

Library Helpsheet

Interview Skills

Interviews can be nerve-racking, so here are a few tips on not only getting through an interview but feeling happy with your performance. Think of an interview as a 2-way process i.e. a conversation. You are getting to know the people you will be working with as well as the interviewer getting to know you.

Types of interview

Interviews can take place in a variety of formats. Make sure you know what kind of interview you will have beforehand.

Type of interview	How it is conducted	Tips
Telephone interview	Usually one to one over the telephone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare as if for a face-to-face interview • Have your CV/application to hand • Find a quiet place with no distractions • If using your mobile phone, make sure the battery is charged and you have good reception • Make sure your tone of voice is enthusiastic and positive.
Panel interview	Interviewed by several people face-to-face – most common type of interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address your answers to whoever asked the question but make eye contact with the entire panel • Don't worry if someone is writing as you speak as notetaking is part of an interview; just concentrate on what you want to say.
Assessment centre	A wide range of tests and exercises e.g. group exercises, presentations, psychometric tests (to assess your abilities and personality), and interviews – over 1-3 days	<p>Your personality, skills and how you interact with others are assessed. Think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All documentation, notes and resources you might need to take with you • Match your own knowledge, skills and experiences to the job competencies (in the job specification) and identify your strengths and weaknesses in relation to the job • Maintain a friendly manner and remember you are being assessed even in "informal" situations – be careful what you say to others in informal situations.
Group interview	Observes how you perform in a group situation through discussions and/or tasks	<p>Make sure you participate and show your knowledge. You can say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree and would like to add... • Another approach would be to... • Does anyone want to add ...?
Competency based interview	The interviewer seeks evidence that you have the skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare examples from your own experiences which match the job competencies e.g. using problem solving to overcome a barrier and meet a deadline

	required to do the job (job competencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use examples from work or school e.g. teamwork in a rugby team, voluntary committee, pupil council, etc.
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Preparation

The most important aspect of an interview is making sure you are well prepared.

This involves:

- ❖ Finding out about the company or organisation e.g. structure, turnover, main business, objectives
- ❖ Finding out about the position you have applied for and how it fits in to the organisation or company
- ❖ Make sure you know how to get to the place of interview – plan to arrive 10 minutes early
- ❖ Preparing answers to likely questions – take this with you and refer to it to make sure you have said everything you want to get across
- ❖ Making notes of questions you would like to ask
- ❖ Gathering any documentation you need to take e.g. ID, qualifications, certificates, portfolio, etc.
- ❖ Practicing answering questions with a teacher, family member or friend.



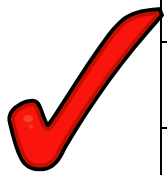
FAQs and what interviewers want to hear

Question	Suggested response
Why do you want this job? Why do you want to work here?	Show you have researched the company e.g. to be part of a great training programme; good public image; part of a growing business; good fit for your skills.
What are your strengths? Tell me about yourself. What can you bring to this job? How would a friend describe you?	This is where you can sell yourself. Make sure you talk about your qualities which match the job specification e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well organised/ flexible/ reliable / enthusiastic • Interpersonal skills/ teamwork • IT/ communications/ problem solving skills • Work on your own initiative/ decision making.
What are your weaknesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't admit to any except those which may be taken as a positive e.g. I am a perfectionist. • Alternatively, pick a weakness you have overcome e.g. not able to speak to strangers but joined a new club and overcame that fear. Make it a positive!
Give an example of how you worked on a team effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the situation briefly, your role and group task • Describe any problems which arose and how these were tackled • What was the result and what you learned from it.
What are your plans for the future? What can you see yourself doing in 5 years' time?	Here your research will highlight likely career paths. Outline your interest in the business sector or industry and emphasise what you can bring to the organisation. Focus on the roles and responsibilities you would hope to gain over time – not the salary!
What is your greatest achievement?	You should highlight something which demonstrates competencies relevant to the job such as teamwork,

	communication or organisation e.g. Duke of Edinburgh award; organising a fund-raising event; learning a new skill.
Do you have any questions?	Show your interest in the job: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would a typical day involve? • What further training is available? • What are the company's long-term goals? If you don't have any questions as the prepared ones have been answered during the course of the interview, say "You have covered everything I was going to ask, but can I clarify..."

Dos and Don'ts

Do	Don't
Get a good night's sleep	Have a late night
Eat something – you need energy to be at your best	Eat anything strong smelling e.g. garlic
Switch your mobile phone to silent	Play games or text while waiting to go in for interview
Be prepared – research, notes and think about the job beforehand (see above)	Forget to look over your application/CV to remember what you said
Dress formally in clean and appropriate clothes and shoes	Wear clothes or jewellery which are overly patterned and can distract from you
Be on time – aim to be there 10 minutes early to have time to calm yourself	Be late – gives a bad impression
Stay calm and remember to breathe!	Panic – remember to breathe!
Smile when appropriate	Lie or pretend you have experience where you don't
Be aware of your body language	Slouch, fold your arms, tap your hands/feet, excessively use your hands when speaking
Make eye contact with each person	Stare or look at the ceiling/your feet
Listen carefully to each question	Interrupt the interviewer
Speak slowly and clearly	Mumble – also try to avoid saying "erm"
Keep your answers concise – 2-3 minutes per question	Talk too much or use only one or two word answers
Ask for the question to be repeated	Be afraid to admit you need to learn more
Be honest and diplomatic	Criticise school or former employer
Be yourself – let your personality shine	Be unprofessional or too informal



A strong finish

A strong finish is as important as a good first impression. Remember to:

- ❖ Thank the interviewers for their time
- ❖ Say you look forward to hearing from them and shake hands if offered
- ❖ Collect your belongings
- ❖ Smile and say goodbye
- ❖ Remain professional and dignified until out of the building.

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