you even more valuable to the team OR remind the employer of the key skills and / or accomplishments that make you the ideal candidate for the position. Repeat the job title you are applying for and show continued interest in it.

In the last paragraph, let the employer know that you look forward to hearing from them. Make it clear that you are willing to come in and discuss the job further.

Sincerely,

Your name

INTERVIEW THANK YOU EMAIL SAMPLE

Dear Ms. Cogan:

Thank you for meeting with me today about the Graphic Designer position. I found the discussion both informative and interesting, and am enthusiastic about the job opportunity and joining your team.

Now that I have learned in greater detail the specific tasks of your graphic designers, I am convinced that my technical and creative skills would make an impactful contribution to your graphic design team. My training in design and layout ensures that I could immediately be a productive employee.

You will find that I am an energetic and hard-working member of any team effort. I am eager to join the graphics department at your Toronto office, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Kelly Stevens



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COLLEGE**
SUCCESS MATTERS

Hired Portal

hired.durhamcollege.ca

- Search full-time, part-time, contract, summer, & volunteer job postings
- Book one-to-one coaching appointments
- View upcoming recruiting events
- Explore valuable Career Resources for your program

EVENTS

Watch for upcoming events hosted by Career Development:

- **PART-TIME JOB FAIR**

Hosted annually in September at both Oshawa and Whitby campuses

- **FURTHER EDUCATION EXPO**

Hosted annually in October at the Oshawa campus

- **TRADESMART**

Hosted annually in February at the Whitby campus

- **JOB FAIR**

Hosted annually in February at the Oshawa campus

- **EMPLOYER INFORMATION SESSIONS**

Ongoing throughout the year

For dates and details, log in to [Hired](https://hired.durhamcollege.ca) (hired.durhamcollege.ca)

