

Interview Tips

Version 5

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PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW:

Know about working in the public service (court/tribunal/legal department)

You will be provided with the name of the department and/or branch and a contact name. Find out about the court/tribunal by searching its website, brush up on the areas of law, courts or tribunals that are relevant to the organization.

Expect a panel of interviewers

There may be more than one person who conducts the placement interview, or it may be someone other than the person who will be supervising your work. Don't be thrown off by the fact they are writing. Don't wait for them to finish writing - keep talking. These notes are primarily used as a reminder for panel members about your responses that they can use to reflect on when making their decisions.

Think about what you can bring to the field placement and why you are the best person for the job.

What is it about you and the competencies and experiences you have that makes you an appealing candidate? Think about how your strengths and competencies/skills "fit" this area of practice. In addition to your diploma, what else do you bring to the job? What skills have you developed through your volunteer work?

Qualities Public service Employers Seek

Service Orientation: the capacity to understand and respond to client needs and expectations, to give priority to client satisfaction and review the impact of decisions and actions.

- Do you see issues from your supervisor's point of view?
- Are you responsive and get work done?
- Did you establish communication channels with a supervisor that allows for feedback from your advice, recommendations, or actions?
- Do you show that you understand clients' expectations and can see issues from their perspective?
- Are you responsive to the needs of clients?

Adaptability: the capacity to deal with unforeseen circumstances and modify behaviour accordingly.

- How do you demonstrate the ability to work under pressure caused by unexpected demands?
- Do you adapt your approach to deal with shifting priorities and changes?

Dependability/Reliability: the capacity to handle a heavy workload efficiently, complete assignments on time and be trusted to perform duties with a minimum of supervision. Capacity to be punctual and to be consistently able to report for work.

- Are you known for your capacity to handle a heavy workload?
- Are you known for completing assignments on time?
- Have you ever missed a deadline?
- How often has your supervisor had to follow-up with you for your on-going work?

Effective Interpersonal Skills: The capacity to produce good results through interaction with other individuals such as clients, colleagues, or supervisors. The capacity to be courteous and respectful in one's dealings with others. The capacity to work co-operatively and responsibly with others as a team so as to achieve good results.

- In which way do you have a positive impact on your colleague in your day-to-day work?
- In which way have you had a negative impact on your colleague in your day-to-day work? How did you react when your supervisor discussed this with you?
- How did you demonstrate your willingness and ability to work effectively as a team member?
- How do you vary or adjust your interaction to suit a client?

Initiative: The capacity to originate actions, rather than respond to events; the capacity to undertake new work activities without specific direction.

- How do you demonstrate initiative in your current job?
- Do you undertake new activities without specific direction?
- How do you contribute to your work unit's ability to meet its objectives?

Judgement: The capacity to distinguish and select the most appropriate course of action and to keep sensitive information in confidence.

- Do you assess situations and make valid decisions?
- Are you able to make effective decisions while under pressure situations?
- Do you respect the handling of confidential or sensitive information?

Flexibility: capacity to move easily from one task to another and to accomplish all tasks competently; ability to handle more than one task at a time. The capacity to be receptive to

direction, advice, and counsel from others.

Thoroughness: The capacity to complete all aspects of tasks. The capacity to be detailed in documenting information.

References

You will not usually need to provide references when attending an interview for field placement.

During the Interview:

Recognize your individual efforts

The interviewer is interested in your individual performance so try to use the word "I", as opposed to "we". If what you did was part of a team effort, explain what your role was on the team. While credit should be given to the team, you should focus your answer on your value-added contributions.

Describe past experiences including what you accomplished, not just what you did

When referring to past job or school experiences talk about and be specific concerning the outcomes you achieved and how your own learning and development were enhanced. Try to quantify your experiences when possible by using numerical examples.

Structure your answers for maximum impact. Keep your responses concise, structured, and based on the questions. Be prepared to answer behavioural-based questions where you are asked how you would handle certain situations or how you met certain challenges. A common technique for answering these types of questions is called PAR where you can describe your experience in terms of the:

- Problem that you faced
- Action you took
- Result(s) you achieved

Interview Questions

Type of Question: General

Questions aimed at asking information about your work history, skills, or knowledge.

Remember that the interviewer has read your résumé already, so try not to just repeat what is in it.

Examples:

- Briefly describe why you are interested in becoming a paralegal.
- What skills and experience do you possess that make you an ideal candidate?
- What do you know about the firm?

Type of Question: Technical or job-specific knowledge

Questions aimed to assess your knowledge of specific areas of law, court or tribunal procedures that are related to the work of the position.

Example:

- Do you know how to commence and action in small claims court?

Use the knowledge gained in your paralegal courses that will contribute to a good response.

Type of Question: Situational or scenario-based

Questions aimed at presenting you with a hypothetical situation that you may be faced with on the job and ask you to suggest a solution. These questions tend to assess analytical and problem solving skills and the ability to handle daily tasks effectively. It is important to think effectively on your feet and to formulate your responses in an organized manner.

Example:

- You are working on a document that has to be completed by tomorrow a.m. Your supervisor comes to you with an assignment to be completed by noon tomorrow. You can't meet both deadlines. What would you do?

Think about the process you would go through to address such an issue, who you would consult with, and what results you would anticipate obtaining.

Type of Question: Behavioural-based

Questions aimed at drawing on your previous experience and behaviours to provide examples of how you demonstrated specific skills in previous situations. They are specific and challenge the candidate to provide concrete examples of their previous achievements in different types of situations.

Type of Question:

- Conflict is inevitable when working with others. Please describe a recent conflict you had with a co-worker and how you dealt with the situation?

Also, describe what you learned to help you work with that individual in the future.