

Interview Preparation Guide

Practical guidance to help you prepare, feel confident and make the most of your interview.

Before the interview

Preparation will help you feel more confident and give clear, relevant answers.

- **Confirm the details:** Check the date, time, location or meeting link, interview format and the names of the interviewers.
- **Research the organisation:** Review its website, services, values, recent news and social media. Be ready to explain what interests you about the organisation and the role.
- **Review the role:** Read the job description and identify the main responsibilities and requirements. Prepare examples that show how your experience and transferable skills relate to them.
- **Know your CV:** Refresh your memory on your responsibilities, achievements, systems used, dates and reasons for leaving previous roles. Be confident to discuss the content of your CV.
- **Prepare examples:** Think of concise examples that demonstrate relevant skills such as teamwork, communication, problem-solving, organisation and adaptability.
- **Plan your questions:** Prepare a few thoughtful questions about the role, team, priorities, training and next steps.

Practical preparation

- **Plan your journey:** Check the route and allow extra time. Aim to arrive around five to ten minutes early. If you are delayed, contact the employer or your recruitment consultant as soon as possible.
- **Dress appropriately:** Choose professional clothing that suits the organisation and role while allowing you to feel comfortable and confident.
- **Take what you need:** For an in-person interview, bring a copy of your CV, a notebook and pen, plus any documents you have been asked to provide.
- **Review your online presence:** Check that any public professional profiles are accurate and present you appropriately – what would appear on social media if your name was searched?
- **Minimise distractions:** Switch your phone to silent before an in-person interview.

Virtual interviews

- Test your camera, microphone, internet connection and meeting link beforehand.
- Choose a quiet, well-lit space with a neutral background and minimise interruptions.
- Position your camera at eye level and keep your CV, the job description and brief notes nearby.
- Close unnecessary applications and turn off notifications on your phone and computer.
- Join a few minutes early and keep the interviewer's contact details available in case of technical problems.

During the interview

- **Make a positive start:** Greet the interviewer warmly, introduce yourself clearly and be courteous to everyone you meet. Follow the interviewer's lead on handshakes.
- **Listen carefully:** Make sure you understand each question. It is fine to pause briefly to gather your thoughts or ask for clarification.
- **Keep answers focused:** Give enough detail to answer the question without losing the main point. Use specific examples rather than relying on general statements.
- **Use the STAR approach:** For competency questions, briefly explain the Situation, Task, Action you took and Result.
- **Be honest:** If you have less experience in an area, acknowledge it and explain the relevant skills you can transfer or how you would develop.
- **Show genuine interest:** Explain what appeals to you, while using the interview to decide whether the opportunity is right for you.
- **Discuss previous employers professionally:** Keep your comments balanced and focus on what you learned from each of your roles and what you are looking for next.
- **Be yourself:** Natural nerves are common. Focus on the conversation rather than trying to deliver a perfect performance.

Common interview questions

Prepare key points rather than memorising scripts. Your answers should sound natural and be relevant to the role.

Tell me about yourself

Give a concise overview of your recent experience, relevant skills and what has led you to this opportunity. Focus on information that helps the interviewer understand your suitability.

Why are you interested in this role and organisation?

Link your experience and career goals to the responsibilities of the role, and use your research to explain why this particular company appeals to you. Consider what you've learned about its values, focus and reach, and identify something specific that particularly interests or appeals to you.

What are your strengths?

Choose two or three strengths that are relevant to the role and support each one with a brief example.

What is an area you are developing?

Choose a genuine development area that does not undermine a key requirement. Explain what you are doing to improve and the progress you have made.

Tell me about an achievement you are proud of

Choose a relevant example, explain your contribution and describe the positive result. Achievements may come from work, study, volunteering or other suitable experience.

Tell me about a challenge or difficult situation

Use the STAR approach to show how you assessed the situation, communicated, took action and learned from the outcome.

Why are you looking to move?

Keep your answer constructive and forward-looking. Focus on the experience, development, responsibilities or environment you are seeking rather than criticising your current or previous employer.

Why should we appoint you?

Summarise the strongest match between your skills and the role, supported by evidence, and reinforce your enthusiasm for the opportunity.

Questions you could ask

- What would be the main priorities for the person joining this role?
- How will success be measured during the first six to twelve months?
- How is the team structured, and how does this role work with others?
- What training, support or professional development is available?
- What do you enjoy most about working for the organisation?
- What are the next steps in the recruitment process?

Ask questions that genuinely matter to you and avoid asking for information that has already been clearly covered.

Closing and follow-up

- Thank the interviewer for their time.
- If the role still interests you, say so and briefly reinforce why.
- Confirm the likely timescale and next steps if these have not already been explained.
- After an agency-arranged interview, contact your recruitment consultant promptly with honest, detailed feedback, including what went well, any questions or concerns and your level of interest.