



PARLIAMENTARY PROTECTIVE SERVICE
SERVICE DE PROTECTION PARLEMENTAIRE
CANADA

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW





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BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Self-reflect

- Read the Notice of Job Opportunity (poster) again.
- Is this position right for you?
- Decide honestly if it is something you want to do or if it is just the title, level and salary which interest you.
- Does it help you meet your career goals or objectives?
- Is the location of work/travel time acceptable to you?
- Will you be able to fulfil the conditions of employment or operational requirements as indicated on the poster? Conditions of employment and operational requirements are not negotiable. By accepting the position, you accept all the conditions associated to the position.

For example:

- Can you work various shifts, weekends, nights, 9 to 5?
- Can you work overtime if asked to?
- Are you ready to exert physical effort, stand and walk continuously?
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Frank recognition and acceptance of yourself are important. They demonstrate maturity and emotional intelligence. By acknowledging that you have certain weaknesses, you have a good head start in knowing where to improve.

Prepare ahead of time

Obtain relevant documentation when possible, and do your research:

- Poster
- Job description
- Visit the employer's website: <https://pps.parl.ca/>
- Do some online research about the organization (mandate, values, priorities...)

Establish contacts:

- Speak to employees in the area or who work for the organization
- Speak to people who work in a similar position



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Competencies and knowledge:

- Become familiar with the competencies and knowledge that will be evaluated during the staffing process.
- The competencies and knowledge are identified on the poster.
- The competencies and associated behaviours, as well as the core values of the PPS, will be provided to you so you can better prepare yourself.

Practice:

- Prepare some strong answers and scenarios and review them against the competencies and knowledge indicated on the poster.
 - Write your answers down on paper
 - Record yourself
 - Ask someone to listen to you(Are you missing anything? Are you highlighting the right things? Are you clear?)
- Make sure that your answers are well structured. The STAR* method can help you with this. (see Annex1)
- Make sure that your answers demonstrate the desired competencies and associated behaviours or knowledge.
- Try to use "I" as opposed to "We" when formulating your answers.
- Take the space of the position - use examples that demonstrate that you can work at the level of the position that you applied for.
- Try to use examples or scenarios that are relevant to the position.
- If you must provide an answer with negative results, flip it to highlight a positive outcome, showing your strength in the face of adversity or lessons learned.
- Vary your examples to demonstrate depth and breadth of experience. If you stick to one or 2 examples only, the board will question your experience and your ability to handle other situations.
- Be prepared to answer behavioural and situational questions.
 - Behavioural questions: Candidates are asked to describe actions they have taken or behaviours they have demonstrated in similar past situations (Tell us about a time that...).
 - Situational questions (or traditional interview questions) are hypothetical and will ask you to describe what you would do under certain circumstances (What would you do if ...).



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- Look online for examples of interview questions (just search “behavioural interview questions” or “situational interview questions”)
- In dealing with situational questions, look at both sides of the situation. If there are two or more possible solutions, briefly indicate the other possibilities and why you rejected them. This shows the interviewers that you considered alternatives and analysed them in arriving at your solutions.
- Interviews are usually approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length but can vary from one process to the next. When practicing, be mindful of the length of your answers and time yourself accordingly.
- Make use of the time allocated to you during your interview. This does not mean to repeat and ramble, but to make sure that you have fully answered the questions and possible sub questions, demonstrated the competencies that you intended, and provided sufficient detail so the board members can fully grasp the situation that you are referring to.
- Remember that the board members (even if they know you) can only evaluate the information you provide and say during your interview. They will not guess, infer, or fill in the gaps. If you do not say it, it will not be evaluated.
- You might be asked to bring references. Ensure that you have the correct and most updated contact information for them. Most organizations will ask for 2 to 3, including your most recent manager/supervisor and a peer or someone that reports to you (if pertinent). Instructions should be provided.

ON THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW

- Dress appropriately even if the interview is conducted virtually.
- If your interview is conducted virtually, make sure that you will not be disturbed, you are in a quiet location and that your equipment/internet is working properly.
- Try to manage any pre-interview jitters – get some rest, take deep breaths, slow down on the coffee...
- Remind yourself that you have done your homework and prepared ahead of time. This should help calm yourself and bolster your confidence.
- Remember that some stress is healthy and normal because it keeps your senses at peak efficiency. It is normal to be nervous - everyone is. The board members are aware of this and are understanding.
- Make sure to note the details of the interview (time, location, length) and that that will be one less thing to worry about!



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- If your interview is in person, give yourself enough time to travel (and find parking!) and try to arrive 10 minutes early to allow time to compose yourself and find the location of your interview. Never be late.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Shake hands with the interviewers if hygiene practices permit it.
- Be optimistic, friendly and courteous.
- Do not be overly familiar with the board members even if you know them. Always be professional.
- Conduct your interview in the official language that you are most comfortable with – the board members will be bilingual. The board members will not evaluate your language proficiency, this is a separate evaluation.
- Listen carefully to the instructions that will be provided to you and don't hesitate to ask questions to clarify your understanding.
- Be mindful of the competencies and knowledge being evaluated when answering the interview questions and possible sub-questions.
- Be mindful to respect the time given to you during the interview and time yourself accordingly. You will most likely not be given any extra time and, if it runs out, you might not have answered all the questions and demonstrated your knowledge and competencies.
- Avoid discussing your personal problems, making disparaging (bad-mouthing) comments about people or organizations.
- Using too many acronyms – the board members may not be familiar with what you are referring to and this may confuse or detract from your answers or the message you are trying to get across.
- During your interview, the board members will be listening attentively to you and will be taking notes with little to no interaction with you – this can come across as impersonal and cold, but be cognisant that this is to ensure that all the candidates are treated fairly and in the same manner, giving nobody a possible advantage.
- If you do not have an answer to an interview question - be honest and explain what you would do if this situation ever happened to you. At least you will be able to demonstrate some behaviours and better this approach than no answer at all.
- Once you have finished your interview, you will be offered a chance to ask questions to the board members – remember to be mindful of time. You can always send an email to the HR contact should you have other questions.
- Thank the board members for their time.



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AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Take a deep breath – your interview is done!
- Review the interview mentally and congratulate yourself for successfully completing the interview.
- Do not communicate with the board members to find out the results of the selection process; wait until they contact you.
- Remember that interview questions (and any other evaluations) are confidential and are not to be discussed or shared. It would be to your own disadvantage to do so.
- If you wish, you can thank the board members by sending a note to the HR contact.



ANNEX 1 – THE STAR METHOD

What is the STAR method?



STAR is an acronym that stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult. The STAR method is a technique you can use to frame your interview answers in a methodological and concise manner.

Situation: Start by setting the scene for your example. Here, you outline a specific challenge you faced and give the interviewer some context. For example, describe the project you worked on, your role, where and when it took place, and any complexities that you faced.

Task(s): Think things through before tackling any situation. For example, what research did you do? Did you consult anyone and why? What were your considerations? What analysis did you do and why?

Action(s): Explain what you did and how you did it. Be specific and explain how you overcame the challenge. Outline the steps you took to resolve the situation. Even if it was a team effort, explain what you did and lead with "I" instead of "We" to detail your approach. Describe your options, solutions, recommendation, and why you chose them.



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Result(s): Finally, summarize the effects of your tasks and actions. Mention specific results/outcomes and, if possible, talk about facts, figures and stats that quantify your success (ex: production went up by 20%, I was able to take more calls a day, I am able to process double the files than previously, my supervisor noticed an increase in the quality of my work...). You can also discuss what you learned and share insights that you can apply to future challenges.

Tips:

- Practice your interview answers by applying the STAR method
 - Situation represents about 15% of your answer
 - Task(s) and Action(s) represent about 60% of your answer
 - Results represents about 15% of your answer
- You can apply the STAR method to answer behavioural or situational/traditional interview questions.
- For situational/traditional questions, the context is already given to you in the interview question.
- Most of the competencies and associated behaviours will be found in the Task and Action sections of your answer.
- Make sure to give sufficient information in your answers, but don't get bogged down with unnecessary or irrelevant details – your answer may become incoherent and you and the board might become confused.
- If you don't have a lot of work experience, you can share examples from internships, volunteer work, school projects, and your personal life.
- The STAR method is meant to be simple. Apply the STAR method in the correct order and be as specific as possible in your answers.

Good luck!