



## Interview techniques

Congratulations! Your application has made a good impression and you're now at the next stage of the recruitment process: the interview. For your very best chance of being offered the job, follow our top interview tips.

### Top tips for a successful interview

#### 1. Do your homework

Before arriving for your interview, make sure you have gathered information about the interviewing organisation. Visit their website or conduct other research to find out about their background, what their business is and additional details, eg about the company mission statement and their values.

You don't need to have an encyclopedic knowledge, but you should be able to demonstrate that you know something about the organisation.

From what you have found out about the organisation, ask yourself: can you identify with their values? Can you imagine yourself working there? If you can't, then it may be worth reconsidering your application. If you decide to withdraw, you should always let the employer know. Assuming you are still interested, think carefully about how your experience and knowledge could be applied to the recruiting company and role.

## 2. Plan ahead

Make sure you know where the interview is being held and how you will get there. If you are driving, check out the parking options and make sure you have the correct change for pay and display car parks (where applicable). If it is possible, then do a practice run. Bear in mind factors such as rush hour traffic which may affect your journey, and sort out what you are going to wear to the interview. Ensure that it's clean and pressed.

If you have been asked to make a presentation, check with the interviewer what audio visual equipment (laptop, projector, flip charts, etc) will be available, and make sure you thoroughly rehearse what you are going to say.

Anticipate the kinds of questions they will ask you, and plan what you will say. Consider taking a portfolio or examples of previous work relevant to the vacant post. If you can, enlist a friend or relative to help you practise for the interview.

## 3. Engineer the first impression

Research has shown that an interviewer will have formed an impression within the first eight seconds of meeting the candidate. It's vital therefore that you look, act and dress appropriately for the role.

- Make sure your shoes, hair and nails are all clean and that you dress appropriately
- Make eye contact with the interviewer and smile
- Don't let yourself down with a very weak or hand-crushingly firm handshake

Don't forget, the interview starts as soon as you arrive. Be pleasant and polite to everyone you meet and consider yourself 'on parade' until you have left the premises.

#### **4. Look confident, be professional**

Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer(s) throughout the interview. On entering the interview room, don't sit down until you're invited. Don't chew gum!

Sit up straight, maintain an 'open position' (don't cross your arms or legs) and try to relax. Make sure you speak clearly and as confidently as you can and be enthusiastic about the job and the opportunities that it offers you.

#### **5. Prepare for the questions**

Ultimately, the interviewer is trying to find out whether you will be able to perform the job well and if you will fit in with the company's culture and other team members.

Before the interview, study the job description and person specification. These will indicate the important skills and knowledge required for the role and give you a clue in terms of the questions you will be asked. At the end of this document you will find some examples of typical interview questions.

Even if you are not asked the questions you are anticipating, the fact that you have prepared for them will make you generally feel more confident in the interview situation. If you are asked a question you hadn't expected, don't panic. Take your time to think about what you're being asked and don't rush for an answer.

## 6. Ask a few of your own

At the end of the interview, you will almost always be asked if you have any questions for the interviewer. It's a good idea to have some ready as it shows that you are interested in the role and have taken the time to prepare.

What these questions are will obviously depend on the role, but could include:

- What training and induction will be given?
- What prospects are there for development?
- What would a typical day in this role look like?
- What do you think is the best thing about working for this company?
- How does this department fit in with the rest of the organisation?

It would also be acceptable to ask practical questions such as:

- What are the normal hours of work?
- Who will I be working with and/or who will I be directly responsible to?

You may naturally wish to ask about the pay and benefits and what happens next, for instance when you will find out the outcome of the interview. These are perfectly acceptable questions but are best left for last.

## **7. An interview is a two way street**

An interview should be seen as a two way process. As well as being the opportunity for the recruiting company to find out more about you, you should also consider it an opportunity for you to find out about the job and the company.

## **8. Ask for feedback**

Of course, not all interviews can result in securing a job. If, despite all of the above, you still don't get the job, try and find out why. Ask the recruiting company for feedback on your interview, as this will be useful for your next interview situation.

**Use the space on the next page to begin jotting down your thoughts to common interview questions. It helps to have a few notes down on paper as a starting point, then each idea can be developed.**

## Typical interviewer's questions

**General background:** *eg Tell me about yourself (often the first question you are asked).*

**Qualifications:** *eg Why do you think you're qualified for this role? What makes you think you would be good at this job? What qualities do you have to offer? (In this context, qualifications can include educational, employment-related and personal.)*

**Experience:** *eg Describe a situation where you have...? Have you come across...? How do you cope with...? (These are specific questions directly related to the vacant position and are seeking to elicit if you have particular competencies required.)*

**Reasons for applying:** *eg Why are you seeking a position with this company? What interests you most about this job? (Your answers should describe what you find appealing about the post and how your previous experience fits you for the role.)*

**Career objectives:** *eg Where do you see yourself in five/ten years' time? What's your ideal job? (Be ready to discuss your long term aspirations. The best approach is probably one that indicates that you have thought about this and have taken some action towards realising your ambitions.)*

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