



# Fingertip interview responses to secure your dream career

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## Behaviour-based interviews

Behaviour-based interviews are conducted on the premise that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. Interviewers use this hypothesis and ask open-ended questions designed to elicit the truth about how you responded to different situations in the past. Once satisfied that you have the technical skills required for the job, an interviewer will want to know whether you are a good fit with the company, in other words, with its philosophy, managerial style and environment. Equally important (and often overlooked by interviewees) is that your personality will enhance the work experience and not disrupt co-workers. Organizations aspire to hire employees on a long-term basis, thereby saving manpower hours and other costs associated with the interview process. It is imperative that a good match be made during the interview process. With some practice, you can improve your chances of securing your dream job.

## Interview process

- 1 Initial interview with a Human Resources professional  
This is where your basic technical skills for the position are assessed, followed by intensive behaviour-based questioning.
- 2 Second interview with department or company head  
Here technical skills are verified and your personal fit within the company/department is determined.

The types of interviews described above can take place with one or several interviewers at the same time. Also, remember the influence a receptionist may have in the decision-making process of who to hire.

## Areas to be explored

The interviewer will want to explore your communication skills, interpersonal skills, organizational skills, leadership ability, problem-solving skills and team spirit.

## Interview strategies

### Preparation

The key component to a successful interview is

preparedness. This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. You need to review your work history and write down key accomplishments that show you are the best fit for the prospective position. In addition, you need to have at your fingertips responses to the most commonly asked behaviour-based questions.

Once you have established your responses and accomplishments, practise them with a friend, a career coach, in front of the mirror or on tape. Remember: Answers should be detailed and succinct. Never ramble or reiterate the same point in several ways. Preparation and practice will ensure that you overcome this common problem.

### PAR (Problem-Action-Result)

Whenever possible, you should answer behaviour-based questions using the PAR system. This technique situates you clearly within the context of a past situation, allowing the interviewer to quickly and easily assess your accomplishments. PAR is your best promotional tool.

**Problem:** Describe the situation or the area where improvement was needed.

**Action:** Discuss the line of action you took to solve the problem.

**Result:** Detail the tangible results your actions yielded.

**Example:**

**Problem:** Advertising campaign no longer yielding financial gain.

**Action:** Conducted market survey, then adjusted target audience.

**Result:** Re-established financial profit with an increase.

### Research the company

Before going to an interview, research the company as thoroughly as possible. Use the Internet, as most companies now have Web sites. This will enable you to align your accomplishments with the goals of the company, allow you to show your fit with the company by understanding its philosophy, ask intelligent questions at the end of the interview and show sincere interest in the company by having taken the time to research it.

### Voice

Your voice should never be monotone, high-pitched or nasal. Instead, try to sound engaging, clear and resonant.

### Attitude

Some interviewees make the mistake of thinking that taking

control of an interview shows leadership skills and confidence. On the contrary, it shows arrogance, lack of respect and poor ability to take direction. Instead, consider deferring to the interviewer to set the direction of the interview. As the interview progresses, you will have ample time and opportunity to demonstrate your innate confidence and leadership skills by answering intelligently and interacting with the interviewer on an equal level.

### Body language

Start with a firm handshake and smile appropriately throughout the interview. Do not fidget or hold things in your hands. Sit straight and lean forward from time to time, thereby showing interest and enthusiasm not only for what you are saying but also while listening to what the interviewer is saying.

## TYPICAL BEHAVIOUR-BASED QUESTIONS

*Tell me about yourself.*

This is usually the opening question. Giving personal details such as your marital status or whether you have children is not appropriate here (nor are employers legally allowed to ask for such personal information). Instead, use this question as your grand opportunity to sell yourself—identify your accomplishments from past positions and link this to how you can benefit the organization.

*Tell me about a time you had a disagreement with a superior.*

Find a mild disagreement that highlights your communication and problem-solving skills—NEVER criticize past employers, colleagues or organizations.

*What are your salary expectations?*

Research the industry and position. Give a salary range or a specific salary, always adding that you are flexible and believe that a good fit between you and the organization is most important.

*If I were to talk to some of your friends, what would they say your weakness was?*

The interviewer is looking for a character weakness. Find a weakness that can be both positive and negative, such as: "I'm stubborn, however, my tenacity has helped me reach my goals." It's a good idea to add that you are working on improving the weakness.

*Tell me the achievement you're most proud of.*

The answer to this reveals your strengths. Don't forget the PAR system, and choose achievements relevant to the position sought.

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**LA PASSERELLE**  
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