

Top tips for interviews

You've found the perfect role for you. You've sent us your CV and (impressed by your skills, experience, and attitude) the employer has offered you an interview. How do you make sure that you stand out from the crowd and impress the interviewer enough to secure that role for yourself? Our ten top tips will help you get interview ready and raring to go.

80% of employers see the interview as the most important part of the recruitment process, so if you really want to get that job, it is imperative that you get it right. There is no sure fire way of being 100% successful in interview, because no two interviewer techniques are exactly the same and every employer is looking for something slightly different.

However, you can give yourself the best chance possible by following a few basic guidelines and getting plenty of practice.

1. Preparation

The perfect interview is one where you leave the interviewer having no doubt at all that you are perfect candidate for their job. How do you do this? You need to prepare. You need to know exactly what they are looking for, and be that person. So do your homework and find out as much as you can:

Research the Organisation - Find out about the company. Where are they? What do they do? How big are they? Who are their competitors? This sort of information is usually readily available on websites, in the press or in company literature/accounts.

Know the Job Specification - What are they looking for in terms of skills, qualifications, experience and personality? **Research Yourself** - You should be the world's expert on you. Match your skills, qualifications, experience and personality to that of the job specification and try to think of examples which illustrate these. Know your work history and be ready to explain any gaps and reasons for leaving previous positions. Generally, be prepared to talk about anything you have written in a CV or on an application form. Think about what you could

bring to the role and what you could offer the company. Once you've done your homework, you're halfway there. You should now be able to comfortably answer most, if not all of the questions put to you in the interview. All that is left to do is get your personality across and create the right sort of impression.

2. Impressions

You've probably heard the saying 'first impressions last', well this is especially true in an interview. It's all very well having the right skills and experience, but if you give the interviewer a bad impression, it is unlikely you will get the job. Most employers will make their minds up in the first five minutes of the interview, so if you're late or inappropriately dressed the interview will probably turn out to be a bit of an uphill struggle. So, yet again, be prepared:

Be early - aim to be ten to fifteen minutes early. Know where you are going, and plan the route, find out bus and train times in advance.

Dress appropriately - play it safe, conservative dress (generally a suit) will usually be appropriate for most situations. What you wear can also be dependent on the type of company or interview you are attending, so make sure you know what is expected.

Confident and polite - confidence can play a big part in your success, so remember; you are interviewing the company as well. Always give a firm handshake, keep good eye contact and smile.

Body Language - this is non-verbal communication that we use every day without being aware of it. It can give away the way we are feeling and sometimes imply the type of person we are. This is a subject for discussion, but for now you should be aware of the basics; Keep good eye contact, don't look at the walls or floor. Sit in a relaxed manner, don't slouch, or sit bolt upright. Keep your hands on your lap or on the table in front of you, don't scratch, fidget, or wave your arms about. If things start looking good, don't over relax, they can go downhill just as quickly.

Take with you - there are some basics you should always take with you. A pen, company literature (if you have any), a list of pre-prepared questions to ask at the end of the interview, a note pad, your CV, and your application form if required. By taking these, you will give the interviewer the impression that you have prepared and if nothing else, you will have something to do with your hands.

Be honest and relevant - stick to the facts. Be clear and concise and only answer the question being asked. It is easy to get carried away and tell the interviewer everything about you, but if it's not relevant, it probably won't impress. Whatever you do, don't lie. If it doesn't trip you up in the interview, it's bound to later.

Be enthusiastic - enthusiasm can go a long way. You may not have all the skills or experience they are looking for but if you show you are keen this will go in your favour and may make you stand out from the crowd.

Personality - Changing your personality for the interview is really another form of lying. You may get the job and find out you hate it because your real personality doesn't fit in with that of your colleagues. You can never be 100% sure of the type of personality an employer is looking for, so play it safe. Be yourself. As discussed earlier, preparation is really the key to success, and this holds true for most situations.

Below are some of the most popular questions that are asked in interview. If you can answer them positively and confidently without pausing or wracking your brains to find the answer, you should be fine on the day. If not, prepare your answers and ask someone to role play the interview with you. This may feel a little bit strange at first but it will really help.

3. Questions Most Often Asked During Interview

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why did you leave your last/previous job/s?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- What motivates you?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What are you looking for in a job?
- Who do you admire and why?
- How do you prefer to work, independently or as part of a team?
- What have been your major achievements?
- Give me three words that best describe you?

- What attributes/skills could you bring to this role?
- What other positions have you applied for?
- How did you get along with your last boss?
- How would your last boss describe you?
- How would your best friend describe you?
- Why do you think we should employ you?
- What sort of salary are you looking for? • Are you flexible? Give me an example?
- Are you self-motivated? Give me an example?
- Why did you choose to study.....at college/university?
- Are you innovative? Give me an example?
- How would you deal with an angry colleague/client?
- What salary are you worth?
- What did you like about your last job?
- What did you dislike about your last job?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- What do you know about the company?
- Now you are aware of these questions, consider how you would BEST answer each of them.

4. Any questions?

After the interviewer has finished asking you about yourself, they will usually ask if you have any questions. If you have done your homework and researched the company this is an ideal opportunity to ask questions which relate specifically to the company's product and/or services.

At this point you can then refer to the ones you prepared earlier and don't be afraid to take notes for future reference. It can be quite difficult to think of good questions to ask so there are some examples below to give you some guidelines.

Try to avoid issues such as salary, benefits, hours of work or anything which can be seen as purely selfish issues. You should really know the answer to these questions before you go for the interview.

Questions to ask the interviewer could include:

- How long have you been established?
- What training will I receive?
- What would my long-term prospects be?
- Who are your biggest competitors?
- Why is your service/product better than your competitors?
- What sort of companies do you deal with?
- Why do you like working for this company?
- How would I fit in with other members of staff?
- Where could you see me in five years' time?
- Who would I be responsible for/to?
- When will you be making a decision?
- Where can you see the company in five years' time?
- What kind of a person fits in here?

It is always a good idea at the end of your questions to add one of the following; How suitable do you think I would be for this position? Do you have any reservations about me? These will establish whether the interviewer has any doubts about your personality, skills or ability. Something you said earlier in the interview may have come out wrong. This gives you the opportunity to explain and redeem yourself.

5. Closing

At the very end of the interview, always express your interest in the position, even if you are not sure. You can always say no if you are offered the job later. This is probably most important after a first interview, as second interviews can often be less informal and can give you a better understanding of the job/company.

Hopefully this will have helped you a little bit. We cannot reiterate enough that preparation is the key.

Remember: Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Good luck!!