



# Preparing for a Successful Interview

## The 4P's of a Successful Interview

You've got the interview! Now you may be worried about how to make the positive impression that will get you the practicum placement. Using the 4 P's will increase your chances for a successful interview.

### 1. Prepare

#### **Know yourself**

You increase your confidence when you know what you can contribute to the organization and what you want from the placement. You also demonstrate to the interviewer that you are purposeful and reflective—qualities employers want interns to have.

Identify your assets and qualities by making a list of your

- skills and competencies
- knowledge
- values and needs
- beliefs
- interests
- personal characteristics.

#### **Know the organization and the placement**

Learn all you can about the organization and the practicum placement you're interviewing for. Knowing this information shows you're motivated and keenly interested in the company. The following suggestions will help you get started:

##### Study the organization's website

You'll get a feeling for how it operates and how it views its employees. Check out

- the latest annual report
- recent news releases
- the vision statement and goals

If you can't find the information online, call or visit the organization and ask for the latest brochures, annual report and other publications.

##### Be sure you know what the practicum placement should involve

If available review the practicum placement information advertised by the site.

Find out more about the placement from a student who was previously interning with the company

#### **Know your accomplishments**

Interviewers want to know about your track record for achieving results—they often use

your past performance to predict your future success. Keep this in mind during your interview and take opportunities to demonstrate your accomplishments. Here are some tips to help you prepare:

- Create a master list of accomplishments from your work, leisure and volunteer activities, and include the results you achieved.
- Review your accomplishments. Which are related to the requirements of this position?
- Write down questions the interviewer might ask (or see below). Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes and think about what you would want to know about a potential candidate
- Describe situations that illustrate your accomplishments using the Situation, Task, Action, Result and Skills (STARS) technique. To learn more about the technique, check out the [Analyzing Your Accomplishments](#) worksheet.

## 2. Practice

The interviewer wants to know how your skills, knowledge and experience match the needs of the position—and also how well you communicate. Practicing what you're going to say and how you're going to say it will help you communicate clearly and confidently.

It's best not to memorize questions and answers. Instead, develop key points that you want the interviewer to know about you, based on your preparation. You can practice using these key points to respond to a variety of questions.

It's also important for you to ask relevant questions during the interview. Make a list of three things you want to know about the position or the organization and practice asking questions about them. Make sure you couldn't be expected to know the answers to these questions from your research.

You'll make the most of your practice time if you record your sessions so you can see and hear how you perform. It's also a good idea to role-play the interview with a friend.

## 3. Participate

How you present yourself in the interview—your appearance, your attitude, your body language—is vitally important.

You don't get a second chance to create a first impression! These suggestions will help you show your enthusiasm and motivation in the interview:

- Smile and extend your hand to shake hands with the interviewer when you meet.
- Sit straight with your feet flat on the floor, leaning slightly forward to show interest.

- Make eye contact—interviewers will expect you to look them in the eye with confidence.
- Watch the interviewer's body language and expressions for feedback on how you're doing.
- Listen closely to the questions so you can answer them accurately.
- Be direct. Don't ramble or go off topic.
- Take time to think before you respond.
- Give all your attention to the interview and the interviewer—this tells the employer you are focused on your commitments.

### **Be positive**

Most people feel anxious about a practicum placement interview. You can choose to be positive and confident, even if you're nervous. Pretending to feel confident, even when you actually don't, will have a positive effect on both you and the interviewer.

You may be able to decrease your anxiety by realizing that an interview is a meeting between two equally important parties with the goal of sharing information. The employer wants to find out if you can do the practicum placement and if you will fit into the organization. You want to find out if you should contribute your skills and knowledge to the organization, if you can learn and grow in this position, and if you will be respected and supported for your contribution.

After the interview, be sure to follow-up with a thank you note that emphasizes two or three reasons why you're the ideal candidate for the position.

Using the 4 P's will help you present yourself confidently and professionally in your next practicum placement interview. Each interview that's a positive experience moves you closer to the interview that lands you a practicum placement.

Adapted from <http://alis.alberta.ca/ep/eps/tips/tips.html?ek=150> May 29 2013

## Clinical Practicum Interviewing Questions

Following is a list of questions frequently presented to students in a practicum interview situation. It is likely that you may have some of these questions asked of you during an interview, and I suggest you review them as part of your preparation when you go to a site for an interview.

- What is your theory of change?
- What is your theory of psychopathology?
- What is your theoretical orientation?
- How do you consider diversity in your work?
- What has been your most difficult/challenging case?
- What has been your most successful case?
- What theorist do you admire most?
- What is/are your greatest strength/s?
- Why do you want to be a counselor?
- What can you bring to this site?
- What are your professional goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What are some of the most interesting readings about the field you've come across?
- What are your main interest in the field?
- How do you develop a relationship with a client?
- What populations/diagnosis is the most difficult for you?
- What words describe you?
- What personal attributes do you bring to the therapeutic relationship?
- What would your colleagues say about you?
- What have you enjoyed the most about your previous sites or jobs?
- What have you enjoyed the least about your previous sites or jobs?
- What do you look for in supervision?
- Describe one of your best supervisory experiences.
- Describe one of your worst supervisory experiences.
- Why do you want to come to this site?
- What do you know about the client population served at this site?
- What do you know about the geographic community (demographic, resources, etc) in which the site is located?
- Be prepared to answer questions on what you would do if a site provides you with a clinical scenario and asks you what you would do.