

GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING

A stylized bird logo in shades of green, pink, and red, positioned behind the text. The bird's head is at the top, and its tail feathers are at the bottom. The text "CaPS" is written in a large, bold, blue font with a white outline, centered horizontally and partially overlaid by the bird's body.

CaPS



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Introduction

Case Interviews

Case interviews are most commonly used by consulting firms, but other industries sometimes use them as well. **The case interview format allows interviewers to see how you solve problems and how you might respond to certain situations that may arise.** Case questions may be specific or broad. For example, some may ask you to formulate a long-term policy while others may require you to perform a specific task, such as developing promotional pricing for a product.

Critical thinking, analytical ability, creativity and presentation are often more important in a case interview than arriving at the “right answer.” Interviewers are looking at your ability to analyze, synthesize information, handle pressure, and be creative.

Step 1: Know Yourself

In preparing your C.V. and cover letter, you should have considered **interests/experiences, skills, achievements and values** you want to showcase to a potential employer. This is known as self-assessment and the work you have already done for your C.V. should be helpful as you begin to prepare for an interview.

Review the self-assessment exercises you completed when writing your C.V. and cover letter. Consider how you want to verbalize and convey this information to the employer in an interview setting.

- t Which of your skills are most relevant for the position for which you are applying?
- t How can you best highlight these skills based on your past experiences and achievements?

You may wish to make a chart that lists specific examples of how you have used your skills to achieve tangible goals and how those relate to the job description.

Skills Needed for this Job	Examples
Leadership, initiative, problem-solving, communication	As a new camp counsellor, proposed and led weekly meetings with the other counsellors to discuss particular issues faced by the campers.

Alternatively, you can approach the problem from the other way by choosing an experience and thinking about what skills you acquired from it.

Experience	Skills

One technique you may want to use in helping you prepare strong answers to behavioural interview questions is the S.T.A.R. technique:

Situation	t Provide a brief overview of the situation.
Task	t Outline the specific task you were assigned to do, responsibility you undertook or problem you faced.
Action	t Explain the action you took and why - step by step.
Result	t Describe the positive result or outcome of your actions using numbers or percentages where possible.

The purpose of using the S.T.A.R. technique is to draw parallels between your past experiences and the skill you are being asked about. Therefore, choosing an appropriate example is important. Do not pick something irrelevant or something that showcases poor judgement. On the other hand, do not be modest in your interview. Talk honestly about what you accomplished and sell yourself, but be careful not to lie or stretch the truth. Interviewers are adept at exposing dishonesty.

Here is an example of the S.T.A.R. technique:

Situation	t The window display at the bakery where I worked last summer was not very creative and was not changed very often.
Task	t After getting permission from the manager, I took it upon myself to change the display every week, featuring the special of the week.
Action	t I made a backdrop, put some baskets in the display and filled them with bread and buns. I put the cakes on a slant so that the customer would have a better view of them. I changed the display weekly in order to feature the weekly special.
Result	t Many customers commented on the attractive display and sales of the weekly special increased by 20%.

Step 2: Research, Research, Research!

Another excellent way to gather information on an industry is to conduct informational interviews with individuals currently working in that sector. Informational interviews provide you with a chance to informally ask questions about the work and market conditions of a particular industry.

R E

Doing research on the organization before your interview is an important step of the interview process. The better you know the organization, its values and its services, the better you will be able to show how you will “fit” in. **Communicating how you can contribute and add value to the particular organization or company should be the main goal of any interview.**

Most companies and organizations now offer a wealth of information on their websites and you are expected to consult them in depth. When researching, keep the following questions in mind:

- t What are the major products or services provided by the organization?
- t What are the organization's goals and values?
- t What is the history of the organization?
- t What are the organization's community interests and involvement?
- t Who are the organization's major competitors?
- t How large is the organization? Where is it located?
- t What is the staff turnover rate?
- t What opportunities are there for advancement?

When researching the organization, consider how your skills and values fit with the stated goals and structure of the organization. This will help you respond to interview questions and help you formulate questions for the interviewers. Be aware that you may be evaluated as much by the quality of the questions you ask, as by your responses.

R P

Researching the position for which you are applying can help you anticipate the type of questions you will be asked in your interview. **You should be able to communicate your interest in the job and its impact on your career goals.** In preparation:

- t Research the general tasks and responsibilities of the position
- t Research other aspects of the job that will have an impact on your decision (travel, overtime, shift work, etc.)
- t Research salary ranges and other benefits

Step 3: Prepare, Practice and Polish

According to polls, most job candidates spend less than an hour preparing for their interviews. Not surprisingly, unprepared candidates often give poor interviews. Thorough preparation in the lead-up to your interview will improve your performance and reduce your anxiety on the day of your interview.

R Q

Spend some time preparing answers to possible interview questions. This will help you feel more confident, keep you organized and focused, and reduce your stress leading up to the interview. **You should be able to communicate your knowledge and experiences clearly, concisely and cogently.**

T

When researching an industry or organization, you may wish to consult:

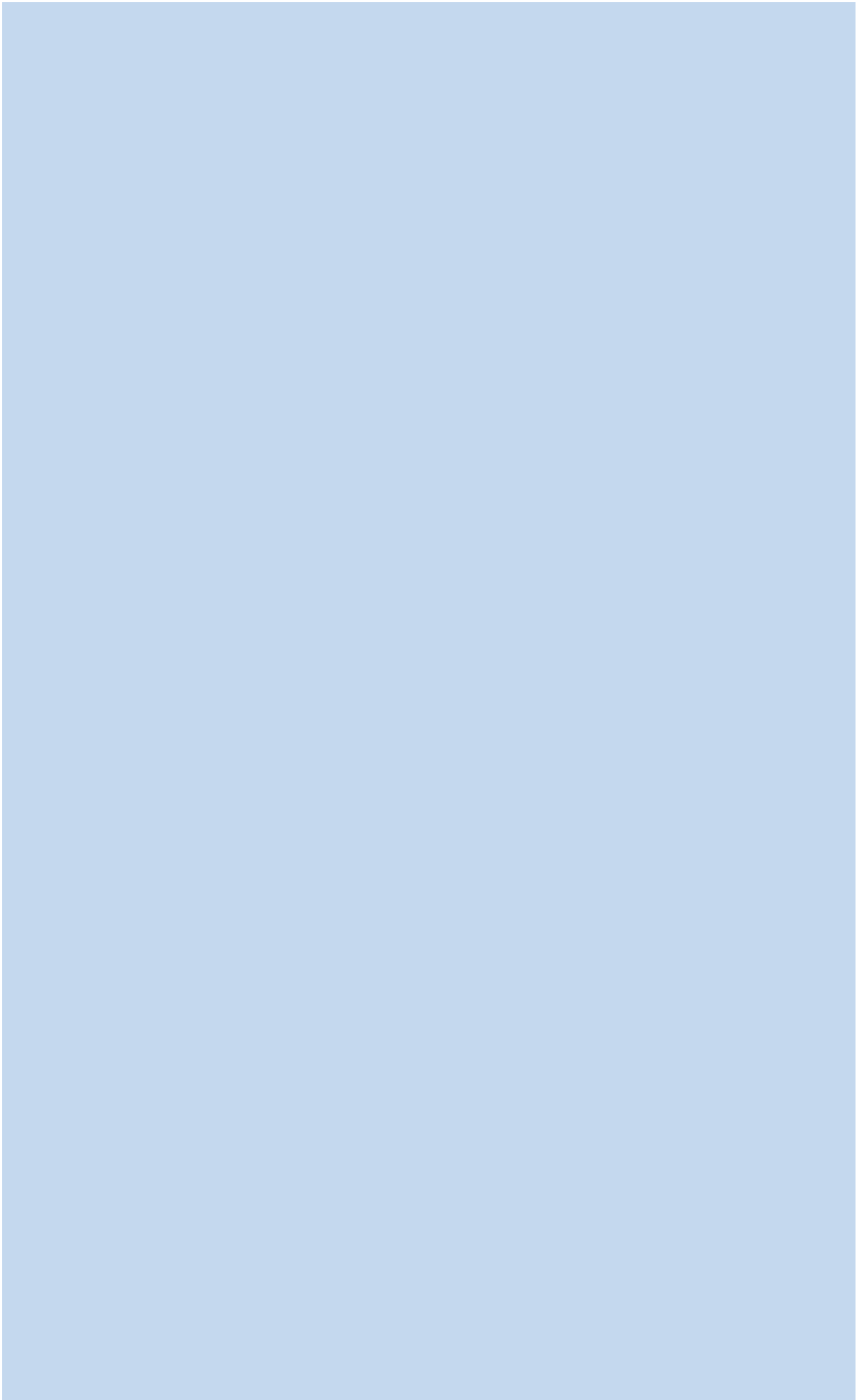
- t Annual reports or stockholder reports
- t Prospectuses
- t Trade magazines
- t Websites

Consider asking a friend or a Career Advisor to conduct a mock interview with you. This will help

- t Tell me about yourself.
- t What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- t Why do you want to work for us?
- t Why should we hire you?
- t What are your long-term career goals?
- t What do you know about our organization?
- t Have you worked in this field before?

Work History and Experiences

Remember that behavioural-based interviews are designed on the premise that your past actions are the clearest indications of what you will do in the future.



Teamwork and Cooperation

Teamwork and cooperation are essential in all entry-level positions where you will often be a

- t Are there opportunities for professional development and training?
- t Are employees encouraged to be active in professional organizations?

About Evaluation and Advancement

- t How will my performance be evaluated?
- t How often are performance reviews given?
- t What opportunities are there for advancement in the organization?
- t Does the organization typically promote from within?

About the Hiring Process

- t What would the next step of the hiring process entail?
When will you be making your decision to fill this position?

- t Pen and paper
- t Copy of your transcript
- t Business card

A

Be Punctual

Arrive at least 10-15 minutes prior to the interview. Being early reflects positively on you: it shows you are organized, interested in the position and prompt. If for some reason you cannot make the interview or become delayed, call as soon as possible and explain the situation. Apologize to the interviewer.

Closing

Be sensitive to signs that the interview has drawn to a close. Stay positive even if you feel it has not gone well. The interviewers may simply be testing your reaction to adversity. At the end, the interviewers will usually explain the next steps in the hiring process and offer you one last chance to ask questions.

Before leaving, ensure you thank the interviewers for their time. **Above all else, it is important you leave the interviewers with a lasting impression that you are qualified for, and enthusiastic about, the position.**

Step 5: Follow-Up

One of the biggest mistakes made by candidates after an interview is failing to follow up with the organization. It is important to remind the interviewers of your interest in the position in the days and weeks following the interview.

T H I N K
