



Preparatory Guide for the Telecom Operator Selection Interview

The purpose of the *Preparatory Guide for the Telecom Operator Selection Interview* is to make you more aware of what will happen at this step of the recruitment process. It provides you with tips on how to prepare for the interview and is intended to help minimize any anxiety you might have. The ultimate goal of this guide is to help you perform at your best during the interview, as this will enable us to get the most accurate information about your potential to perform successfully as an RCMP telecom operator.

Introduction

The Telecom Operator Selection Interview Guide (TOSIG) is the interview guide used by the RCMP to select applicants for telecommunication operators. In the RCMP recruitment process, the selection interview takes place after the Telecom Operator Aptitude Test (TOAT). The selection interview is found by many to be the most challenging stage of the selection process. However, if you carefully plan for the interview, it can turn out to be a positive experience.

What to expect at the Selection Interview?

A careful analysis of the telecom operator functions was carried out to identify the qualities required to do this job well. From this analysis, a list of questions was prepared. The TOSIG contains questions that largely focus on gathering examples of how you have performed in different situations. These questions are fairly general so that applicants from a variety of backgrounds are able to relate to, and describe, a pertinent situation. In your answer, you can refer to experiences from a variety of contexts (school, work, volunteering, sports, etc.). Here is an example of a question:

People often have to show perseverance to overcome obstacles. Please tell me about a time when you had to face such a situation.¹

A few questions in the interview focuses on gathering information about how you would act in hypothetical situations that are similar in context to those you would likely experience

¹ This is only an example, not necessarily an interview question on the TOSIG.

as an RCMP telecom operator. For these questions, you will be presented with a hypothetical situation and then asked to describe in detail what you would do in this circumstance. You will also be asked to explain the reasoning behind your intended behaviour(s), including the factors you took into consideration when deciding what actions you would (or would not) take.

These situational questions are included in the interview so that applicants from a wide variety of backgrounds have the chance to demonstrate how they would perform in a situation they may not have actually experienced in the past. Here is an example of this type of question:

You are a member of a soccer team. During an important game, the referee makes a bad call against your team, which leads to the other team scoring a game-winning goal. After the goal is scored, four of your teammates and your coach begin to argue with the referee and players of the other team. The argument is becoming very heated, but you believe that what your coach and teammates are saying is correct and that the referee's call was very unfair. What would you do in this situation, and why?

The average length of the selection interview is two to three hours.

What Does the TOSIG Measure?

The TOSIG assesses five competencies (qualities) considered essential to perform successfully as an RCMP telecom operator. The goal of the interview is to determine to what extent you possess these competencies. Each competency is defined below:

Interpersonal Skills: Interacts sensitively and respectfully with others, regardless of their background. Demonstrates tact and empathy. Works effectively with others. Mediates conflict; reassures and calms individuals who are upset.

Personal Effectiveness and Flexibility: Adjusts behaviour to current circumstances in order to remain productive during periods of transition, ambiguity, uncertainty and stress. Persistently strives for excellence, even in difficult situations. Adapts behaviour to changing circumstances in order to reach a goal or to address diverse and changing client needs. Maintains composure and effectiveness in stressful and challenging conditions. Demonstrates perseverance and a willingness to perform beyond the normal range of job expectations and requirements, when necessary. Effectively handles multiple tasks and conflicting demands.

Thinking Skills: Acquires and analyses all appropriate available information and considers alternative strategies to achieve objectives. Anticipates problems in advance, and develops innovative solutions. Evaluates potential outcomes and risks of various actions before making decisions. Establishes priorities, makes decisions and takes actions based on requirements of the situation. Assesses outcomes of actions and adjusts future responses accordingly.

Leadership: Mobilizes and coordinates activities, energies and talents of others to work toward shared objectives. Asserts own views with confidence and persuades others to take appropriate courses of action. Actively participates with other individuals to accomplish goals and objectives. Accurately assesses and manages risk. Makes, and/or inspires others to make innovative and responsible decisions. Accepts responsibility for outcomes and is accountable. Inspires others, by example, to perform to the highest standards. Sets and/or involves others in setting, goals that are challenging, realistic and measurable. Recognizes contributions and successes of others.

Oral Communication: Presents issues and information orally in a clear and credible manner. Tailors communication to intended audience/listener and uses appropriate tools and strategies to convey information. Listens to and understands other perspectives. Modifies communication style and approach to enhance understanding and/or achieve results. Exercises open, honest and bilateral communication. Projects a professional image.

How to Prepare for the TOSIG

Before applying for a job, it is always wise to research the organization to which you are applying. This will help you to determine if the responsibilities, culture, and working conditions of that occupation will suit you. Reading relevant documentation and talking with RCMP telecom operators about their work experiences will help you to form a realistic idea of an RCMP telecom operator's job. This will likely increase your job satisfaction later on.

The interview will focus on your own capabilities and how you

have demonstrated them in the past, rather than how much you know about legal or policing issues, or the RCMP itself. Therefore, there is no essential material to *learn* before the interview. Still, there are several steps you can take ahead of time to prepare yourself for the interview:

Preparing for the Behavioural Component:

- ▶ Review the definitions of the five competencies and make sure that you understand them.
- ▶ Break up each competency definition into its different components and ask yourself, "When did I have to demonstrate this part of the definition?" For example: "When did I have to work as part of a team?"
- ▶ Review your own experiences and clearly identify incidents or situations that relate to these competencies.
- ▶ Try use challenging AND recent situations as examples. If your best example for a question happened five years ago, use it, but keep in mind that the more recent the example the better. The interviewer wants to know if you are using your skills and abilities now.
- ▶ You do not have to use work examples, particularly if the best example you can think of for a question did not take place at work. You can also use the same example to answer more than one question, if different aspects of that example can be used to answer different questions.

I DON'T HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE!

Many people make the mistake of neglecting very relevant life experiences, just because they did not take place in a full-time job setting. However, you may have acquired and demonstrated the required competencies through a wide variety of activities.

So when preparing for the interview, take time to reflect on your past and pick behavioural examples that most closely relate to each of the competencies. The following list provides some examples of activities you may have participated in that could provide some excellent answers to the interview questions:

- ▶ Competitive sports
- ▶ Volunteer work
- ▶ Hobbies
- ▶ Past jobs - full-time, part-time, summer term, internships and cooperative education placements
- ▶ Projects undertaken in school (term projects, extracurricular activities such as the student newspaper, student clubs/ associations, organization of events, etc.)

To make a fair assessment of your actions in the examples you describe, the interviewer needs to get a complete description of the circumstances, the actions you took, and the result of these actions. We call this structure the STAR principle (see next grey box). If you practice describing your past experiences according to this structure, your answers will flow more easily and you will be less likely to leave out important information.

For behavioural questions, set out your answers using the STAR principle:

- S:** Describe the situation surrounding your example clearly and concisely. Who was involved? What are the relevant details that impacted your actions?
- T:** What was the task you were called upon to do? What was your specific challenge?
- A:** What action(s) did you take? Talk about your contributions and what you actually did.
- R:** What was the result? What did you accomplish?

Preparing for the Situational Component:

- ▶ The situational questions are based on the same competencies as the behavioural questions, so review the relevant behavioural examples that you have identified. Think about the effective and ineffective actions you took in those situations, and whether there were any problems, frustrations and conflicts. What did you learn? What would you do differently if you were in those situations again? What behaviours did you perform that could be applied to different situations (e.g., asking others who are knowledgeable for advice in a problem solving situation)?
- ▶ For the situational questions, the interviewer needs to get a complete description of the actions that you would take (or not take), and the reasoning process that you used to make your decisions, including the factors you took into consideration. This is reflected in the ARC principle (see next grey box). If you approach situational questions with this structure in mind, you will be less likely to leave out important information that the interviewer needs to know.

For situational questions, use the ARC principle:

- A:** What actions would you take?
- R:** What is the reasoning behind your actions? How did you arrive at this decision?
- C:** When determining what your actions would be, what factors did you take into consideration?

- ▶ In responding to some situational questions you will be asked to play the role of a telecom operator in some hypothetical situation. In addition to what has already been described in terms of preparation, having a thorough understanding of the specific responsibilities of a Telecom Operator should assist in responding to such an exercise.

In General:

- ▶ It is a good idea to write down a summary of examples that highlight your skills, abilities and experiences. Review them periodically to refresh your memory (some people use index cards). When you write out your examples, try to structure them according to the STAR principle, and think about how they could apply to other situations. Please note that candidates are NOT allowed to consult their preparatory materials during the course of the interview.
- ▶ Conduct a practice interview with a friend. You can prepare interview questions using the competency definitions (e.g., “Tell me about a time when you had to ...”). This will give you the opportunity to get some feedback on your answers regarding clarity and level of detail (i.e., too much, not enough).

During the Interview

- ▶ Be enthusiastic and confident, but keep in mind that this is a formal meeting, where being composed, courteous and friendly is always the best policy. The way you handle the interview provides an indication of your interpersonal and communication skills, and the interviewer will take this into account in his/her evaluation.
- ▶ Answer the questions directly. There is a fine line between appropriate detail and long-winded responses. Formulating your answers according to the STAR and ARC principles will help you with this.
- ▶ The interview is not a race. Take your time to collect yourself, think, formulate your answer, then talk. You can use note paper to quickly jot down what you want to say or important parts of the question.

- ▶ Be a good listener. Do not hesitate to occasionally ask questions if you do not understand what the interviewer is asking you. However, try to avoid having *every* question repeated to you. Listening is an important part of oral communication, which is assessed during the interview. For this reason, you should not use this as a stalling tactic either (i.e., to gain time to think about your answer).
- ▶ Do not panic if you cannot answer a question. You can “pass” on a question and come back to it later, *and will not be penalized for doing so*. If you draw a blank, as all of us sometimes do, just say: “I can’t think of anything right now, can we come back to that question later?”
- ▶ Being unable to answer a question does not mean that you will automatically fail the interview. The score that you receive for each competency and the overall pass or fail recommendation will be based on all of the information that you provide to all of the questions. Also, being unable to answer a question is unlikely to happen often, as the questions are designed to be general so that they can apply to everybody.
- ▶ Occasionally, the interviewer might ask you for another example, even after you have fully answered a question. This does not necessarily mean that your previous answer was unsatisfactory. The interviewer may simply want more (or more recent) information about that particular competency.
- ▶ Learn from the interviewer. If you are asked to provide more information about the situation for one question, try to give more detail about the context when you answer the next question. Or if the interviewer interrupted you while you were talking, try to be more concise in your next answer.
- ▶ Do not make up answers! Interviewers have been trained to probe for additional detail and any misinformation is likely to be detected. The interviewer may ask you to provide the names and contact information of people who can verify the situations you describe. Any attempt to lie or deliberately omit relevant information will result in your removal from further consideration for employment within the RCMP.

What to Expect

The interviewer’s job is to gather the information required to make an informed decision about whether or not to recommend that you continue in the selection process. For that reason, the interviewer will be taking a lot of notes during the interview, and you will not get as much eye contact as you would in a normal conversation. This extensive note-taking is for your

benefit and the interviewer’s benefit: the interviewer needs to capture your answers in as much detail as possible in order to give you a fair rating. The interviewer often may continue writing after you have finished speaking. You can use this time to “rest up” and organize your thoughts.

You can also make brief notes during the interview to organize your answers. However, at the end of the interview the interviewer will collect all of the notes that you have made in order to preserve the confidentiality of the TOSIG questions.

From time to time, the interviewer will ask you questions to clarify something you have said or to have you provide a more complete answer. For example, he or she might request further details about your individual contribution to a team project you have described. Interviewers ask these additional questions to obtain the most complete and accurate picture of your past experiences.

Once the interview is over, the interviewer will rate your answers against a predetermined structured scoring key. This ensures that everyone is evaluated the same way and against the same standards.

You must successfully pass the TOSIG in order to proceed in the recruiting process. After passing the interview, you still have to successfully complete other steps, including a background investigation and a medical exam. If necessary, you may also write a language test (second language). Contact your recruiting office for more details on these steps of the process.

The purpose of the feedback session is to provide you with the interviewer’s decision about whether or not you have been recommended for further processing. The interviewer will also give you a brief explanation for the ratings that they have assigned. It is important to remember that when the interviewer meets with you to give you feedback, his or her final decision has already been made. The decision is not open to debate. If you do not pass the TOSIG, the interviewer will explain to you the reasons why. Please note that if you fail the selection interview, you will have to wait one year from the date of your interview before you can be interviewed again.

The interviewer will ask that you not discuss the content of the interview with anyone else, and will also gather any notes you may have taken during the interview. It is in your best interest, of course, not to advantage other applicants by revealing the interview questions. The interview questions are protected information and cannot be communicated to any other person, including members of the RCMP. The interviewer will ask you to sign a security acknowledgment form to this effect. Evidence that you have discussed the interview questions with other individuals will disqualify you from the recruit selection process and may result in civil action. This is necessary to ensure fairness for all applicants.

General Tips on How to Approach the Interview

It is normal to be nervous at a job interview. However, you need to minimize this nervousness to perform your best. The best way to do this is to prepare ahead of time. The following tips may help:

- Make sure to get enough sleep and to eat well the night before the interview. If you are tired, you will have trouble recalling your best incidents, or all of the specific details the interviewer needs.
- Stick to your normal routine in the days before the interview.
- Try to relax and think about other things the night before.
- Give yourself plenty of time to arrive at the interview site. If you are worried about arriving late, you will be nervous when you get there. Become familiar in advance with the route you will travel to the interview. It may be a good idea to make a trial run the day before, to get a general idea of how long it takes to get to there, where to park if you have a car, etc.
- Your goal should only be to do your best. The less pressure you put on yourself, the less nervous you will be, and the better able you will be to demonstrate your skills and abilities.
- Remember that the goal of the interview is not to trick or confuse you, but simply to see if you possess the qualities required of RCMP telecom operators.

Kennedy. For Dummies Press.

Interview power: Selling yourself face to face. (2004), by Tom Washington. Mount Vernon Press.

Internet Sites

www.jobweb.com/Resources/Library/Interviews/default.htm

www.wetfeet.com/advice/interviewing.asp

www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html

The *Preparatory Guide for the Telecom Operator Selection Interview* and the interview itself, the *Telecom Operator Selection Interview*, were developed by Research & Intelligence Directorate, Human Resources Sector, RCMP. Please forward any suggestions or comments you wish to make to:

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Suggested Resources

Books

Job interviews for dummies, 2nd ed., (2000), by Joyce Lain