



**Law Society**  
of Ontario

**Barreau**  
de l'Ontario

# **Women's Resource Centre**

## **Interview preparation and salary negotiation**

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## INTERVIEW PREPARATION AND SALARY NEGOTIATION

Job interviews are not meant to be an interrogation — they are supposed to be a dialogue. An interview is as much about making sure the organization is a match for you as it is that you are a match for the organization.

### Preparing for the interview

Before the interview, at a minimum, you should research the organization — and the interviewer(s), if you know that information ahead of time.

At a minimum, conduct a Google search. Look at the organization's website. Look for the interviewer's LinkedIn profile. While you are on LinkedIn, see if the organization has a profile. Also check out the LinkedIn profiles of other key employees of the organization. How long have they been in their current jobs? How long have they been with the organization? What was their background before they joined the organization?

Your research will not only help you understand the organization better, but it will also help you ask more informed questions in the interview. And that is the subject of this step. If you have not asked questions as the interview progresses, there will likely come a time in the interview when the person conducting the interview says to you, "So, do you have any questions for me?"

This is where your research comes into play. Surely, as you were learning more about the role and the organization, you were curious about a thing or two. Even if you were not, it can make an impression on interviewers when you do not ask any questions. That can either signal that you are not interested enough in the job to muster up any questions — or that you did not know anything about the organization coming into the interview, and you were not paying attention enough to latch onto any information shared in the interview. Both scenarios do not bode well for your employment prospects.

With that in mind, here are more than 100 questions you can consider asking in a job interview. They are designed to empower you and cover topics such as diversity, equality and inclusion, work-life balance, finding the right match in an employer, workload parameters, engagement, use of your skills and talents, mentorship, hybrid work arrangements, the COVID pandemic and much more. Even though the word "employee" is often used, some of these questions can be useful for a partner.

Choose 4 or 5 questions that make the most sense for your circumstances and what you are trying to achieve (or avoid) in this new job or transition. You may adapt questions to make them more relevant for you or come up with ones of your own. Write the ones you have chosen on an index card or sheet of paper you can reference at the appropriate time during the job interview.

### Questions to ask an interviewer

1. How long has this position been open?

2. Is this a new position? If so, why was it created? If not, why did the person who held this position leave the position?
3. What are the organization's priorities, and what specific results would be expected from me in the first 90 days or so?
4. What kind of opportunities for advancement are available?
5. Why did you (the interviewer) join the organization? What is it about the organization that keeps you here?
6. Did my résumé raise any questions I can clarify?
7. What do you look for in an employee or partner?
8. What type of onboarding is required and how long is it? What type of training is available?
9. What are the opportunities for on-the-job training and further education or professional development?
10. What would my first assignment be?
11. What are the skills and attributes most needed to get ahead here?
12. How regularly do performance evaluations occur?
13. Do you have a job description available for this position?
14. Are there any expansion plans for the organization?
15. What does mentorship look like in your organization? How is mentorship supported by the organization?
16. What is your hybrid work policy? Who can work a hybrid schedule? Are there core hours I must work [if working remotely]?
17. How do you measure performance in a hybrid situation?
18. How would I be integrated into the organization if I work remotely?
19. What support could I expect to receive when working remotely?

### **Questions to ask a headhunter or recruiter**

1. Are you dealing with the client's Human Resources department, or do you have direct contact with the hiring manager?
2. How many candidates have you placed with this client? How long have you worked with this client?
3. May I have a written job description?
4. Where is the position located?
5. To whom does the position report?
6. Is this a new position? If not, why is the position open?
7. What happened to the person who previously held this position?

8. How long have you been working on the assignment?
9. What does the position pay?
10. Are there any pay or compensation constraints that I should take into consideration?
11. What can you tell me about the person who will be interviewing me? What is their position, title, management style?
12. Who will make the final hiring decision?
13. After you present my résumé, when can I expect to hear from you regarding the status of this position?

### **Questions to ask human resources**

1. Why do you enjoy working for this organization?
2. What attracted you to this organization?
3. Can you describe the work environment here?
4. How do you describe the philosophy of the organization?
5. What do you consider to be the organization's strengths and weaknesses?
6. Can you tell me more about my day-to-day responsibilities?
7. How soon are you looking to fill this position?
8. How do my skills compare with those of the other candidates you have interviewed?
9. In your opinion, what is the most important contribution that this organization expects from its employees?
10. What are my prospects for advancement? If I do a good job, what is a logical next step?
11. Assuming I was hired and performed well for a period of time, what additional opportunities might this job lead to?
12. I know that for the position for which I am interviewing, the organization decided to recruit from outside the organization. How do you decide between recruiting from within and going outside?
13. What advice would you give to someone in my position?
14. What major challenges and opportunities are you facing right now in this department or position?
15. Can you give me a formal, written description of the position? I am interested in reviewing in detail the major activities involved and what results are expected.
16. Can you please tell me a little bit about the people with whom I will be working most closely?

17. How would you handle a situation where an employee was being culturally insensitive, sexist, racist or homophobic?
18. What steps do you take to eliminate bias from your hiring process?
19. How did the organization respond to the COVID-19 crisis?
20. Does the organization have a return-to-the office date?
21. What has the organization done to deal with COVID safety measures in the workplace?
22. How does the organization handle remote onboard training?
23. If an employee gets COVID-19, what steps does the organization take to keep the rest of the employees safe?
24. I have really enjoyed meeting with you and your team, and I am very interested in the opportunity. I feel my skills and experience would be a good match for this position. What is the next step in your interview process?
25. Before I leave, is there anything else you need to know concerning my ability to do this job?

### **Questions to ask hiring managers**

1. What specific skills from the person you hire would make your life easier?
2. What are some of the problems that keep you up at night?
3. What are some of the skills and abilities you see as necessary for someone to succeed in this job?
4. What would be a surprising but positive thing the new person could do in first 90 days?
5. How would you measure success on your team?
6. What challenges might I encounter if I take on this position?
7. [for an in-house role] Will you be expanding or bringing on new products or new services that I should be aware of?
8. What are your major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this job?
9. What do you see as the most important opportunities for improvement in this role?
10. What aspects of the job would you like to see improved?
11. What attracted you to working for this organization?
12. What have you liked most about working here?
13. Are there any weaknesses in the department/organization that you are particularly looking to improve?
14. What is currently the most pressing business issue or problem for the organization or department?

15. What are the department's goals, and how do they align with the organization's mission?
16. What goals or objectives need to be achieved in the next six months?
17. Would you describe for me the actions of a person who previously achieved success in this position?
18. What are the most important traits you look for in a colleague?
19. Could you describe to me your leadership style and the type of employee who works well with you?
20. How would you describe the experience of working here?
21. If I were to be employed here, what one piece of wisdom would you want me to incorporate into my work life?
22. What have I yet to learn about this organization and opportunity that I still need to know?
23. Can you please tell me about the people who will look to me for supervision?
24. What happened to the person who previously held this job?
25. What are the success factors that will tell you if the decision to bring me on board was the right one?
26. What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?
27. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of colleagues from different backgrounds?
28. How important is diversity to the organization (and/or your team)?
29. What were your key takeaways from the COVID-19 pandemic, both from a business and leadership point of view?
30. How do you communicate with your colleagues while working remotely?
31. From all I can see, I would really like to work here, and I believe I can add considerable value to the organization. What is the next step in the selection process?

#### **Questions designed with a purpose**

1. I understand the organization has experienced layoffs within the last two years. Can you review the reasons why they were necessary?
2. Are there formal metrics in place for measuring and rewarding performance over time?
3. How much freedom would I have in determining my objectives and deadlines?
4. How long has this position existed in the organization? Has its scope changed recently?

5. Do you foresee this job involving significant amounts of overtime or work on weekends?
6. Are my tasks limited to my job description, or will I be performing duties outside the described job scope?
7. What are some key diversity, equity, and inclusion actions your organization has taken in the recent months?
8. How would your team members describe their relationships with one another at work?
9. How often do you see and hear from those who report to you?
10. Could you share an example of a matter that the team worked on? What went well, and what did not?

### **Questions designed to get feedback**

1. Do you have any concerns about my candidacy?
2. Based on our conversation, how do you think my experience matches what is needed for the job?
3. How do you think my skills can be leveraged to bring value to your team and the organization?
4. Is there anything else you need from me to have a complete picture of my qualifications?
5. [if given a second interview] Is there anything specific I should highlight going forward?
6. [if you did not land the job but want to know if you are suited for another role within the organization] Do you think, based on the feedback from my interviewers, that I would be a match for future opportunities at your organization? Can you give me any feedback that would make me more attractive to the organization in the future or that I could benefit from next time?

### **Checklists**

#### **Interview preparation**

- Prepare, prepare, prepare! You must be extremely well-prepared and able to summarize your skills, experience, and other qualifications as they relate to your prospective employer's specific needs.
- You also need to research the organization. Read their website. Google them. Understand their history, but also where they are going.
- One of the best things you can do to prepare for an interview is to come up with a short list of questions to ask your interviewer(s). Do not forget that a job interview is also a chance for you to find out if the organization is a match for your needs.



- You can never be too prepared for a job interview. Have a friend, colleague or lawyer coach help you practice answering questions.

### **Interview red flags**

- If your interview gets rescheduled more than twice, or the recruiter or internal human resources personnel take an exceedingly long time to respond to your emails, it may be an indication that something is amiss with the organization.
- If the job you are interviewing for starts to sound very different from the job posting, it might be time to reconsider.
- If the interview process has an excessive number of interviews or assignments to submit, it might mean that the organization or team is indecisive, not aligned as a unit, or has issues reaching a consensus (whether in the hiring process or with everything else too).
- If you receive an ultimatum or a tight timeline, this could be a sign that the organization is inflexible, bullying, or autocratic.
- If you are asked a question that is offensive, biased, or even illegal.

### **What to do at the end of an interview and afterwards**

- Before ending a job interview, be sure to ask about “next steps.” What happens next? When? Ask if it is okay for you to follow-up.
- The first thing to do after an interview is send a thank you note. Email works. Be sure to mention something specific about the conversation that you appreciated.
- Do not put all your eggs in one basket, so to speak. Continue to apply for — and interview for — other positions even as you follow up on this interview.
- Conduct a search on LinkedIn and see if you can find an existing contact who works for the organization. They may be able to provide insight about the competition and your chances for a second interview.
- While you wait for the next step, conduct salary research so you are prepared to negotiate your salary if you are offered the job.
- If the interview revealed any specific gaps in your skills or education that can be addressed while you await a second interview, start working on that now.
- Continue to conduct research and prepare for the next round of interviews.
- Follow up, as appropriate, until you receive the next interview, a job offer, or you find out that another candidate has been hired.

### **How to respond to inappropriate interview questions**

- If you are asked a question that is offensive, biased, or even illegal, you have options. If illegal, you can refuse to answer (i.e., I’d rather talk about...). You can choose to be direct and say, “I’m not sure how that question relates to this role” or “That kind of question violates the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.”

- Consider how the interviewer's behaviour impacts your interest in the role. Does the behaviour appear to be specific to the person or representative of the culture? You might decide that an organization that tolerates this kind of employee is not one you want to join.

## Resources

- [Your Interactive Pre-Interview Worksheet and Checklist for Success](#)
- [What to Do If Your Job Interviewer is Biased](#)
- [5 Questions to Ask Before Accepting a Job](#)
- [How to Ask for Feedback from an Interviewer](#)
- [10 Red Flags to Watch Out for in a Job Interview](#)
- [10 Paralegal Interview Questions You Need to Be Ready For](#)
- [33 Common Law Firm Interview Questions \(With Sample Answers\)](#)
- [Top 23 Law Firm Interview Tips for Attorneys and Law Students: How to Excel in Law Firm Interviews](#)
- ["N" is for "not" having any questions during OCIs](#)
- [How to Prepare for a Partner Interview](#)
- [Lateral Partner Interviews: 5 Topics to Mention \(and 3 to Avoid\) if You Want an Offer](#)
- [17 In House Counsel Interview Questions and Answers](#)
- [Eighteen Favorite In-House Counsel Interview Questions](#)
- [How can you tell if an employer is inclusive? Is the Company You're Interviewing with Actually Inclusive?](#)

## Salary negotiation

- The most important thing to remember about salary negotiation is that most salaries are negotiable. One study found that only 7% of women attempted to negotiate salary, while 57% of men did (*Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation--and Positive Strategies for Change* by Linda Babcock). Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate!
- Salary may be used as a screening technique in application forms or during an initial call with the recruiter. The answer you provide may come into play at the interview or offer stage, so be careful about what you say. Provide a range where possible or simply indicate, "negotiable."
- Never include salary information on your résumé.
- Do not bring up money until the interviewer brings up money if you can help it. You do not want to price yourself out of the running, nor do you want to settle for less than you are worth.
- If you are asked about your salary history in an interview and you feel you must name a figure, give a salary range instead of your most recent salary. And do not forget to add "that does not include the value of fees, insurance or other benefits."

- ❑ Benefits can make a huge difference in your compensation package, so do not overlook them. Benefits that can contribute to your compensation include life, dental, and disability insurance, bonus structures or profit-sharing plans, pension or RRSP contribution/matching plans, vacation days, sick days, company car, tuition reimbursement, and signing bonuses.
- ❑ Conduct salary research. Check out the guide, [Six things to do to start your job search](#), for more information.
- ❑ Do your homework about the organization. Websites like Glassdoor.com can give you insight into the organization's specific compensation structure.
- ❑ Know what you need to make (and want to make). Many jobseekers do not know how much money they need to make on an annual or monthly basis. It is important for you to calculate all your expenses (including phone, utilities, groceries, spending cash, etc.), savings and debt payments as a way to empower yourself in the negotiation process.
- ❑ Consider alternative compensation packages. In lieu of cash, consider stock options, performance bonuses, incentives, equity positions, telecommuting or other alternative work options, or a more comprehensive benefits package.
- ❑ Recognize that you may make less money in your next position, at least at the beginning. Historically, 40% of workers will make the same amount as in their last job, and 20% will make more. The remaining 40% will make less. Things have changed since the pandemic (and they may change again) with half of workers in the USA who switched jobs between April 2021 and March 2022 got a net pay increase of 9.7% or more; the other half of job switchers got a smaller raise or saw their net earnings decline: <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/02/typical-job-switcher-got-a-pay-raise-of-nearly-10percent-study-finds.html>
- ❑ If your salary is not the one you dreamed about, but the job offers the opportunity for learning and/or growth, consider taking the job with the goal of making yourself invaluable to the organization ... or positioning yourself for your next job.

## Resources

- [Setting the Record Straight: Using an Outside Offer to Get a Raise](#)
- [15 Rules for Negotiating a Job Offer](#)
- [How To Negotiate Salary \(With Examples\)](#)
- [How to Negotiate Salary After You Get a Job Offer](#)
- [A Woman's Guide to Salary Negotiation](#)
- [The Truth About Salary Negotiation For Black Women](#)
- [4 Salary Negotiation Tips for Legal Professionals](#)
- [Tips for Negotiating Your Lateral Associate Offer](#)
- [Negotiating a Job Offer: Helping Law Students Learn to Ask for What They Deserve](#)
- [5 Ways Women Can Negotiate For Higher Pay](#)
- ['Be willing to walk away': 6 Black women career coaches on negotiating your salary and countering a low offer](#)

- [How Lateral Partners Should Negotiate Compensation When Working With a Recruiter](#)
- [Law Firm Compensation: How are Partners Paid, Compensated](#)
- [Salary & Benefits: In-House Counsel](#)

### **What to do when your job search is not working**

- First, figure out where you are lost or stuck in your job search. Is your résumé getting interviews? Are you getting offers after your interviews? You must identify the problem before you can find a solution.
- Ensure you have a clearly defined goal that you are pursuing. Wanting “any” job usually means you do not get “any” offers. Check out the guide, [Knowing what you want and developing a list of dream employers](#).
- Not getting interviews? The problem might be your résumé. Make sure you are applying for positions that are aligned with your résumé. In other words, if you told your professional résumé writer your job target was as a litigation position, do not use the résumé to apply for solicitor roles. Check out the guide, [Six things to do to start your job search](#). If you have not consulted with a professional résumé writer, think about working with one who specializes in the legal industry.
- Are you applying for positions that you are qualified for? Meaning, you are not underqualified and you are not overqualified, either.
- The definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. If your current job search is not working, it is time to do something different. Create an action plan of specific activities that will help you connect with prospective employers — the most effective job search strategies involve talking to people who can either hire you directly or put you in direct contact with a hiring manager. In other words, check out the guide, [Informational interviews](#).
- Assess how you are preparing for job interviews. Are you setting yourself up for success by researching the organization and the person interviewing you, learning more about the organization meets your needs, and what you have to offer?
- If you are getting interviews, but not offers, consider practicing your interviewing skills. Listen carefully. Do not be afraid to ask questions — remember, you are looking for a match.
- Enlist help. Ask a friend, another jobseeker, or a career coach to be your accountability partner — someone who will support, encourage, and motivate you in your job search.

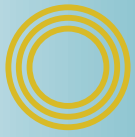
### **Your first 90 days in a new job**

- You get paid for effort, attitude, and results. Effort = Showing up on time (or ahead of time), ready to work. Attitude = Being a positive influence on others. Results =

Doing what needs to be done. Put in the effort, adjust your attitude, and deliver results.

- Listen carefully and take notes. The first 90 days can be a blur!
- Get to know your co-workers or others in the organization when the opportunity presents itself. This is particularly important when you are working in remote or hybrid work environments.
- Ask your new employer for input so you can develop a transition plan for the first 30-60-90 days on the job. Your 90-day plan should specify priorities, goals, and milestones.
- Make learning a key component of your first 90 days in a new job. Learn the history of the company and begin to understand the culture. This will help you be more successful in your new role.
- Check in regularly with your new boss. Even if you have developed a master plan together, make sure you are scheduling progress meetings (weekly or biweekly) to make sure you are on track towards achieving the goals you have set for your first 90 days. You should also schedule a meeting at the end of each month to review your 90-day plan.
- Identify one area where you can secure an “easy win” — an accomplishment that can be achieved through focused effort within the first 90 days that you can build on for future success. Make sure that the win is something that is important to your new boss.

**This completes all the information you need to know to find a new job or make a career transition. You may need to circle back to earlier guides or consult a professional for more assistance. All the best in your new endeavour!**



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