

# Successful Interviews

Tips & Advice for prior & during the interview

# Tips & Advice: prior to the interview

Firstly check your social media / online presence, employers will look at the online version of you, so make sure what they see helps solidify their impression of you as a candidate. You must get off to a good start from the outset, research shows that people make their mind up about someone in the first few seconds of meeting with them.

## First Impression

**No matter how well qualified you appear ‘on paper’ for a position, when recruiting, an employer will still be interested in your personality, engagement & presentation. With more suitable applicants available for every role than ever before, interview performance is often the deciding factor. This makes the interview a significant part of the recruitment process & you will need to make a good impression from the start. This includes being accommodating with your availability for interview**

*If you follow these simple interview preparation guidelines they will help you overcome any interview nerves & instil confidence for a productive meeting with your potential employer.*

## Practical Tips:

Double check the date, time & location of the interview & be familiar with the name & title of the interviewer/s.

**Look the part!** Ensure your appearance is both smart & comfortable. Appearances shouldn't matter, but the plain fact is that you are often judged before you've even uttered a word. Polish your shoes and dress professionally (suited and booted).

If you smoke and are serious about making a good impression for an interview, we advise that you do not smoke for a few hours before an interview!

**Plan your route,** ensure you know exactly where the interview is being held & allow sufficient time to get there.

**Take copies** of your CV, note pad & pen and any certificates, references etc.

**Arrive** for the interview at least five minutes **early**. If you are **UNAVOIDABLY** delayed, notify the company or your agency immediately.

**Be courteous** to everyone you meet, imagine you are being interviewed from the moment you enter the building.

**Read your CV** thoroughly ensuring that you can supply more information if the interviewer needs it. What was your reason for leaving previous employers? What systems did you use? Etc.

Where a **job description** has been supplied ensure you have read it carefully. Have the confidence that you are technically qualified to do the job. Ensure that you can meet the criteria, & have examples from previous roles that can prove this.

## Research & Preparation:

**Remember if you fail to prepare, be prepared to fail!**

It is certain you will be asked specific questions about the company, so make sure you research as much as possible about the company, including, but not limited to: looking at their website, reading media articles & speaking with anyone you know who has worked there. If this fails try phoning the company & requesting general information & or a company brochure. You will compromise your chances if it is obvious that you haven't taken the time to carry out any research.

DON'T assume that you can “wing it”

**Finally, remember to turn off your mobile phone before you arrive.**

# Tips & Advice: during the interview

There are **no** excuses for turning up to an interview unprepared or late!!

## **DO NOT!**

**Talk too much.**

**Criticise your present or previous employer.**

**Discuss expected salary if you can possibly avoid doing so.**

**Interrupt your interviewer.**

**Show any doubt in the role or the company.**

**Be too pushy or desperate.**

**And finally, do not worry about interview nerves, these are natural & healthy to a degree.**

**ADVANCED preparation will ensure any apprehension does not become debilitating.**

## **The Interview**

Greet your interviewer/s with a strong & firm handshake (DON'T break their hand). **Introduce yourself clearly** to the interviewer.

Remember to **smile!** 😊

**Good body language** is vital, be confident & try not to appear too nervous. Being aware of your body language & how you are sitting can help you appear & feel more confident.

**Be prepared** to show how your experience & skills could benefit the company.

You must be able to **back up** everything on your CV – eg 'hardworking' 'energetic' think of examples to give.

**Ask questions** about the business / firm & about the position for which you are being interviewed for.

**Think** before you speak, take time to answer questions, constructing your answers before rushing into a vague reply eg 'why have you not gone on to further studies!'

Demonstrate your **enthusiasm** for the role, even if you have some doubts as these can be addressed should you proceed to the second interview stage.

Be able to discuss your goals & career **aspirations**.

Ask well-informed **questions**. Do not show any reservations you may have about the role or the company

**LISTEN** carefully to the questions & **THINK** about your answers & do not give irrelevant detail. See next section – "Top Interview Questions".

The interview is a two way process, this is also your opportunity to **ask questions** & to find out if the company is right for you, ask open questions (i.e. the 'what, how, where, who or why) this will encourage your interviewer to talk & provide you with additional information.

Remember to smile & **make eye contact** throughout the interview with everyone on the interview panel.

Also remember to **thank** your interviewer & reaffirm your interest in them as an employer. Try not to leave the interview without finding out when you will hear if you have been chosen to proceed to the next stage of the interview process & what the process entails.

Finally, if an agency arranged your interview, remember to contact them straight after your meeting to provide detailed **feedback** which they can relay back to the firm.



## Top Interview Questions

Interview questions may vary but in essence companies are all trying to establish the following:

- ✓ Your skills & experience to do the job.
- ✓ Your enthusiasm & interest for the job and firm.
- ✓ Whether you will be a good team fit.
- ✓ If professional study is required, that you know what is involved.

The following responses are only suggestions, try to personalise your responses as much as possible.

### Tell me about yourself?

Identify some of your main attributes & memorise them. Describe your qualifications, career history & range of skills, emphasising those relevant to the job on offer.

### Tell me about an achievement of which you are proud?

Choose work-related examples that show a tangible benefit to the business. Personal achievements should only be included if they are very impressive or prestigious.

### What do you know about our organisation?

You need to know details about, Company structure, finances, products & services. Key staff, customers / clients & competitors. Market trends & challenges.

### Tell me about a difficult scenario at work & how you dealt with it?

They are testing how you cope under pressure as well as your problem-solving & communication skills. Good examples are where you:

- Helped resolve or improve a difficult situation
- Were resilient in adverse conditions
- Showed emotional intelligence & cool-headedness
- Avoid any examples which you feel sensitive, because in a high-pressured interview situation, old

emotions can easily resurface & throw you off balance.

### What do you like about your current job?

This is a straight forward question. All you have to do is make sure that your 'likes' correspond to the skills etc. required in the job on offer. Be enthusiastic, describe your job as interesting & diverse but do not over do it – after all, you are interviewing for another role.

### What do you dislike about your current job?

Be cautious with this answer. Do not be too specific as you may draw attention to weaknesses that will leave you open to further problems. One approach is to choose a characteristic of your present company, its size or slow decision making etc. Give your answer with the air of someone who takes problems & frustrations in your stride as part of the job.

### What are your strengths?

This is one question you know you are going to get so there is no excuse for being unprepared. Concentrate on discussing your main strengths. List three or four proficiencies e.g. your ability to work quickly, determination to succeed, positive attitude, your ability to relate to people & achieve a common goal. You may be asked to give examples, so be prepared.

### What is your greatest weakness?

Do not say you have none – this will lead to further problems. You have two options – use a professed weakness such as a lack of experience (not ability) on your part in an area that is not vital to the job. The second option is to describe a personal or professional weakness that could also be considered as a strength, & the steps you have taken to combat it. An example would be, "I know my team thinks I am too demanding at times – I tend to drive them pretty hard but I'm getting much better at using the carrot & not the stick".

### Why are you looking to leave your current employer?

Your answer should be positive & upbeat even if the circumstances were difficult. If you were made redundant, depersonalise it by talking about company restructuring rather than your individual circumstance. Never criticise a previous employer no matter how tempting. It is not advisable to state salary as your primary motivator.

### With so many good applicants, why should we offer you this role?

Your answer should reinforce why you are such a good fit for the job & then convey your enthusiasm for the role e.g. Good match between your skills & their requirements. Interested in the product/market/sector. Company's excellent reputation, exciting challenge etc. Do not say (even if it's true) that you just need a job & that you will do anything!

# My interview help notes, answers to questions & ideas

Tell me about yourself?

Tell me about an achievement of which you are proud?

What do you know about our organisation?

Tell me about a difficult scenario at work & how you dealt with it?

What do you like about your current job?

What do you dislike about your current job?

What are your strengths?

What is your greatest weakness?

Why are you looking to leave your current employer?

With so many good applicants, why should we offer you this role?

If a role requires you to study, remember to research the qualification, what's involved, including costs, length of time it takes to complete, where provides the training etc.?