An interview is usually the first face to face contact made between employers and candidates; it puts a face and a personality to a name on a C.V and gives you the opportunity to truly sell yourself.

Employers gain vital information from the interviewing experience, not just from the answers to questions:

- they gain a deeper understanding of a candidate's skills including presentation and personality;
- they can assess your capabilities such as your ability to perform under pressure; and
- your personality is apparent and employers will make a judgement about whether you are suitable for the company, as well as the role being offered.

Preparation is paramount

- research the company and be prepared to ask and be asked questions on past company ventures. This will help you understand the work involved;
- look over your submitted C.V and try to spot any obvious questions they may ask you. This can be on your personal interests, skills or achievements;
- check your travel/arrival arrangements and times and ring to confirm the interview 24 hours before. If you experience travel problems and run the risk of being late, contact the interviewer immediately;
- keep up to date with current issues, you may be asked on any that can relate to the job or the company;
- remember that preparation equals confidence. Once you are fully prepared, there are a few requirements to be prepared for on the day of the interview;
- arrive on time, it is recommended that you arrive 10 minutes early to prepare yourself and calm your nerves;
- use positive body language; this includes a warm handshake, good posture and eye contact;
- answer questions generously, make sure you give the employers enough information, but don’t be too verbose. Avoid the use of fillers such as ‘um’ and ‘ah’. Try to keep conscious of what you are saying and how much information you are giving;
- dress appropriately, it is recommended to dress smarter than you initially think. If you have no ideas on how to dress, check for a company website and view images of the employees;
- take with you some essential items like a pen, paper and a copy of your C.V. Also if you have been sent any correspondence, take it with you so you know who to ask for when you arrive;
- turn off your mobile phone, even a vibrate setting can be heard and can be off putting for both you and the interviewer;
- be polite to everyone you meet. The interviewer can ask anyone their opinion of you; and
- remember to smile, relax and be comfortable.

Example questions

Part of the preparation process can be to familiarise yourself with example questions that may appear during the interview.

**What are your strengths and weaknesses?**
- make sure you mention your positive weaknesses such as stubborn determination rather than negative weaknesses; and
- when mentioning your strengths remember to use examples to back you up.

**Where do you see yourself in five years time?**
- mention your future aims and any future qualifications you plan to take, this shows the company you are driven and you are equally as likely to achieve for them.

**Why do you think you are suitable to fill this role?**
- include your relevant qualifications and you can also mention what friends or past colleagues would say about you; and
- include any past experiences you may have to back you up.

**Why do you want this job?**
- note any past experience in similar fields, your qualifications and interests in the skills or work involved.

**Why do you want to work for this company?**
- include what you know about the company from your previous research. Mention their reputation and any past high profile work you can quote.

**What qualities do you bring to the role and the company?**
- feature your relevant skills and qualifications; also mention any personal attributes you have that will benefit the company, such as being a ‘team player’.

**Have you ever worked in a team before?**
- employers will want to know that you are capable of working as part of a team. Examples don’t have to be work related - include any examples when relevant.
Don’t forget to ask the interviewer some questions

What are the most important skills for the job?
- this gives you more detail as to what the role actually involves and clears up any previous confusion you may have.

What is the work environment like?
- this lets you know whether you’ll be working in an office, within a team, on your own or whether any travel is involved.

When can I expect to hear from you?
- a simple yet important question, this lets the interviewer know you are interested whilst letting you know when to expect further contact.

When it’s all over don’t forget to thank the interviewer for the opportunity, and to emphasise your keen interest in the vacancy.

Handy tips
- remember that an interview is a two way process, not only does the employer decide whether they want you to work for the company, but it also gives you the opportunity to decide whether you want to work for the company;
- rehearse - a trial run with a friend or family member can help settle nerves and prepare you for the formal situation;
- settle your nerves – use a variety of breathing exercises to fill the time awaiting the interview and try to remember this is not a life or death situation, there are plenty of other jobs out there;
- take your time – make sure you fully understand the question before answering and don’t rush an answer; you may miss out vital information which may not be recovered;
- stay conscious – be aware of your body language, keep it positive, keep eye contact and avoid talking too fast;
- use examples – quote examples when answering the interviewer’s questions, these can back up your skills learnt and be relatable to the employer;
- don’t read from notes – use your preparation time to familiarise yourself with your educational and work history to provide unprompted responses;
- focus your answers – make sure you focus your answers on what you can do for the company and not what they can do for you;
- personal answers – also try to focus your answers on what ‘you’ did in your examples, avoid the ‘we’ situations; and
- learn – whatever the outcome of the interview stay positive, think about what you have learnt from the interview experience and how your techniques can be improved.

Telephone interview advice

You should follow the same requirements as a normal interview but also utilise these handy tips.

Handy tips
- keep the conversation formal, although the situation isn’t. Use the interviewer’s title of Mr/Mrs and their surname unless they ask you otherwise;
- the interview should cover the same vital information as face to face interview including experience, availability and salary, so keep the required information to hand;
- keep your C.V, lists of achievements, experience and planned questions nearby to make referencing the information easier;
- keep other necessities to hand such as a pen, paper, the job advertisement and your diary;
- smile, although you are not being viewed. Smiling as you’re talking comes across in the tone of your voice and keeps you positive;
- try to enunciate clearly through the conversation, this prevents any information getting lost or misunderstood;
- avoid fillers such as ‘ums’, ‘ahs’ and ‘Okays’, these are more noticeable on the telephone;
- also avoid simple ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ answers. Give detail and use examples in your answers;
- keep taking notes of the information you are being told; you can refer back to them at the end of the interview and ask any questions that may have come up;
- always be prepared for the interview. Although they are usually scheduled, times can be unpredictable and changed. If you are busy or cannot talk at that time, apologise and organise a more suitable time with the interviewer;
- clear the room. Make sure you are in a silent environment to ensure you can hear all the information given and that you can be heard;
- it is useful to keep some water on hand to prevent your throat from drying and making any further conversations difficult; and
- when complete send the interviewer a Thank You email, and if further contact or interview have not been arranged tell them you look forward to hearing from them.
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