

The 4 P's of a Successful Interview *by: The Alberta Learning Information Service*

<https://alis.alberta.ca/ep/eps/tips/tips.html?EK=150>

You've got the interview! Now you want to make the kind of impression that will get you the job. Using the 4 Ps will help you present yourself confidently and professionally.

1. Prepare

Being ready for the interview will boost your confidence and increase your effectiveness.

Find out about the organization and the job you're applying for. This will show the interviewer you're motivated and keenly interested in the position. Use the following suggestions to find the information you need:

- Study the organization's website. Get a feeling for how it operates and how it views its employees. Look for
 - 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 position requires:
 - Review the job posting.
 - Ask the human resources department or hiring manager for a job description.
 - Find out more about the job from someone who works for the organization.
 - Talk to someone in your network who does similar work.

Visit **Alberta Work Search Online** at alis.ab.ca/worksearch for information about **researching employers**.

Identify the positive qualities you bring to the job. This will raise your self-confidence. Make a list of your

- skills and knowledge
- interests
- values
- personal characteristics

Identify your accomplishments and be ready to talk about them. Interviewers want to know about your track record—they often use your past performance to predict your future success. 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?
- Put yourself in the interviewer's position and write down questions you would want to ask a potential employee. For help with this suggestion, visit the Interviews & Offers tab at **Alberta Work Search Online** at alis.ab.ca/worksearch
- Describe situations that showcase 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**

Practicing what you're going to say and how you're going to say it will help you speak confidently about your skills and accomplishments. It's a good idea not to memorize what you want to say. Instead, figure out which key points you want to focus on.

Review the questions you've come up with and the situations you've described in the previous section. Decide which situations would make good responses to the questions. Practice answering the questions using STARS descriptions of your accomplishments.

The interview is also your opportunity to ask questions. List 3 things you want to know about the job or the organization, and practice asking questions about them. Make sure you couldn't be expected to know the answers from your research. Leave questions about salary, vacations or other benefits until after you receive a job offer.

Record your answers so you can see and hear how you perform. It's also a good idea to role-play the interview with a friend.

3. **Present**

How you present yourself in the interview—your appearance, attitude and body language—is vitally important. It's normal to be anxious but acting as if you're confident, even when you aren't, can have a positive effect on both you and the interviewer. Use these suggestions:

- Dress the way you expect the interviewer to dress. Be clean, neat and well groomed.
- Smile, introduce yourself and shake hands firmly with the interviewer when you meet. Stay standing until you're offered a chair.
- Sit up straight with your feet on the floor. Leaning back can make you seem uninterested, while sitting on the edge of your chair can make you seem tense.
- Keep your hands still in your lap or on the arms of your chair, except when you're making a point. Don't cross your arms.
- Make eye contact, and smile when it's appropriate.

4. **Participate**

The interview is also your chance to show your positive attitude and your communication skills.

- Turn off your cell phone when you arrive at the interview and leave it off until you leave. Use a pen and paper to make notes, rather than a laptop or other device.
- Follow the interviewer's lead. Even unusual or irrelevant questions get asked for a reason.
- Listen closely to the questions so you can answer them accurately. If you don't understand a question, politely ask the interviewer to rephrase it. If you don't know the answer, say so.
- Take a moment to think before you answer a question. Be pleasant, sincere and direct. Stay on topic.
- Avoid answering with only "yes" or "no." Try to figure out what the interviewer wants to know and answer with that in mind.
- Follow up after the interview with a thank you note or email that emphasizes 2 or 3 reasons why you're the best candidate for the job.

Using the 4 Ps will help you make a strong first impression in your next interview. Each interview that's a positive experience moves you closer to the interview that lands you a job.