

Interview Tips

Securing an interview is both a huge accomplishment and a nerve-wracking situation. While it is completely normal to feel nervous, it is essential that you are as prepared as possible. Preparation will see that you are as comfortable and confident as possible during an interview, which contributes hugely to your potential success.

Preparation

In recent studies it was revealed that over 80% of candidates do little or no preparation before an interview. While this is up to you as an individual, it would be far more likely that you would be successful if you did everything possible to better your chances.

By following the tips below, you will find yourself much more confident, and have an overall more positive interview experience than if you take no time to prepare.

Research the firm

- ▶ Check out its website. This will often provide good information. Many sites list recent press releases, but you can also conduct a wider search to get the bigger picture on specialist areas or other information.
- ▶ If you have time, contact the firm's marketing department for up-to-date literature.
- ▶ If you have never been to the firm or area before, try a 'practise run' so that you are confident when travelling there on the day of the interview.

Know your CV

- ▶ Know your CV inside out. Be ready to expand on any decisions you have made on previous educational and career decisions. Be confident about talking about your key achievements.
- ▶ Prepare some questions and answers.
- ▶ Take time to consider questions you might be asked and practice your responses.
- ▶ Prepare a brief career overview in response to that popular kick-off question 'tell me something about yourself'.
- ▶ Be ready with plenty of examples to illustrate your skills and how you could contribute to the company.
- ▶ Think about questions you would like to ask. Those which invite thought and comment are more memorable to the interviewer than those that request specific detail. This is also an excellent opportunity to illustrate your understanding of the firm.

Research the interview process

Find out the format of the interview process:

- ▶ How many interviews will there be?
- ▶ Does the firm carry out psychometric testing?
- ▶ Who will be conducting the interviews? What is their position?

The day of the interview

- ▶ Make sure you know where the interview is taking place and allow yourself plenty of time to get there.
- ▶ If you are going to be late, call the firm and let them know.
- ▶ Make sure you know roughly how long the interview will last. You do not want to be fretting about your next meeting.
- ▶ Arrive a little early for the interview. Ten minutes spent in the reception will give you time to collect your thoughts and a chance to read the firm's brochures and study recent press releases. Listening to the receptionists and watching the comings and goings can provide a valuable insight into the type of firm you might be joining.

Presentation

- ▶ Always dress to impress. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Get a second opinion and check that your choice of interview wear creates the right impact.
- ▶ Look in the mirror and check your posture. Relaxed shoulders present an open and confident manner. A strong but not over-bearing handshake and a natural smile complete the positive picture. You want your interviewer to think you are likeable and friendly immediately.
- ▶ Have some additional copies of your CV with you.

Performance

The interview is the forum within which you will need to answer three questions:

- ▶ Do you have the technical skills and experience to do the job?
- ▶ Will you have the right attitude and commitment to do the job?
- ▶ Will you fit in?

Attitude and commitment

- ▶ It is all very well having the technical ability, but this is meaningless unless matched with application and the drive and desire to succeed in the role. Give practical examples of how you have shown commitment and motivation in the past.
- ▶ Will you fit in? Companies differ. One person's dynamic and exciting environment may seem competitive and backbiting to another.
- ▶ It is your opinion that matters. A company's literature and your interviewer will provide clues on how to convey the impression that you will fit in. However, bear this in mind before accepting a position; you must believe that you really will fit in. If the firm's culture is very different from your own, it is unlikely you will be successful.

Other useful tips

- ▶ Be clear and concise. Always use positive language. You are in control of what you want your interviewer to know, so take responsibility for answering the three key questions from the start.
- ▶ If you tend to fidget, keep your hands apart and do not hold a pen or copy of your CV.
- ▶ Practise a comfortable sitting position beforehand that feels natural.
- ▶ Be aware of your voice. Pace, tone and intonation all contribute to your success in an interview. If the role demands energy and enthusiasm, show some!
- ▶ If you are being interviewed by more than one person, engage the whole panel when responding.
- ▶ Although you have thought about the salary side of things, always allow your interviewer to initiate discussions. This often will not occur during the first interview.
- ▶ Negotiate as late as possible: you will have most influence when the recruiter wants you.
- ▶ Even if doubts are setting in, always remain positive throughout the interview. There will be time to discuss concerns later. You want to be able to make the final decision.
- ▶ At the end of the interview, always be positive if asked about your interest in the job.
- ▶ It is worth making notes immediately afterwards on what you thought went well, what did not and what you would do differently next time. Experience always enhances performance, so make the most of the meeting.
- ▶ Finally, follow up with a brief thank you letter, reiterating your interest in the position.
- ▶ If you have any additional information, which might help the company make a decision in your favour, offer it here. Send a letter rather than an email, which can be easily deleted.

Frequently asked interview questions

- ▶ Tell me something about yourself.
- ▶ What brings you to the job market at this point in your career?
- ▶ Why would you like to work for this company in particular?
- ▶ What attracts you to this role?
- ▶ What are your key strengths and weaknesses?
- ▶ Describe two major achievements in your career.
- ▶ If you could change anything about your career so far, what would it be?
- ▶ How would members of your team describe you?
- ▶ What important points came out of your last appraisal?
- ▶ Describe your management style.
- ▶ What do you look for in a manager?
- ▶ Describe your toughest client.
- ▶ What do you want from your next role?
- ▶ What does success mean to you?
- ▶ What are the key things that drive or motivate you?
- ▶ What really winds you up in the workplace?
- ▶ Describe your greatest challenge so far.
- ▶ Describe a difficult work scenario and how you managed it.
- ▶ Where do you see yourself in two to five year's time?
- ▶ What are your career aspirations?
- ▶ What would you say about your current and last employers?
- ▶ Describe your preferred company culture.
- ▶ If you could have your time again, what career would you choose?

Questions to ask the Interviewer

- ▶ How has this vacancy arisen?
- ▶ How would you describe the firm/company culture?
- ▶ What do you see as the key challenges of this role?
- ▶ How do you differentiate yourselves from your competitors?
- ▶ What are the organisation's major business objectives in the coming year?
- ▶ How are employees measured in terms of performance?
- ▶ What processes exist to support employees in their career development?
- ▶ How would you describe the firm/company's values?
- ▶ What key issues currently face the organisation?
- ▶ What can I expect to be involved in during my first six months of joining?
- ▶ What are the department's priorities during the next six months?