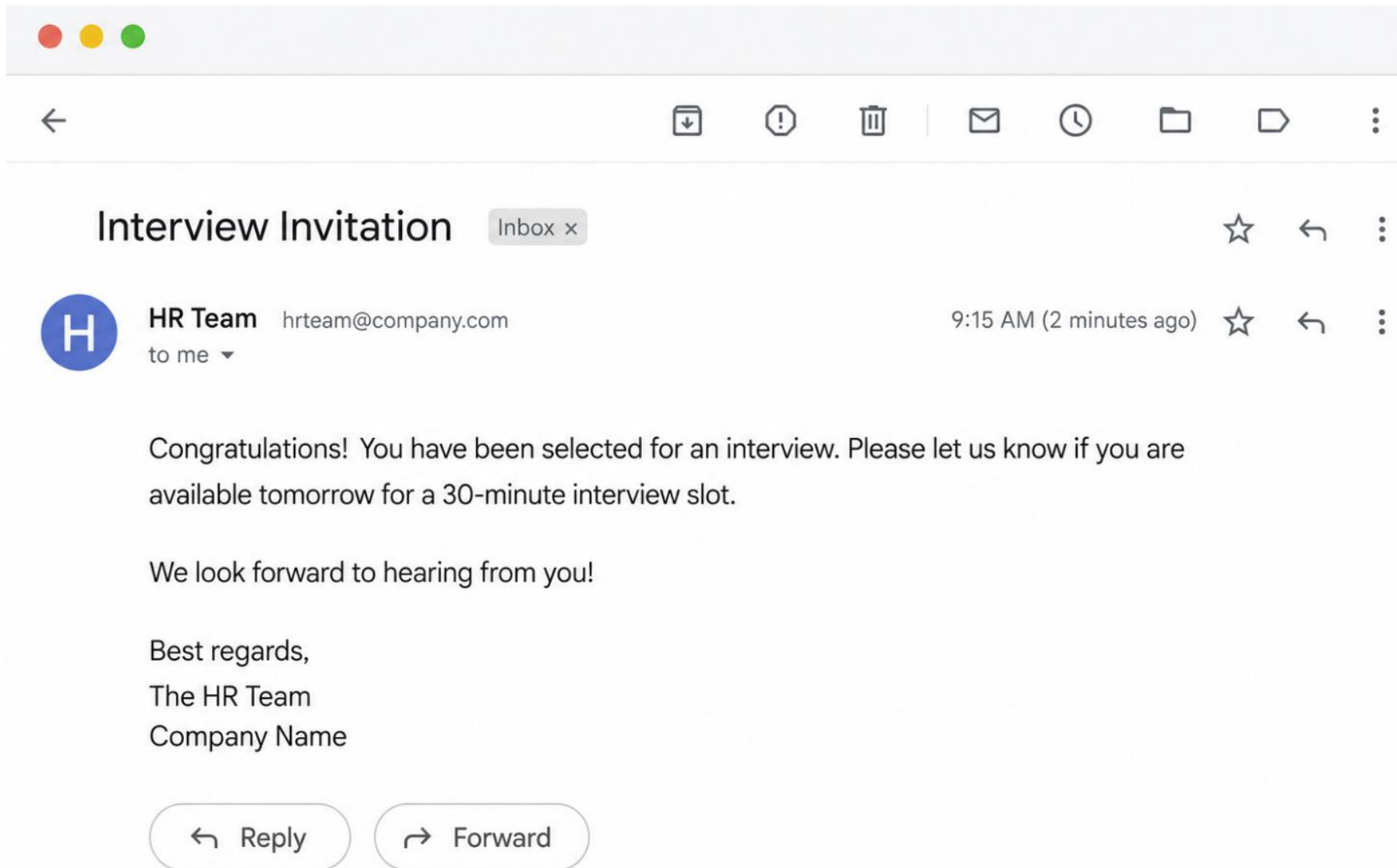


Interview Strategies that Work



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

Centre for Career
Development



WHOSE LAND ARE WE ON?

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.

Curious about the land that *you* are on?

Visit <https://native-land.ca/>



Artwork by local Indigenous artist Alanah Astehtsi Otisistohkwa
(Morningstar) Jewell

Co-creating a safe(r) space

- A safe space means different things for everyone, but we'll do our best! Let's keep 3 things in mind:
 - Choice, Respect, Care
- Participate in the way that feels most comfortable for you!
- Please use the chat or raise hand for questions/comments
 - Feel free to send me a direct message if you would like to share anonymously
- Ask questions whenever! We'll also dedicate time at the end for Q&A
- Take what works for you, leave what doesn't.

Which interesting job would you want to try?



Volcanologists



Wildlife Biologist



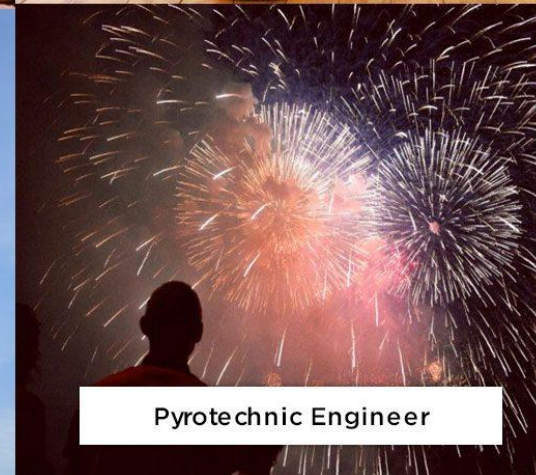
Artificial Intelligence Engineer



Scientific Research Diver



Theme Park Engineer



Pyrotechnic Engineer

Source: [Malia Bartek](#)

Strategies we will cover today:

- **Strategy 1:** Reframe the purpose of an interview
- **Strategy 2:** Identify relevant skills
- **Strategy 3:** Prepare stories in advance using the S-T-A-R method
- **Strategy 4:** Understand and calm potential anxiety
- **Strategy 5:** Make AI work for you, not against you



Source: Unknown Author licensed under CC BY-NC-ND



STRATEGY 1: REFRAME THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

THE GOAL OF AN INTERVIEW

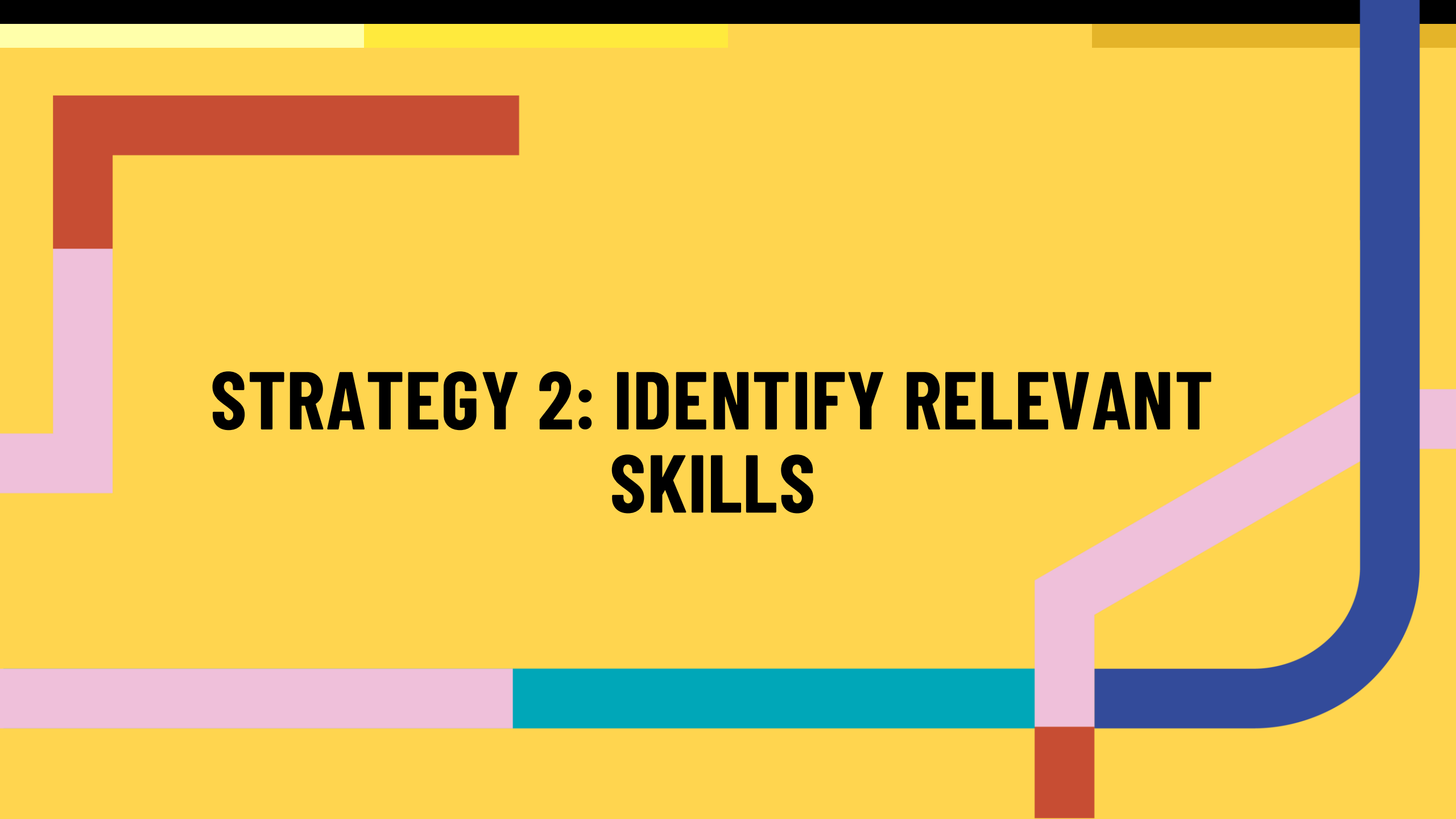
The goal of an interview is:

- A conversation to determine mutual fit.
- An opportunity to provide evidence of your skills, experiences, and potential.
- A chance to learn about the role, team, and organization.
- A way for employers to predict how you will perform in the job.
- An opportunity to build rapport

The goal of an interview is not:

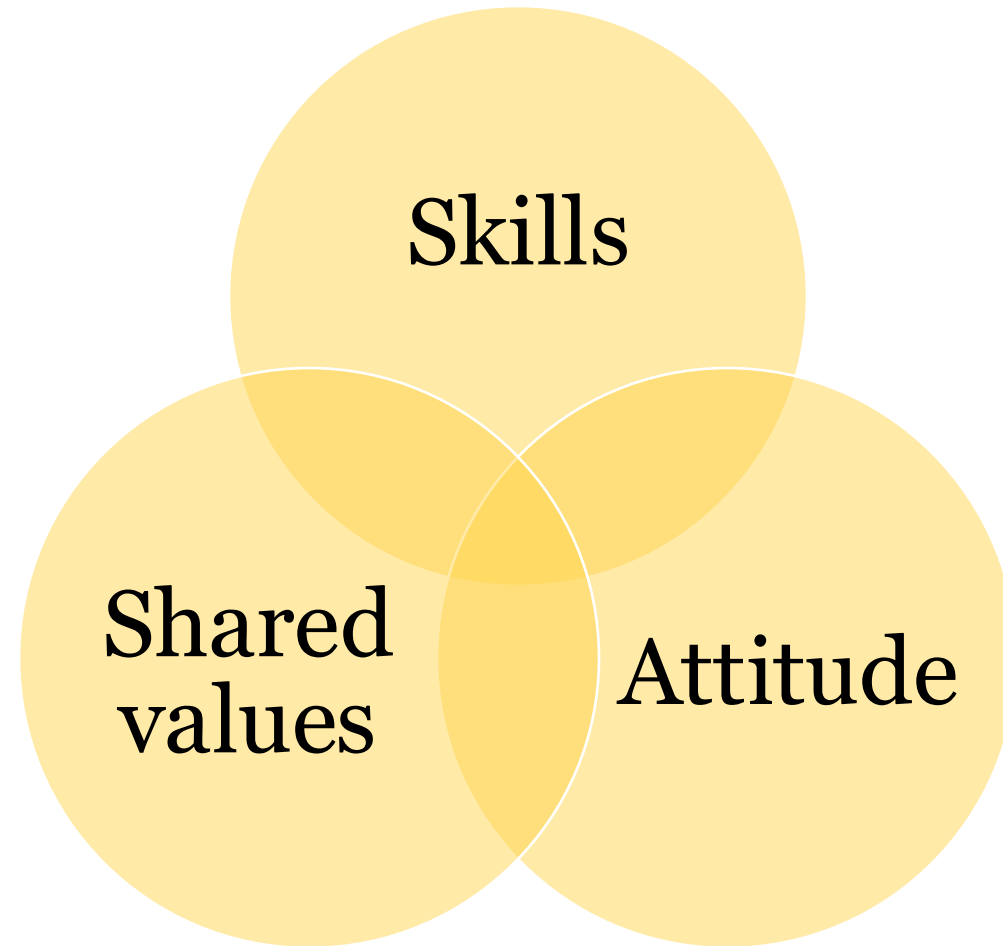
- A test where there is only one "right" answer.
- An interrogation designed to make you fail.
- A chance to recite your résumé word for word.
- A measure of your worth or value as a person.
- A one-sided evaluation—you are assessing the employer, too.





STRATEGY 2: IDENTIFY RELEVANT SKILLS

WHAT DO YOU WANT AN EMPLOYER TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?



JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

Employer: Liberty Tutoring
Job Title: Private Tutors for Math, Science & English

Do you love math, science, or English? Want to help high school students actually understand the concepts, not just memorize answers? Are you a creative, inspiring tutor who can make learning enjoyable and meaningful? If so, we want you on our team.

Job responsibilities

- Work closely with students to solidify their understanding of concepts, strengthen foundations and empower them to approach new challenges with confidence
- Prepare lessons, assignments and tests tailored to students' individual learning needs
- Evaluate students' progress and discuss results with students and/or their parents

Required skills

- Must be a university student or a recent graduate from university
- Outstanding teaching skills
- Excellent academic merit
- Previous tutoring and/or coaching experience
- Reliable, takes initiative and very organized
- Patience, good communication skills, and creativity

JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

Employer: Liberty Tutoring
Job Title: Private Tutors for High School Math, Science & English

Do you love math, science, or english? Want to help students actually understand the concepts, not just memorize answers? Are you a creative, inspiring tutor who can make learning enjoyable and meaningful? If so, we want you on our team.

Job description

- Work closely with students to solidify their understanding and empower them to gain confidence
- Coaching/teaching experience
- Excellent academic merit
- Evaluate students' progress and discuss results with students and/or their parents

Required skills

- Strong organizational skills
- Outstanding teaching skills
- Excellent creativity
- Professional and reliable
- Patience, good communication skills, and creativity
- Very organized

SKILLS ASSESSMENT CHART

Skill	Evidence
Communication skills	Lots of customer interaction working retail
Teaching skills	Let's Talk Science volunteer
Organizational skills	Organized a student art exhibition
Takes initiative / reliable	Asked school principal to include battery recycling at our school – and started running that program
Creativity	Designed creative and interactive games and themed activities for kids at summer camp

**STRATEGY 3: PREPARE YOUR
STORIES IN ADVANCE**

KNOW THE STORIES YOU WANT TO TELL

We learn about each other best when telling stories. Interviews are basically storytelling exercises.

Planning stories in advance can help you feel confident and prepared, no matter how they phrase the questions.

Some students tell us compiling their best stories is like making a playlist of their “greatest hits”.



Source: Penguin Vectors by Vecteezy

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANTICIPATE THAT REQUIRE STORIES



Source: Programming concept by lemono

Tell us about a time when you demonstrated_____ skill.

When was the last time you had to use _____ skill. What did you do and how do you know it was successful?

How have you managed conflict in the past when working on a team?

JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

Employer: Liberty Tutoring
Job Title: Private Tutors for High School Math, Science & English

Do you love math, science, or english? Want to help students actually understand the concepts, not just memorize answers? Are you a creative, inspiring tutor who can make learning enjoyable and meaningful? If so, we want you on our team.

Job description

- Work closely with students to solidify their understanding and empower them to gain confidence
- Excellent academic merit
- Evaluate students' progress and discuss results with students and/or their parents

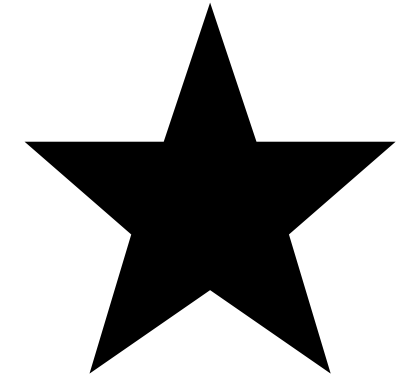
Required skills

- Strong organizational skills
- Outstanding teaching skills
- Excellent creativity
- Professional and reliable
- Patience, good communication skills, and creativity
- Very organized

SKILLS ASSESSMENT CHART

Skill	Evidence
Communication skills	Lots of customer interaction working retail
Teaching skills	Let's talk science volunteer
Organizational skills	Organized a student art exhibition
Takes initiative / reliable	Asked school principal to include battery recycling at our school – and started running that program
Creativity	Designed creative and interactive games and themed activities for kids at summer camp

STAR APPROACH



Situation	Background and context
Task	What you needed to do
Action	What you did and how you did it
Result	The outcome of your actions



Q: TELL ME ABOUT A TIME YOU COMMUNICATED SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE TO A NON-SCIENTIFIC AUDIENCE

Situation	“Let’s Talk Science” Volunteer
Task	Create workshop on global warming for 8 th graders
Action	• Researched the 8th grade science curriculum • Consulted with professors and TAs on strategies to simplify information • Delivered the workshop to 20 students and kept them engaged by inserting analogies, videos and activities into the workshop
Result	Students expressed their newfound interest in global warming, and I was invited to deliver another workshop



QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANTICIPATE THAT DON'T REQUIRE STORIES

Tell me about yourself.

Why are you interested in this role?

What do you know about our company?

What questions do you have for us?



Source: [Question Vectors by Vecteezy](#)

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

There are many ways to organize this answer. Here is a popular one:

Name and program

Relevant experiences

Relevant skills

Interest in the role and company



Source: Unknown author licensed under CC BY-ND

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS ROLE?



Source: Professional Vectors by Vecteezy

Employers want to hire people who genuinely want to work with their organization.

Do some research and reflection on what is interesting about this position.

Focus on how you want to contribute to their goals, rather than focusing on how this experience will serve you.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR US

Write down your questions and come prepared with around 5 (even if you don't end up asking them all!)

Start with questions that focus on the employer, before asking questions that focus on your own experience.

Ask questions you are genuinely curious about!

Try:

- What are some projects you are working on lately that you are excited about.
- I read that you recently got an award for _____. Congratulations, what went into making that possible?
- If I were the successful candidate, what could I start working on now to ensure I am ready for my first day?

**STRATEGY 4: UNDERSTAND
AND CALM POTENTIAL
ANXIETY BEFORE AND
DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Calming Interview Anxiety

- Was there a time when you had to calm yourself down before a high-stakes event or activity? What did you do?
- If you had a friend who was nervous about an interview, what tips would you give them?
- *Chat storm!*



Source: beauQ via Pixabay

Mindset

Aim for a conversation,
not perfection

Physical

Deep breaths, relax your
body

Routine

Create a pre-interview
ritual

Preparation

Practice out loud and
prepare questions;
consider creating high
level notes to refer to!

Building Your Interview Anxiety Toolkit

Support

Practice with someone
you trust

Self-talk

Use grounding phrases, be
kind to yourself

Other tools?

What to say when you don't know what to say

- "That's a great question. Let me take a moment to think about it."
- "Could you rephrase the question? I want to make sure I understand what you're asking."
- "I haven't encountered that situation directly, but here's how I would approach it if I were in that role."
- "While I haven't experienced that exact situation, I've had a similar experience that demonstrates a related skill."
- "I'm not certain of the answer, but here's how I would go about finding the information or solving the problem."

**STRATEGY 5: MAKE AI WORK
FOR YOU, NOT AGAINST YOU**

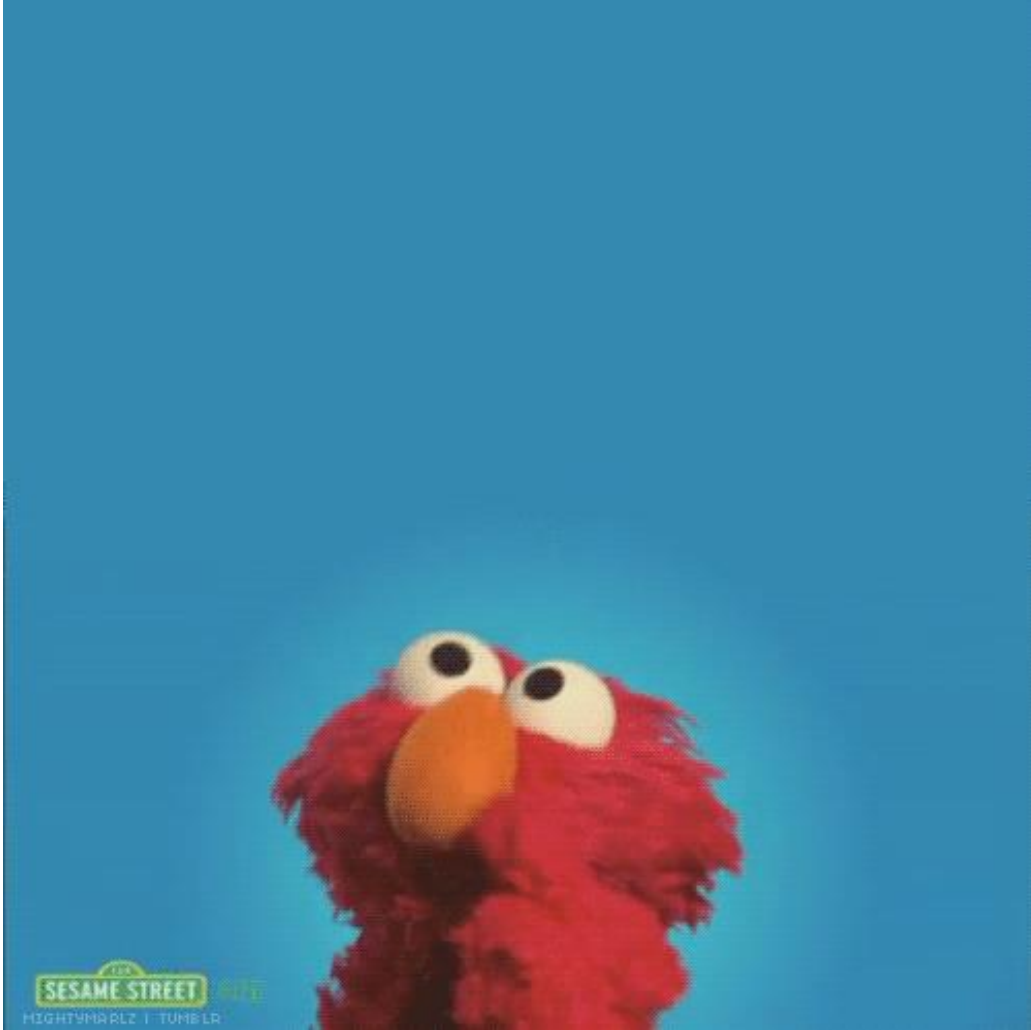
Ways AI tools can support your interview prep

- Researching the role
- Generate interview questions
- Improving your answers
- Generating ideas
- Building confidence



Source: Elf-Dance via Pixabay

What might a prompt look like when using AI to prepare for your interview?



Take 1 minute to brainstorm a potential prompt before our chat storm!

Source: via GLPHY

Example Prompts

- "Summarize this job posting and identify the top 5 skills they're looking for."
- "What questions might an employer ask based on this job description?"
- "What values or competencies seem most important for this role?"
- "Help me organize this experience using the STAR method."
- "Does my answer clearly demonstrate the skill of teamwork?"
- "Help me identify examples from my experiences that demonstrate leadership."
- "Help me identify my top five strengths for this role."
- "What accomplishments from my experiences am I overlooking?"

When using AI gets a bit prickly

- Using AI during the actual interview
- Over-rehearsing AI-generated "perfect answer"
- Using AI to answer questions you don't understand
- Relying on AI in take-home or asynchronous interviews without checking rules



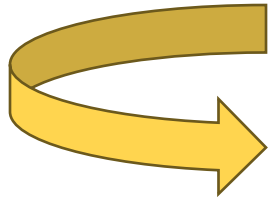
Source: via Pixabay



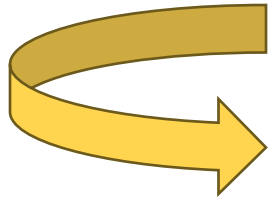
SCENARIO:

Situation:

It's the day before the interview - you have researched, reflected, and practiced.



What are your final steps to prepare?



How might that differ if it's in person or virtual?



Remember...

- Research with purpose! Understand the role, employer, and what they're looking for
- Prepare flexible STAR examples that highlight your skills, and practice communicating them out loud with confidence
- Every interview is a chance to learn and improve – employers are not looking for perfection!
- Draw on strategies that have helped you navigate other high-pressure situations and incorporate them into your interview preparation
- Use AI to strengthen your preparation, not to replace your own experiences and authentic voice
- **YOU'VE GOT THIS!**



Source: [Ann H via Pexels](#)

Centre for Career Development Student Services



Career advising

One-on-one appointments for:

- Résumé & cover letter writing
- Interview practice
- Career exploration
- Work search strategies
- Further education support

Book via [WaterlooWorks](#)



Workshops and events

Topics include but not limited to:

- Résumé & cover letter writing
- Interview strategies
- Job search strategies
- P4E Job Fair
- Further Education Fair

Register via [WaterlooWorks](#) or [Portal](#)



Drop-in advising

Same day, peer-led 20-minute conversations for:

- Résumé review
- Cover letter review
- Quick interview prep

Registration on [WaterlooWorks](#) daily at 8 a.m.



Online resources

- [CareerHub](#)
- [Recorded workshops](#) for flexible learning

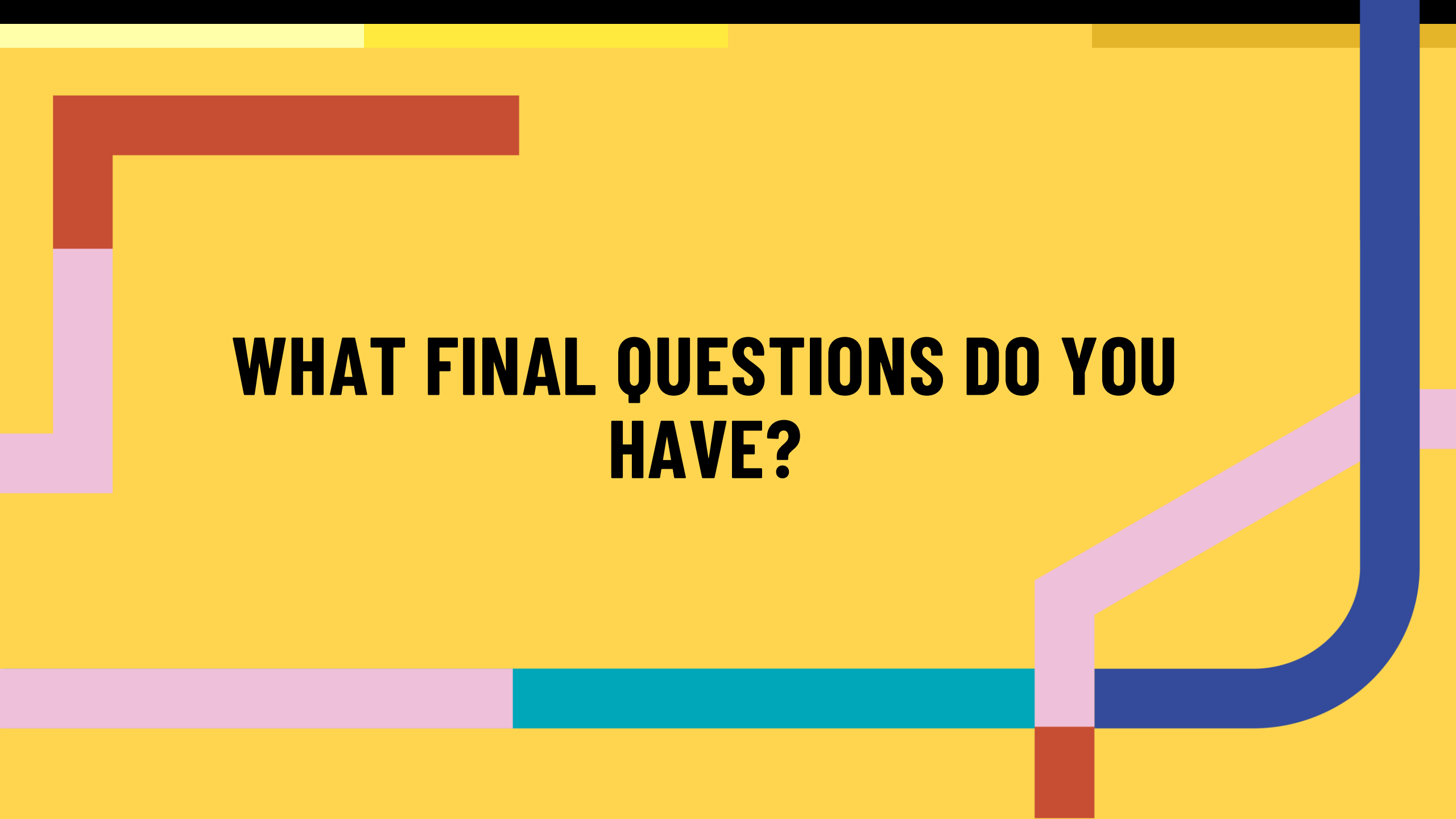
We'd love to hear from you!

Please complete the survey linked in the email with the slides, for a chance to win one of 5 prizes of \$20 added to your WATcard.

It helps us improve!



Source: University of Waterloo

The background is a solid yellow color. It features several abstract geometric shapes: a red L-shaped bar in the top-left corner; a pink L-shaped bar below it; a horizontal bar at the bottom composed of a pink segment on the left and a teal segment on the right; and a blue shape on the right side that includes a vertical bar and a curved section. A pink diagonal bar also crosses the bottom-right area.

**WHAT FINAL QUESTIONS DO YOU
HAVE?**