Youth Employment Services - YES

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Future SKills: A mODERN APPROACH TO INTERVIEWS and NETWORKING

Participant Workbook

**A Modern Approach to Interviews & Networking**

**Overview and Purpose**

This workshop introduces key details about what to expect in job interviews – before, during and after, including the intent of common interview questions and the importance of following up with a thank you note. Networking is introduced as a practice you are already doing informally. Tips are provided for how to take networking to the next level. You take part in activities that prepare you for mock interview practice at a later date and for networking in the community.

**Time**

The workshop is between three and six hours long.

**Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this workshop, you will:

1. Understand what to expect in an interview.
2. Know how to prepare for an interview.
3. Know how to write a reference list.
4. Understand the importance of networking.
5. Know how to begin networking effectively.

**Leading Questions**

As you complete this workshop, you will think about and answer the following questions:

1. How do I feel about interviews?
2. What can I expect before, during and after an interview?
3. What are employers looking for in an interview?
4. Who can I put on my reference list?
5. How much networking am I doing already?
6. How do I take networking to the next level?

**Workshop Agenda**

Introductions and Workshop Overview

1. The Purpose of an Interview
2. Types of Interviews
3. Before the Interview
4. When You Arrive
5. During the Interview
6. After the Interview
7. Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them
8. Illegal Interview Questions
9. Reference List
10. What Is Networking?
11. Networking Tips
12. Review and Wrap-Up

### 1. The Purpose of an Interview

Employers want to talk to you to see how closely you match the person they “met” in your resume. They want to learn more about who you are and whether your skills, qualities and experiences make you the best person for the job.

You can learn more about the company and decide, if offered the job, whether it is a good fit for you at this time.

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|  | 1. Have you been to any formal interviews, for a paid job or volunteer work? 2. Note a few examples and how you felt about them. 3. What concerns do you have now? |

### 2. Types of Interviews

Employers can choose from several interview types. Here’s an overview of the most common ones:

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| **Type of interview** | **What you can expect** | **Remember…** |
| Face-to-face, in person or by video calling | One or more interviewers | to look at the interviewer when you answer the question, and to also look at the other interviewers if there are more than one. |
| Face-to face, in a group | A competitive atmosphere  A group activity | to stay alert and show you are following the conversation.  to nod your head when someone says something you agree with.  to listen carefully to what everyone has to say.  that it’s okay to say you agree with the person before you if they give the answer you were thinking of. |
| Telephone | It might be a screening interview or a full interview. | that the interviewer cannot see you so you’ll need to pay more attention to how your voice sounds and the words you choose.  to smile while you speak.  to stand up or sit up straight. |

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|  | 1. Employers are always looking at whether you are the right person for the job. What else are they paying attention to in each type of interview?   Face-to-face:  Group:  Telephone: |

### 3. Before the Interview

Your chances of doing well in an interview will increase if you take the time to prepare. Even before you send out your resume, you can develop a to-do list and learn how to answer common interview questions. Here are some useful tips!

**Work on Your Professional Image**

Studies show that 74% of interviewers check candidates’ social media sites before they interview them. Have a professional and working voicemail and email address. If you use social media (Instagram, Twitter, etc.), ensure that it is not public. Clean up your social media presence to eliminate any inappropriate content.

Always answer the phone professionally. Monitor your voicemail and emails, and return employer messages promptly.

Make sure your interview clothes are clean and ready.

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|  | 1. Do a search of your own name to see what comes up. 2. Ask yourself if this is something an employer would like to see. 3. Take steps to fix what needs to be fixed. |

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|  | 1. Change your email address if you need to. Which email address would you choose? Put down a few options in case your first choice is unavailable. |

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|  | 1. Check your outgoing voicemail message. 2. If you decide to change it to make it sound more professional, write down the new message here. 3. Practise and get feedback from a few people in the group. |

**Stay Organized.**

**Get Your Interview Materials Ready.** Put the following in a professional folder:

**Focus and Refresh Your Memory.**

* Re-read the job posting so that you are very familiar with it.
* Re-read your resume and highlight key points you will want to talk about.
* Think of additional examples of how and when you used skills the employer is looking for.
* Review the research you did on the company before you applied for the job. Do more research if you need to.

### When You Arrive

* Smile and be nice to the receptionist. Say who you are and why you have come.

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|  | 1. Write down what you might say to the receptionist. 2. Practise walking into the room and greeting someone. 3. Ask someone to film you and then watch yourself. Do you see a friendly, confident person? |

While you wait,

* Turn off your cell phone.
* Don’t read your resume or look at your cell phone while you are in the waiting area.
* Go to the washroom to check your appearance and to take a deep breath. Do some power poses so your energy level is high and you feel more confident.

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|  | 1. When you have 20 minutes or so, consider watching Amy Cuddy’s TED talk on power poses: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-_Mh1QhMc>. 2. Observe your own posture from time to time. Have someone take a picture of you when you are standing and sitting – from all sides. What do you see? What would you like to continue doing and what would you like to change? |

### During the Interview

There is a lot to think about during an interview. You will want to create a positive first impression, have a good conversation and remember all the good things you want to say about yourself and what you have to offer.

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|  | 1. Below, there are statements that describe the cues we give when we are listening, intentionally or not, to indicate that we are interested in a conversation and would like it to continue, or that we are ready to move on to another topic. 2. Check which cues belong in which column below. 3. Add some more examples.  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Cues** | **I’d love to hear more.** | **It’s time to stop talking!** | | Open your mouth like you want to say something |  |  | | Make eye contact |  |  | | Say things like “oh, really?” or “wow” |  |  | | Put your hand out in front of you |  |  | | Lean forward |  |  | | Look at your watch or the clock on the wall |  |  | | Ask for more details |  |  | | Slowly nod your head up and down |  |  | | Interrupt |  |  | | Fidget or move things around on the table |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |

**You will have a chance to ask questions too.**

Show that you are interested in the position and that you have come prepared by having a few questions ready. Avoid asking questions that could be answered by looking at the company’s website and avoid asking about holidays and vacation time. Here are some questions you might want to ask instead:

* Could you tell me the next step in the hiring process?
* What is the best way for me to follow-up?
* When is the anticipated start date?
* What kind of training do you offer for new employees?
* What are the primary duties of this position during the first six months?
* What is a typical day like in this position?
* What three skills do you feel are essential to succeed in this position?
* What are some of the upcoming projects the company will be working on?
* What are the greatest challenges encountered in this position?
* How would you describe your current team?
* What do you enjoy about working here?
* What are the demographics of your target market?
* Can you tell me how my performance will be evaluated?
* If I were hired, whom would I report to?

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|  | 1. Read through the above list of questions. 2. Put a √ beside 3 questions you feel comfortable asking. 3. Put an X beside 2 questions you think you might need to practise. |

### After the Interview

After you leave the company, find a quiet place to reflect on the interview. Make some notes.

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|  | 1. How do you feel? 2. What went well? What did you forget to say? 3. Are you still interested in the job? 4. What would you do differently next time? |

**Follow up** with the employer if you haven’t heard anything after a week.

**Thank You**

Write a thank-you email or hand-written note and make sure the employer receives it within 24 hours. If the interview takes place on Friday, send the thank you on Friday afternoon or on Monday morning.

* Address the thank-you note to the interviewer, or the head interviewer if there were more than one.
* Say why you would be a good fit for the job. This may include something you forgot to mention during the interview.
* Restate your interest in the position.

Here’s a sample

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| *Sam Gupta*  *338 Main Street*  *Toronto, ON M4L 3K9*  *January 10, 2020*  *Ms Bonita Cadell*  *Shift Manager, Sport Shoes Plus*  *333 Town Line Road*  *Toronto, ON M2K 3B8*  *Dear Ms Cadell,*  *Thank you for the time you spent with me this morning. I enjoyed learning more about the retail sales associate position in your company and about the great community work you do for homeless youth.*  *The skills and experience I’ve gained over the past five years working in retail will benefit your team. You mentioned how important it is to establish a good relationship with the parents of children who are shopping for shoes. My supervisor has received several compliments from parents about my ability to include everyone in the shopping experience.*  *I continue to be interested in working at Sport Shoes Plus and would be pleased to answer any additional questions you may have.*  *Sincerely,*  *Sam Gupta* |

### Common Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

Employers are really interested in the five main questions listed below. They will choose from a large number of possible interview questions to get the information they need to make a decision.

**Types of Questions**

**Factual:** Employers may ask you questions that are factual and straightforward, such as “When did you work there?” or “What was your favourite subject at school?” They may also want to clarify certain facts listed in your resume.

**Situational or Behavioural**: Employers may also ask a very different kind of question – about situations that have already happened to you. They will use your answer about how you behaved in the past to predict how you might behave if they hire you. If you don’t have a suitable example from paid work, that’s OK. You can offer one from school or from your volunteer work. The important thing is to find a good example!

One way to approach a situational or behavioural question is called Situation-Action-Result (SAR). Some people call it Situation-Task-Action-Result (STAR).

**Situation** – Describe a recent challenge or situation you’ve faced. Include the task you were expected to undertake.

**Action** – Talk about what you did, why you did it and what your alternatives were.

**Result** – Describe the outcome that resulted from your action, whether you met your objectives. Talk about what you learned from the experience and whether you’ve used what you learned.

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|  | 1. We will look at an example of a situational interview question today. 2. See the Appendix for a list of common interview questions**.** 3. Go through the list and identify which questions are factual and which are situational. 4. Think of examples for the situational questions. We will have an opportunity to practise them in another workshop. |

**Practice**

In this workshop, we’ll focus on four questions – what they mean and how to answer them. These are

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. How have you handled conflict with a co-worker?
4. Where do you see yourself in five years?

**Tell me about yourself.**

This question usually comes at, or very near, the beginning of the interview. Be prepared to make a great impression!

Develop an elevator pitch, or 30-second commercial, to answer this question. It will also come in handy for networking.

Everything you say must relate to the job you are looking for. Key points to include in 30 seconds.

* How or why you became interested in the job or field
  + Community involvement
  + Extracurricular activities
  + Personal interests
* Educational background and related training and professional development
* Brief descriptions of paid or unpaid experience related to the job
* Specific technical skills and transferable skills related to the job
  + Technical – equipment or machinery you know how to use; software programs
  + Transferable – soft skills such as time management, problem-solving, interpersonal skills

**Sample Elevator Pitches**

*For retail sales: I have always enjoyed working with people and have over three years’ experience in customer service. In my last job, I gained experience working in sales and as a supervisor. My excellent communication and interpersonal skills allow me to work with diverse groups of people. I have worked in retail and call centre environments. Through these experiences, I developed excellent problem-solving skills and the ability to meet targets with tight deadlines, resulting in high sales and customer satisfaction.*

*For after-school child-care: When I was younger I took the babysitting course offered by the City and began babysitting for my next-door neighbour. They were so happy with the way I took care of the children – playing with them but respecting the limits the parents provided – that they referred me to their friends. I now have 10 clients! I have taken family studies in high school and a weekend first aid/CPR course. Over the past five years, I’ve learned a lot about how to motivate young children and help them learn through fun.*

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|  | 1. How do you feel about saying nice things about yourself? 2. Find a job posting that interests you. 3. Look closely to see what the employer is looking for. 4. Identify how your skills and experience relate to the position. 5. Note key words and phrases you want to mention in your elevator pitch. 6. Practise saying your elevator pitch out loud, sounding natural and positive. Do not memorize a written paragraph. 7. Time yourself and practise again! |

You might want to use this table to organize your thoughts:

Position:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Why interested |  |
| Related educational background and training |  |
| Paid or unpaid experience |  |
| Technical and transferable skills |  |

**Why did you leave your last job?**

If your last job ended badly, avoid being negative in your answer. Be as diplomatic as possible. If you were fired, you may want to leave that experience off your resume. It’s fine to say that you were laid off, the contract ended, you returned to school, or moved away.

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|  | 1. Have you had a paid or volunteer jobs? 2. How did each one end? 3. Practise answering this question out loud. Record yourself and listen. What do you like about your answer? What would you change? |

**How have you handled conflict with a co-worker?**

This is a situational question. The interviewer is looking for an actual example of a time when you successfully handled a disagreement with a coworker. Try to give examples of how you took the initiative to solve a dispute, and the positive outcome of your actions. If you do not have an example from work, think of one from another setting, like school or volunteer work. Relate the example to work.

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|  | 1. Can you think of an example or two? 2. Answer the questions below. 3. Prepare the key points you’d like to include in an answer. 4. Practise answering this question out loud. Record yourself and listen. What do you like about your answer? What would you change? |

What was the situation?

What was the action?

What was the result?

**Where do you see yourself in five years?**

You may want to be selective about how much to share. Keep your answer in line with the employer’s goals, focusing on what you hope to learn from the experience and what you can contribute to the company over five years.

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|  | 1. What are your personal goals for five years from now? 2. What are your work goals? 3. What do you know about the possibility of advancing to more responsible positions within the company you are applying to? |

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| **Personal goals** | **Work goals** |
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### Illegal Interview Questions

Sometimes during an interview, the interviewer asks a question that is inappropriate and even illegal. What is an illegal question and how do you answer it?

Illegal questions are often personal and discriminatory in nature. They have nothing to do with your professional abilities, strengths and experiences. These questions are illegal because the *Canadian Human Rights Act* forbids employers from discriminating against any person on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, nationality or disability. Employers are not supposed to ask you about the following:

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| country/place of origin and citizenship status | religion, faith or creed | age |
| gender or sexual orientation | race or ethnicity | family structure, children or marital status |
| mental or physical health and disability | appearance, height and weight | pardoned offences |

**Sample Illegal Questions**

It is OK to refuse to answer an illegal question. Know that not answering may cost you the job. Ask yourself, “Do I want to work in an environment and/or for an employer that might subject me to such practices or insult my dignity?” or “Do I want this job so badly that I can overlook that the employer has asked me an illegal question?”

**Four Ways to Answer Illegal Questions**

1. Ignore the improper question and focus instead on the intent behind the question. For example, you might say, “I think what you are saying is…” and then select the answer you want the interviewer to know.
2. Answer the question by saying, “Can you please explain to me how this is applicable to how I would do the job?”
3. Answer the question without any reference to its appropriateness.
4. Answer the question by saying,” “I’d prefer not to answer this question unless there is a particular reason why it is relevant.”

Although illegal questions often arise out of genuine interest, be aware of other motivators. For example, the interviewer may be testing your behaviour under stress, or acting from a personal, or company bias. Knowing your rights and how to handle improper questions during interviews is the first step. Remember, be tactful and you will be in control. Keep your answer brief and move on.

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|  | 1. Reflect on job interviews from your past. 2. Were any of the questions illegal according to the above definition? 3. How did you respond? 4. What might you do differently the next time you are asked? |

### Reference List

Employers will almost always ask for references during or after the interview. They will call references if they are very interested in hiring you. They ask about your skills, abilities, attitudes, and work ethic.

**Who can be used as a reference:** It is best to include former managers or supervisors who can talk about your successes, accomplishments and skills on the job. However, if you do not have at least 3 professional references, you can consider using

* current, or former, teachers, coaches and club leaders
* co-op supervisors or employers
* volunteer coordinators or supervisors
* a respected member of the community who has known you for a long time

**Who not to use as a reference:** Avoid using family members, employers who fired you, friends or roommates. Do not use someone’s name without their permission.

Be sure to let references know when you have shared their name.

* Send them a copy of the job posting.
* Let them know if you were invited for an interview and how it went.

References should always be listed on a separate page, NOT directly on your resume. Here is a sample:

|  |
| --- |
| *Sam Gupta*  *338 Main Street, Toronto, ON M4L 3K9*  *647.444.4444*  ***References***   1. *Jay Singh, Supervisor*   *Sports R Us*  [*Jay.singh@sportsRus.com*](mailto:Jay.singh@sportsRus.com)  *416.555.5555*   1. *John Grant, Assistant Manager*   *Out of the Cold Program, Bell Street Church*  [*grant.john@gmail.com*](mailto:grant.john@gmail.com)  *416.888.8888* |

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|  | 1. Think about your volunteer and paid activities. Who might be good references? List them below. 2. What will you say when you ask them to be a reference? Practise. |

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| **Who could I ask to be a reference?**  **(name, title, company)** | **How do they know me?** | **Contact information** |
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### What Is Networking?

Networking is one of the most important - if not **the** most important - activities that you need to master to be truly successful in your job search.

Because the vast majority of job openings are never advertised, job seekers need to have a network of contacts - a career network - that can provide support, information, and job leads. While we might call it a career network, it is wider than people you meet through work. Anyone can tell you about a job posting, suggest you talk to someone about an opening, or refer you through social media.

Here’s a sample true story:

*Kevin quit his job and went to teachers’ college in Buffalo when his children were small. There was a delay in getting his paperwork finalized and he was unable to register with the Ontario College of Teachers until the paperwork was finished. This meant he couldn’t work as a teacher yet. During that time, his wife’s co-worker came to her with a name and phone number written on a small piece of paper. “Tell Kevin to call that number. They are looking for people to mark grade 10 literacy exams.” His paperwork from the College had just come through but Kevin called the number and started a two-week job marking papers. On the first day he met Sally, whose sister was a school principal. Sally told her sister about this person she’d met who was looking for work and within the week, Kevin was hired as a teacher for a short-term contract. This became a full-time position.*

Has anything like this happened to you or anyone you know?

Networking doesn’t mean asking every person you run into for a job or if they know about job openings. It means establishing relationships so that you can enlist support and comfortably ask for ideas, advice, and referrals to people who are in a position to hire. This can be done in person and online.

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|  | 1. Take 5 minutes to write down the names of everyone you know who could possibly be a part of your career network. Don’t think too hard, just write. 2. Take 5 minutes to look at the names you have written down. How would you group them? For example, people your age, people who are older than you are, people who are in careers that interest you, people who are well-connected? 3. Where are there gaps? Who else might you reach out to? |

### Networking Tips

There are many ways to network, depending on your situation. Here are some ideas:

Know what you are looking for.

* Be able to say what you’re doing now and what you hope to do.
* Practise your elevator pitch, or 30-second commercial.
* Think about what you’d like people to do for you and practise asking.

Offer something in return.

* Find out what others are interested in and keep them in mind.
* Send along job leads if you see something that might help them.
* Offer to help someone they know.

Keep in touch.

* Keep track of the people you have met in person and where.
* Keep an online contact list.
* Follow up with a thank-you note if someone has given you valuable information.
* Once in a while, let contacts know what you are doing and hoping to do.

Stick to your timelines.

* Be sure to arrive a few minutes early if you’ve arranged to meet someone. Check your equipment if you are going to meet someone via video calling.
* If you have asked to meet someone for half an hour, end the conversation at 30 minutes – “It’s 11:30. Thank you so much for your time. It has been nice talking with you.”
* Set a silent alarm on your phone 5 minutes before your time is up to remind you to make sure you have covered all of the material that you had hoped to in the meeting without running out of time.

Look for networking events and try going to some.

* Use a service like EventBrite to find networking opportunities to attend in person.
* Go with a friend if you are shy or scared about going on your own.
* Set yourself a goal of speaking with 3 people you don’t know. Increase this number as you get used to it.

Be prepared.

* If you are going to an event, try to find out who else will be attending. Research them ahead of time and have a few questions or talking points ready in case you get a chance to speak with them.
* Always have an up-to-date and relevant elevator pitch.

Establish and maintain a social media presence.

* Monitor what comes up if you Google your name.
* Learn how to use LinkedIn to connect with others. Google “What is LinkedIn and how can I use it” to be directed to a series of brief videos on how to get set up.
* Update your LinkedIn profile regularly.
* Find out which online groups you might want to follow or join.
* Follow the posts of people you admire in the jobs you’d like to have one day.

### Appendix: Common Interview Questions

Here are some common interview questions. Understand what the question means and practise your answers.

1. **Tell me about yourself.**
   * Develop an elevator pitch, or 30-second commercial, to answer this. Having a solid answer prepared in advance will help you to lead the conversation in a direction that allows you to elaborate on your qualifications.
2. **What is your greatest weakness?**
   * Use this question as an opportunity to talk about something you are working to improve. This will show that you recognize your faults and are proactive in dealing with them. If you are having trouble coming up with a good answer, use a weakness that is unrelated to the job.
3. **Tell me about the worst employer or job that you ever had.**
   * Never say bad things about a previous employer, even if you left on bad terms. Instead, talk about a difficult situation or conflict in work styles, and how you acted positively to resolve it, or talk about something you learned that you can bring to the job.
4. **What are your salary expectations?**
   * Before an interview, always research the salary range for the field and position you applied for. When possible, avoid discussing salary before an offer has been made but, if pressed, give a range instead of a specific number. For example, between $15 and $18 an hour.
5. **Can we call your previous employer?**
   * If you did not leave on good terms with your last employer, give the interviewer your list of references instead. This list can include past supervisors, teachers, coaches and other professionals who have known you for a long time.
6. **Where do you see yourself in five years?**
   * You may want to be selective about how much to share. Keep your answer in line with the employer’s goals, focusing on what you hope to learn from the experience and what you can contribute to the company over five years.
7. **Why did you leave your last job?**
   * If your last job ended badly, avoid being negative in your answer. Be as diplomatic as possible. If you were fired, you may want to leave that experience off your resume. It’s fine to say that you were laid off, the contract ended, you returned to school, or moved away.
8. **Why do you want to work for us?**
   * Talk about what interests you about the position and the company, what skills you wish to use, and what contributions you want to make. Avoid talking about good the job is for you.
9. **Why should we hire you?**
   * Tell the employer about three of your best qualities related to the job. Talk about your personality, experience and skills and how they’ll benefit the company.
10. **Describe a difficult situation and how you solved it.**
    * Employers want to see your problem-solving abilities. Briefly describe a situation and then focus on what you did to solve it. Finish by telling them about the positive outcome that resulted from your actions.
11. **Are you able to work overtime? Weekends? Holidays? Nights? Flexible Shifts?**
    * Be honest! If you are unable to work certain shifts due to previous obligations (family commitments, volunteering, school) it is important to let the interviewer know this. However, keep in mind that many jobs require weekend and holiday shifts. If you indicate that you are *unwilling* to work these hours, it may cost you the job. Try to be as flexible as possible!
12. **How have you handled conflict with a co-worker?**
    * This is a situational question. The interviewer is looking for an actual example of a time when you successfully handled a disagreement with a coworker. Try to give examples of how you took the initiative to solve a dispute, and the positive outcome of your actions.
13. **Describe a situation where your work was criticized and how you dealt with it.**
    * Similar to above, the interviewer is looking for an actual situation where your work was criticized. Give an example that shows how you dealt with the criticism in a positive way, as well as the outcome, and how you strived to improve afterwards.
14. **Why do you like this type of work?**
    * The employer is really asking why you would find the job personally satisfying and if you would be enthusiastic about performing the duties. Show that you are truly interested in the work you would be doing by giving examples of past activities or interests that are similar to the job (through school, work, volunteer, personal activities, etc.).
15. **What did you like most about your last job?**
    * Pick 2-3 things from your last position, preferably transferable, or relevant to the new job you are applying for. Talk about how performed tasks successfully and give examples of how you excelled in these areas that you enjoyed. Try to mention a mix of hard skills and soft skills (e.g. enjoyed the team atmosphere and creating computer spreadsheets).
16. **What motivates you?**
    * Give examples to demonstrate that you have a strong work ethic. Provide specific examples from positive experiences you have had in the past, such as working on a strong team, achieving a goal, directly helping others. Try to avoid mentioning selfish/self-serving motivators (e.g. “the money”, “vacation time”).
17. **What do you know about our organization?**
    * Show you are truly interested in the company by mentioning points from the research you did before you applied and before the interview. This can include positive things about the company products/services, why you want to work for the company.
18. **What goals or objectives have you established recently?**
    * Pick a goal that shows initiative; one that you set for yourself, and achieved. Good examples are work-related, educational goals, helping in the community or volunteering.
19. **What accomplishments have given you the greatest satisfaction?**
    * Similar to above, try to choose something relevant to the job you are applying for (e.g. if customer service position, give an example of helping someone, going above and beyond, receiving positive feedback from customer or supervisor).