

Interview Skills

Preparation

- Find out what format the interview will take – how many people will be interviewing you? Do you have to complete any form or test?
- Have a look at the organisation's website to find out what your potential employer does. Consider what the organisation's values are and if it has a mission statement. Research who the competitors of the organisation may be and what recent developments there have been in the sector. Employers will expect you to make the effort to research their organisation thoroughly.
- Read over the CV and covering letter/application form that you used to apply for the job.
- Look at the job advert and person specification again and see what skills the employer is looking for. Think of specific examples of where you can demonstrate that you have used these skills.
- Practise your answers to typical interview questions.
- Prepare some questions to ask the interviewer.
- Plan your journey and what to wear

The Interview

- Arrive with plenty of time, but not too early.
- Take a few deep breaths before going into the interview room.
- First impressions are important and if the interviewer offers you his/her hand to shake, make sure your handshake is firm and done with confidence.
- Make eye contact with the interviewer. There may be a panel of interviewers and you will need to have eye contact with each of them. Remember to smile.
- Listen to the question carefully and answer that specific question. Think carefully before you answer a question – it is okay to pause. Ask the interviewer to repeat/clarify the question, if you didn't understand it initially.
- Avoid yes or no answers – give examples to illustrate your skills and achievements.
- Be confident – this is your opportunity to tell the interviewer about your strengths.
- If you are asked to give an example of a time when you used a particular skill (e.g. leadership, team working), use the STAR technique to structure your answer:
 - **S**ituation – describe the background to the situation.
 - **T**ask – what was your responsibility?
 - **A**ction – what you did specifically.
 - **R**esult – describe the outcome. What did you learn and how did you take this forward?
- Develop a range of specific examples for different skills, using STAR. You can use examples from all aspects of your life (e.g. previous employment,

- academic study.)
- Speak clearly and at a moderate rate.
 - Ask your questions at the end but stay alert, as some of your questions may be answered during the interview process.

Alternative Interview Formats

- Interviews by telephone or by Skype are becoming more common. Such interviews are often used as the first stage of the recruitment process
- Choose a quiet location where you are not likely to be interrupted
- Over the telephone, it is important to speak clearly as well as to listen carefully
- For Skype, set up the equipment in advance and do a trial run to make sure it is working and that the webcam is correctly positioned. Look at the webcam and not at the screen.
Be aware of your backdrop, and avoid lighting directly positioned overhead
- Dress as you would for a face to face interview

After the Interview

- Thank the interviewer.
- You may find it useful to reflect on how the interview went and note down what went well, what you would do differently and the questions, you were asked.
- Take some time out to relax and give yourself a treat.
- If you weren't successful, ask the organisation for some feedback. This will help you to prepare and plan for future interviews.

Typical Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself?
- What did you learn from/enjoy about your degree course?
- What attracts you to this organisation?
- Why are you interested in this role?
- What are the main problems facing the industry?
- Tell me about one of your achievements
- What are your key strengths/weaknesses?
- How would your friends/colleagues describe you?
- Tell me about a time, when you had to lead a team to complete a target/project successfully. What was your role and what was the outcome?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Questions you could ask the Interviewer (depending upon each situation)

- What are the key challenges facing this department/organisation?
- Does the department/organisation have any plans to expand?
- What opportunities are there for staff development?

Additional Resources

- The [Prospects](#) website provides comprehensive resources on interview questions, how to prepare and common interview mistakes, as well as a specific section on Skype interviews.
- [Target Jobs](#) provides information on interview preparation, including techniques for managing nerves and using positive body language. There is also a section on how to deal with “tricky” questions.
- See [Career Player](#) for the video “Stand out at Interview”
- [Prospect Personnel Solutions](#) provides tips specifically for telephone interviews.