



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Boost your chances of success by following this advice on interview techniques

TYPES OF INTERVIEW

There are several different types of interview:

- **Telephone** - Some employers use an initial telephone interview to eliminate unsuitable candidates. Successful applicants are usually then invited to a face-to-face interview or an assessment centre. Telephone interviews usually last for around 30 minutes.
- **Video** - An alternative to the traditional telephone interview, some organisations, particularly those recruiting in sales, media and marketing, will screen candidates via Skype, FaceTime, YouTube or Appear IN. Video interviews usually last for around 30 minutes.
- **Face-to-Face** - The most common type of interview, face-to-face encounters can take place with either one interviewer or, more commonly, a panel. In some rare cases, you may interview alongside other candidates and questioning can either be strengths-based or competency-based. Face-to-face interviews usually last for between one and two hours.
- **Assessment Centres** - Used primarily by large employers to compare the performance of several candidates in a range of situations, **assessment centres** typically involve tasks such as presentations, group work, written tests and in-tray exercises. They usually last for one full working day.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Regardless of the type of interview you're preparing for, doing plenty of research and planning is key. Generally, you should:

- Consider how you'll explain problematic aspects of your career, such as gaps in your work history.
- Identify the skills, interests and experiences that the organisation is looking for by looking at its website and social media channels.
- Plan your journey in advance, aiming to arrive at least ten minutes before your interview is scheduled and ideally completing a 'dry run' beforehand.
- Prepare answers to common interview questions, as well as your own questions to ask at the interview.
- Find out about the people who'll interview you.
- Research the issues, trends and opportunities affecting the organisation and the wider job sector.

On the morning of your interview, eat a healthy breakfast and don't consume too much caffeine. You can combat nerves by exercising - if you have time, of course - as this creates feelings of wellbeing.

WHAT TO TAKE

- a bottle of water/a pen and notepad/photo ID (e.g. your passport or driving licence)
- the job description and person specification/academic certificates and work examples/CV, application form and interview invitation.

WHAT TO WEAR TO AN INTERVIEW

The typical interview dress code is usually fairly straightforward for men: a dark suit and tie combination is the safest option. However, things are slightly more open for women. You could wear a dress, trouser suit, or a skirt and blouse; black, navy or brown are the safest colours.

You should also:

- avoid wearing too much jewellery or make-up/cut and clean your fingernails
- ensure that any briefcase or handbag you take is smart/polish your shoes
- tidily arrange your hair/use aftershave or perfume sparingly/ iron your outfit.

4 WAYS TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION

Winning interview techniques include:

1. **Positivity** - Be well-mannered with any staff you meet before or after the interview and, if you're feeling particularly nervous, remind yourself that the very worst thing that could happen is you simply not getting the job. During the interview, avoid talking about any personal problems unless completely necessary, and never be negative about your previous employers.
2. **Body language** - Give a firm handshake to your interviewer(s) before and after the session. Once you're seated, sit naturally without slouching in your chair or leaning on the desk. Throughout the interview, remember to smile frequently and retain eye contact.
3. **Clarity** - Answer all questions clearly and concisely, evidencing your most relevant skills, experiences and achievements. It's perfectly acceptable to pause before answering a difficult question to give yourself thinking time, or asking for clarification if, at first, you're unsure what the question means. When answering, don't speak too quickly.
4. **Enthusiasm** - It's important that you allow your personality to shine throughout, as well as ask thought-provoking questions at appropriate moments. Both of these strategies will demonstrate that you're genuinely interested in the role and listening closely to the interviewer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

When leaving the organisation, let the interviewer know that you're available to answer any follow-up questions. If you feel things went particularly well, you could email the interviewer the next day, thanking them for their time.

In most cases, the organisation will now have enough evidence to make their decision. In some cases, however, you may be asked to attend a second interview, which aims to more closely scrutinise what you and any other remaining candidates can bring to the role. Prepare for your second interview just like your first, but you should also:

- Request feedback from your first interview, before addressing anything that caused you difficulty.
- Research the organisation in even greater detail than for the first interview, preparing examples that demonstrate how you can benefit the organisation.

DEALING WITH REJECTION

Didn't get the job? How to survive rejection

Being rejected after a job interview can severely dent your confidence. Many candidates dwell on being turned down, often forgetting the bigger picture. Rejection, while not pleasant, can often be blown out of proportion and viewed as a sign of failure. However, by thinking objectively, candidates can use it to build on their core strengths, address development points and ultimately find a job that suits them best.

THE POSITIVE SIDE

At the very least you should feel as though you have learned something through the interview process. We all learn from our experiences, and interviewing is no different.

However, if you performed to the best of your ability, displayed all your relevant technical expertise, demonstrated your competencies and communicated in your most engaging manner in an interview but were still turned down, then you can take comfort from knowing that it was the wrong firm for you.

NARROW YOUR SEARCH

The job market is getting more competitive by the day. With stricter requirements, companies cannot afford to hire you unless you are a 100% match. Be highly selective with where you apply. Don't be afraid to turn down if you feel they are not right. Where you feel you are suitable, research the role, the company, its culture and the team you will be working with in as much detail as possible to gauge how appropriate you are before accepting an interview.