

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Preparatory Guide for the Regular Member Selection Interview Guide (RMSIG)



Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

Preparatory Guide for the RCMP Regular Member Selection Interview

The purpose of this *Preparatory Guide for the RCMP Regular Member 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 assist you in minimizing any anxiety you might have. The ultimate goal of this Guide is to help you perform at your best during the interview. This will enable us to get the most accurate picture of your potential to perform successfully as an RCMP police officer.

The Regular Member Selection Interview Guide (RMSIG) is the interview guide used by the RCMP to select applicants for RCMP cadet training. In the RCMP recruitment process, the selection interview usually takes place after the RCMP Police Aptitude Battery (RPAB) and the Physical Ability Requirement Evaluation (PARE). 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 RCMP constable functions was carried out to identify the qualities required to do this job well. From this analysis, a list of questions was prepared. The RMSIG 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. 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

In your answer, you can refer to a situation in almost any kind of context (school, work, volunteering, sports, etc.). The interview also contains questions presenting you with hypothetical situations. You will be asked to tell what you would do in those circumstances and the rationale behind your intended behaviour. The goal is to see if you possess the qualities identified as necessary to perform successfully as an RCMP police officer.

The duration of the selection interview will vary from one applicant to another, but the average length is two to three

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

hours, unless you answer “no” to one of the five “Essential Job Requirements” questions. In that case, the interview, as well as the recruitment process, will end there.

If you answer “yes” to the questions regarding the “Essential Job Requirements,” the interviewer will go on with the interview questions. Keep in mind that you will be held to your answers related to the “Essential Job Requirements” questions (e.g., you really should be prepared to be posted anywhere in Canada if you answer “yes” to this question).

Essential Job Requirements

- Do you currently possess an unrestricted valid driver’s license?
- Are you willing to be posted anywhere in Canada?
- Are you willing to perform shift work, including weekends and holidays?
- Are you prepared to carry a firearm and to use it or any other necessary physical force in the performance of your duties?
- Are you willing to pledge allegiance to Canada?

The interviewer’s job is to gather the information required to make an informed decision regarding whether or not to recommend that you continue in the selection process. The interviewer will take a lot of notes throughout the interview. Consequently, you may not get as much eye contact as you would in a normal conversation. This extensive note-taking is for both your benefit and the interviewer’s: he or she wants to capture your answers in as much detail as possible in order to give you a fair rating. If it helps you in organizing your answer, you are permitted to make some brief notes too. However, the interviewer will collect them at the end of the interview in order to preserve the confidentiality of the RMSIG questions.

From time to time, the interviewer will ask you questions to get

you to clarify a point or to have you provide a more complete answer. For example, he or she might request further detail on your individual contribution to a 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. If you pass the selection interview, you will go through a security interview, typically that same day. The security interview takes about one hour and requires no preparation.

You must successfully pass both interviews in order to proceed in the recruiting process. Even after passing these interviews, the selection process is not over (though you are well on your way). You still have to successfully go through other steps including a background investigation and a medical/dental exam. If considered necessary, you may also have to write a language test (second language) and/or take another PARE test. Contact your recruiting officer if you would like further details on these steps of the process.

If you do not pass the selection interview, you will be provided with the reasons why this has occurred. Some applicants may have potential but currently lack the life experiences that would *demonstrate* that they actually possess the competencies required from an RCMP officer. The interviewer's final decision has been made when she or he meets with you. It is not open to debate during the feedback session. 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. He or she 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 acknowledgement form to this effect. Evidence that you have discussed the questions with others would disqualify you from the recruit selection process and may result in civil action. This is necessary to ensure fairness for all applicants.

What Does the RMSIG Measure?

The RMSIG assesses seven qualities (defined below) considered essential to perform successfully as an RCMP officer. The goal of the interview is to determine to what extent you possess these qualities.

Continuous Learning Orientation: Continuously identifies areas that need improvement in order to perform effectively and

accomplish established goals, or simply for own interest and satisfaction. Develops and maintains awareness of surrounding trends, programs and issues as they relate to established goals. Addresses learning requirements by: independently keeping abreast of developments, trends and new directions, reading, seeking appropriate experiences, training, course work, community involvement, and other means. Shares information and techniques and applies them to daily tasks.

Interpersonal Skills: Interacts sensitively and respectfully with all individuals and groups to develop mutual understanding and productive relationships. Demonstrates empathy. Works effectively in teams and in partnerships. Identifies and resolves issues through consultation, negotiation and consensus building and/or other appropriate processes.

Service Orientation: Demonstrates a genuine interest in the needs and opinions of people to whom a product/service is being provided. Shows commitment and perseverance in achieving goals and meeting demands to the highest standards. Seeks innovative approaches for improving products/services based on feedback received. Expresses a sincere interest in helping people.

Personal Effectiveness and Flexibility: Adjusts behaviour to current circumstances in order to remain productive through 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. Demonstrates perseverance and a willingness to perform beyond the normal range of job expectations and requirements, when necessary. Takes initiative and enthusiastically strives to do an outstanding job.

Thinking Skills: Works with others to identify needs and to conceptualize issues in diverse, dynamic or complex circumstances giving consideration to all stakeholders' interests. Acquires and analyses appropriate information and considers alternative strategies to achieve objectives. Assesses risk, develops innovative solutions, and evaluates potential outcomes of various actions before making decisions. Establishes priorities, makes decisions and takes actions based on requirements of the situation. Assesses outcomes of actions in consultation with stakeholders.

Leadership: Attracts and mobilizes energies and talents of others to work toward shared objectives of a group or organization. Encourages partnerships. Inspires others, by example, to perform to the highest standards. Sets, and/or involves others in setting, goals that are challenging, realistic and measurable. Actively participates with and/or empowers other individuals and teams to accomplish goals and objectives. Assesses and manages risk. Makes, and/or inspires others to make, innovative and responsible decisions. Accepts responsibility for outcomes and is accountable. Recognizes contributions and successes of others.

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

How to Prepare for the RMSIG

Before applying for a job, it is always advisable to research the organization to which you are offering your services. It helps you determine if the type of work, the culture, and the working conditions will suit you. Consequently, reading relevant RCMP documentation and talking with RCMP police officers about cadet training and their day-to-day work would help you form a realistic idea of an RCMP police officer's job. This will help you adapt better at the cadet training and 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 even about the RCMP itself. Therefore, there is no essential material to *learn* before the interview. Still, there are several steps you can (and should) take ahead of time to better prepare yourself for the interview.

- ▶ Review the definitions of the seven qualities (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 to think about the most challenging and most recent situations. The more recent the better. The interviewer wants to know if you are using your skills and abilities now. Obviously, if your "best" example (one where you handled an extremely difficult situation very well) happened five years ago, you should mention it.

I DON'T HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE!

Many people (especially young applicants who are entering the job market) make the mistake of neglecting very relevant life experiences, just because they did not take place in a full-time job setting. You may have acquired and demonstrated a set of skills and abilities through a wide variety of activities. These skills and abilities may be transferrable to the job of a police officer. Make sure you let the interviewer know about them. So, when preparing for the interview, take the time to reflect about

your past and pick the examples that most closely relate to the competencies as they are defined here.

- Think about ALL of the jobs you have had, either full-time, part-time or summer jobs. Do not forget internships and cooperative education placements.
- Remember the projects you undertook in school (term projects, extracurricular involvement such as the student newspaper, student associations/clubs, organization of sports or cultural events, etc.).
- Did you participate in competitive sports?
- Have you done any volunteer work?
- Do you have any hobbies that have helped you develop the qualities assessed in the RMSIG?

- ▶ In most of the questions, you will be asked to describe a specific situation from your past. To make a fair assessment of your actions in this situation, 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.
- ▶ It is a good idea to write down a summary of the examples that highlight your skills, abilities and experiences, and to review them periodically to refresh your memory (some people use index cards). When you write your examples, try to structure them according to the STAR principle. Again, this will help you formulate your answers in a clear and concise manner for the interviewer. 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 from the competency definitions (e.g., "Tell me about a time when you had to ..."). This will give you the opportunity to describe your past experiences orally, and to get some feedback on your answers regarding their 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 or her evaluation.
- ▶ Answer the questions directly. The interviewer has a limited amount of time in which to understand your examples and ask you the questions, so you will have to be concise and

to-the-point. Formulating your answers according to the STAR principle will help you achieve that. Keep in mind that here is a fine line between appropriate detail and long-winded responses.

- ▶ 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, you should not ask to have *every* question repeated. Listening is an important part of oral communication and you would score very low on that competency if a lot of questions had to be repeated. 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. *You 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?” However, be wary of doing it for every question, as it may only make you more nervous.
 - Being unable to answer one question does not automatically result in failing the interview. Stay focussed and do your best on the questions that follow. The score you will get will be based on the information you provide. Besides, being unable to answer a question is unlikely to happen often, as the questions are designed to be so general that they can apply to virtually everybody.

Set out your answers using the STAR principle to provide the level of detail interviewer is looking for:

- S:** What was the situation? Clearly and concisely set out the situation surrounding your example. Do not overdo it or the interviewer will prompt you to get to the point!
- T:** What was the task you were called upon to do? What was your specific challenge? Try to keep referring to yourself. The interviewer wants to hear about your role in this situation.
- A:** What action did you take? Again, talk about your contribution, what you actually did.
- R:** What was the result? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? What would you do differently if given the chance?

- ▶ 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 on that particular competency.
- ▶ The interviewer may also ask you to provide the names and contact information of people who can verify the situations you describe. This information can be provided shortly after the end of the interview, if necessary.
- ▶ Learn from the interviewer. If, for one question, you are asked to provide more information about the situation, try to give more detail about the context when you answer the next question. If the interviewer interrupted you, 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. Of course, the interviewers are also police officers who are experienced in verifying the accuracy of what they are being told. Do not forget that any attempt to lie, or to deliberately omit relevant information, would result in your removal from further consideration for employment within the RCMP.

The best way to answer negative questions is to outline what you did right and what you have learned personally along the way.

Many questions in the interview refer to difficult situations in which you might not have been successful. You may be asked questions about negative situations, for example “Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone with whom you did not get along.” Be ready to talk about situations that did not turn out that well. To prepare for these types of question, think of times when there were problems, frustrations and conflicts. What did you do and how was the problem resolved? We all experience failure from time to time. Try to describe the situation as honestly as you can and tell the interviewer what you would do differently now that you know better.

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 surest way to do this is to prepare ahead of time. The following tips may also help.

- ▶ Make sure to 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 wants.

- ▶ Do not alter your routine too much in the days before the interview.
- ▶ Try to relax and to think about other things the night before the interview.
- ▶ 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, of where to park if you have a car, etc.
- ▶ Keep in mind that the goal of the interview is not to trick or confuse you, but to know you better and see if you possess the qualities required of RCMP officers.
- ▶ Be yourself. Your goal should only be to do your best. The less pressure you put on yourself, the less nervous you will be, and the more able you will be to demonstrate your skills and abilities.

This *Preparatory Guide for the Regular Member Selection Interview* and the selection interview itself, the *Regular Member Selection Interview Guide*, were developed by the HR Research & Intelligence Directorate, Human Resources Sector, RCMP.

Please forward any suggestions or comments you wish to make to:

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revised May 2006

Suggested Resources

Books

Job interviews for dummies, 2nd ed., (2000), by Joyce Lain Kennedy. For Dummies Press.

Interview power: Selling yourself face to face, (2000), by Tom Washington. Mount Vernon Press.

The complete idiot's guide to the perfect interview, 2nd ed. (2000), by Marc Dorio, William Myers. Alpha Books.

Internet Sites

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

www.campusaccess.com/campus_web/career/c3job_inter.htm

www.wetfeet.com/advice/interviewing.asp

www.quintcareers.com/intvres.html

www.campusaccess.com/campus_web/resource/r3ref_careerjob_slinks.htm

<http://youth.gc.ca/> (Search for "job interview")