



# CMS Interview Guide

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# CMS Interview Guide

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## Introduction

One of the most important things to remember about any job interview is that its main objective is to allow for an exchange of information between both parties (applicant and company), so that a determination can be made as to how well the applicant fits the position/ company and/or vice-versa.

As the applicant, you want to impress upon the employer how your background (i.e., education, previous employment/volunteer positions, extra-curricular and hobbies) matches the requirements of the position they are recruiting for. Your résumé will have given them some indication of how well you match, but during the interview you are expected to expand on this and be able to demonstrate strong communication skills. Your communication skills (oral, written and non-verbal) will be evaluated closely and are expected to be well practiced. Other skills critical to the position/company will also be evaluated, so make sure you have done research on the position and the needs of the organization.

In the remaining sections of this guide, you will find information to help you prepare for the interview, dress for success, familiarize yourself with various interview formats, recognize questions to ask at the interview and to conduct proper follow-ups. The final two sections consist of sample questions and a resource listing.

## Preparing for the Interview

**Do:** try to get all pertinent data during phone call

- Names and titles of those interviewing you and their relationship to the position you are applying for
- Location, time, type and duration of interview
- Phone number and name of person to contact if a problem arises and you must reschedule or be late for the interview

**Do:** your research on the position, company and industry

- Review all company/position data; become familiar with the industry and the company's major competitors
- Keep copies of the job postings/descriptions you have applied to for reference/preparation

**Do:** know the culture of the company

- May not be obvious over the phone, but always a good idea to start formal and then acclimatize yourself to the culture
- Beware of "Casual Friday" syndrome – where you interview in full business attire but the company representatives are dressed down due to special circumstances
- Knowing an insider can really help here; but as a minimum, try to read company literature and/or check with CMS

**Do:** pack properly

- No backpacks or bulky purses – your image should be that of a professional and not a student

Your briefcase or portfolio should include:

- Paper (spiral pad) and pen/pencil
- Copy of job description, résumé, cover letter, list of references
- Address, directions, telephone number and name of contact
- Name of person/people you will be meeting
- Business cards
- Change for parking meter, breath mints, tissues
- Shoes in a bag (weather dependent)

**Do:** follow business etiquette

- Your handshake should be firm, with two or three "pumps" and no ancillary movements (e.g., shoulder/arm grasping, two hand cupping)
- In the initial meeting, let the interviewer offer their hand first; after the interview, offer your hand first to show you are thankful that they took the time to meet with you
- Let the interviewer "lead" you to your seat – remember, you are their guest
- No slouching in chair; sit with the base of your back touching the back of the chair
- Turn off any pagers/cell phones; never be the cause for interruption during the interview
- Behave professionally with everyone you encounter – until you are offered the position, every time you meet someone from the company you are essentially being interviewed

- Ask for business cards so that you have the proper spelling and title of each person who has interviewed you

**Do:** remember that communication is key

- Speak to express and not to impress – using lingo/terminology that you are not totally sure of can come back to hurt you later
- Avoid using slang – be professional
- Monitor and adjust your intonation/volume/pitch
- Non-verbal communication may be evaluated as critically as what you say – so remember to keep a positive attitude
- Keep good eye contact, but don't stare
- Be mindful of hand movements; it's okay for effect, but don't come across as someone trying to conduct a symphony

**Do:** try to schedule strategically

- Always be as cooperative with the interviewer's schedule as possible
- Know yourself – try to schedule when your energy level is normally high (are you a morning person, or is afternoon better for you?)
- Worst timings are considered to be 9:00 a.m. (you are likely to be the first interview and there will be no benchmark), 1:00 p.m. (time when people like to catch up on their schedule), 4:30/5:00 p.m. (late in the day, the interviewer may be fatigued or looking forward to wrapping up their day)
- Ideal timing is mid-morning or mid-afternoon

**Do:** arrive 15 minutes early

- Announce yourself to receptionist
- If you are unfamiliar with the area, perform a dry run the day(s) before (you can use MapQuest for directions), noting how long it took you to get there, whether security measures need to be considered, and time the building is open –
- Get a good night's sleep before the interview

**Do:** bring a list of referees and keep in touch with your referees

- In case they have changed jobs
- To remind them of your performance
- To keep them updated on your career
- To gauge whether they remain a good referee

## Dressing for Success

### **Do:** dress appropriately

- Check the “Career” section of the company’s website to see if they show pictures of staff and take note of how they are dressed; this section may even suggest a guideline for dressing
- Try using your network to locate an insider and ask their advice
- When all else fails, you can call and ask HR directly
- It’s always easier for someone to picture you dressed down then dressed up, so always dress as professionally as possible

### **Do:** wear appropriate business attire

- For males:
  - Black, Blue and gray suits are fine and should be a complete suit (i.e., pants match the jacket)
  - Solid colours are preferred, but thin pinstripe is fine
  - Shirts should be pressed and be of a light colour, preferable blue; never have floral, strongly striped or dark shirts
  - Your tie should complement your suit and not draw attention
  - Stick with black, well-polished shoes
  - Your belt should match the colour of your shoes
  - Socks should match the colour of your suit or can be slightly darker; never wear white socks
  - Check, and recheck your interview “outfit” (i.e., clothing and briefcase items) the night before; make sure it’s still fits appropriately and is clean
  - Be well groomed (clean hair, well shaved, clean finger nails, etc.) and limit the cologne
- For females:
  - Black, blue, gray or beige suits are fine and should be a complete suit (i.e., skirt/pants match the jacket)
  - Blouses should be pressed and be of a light colour, preferable white, off-white or blue; subtle patterns are fine
  - Shoes should be a basic pump with a low heel; can be black, dark blue, or brown
  - Shoes can be brought in a separate shoe-bag (i.e., not in a plastic grocery bag) when weather is either rainy or snowy
  - Hair should be clean, well groomed, and styled in a classic manner
  - Conservatively applied makeup and little or no perfume should be worn

## Types of Interviews:

### *Screening - 1<sup>st</sup> Round*

First round interviews are typically classified as “screening” interviews, as the company will be looking to screen out potential candidates. Often a company will interview 5+ candidates with the hopes of being able to reduce this number to one or two. These interviews are usually between 20 to 30 minutes long and will be conducted by a member of the company’s Human Resource (HR) Department; in the case of smaller companies, someone who works in a different department may fill this role.

The types of questions asked fall into one of four categories:

- **Data/fact finding:** these are questions that are usually based on the content of the candidates resume. For example: *“I see that you are pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce, specializing in Accounting. Tell me why?”*
- **Technical** (e.g. financial, case, task-based): these questions will help the interviewer measure how well you are able to address the more technical aspects of the potential position. For example: *“What do you feel are the reasons why the Canadian dollar is behaving the way it is?”* or *“Explain to me how a network server operates and what issues a company should consider when looking to acquire a new one?”*
- **Hypothetical:** these questions ask a candidate to imagine themselves in a situation and require you to convey how you feel you would exhibit a specific skill(s). For example: *“How do you feel you would act when challenged by a customer whom you know is wrong?”*
- **Behavioural-based question:** these questions ask a candidate to share with the interviewer an example from when they were in a situation requiring them to exhibit a specific skill(s). For example: *“Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer? What happened? How did the situation turn out?”*

Some common questions you may find yourself facing in a first-round interview include:

Tell me about yourself?  
How do/would your friends describe you?  
Why do you want to work here? Why should I hire you?  
What do you know about our company? Position?  
Do you have the skills to work in this position/company?  
What is your greatest strength? Weakness?  
Why did you choose to study \_\_\_\_?  
Describe your leadership/communication/coordinating/etc... style?  
Where do you see yourself in \_\_\_\_ years?  
Tell me about a time/Give an example of \_\_\_\_?  
What are your salary expectations for this position?  
Do you have any questions? About the company? Position? Process?  
More sample questions can be found in the section **“7. Sample Questions”**.

## ***Selection – 2<sup>nd</sup> Round***

Second-round interviews are typically classified as “selection” interviews, as the company will be looking to select the best candidate from a group of two or more. Interviewing for selection purposes can take place over multiple rounds with some companies requiring the successful candidate to go through five or more rounds of interviewing. The questions asked are also generally categorized into the same four categories as first-round interviews- data/fact finding, technical, hypothetical and/or behavioural-based question – but the timing of the interview is typically longer and can be spread out of multiple days.

Another difference between first and second-round interviews is that the environment in which they are conducted may not be the same; that is, where first-round interviews are usually held between one candidate and one company representative (usually, but not always someone from HR), second-round interviews may involve multiple candidates and multiple company representatives. Below are descriptions of common second-round interview settings:

### **Panel Interviews - Lead Interview Style:**

- Two or more interviewers with a Manager likely having most decision power (they will be responsible for managing the successful hire)
- One lead interviewer, others observing but might ask a few questions
- Include everyone in your response (i.e., make eye contact with all)
- Start answer with person who posed question, scan others during response and complete answer with original interviewer

### **Panel Interviews - Drill Down Interview style**

- One person leads off with a general question and the rest add questions that “drill-down” on the topic
- Include everyone in your response, and do not be afraid to reiterate/expand on previous answers

### **Panel Interviews - Independent Questions style**

- Each interviewer asks questions pertaining to their domain/responsibility
- Try not to become competitive with the “Peer”; you are not trying to take away their job, but to potentially work with them

### **Panel Interviews - Good Cop, Bad Cop style**

- A test to see how you can respond to a bad situation (more common for consulting and sales positions)
- You have to find a professional and engaging way to be comfortable with both interviewers
- Need to find balance between the two interviewers



### **Serial Interviews**

- More time consuming than panel as you will spend time separately with one or more interviewers
- Potential problem of “finding” an answer as you go along; that is, you may find a question repeated that you previously were unable to answer. If the answer has only now come to mind, share it, but let the interviewer know that you were previously asked and the answer has only occurred to you now.
- Your answer(s) can grow and change but should follow the same general theme/scope.
- Might be a drill down approach where interviewers ask each other to probe you on one of your answers given.
- At the end, interviewers will compare notes.

### **Group Interviews**

- Worst situation to be in as you have to be aware of the interviewers and the other person
- Acknowledge the other person’s presence/answers
- Never judge the other person or their answers
- If the other candidate’s answer is dead on, say so “I totally agree”...then drill down
- If asked to give an opinion on the other person’s answer, don’t compete/judge...use linking phrases and give your own answer

### **Diagnostic/Skill Tests**

- This type of interview challenges you to complete a task/test
- Task/test may or may not be directly related to the duties of the position applied to
- May also include psychological or psychometric testing

### **Case Interview**

- The case is usually hypothetical or set in the past
- End results usually less important than the process taken in answering case
- Identify problems, state assumptions, show logical reasoning
- Can be a group exercise (you will be watched to see what role you gravitate to)
- Having a follow-up plan or plan of action for implementation can set you apart

### **Company or Department Tours**

- Always an interview - keep up same interview principles throughout
- Don’t comment negatively to anyone about the interview process while on site
- Always show you are a team player and that you are excited to learn more about the ins-and-outs of the company’s operations

### **Social Situations**

- Keep your guard up - you are still being interviewed

- Avoid ordering any food that needs to be consumed with your hands only or is difficult to eat (e.g., spaghetti, ribs, oysters, etc.)
- Food selection – pick items that fall within the average price range of the menu
- Avoid ordering alcohol/wine, but can follow suit if interviewer does so
- Since you are their invited guest, let the interviewer pick up the bill

## ***Telephone Interviews***

Many companies use the telephone as a means to conduct job interviews. This could be because applicants live in an area some distance from the company's location or because of the high volume of interviews to conduct. This could also be because the position will entail the successful applicant to spend some time on the phone during the course of successfully fulfilling the duties of the position. Regardless of why a company conducts a telephone interview, a few tips for applicants include:

### **Reschedule if need be and schedule for when you can be without distractions:**

One of the dangers of listing your cell phone number on your résumé is receiving a call from an employer wanting to conduct a telephone interview with you while you are having coffee with friends (or some other situation). If you are in a situation where distractions may stop you from giving the interviewer 100% of your attention, ask to reschedule to a more convenient time (you of course can explain that you are unable to interview due to these extreme circumstances). You should be flexible and allow the interviewer to recommend a date/time.

### **Ideal setting:**

Would be a place where you can sit in a closed room, at a desk with the following items – your résumé, cover letter, job posting and company information. All televisions and radios should be muted/ turned off. During the interview, do should not eat or chew gum, but you may want a glass/bottle of water handy in case you need it. Avoid using cell phones and/or speakerphones and do not answer other calls that may come into the line.

### **Be in interview mode:**

Dress for success! Wear interview or business casual clothing. Although you may be in the comfort of your own home, you may find it hard to take yourself serious while wearing your favorite bunny-head slippers.

### **Don't get caught reading an answer:**

Although a telephone interview allows you to have supplemental material at hand (e.g., website of the company up on your screen, list of possible answer to potential questions, etc.), don't get caught sounding like your answers have been prepared beforehand.

### **No body language, so voice/tone very important:**

Although the interviewer will not be able to see your non-verbal communication, they may still be able to sense it. Smile while answering and do not forget to monitor and vary your volume/tone.

### **Follow-up:**

Make sure to ask what the next steps are in the interview process and try to schedule a face-to-face meeting.

## ***Behavioural-Based Interviews (BBI)***

Behavioural-based interviews (BBI) are typically conducted in the second-round process and will have a predominance of behavioural-based questions. BBI are conducted in order to analyze a candidate's potential abilities by examining skills that have been used in past performance and uncover patterns of their accomplishments. If past performance of a candidate is the best predictor of their future behaviour, then BBI will provide companies with an effective way to measure competencies.

Some tips on behavioural-based interviews and questions include the following:

- Typical lead-ins to behavioural-based questions include: *"Tell me about a time..."*
- *"Describe for me..."* or *"Give me an example..."*
- Each question will usually target one specific behaviour/competency important to the position/company. It is vital that the candidate recognizes this and ensures that their answer demonstrates experience with this behaviour/competency and not a different one.
- The best answers highlight specific examples from the candidates past and tie-in to the behaviour/competency. A common approach to answering behavioural-based questions:
  - **P** (problem): this is where the candidate will describe the situation/context that they will be using to answer the question
  - **A** (action): this is where the candidate speaks about their role and the steps they took, emphasizing their experience with the behaviour/competency being asked about
  - **R** (results): finally, the candidate needs to conclude their answer by describing the outcome/consequences of their action as well as sharing what they learned from the experience and perhaps what they would not do faced with a similar problem
    - An example: *"Tell me about a time when you initiated a project or idea that saved your company money?"* An answer to this question might include:
      - **P:** *While I was working at Company X, I noticed that a lot of money was spent on the printing of exam papers. There were 5 versions of the exam and forty candidates a day would write the exam, and then forty more would write the same exam the following day, and so on.*
      - **A:** *It occurred to me that the company could save money by printing only a few master copies of each exam and having them laminated. This lamination would increase the cost per copy, but would allow each exam to be reused, as they would only have to be wiped down after the test was taken. On my own, I contacted several printing companies and was able to negotiate a price almost equal to the printing of non-laminated exams. I then brought my idea and work to the head of the department that administered the exam and they were very impressed by the thorough approach I had taken.*
      - **R:** *In the end, by implementing this idea, Company X was able to save approximately \$35,000 per year in printing costs and I was asked to assist more in special projects within the organization.*
- Some behavioural-based questions will challenge candidates to speak about negative experiences. An example would include: *"Tell me about a time when you were late handing in a*

report/paper?” Although candidates may initially feel they should say that the situation has never occurred to them, it is not necessarily the best answer, as it does not provide much substance to the interview. Instead, using one of the following three approaches will provide the interviewer with more substance and can turn the negative into a positive:

- Talk about situations where the negative outcome had only minor impact. If you can choose between discussing the late paper that lost your whole group a letter grade versus the one that a professor was willing to accept with no penalty, choose the latter.
- Talk about how you were able to pull something positive out of the situation. Perhaps you were able to meet with your professor and develop a rapport.
- Talk about what you learned from the situation and identify how you will/did handle it differently the next time a similar situation arises/arose.
- A common situation candidates find themselves in is not having a specific example to use when answering a behavioural-based question. Instead of just saying *“I’m sorry, that has never happened to me...”*, it would be better to:
  - If the question is related to a specific context (e.g., work), ask if you can use a different one (e.g., academic). For example, a question asking you to talk about leading a team at work could be answered by giving an example of how you lead a team at school. Just make sure to ask the interviewers permission to change the context of the question.
  - Ask if you can instead talk about what you would do. Essentially, with the interviewers’ permission, you would be turning the question into a hypothetical.
  - Ask if you can instead talk about what you have observed others doing in the same/similar situation. If allowed to go this route, make sure to discuss what you learned from observing and how you would/wouldn’t apply what was learned.
- Some of the more common behaviours/competencies a BBI will explore include:
  - Showing leadership
  - Demonstrating initiative/innovativeness
  - Working as part of a team
  - Motivating others or what motivates you
  - Giving bad news to someone
  - Having to negotiate
  - Increasing company sales/profits or decreasing costs
  - Making a good/poor decision
  - Adapting to a changing environment
  - Handling criticism
  - Meeting/missing a deadline

Sample questions broken down by behaviour/competency can be found in the section **“Sample Questions”**

## Case Interviews

A common interview style used for consulting and business development positions, or other jobs where the applicant will spend a great deal of their time interacting with a company's clients or suppliers, is the Case Interview. In this situation, applicants are asked to respond to one or more case questions. Companies like to use these questions to see just how energetic and driven the applicant is, and feel that it is a good way to simulate how the applicant will perform in the day-to-day functions of the job. These interviews are sometimes conducted with two or more applicants at the same time, and in this case will also allow the company to see what role the applicant(s) will take.

There are three types of case questions most often used:

- **Brainteasers:** are puzzles or riddles that test your logic, creativity and ability to break down the question. There usually is not a correct answer, but there can be better approaches to answering the question. You can take notes, draw diagrams and should try to break the problem down into manageable parts.
- Don't be afraid to ask clarifying questions, and don't be discouraged if the answer is not helpful. An example would be: *"Aliens have taken you aboard their ship. You will be asked to make a statement. If the statement is true you will be blasted into atoms. If it is false you will be ejected into space. One statement can get you out alive. What is it?"*
- **Guesstimates:** ask you to perform quick calculations using intuition and logical reasoning. The approach you take will often be evaluated more critically than your final answer. You may or may not be allowed to ask questions and you should be prepared to write down your calculations (bring pen/pencil and paper).
- Candidates should use rounded numbers so as to simplify the math. Make and state your assumptions to the interviewer and do not let their response (usually non-verbal) throw you off. An example would be: *"How much money is made each year at lemonade stands across Canada?"*
- **Business cases:** are either written or oral cases asking you to solve a business related problem. They are usually either hypothetical or set in the past and candidates may or may not be allowed to ask clarifying questions (make sure to listen to any answers and incorporate them into solution). Candidates should explain the framework they plan on using to solve the problem (e.g., SWOT analysis, Porter's Five Forces, Cost/Benefit Analysis, etc.) and should make recommendations in their conclusion. Candidates may be asked to give a formal presentation, with or without the assistance of audio/video aides. An example would be: *"Your client wants to know if they should expand their restaurant business to the United States. What would you advise them to do?"*

Some pitfalls to avoid when answering case questions include:

- Not listening to the question
- Ignoring/losing track of facts/data
- Asking the same question multiple times
- Asking unrelated questions
- Answering without a plan
- Other tips on how to prepare for Case Interviews include:

- Bring such items as paper, graph paper, pens, pencils, and calculator with you to the interview. You may or may not be allowed to use them, but it is always better to have them just in case.
- Familiarize yourself with key/common demographics for guesstimates and business cases (visit <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html> before your interview. Some examples include:
  - Population of
    - Canada - approximately 35 million
    - Quebec - approximately 8.0 million
    - Montreal - approximately 1.5 million on the island and 3.5 million in the metro area
    - USA - approximately 300 million
  - Rate of inflation – around 1.2%
  - Unemployment – around 7.2%
  - Household size – approximately 2.6
  - You may want to refresh yourself on key business concepts/frameworks such as
- Porters Five Forces, SWOT analysis, Cost/Benefit Analysis, Four P's, Product Life Cycle, etc.
- Pick up a book of brainteasers or visit such websites as [www.brainbashers.com](http://www.brainbashers.com), [www.braingle.com](http://www.braingle.com), or [www.brainconnection.com](http://www.brainconnection.com)
- Practice your presentation/speaking skills

Sample questions can be found in the section “**7. Sample Questions**”

## Questions you might ask at an interview

The question most interviewers will ask last is *“Do you have any questions?”* (Although they may keep you on your toes and ask this at the beginning of the interview or at another time).

The proper response to this question in a first-round interview is almost never: *“No, all of my questions have been answered.”* There are three areas you may wish to ask questions about with your interviewer.

The first would pertain to questions you were asked – you might want to clarify as to why something was asked or to see if you add additional information.

The second would be to ask questions prepared in advance about the company, position, competitors and/or industry. The answer to these questions should assist you in deciding on whether or not you want to consider the position/company and should not be easily answered by just looking at the company’s website.

Finally, you should ask about the follow-up process and as to when you may expect to hear about additional interviews or the job offer.

Some common questions you may want to consider asking include:

- *Describe a typical day.*
- *What are you looking for in the person who will fill this job?*
- *What areas need the immediate attention of the person you hire?*
- *What skills are most valuable in this job?*
- *What activities could I engage in now that might help me on the job if I’m hired?*
- *What are your plans for new products or services?*
- *How would you define your organization’s management philosophy?*
- *What kind of training would I receive?*
- *How do the duties change once the training program has been completed?*
- *What is the retention rate for people who have been in this training program after one year? After two years?*
- *How is one evaluated both formally and informally?*
- *Will a graduate degree be required in order to enhance my promotional opportunities after several years?*



## Follow-Up Tips

After the interview, candidates should be prepared to follow a course of action that includes:

- **Sending a thank-you letter:** to each of the persons interviewed with. Besides expressing your sincere thanks in having been given the opportunity to meet with them, you should make sure to reiterate your qualifications and continued interest in the position.
- **Prepare your references:** if you feel that there is a chance the company will be calling them, contact each of your referees and let them know about the interview you have just had. You want to prepare your referees so that they can give you the best reference possible.
- **Follow-through with any next steps:** if the interviewer has asked you to do complete a task (e.g., submit a copy of your transcript or portfolio), make sure to do it! As well, if you have promised to do something (e.g., call them back in the following week to see where they are in the recruiting process), make sure it is done in the timeframe promised.
- **Keep track of all contacts made:** create a file on all companies interviewed with.
- **Reflect:** think back on the interview(s) and try to analyze questions that gave you a hard time and why. If you were missing examples to provide in behavioural-based questions, try to think of ones for future reference.
- **Continue to job search:** until you have accepted a job offer, it is in your best interest to continue applying to positions you feel qualified for and attending any interviews you are offered.

## Sample Questions

### *Common Interview Questions*

Questions about you:

- Tell me about yourself?
- How do/would your friends describe you?
- What is the most interesting thing you've done in the past three years?
- What do you want me to know about you that isn't on your résumé?
- Tell me about an interesting article you recently read in the newspaper.
- What's the last non-school related book you read? What did you learn from this book?
- What kinds of tasks and responsibilities motivate you the most?
- Why should I hire you and not the next candidate who walks in the door?
- Do you prefer to work with others or on your own?
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?

Questions about your qualifications:

- Why do you want to work here? Why should I hire you?
- Do you have the skills to work in this position/company?
- What specific skills have you acquired or used in previous jobs that related to this position?
- Tell me about what you learned from your previous jobs and internships.
- What did you like/dislike about your last job?
- What is your biggest accomplishment?
- Describe your leadership/communication/coordinating/etc... style?

Questions about your education:

- Why did you choose to study \_\_\_\_?
- Describe the course that has had the greatest impact on your thinking.
- What courses did you enjoy the most? Least?
- Tell me about your extracurricular activities during school. What do you believe you have gained from these experiences?

Questions about your understanding of the job/company:

- What do you know about our company? Position?
- Why did you apply to our organization?
- What interests/impresses you about this organization?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- What can you tell us about our company?
- What do you think of our organizational structure?
- Who else are you interviewing with? What do you think of those organizations?
- Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
- Do you have a geographic preference?
- Other questions:
- What are your salary expectations for this position?
- Where do you see yourself in \_\_\_\_ years?

## ***Behavioural Based Interview Questions***

### **Assertiveness:**

- Tell me about a time when you were able to express your opinions maturely in spite of disagreements or objections.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be assertive in giving directions to others.
- Tell me about a time when you successfully expressed your ideas/opinions in a tactful and careful way.
- Tell me about a time when you were willing to disagree with another person in order to build a positive outcome.
- Describe a time when you had to sell an idea to our boss, authority figure, or technical expert.

### **Communication:**

- Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal/idea to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
- Tell me about your most successful experience when make a speech or presentation to a group.
- Tell me about an experience of yours that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally.
- Tell me about a specific time when your skill in listening helped you to communicate better.
- Tell me about the writing experiences you have had that you think will contribute to your ability to do this job well.

### **Creativity and Innovation:**

- Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a new and better way of doing something significant.
- Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
- Describe a time when you were able to come up with new ideas that were key to the success of some activity or project.
- Tell me about a time when you had to bring out the creativity in others.
- Give me an example of a time when you came up with a unique and novel solution to a common problem.

**Customer Service:**

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer.  
Tell me about one or two customer-service related programs that you've done that you're particularly proud of.
- Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer.

**Decision Making:**

- Describe for me a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Describe for me a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision
- Tell me about a time when you resisted the temptation to “jump to conclusions” and thoroughly obtained all facts associated with a problem before coming to a solution.
- Give me an example of how you reached a practical business decision by an organized review of the facts and weighing of options.

**Delegation:**

- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Tell me about a time when you did a poor job of delegating.
- Describe for me a time when you had to delegate to a person with a full workload, and how you went about doing it.
- Energizing:
- Give me an example of a time when your positive attitude caused others to be motivated or energized.
- Tell me about a time when your ability to reward and encourage others created positive motivation.
- Tell me about a time when you successfully used competition as a means of encouraging others to work hard.
- Describe a time when you were able to use recognition to create positive energy in another person.

**Goal Setting:**

- Tell me about the most important time in your work history when you successfully prioritized your goals.
- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to set goals and objectives even though you were not prompted or directed by others to do so.
- Give me an example of a time when you used a systematic process to define your objectives. What type of system did you use? What payoff did you get from using the process?

**Initiative and Follow-through:**

- Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.
- Tell me about a goal that you set that took a long time to achieve or that you are still working towards.
- Tell me about a time when you won (or lost) an important contract.
- Tell me about a time when you used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
- Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.

**Integrity:**

- Tell me about a time when you were able to change in order to meet the needs of others.
- Tell me about a time when you felt it necessary to compromise your own immediate interests in order to be socially flexible and tolerant of another person's needs.
- Even more difficult than dealing with a difficult person is being of service to a difficult person. Tell me about a time when you have been successful with this type of situation at work.
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to compromise your integrity.
- Describe a time when you had to bend the rules in order to be successful or accomplish a goal.

**Leadership:**

- Describe a work situation where your ability to set a positive example served as a model to others.
- Give me an example of the greatest success you ever had in the use of delegation.
- Describe for me a time when you may have been disappointed in your behavior.
- Tell me about a time when you had to discipline or fire a colleague.
- Tell me about a time when you've had to develop leaders under you.
- Tell me about a time when you made an unpopular decision. Did it prove to be the correct one?

**Organization and Planning:**

- Give me an example of any time management techniques you have learned and applied at work.
- Tell me what you have done with such tools as flow charts, production schedule, filing systems, or any other tools to help you implement a plan.
- Tell me about how you used realistic schedules and timetables to generate a plan leading to a specific goal.

**Priority Setting:**

- Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.
- Tell me about a time when you had to pick out the most important things in some activity and make sure those got done.
- Tell me about a time that you prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
- Tell me about a time when you got bogged down in the details of a project.

**Team Building:**

- Tell me about a time when you had your biggest success in building a team spirit.
- Tell me about a time when you contributed to a working group's ability to direct itself by building group standards for performance.
- Describe a time when you used the technique of collecting suggestions to build team commitment.
- Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully with the result of building teamwork and morale.

**Thinking and Problem Solving:**

- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced good results.
- Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
- Tell me about a time when you used your analytical skills to identify potential problems at work
- Tell me about a time when you surmounted a major obstacle.

**Working Effectively with Others:**

- Give me an example that would show that you've been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, though there were differing points of view.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get the desired results.
- Tell me about a difficult situation with a co-worker, and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in getting a team (or work group) back on track.

***Case Interview Questions*****Brainteasers:**

- Why are manhole covers round?
- You have a 5-gallon jug and a 3-gallon jug. You must obtain exactly 4 gallons of water. How will you do it?
- Without writing anything or using any calculating device, tell me if there are more 2s or 8s to be found in all of the numbers from 1 to 50,000.
- A little girl is in Alberta, & her mother is in Ontario. The little girl is in an accident & has to be rushed to a nearby hospital. The little girl is the daughter of the nurse who assists her. How is this possible?

**Guesstimates:**

- How many tennis balls fit into a Metro car?
- How many convenience stores are there on the Island of Montreal?
- How many people travel back and forth from Montreal to Toronto each day?
- How many paper cups does Tim Horton's use each year?

**Business Cases:**

- You've just invented a process that allows people to become invisible, is there a market for this product?
- Your client, a maple syrup producer, wants to begin exporting their product into Europe. How would you advise them?
- Donald Trump is considering buying the Montreal casino. What should he consider when evaluating this deal? How much should he be willing to spend?
- Should the Coca-Cola Company acquire Couche Tard?



## Resources

Some websites with good information on Interviewing include:

- [www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)
- [www.campusaccess.com](http://www.campusaccess.com)
- [www.wetfeet.com](http://www.wetfeet.com)
- <http://interview.monster.com>
- <http://www.quintcareers.com>
- <http://www2.cs.fsu.edu/~shilding/interview.htm>
- [www.casequestions.com](http://www.casequestions.com)
- [www.bain.com](http://www.bain.com)
- [http://www.bcg.com/join\\_bcg/interview\\_prep/tips/default.aspx](http://www.bcg.com/join_bcg/interview_prep/tips/default.aspx)
- <http://www.casequestions.com/>