



Interview Skills and Techniques

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Before the Day

You have done well getting to this stage, the key to success is thorough preparation. Make sure you read and re-read any interview letters thoroughly to make sure you have all the correct details. Often organisations will send out a pack with the letter containing some background information on the organisation. Also, make sure you have thoroughly read the original job description and personal specification so you know all the details of the job you are going for.

Do some research on the company you are applying for; this can be done on the internet, through resources at libraries or simply by visiting the workplace.

Do a practice interview with your Adviser or a friend, this may sound a bit embarrassing but it is a good way to prepare you for an interview situation.

Find any documents you may need to take to the interview. You may want to take your CV or record of achievement so you do not have to worry about memorising all your employment/course details.

Have an early night before the interview and get your clothes ready the night before so you do not have to worry about them in the morning.

Timing

Whatever the time your interview, make sure that you allow plenty of time to get there, allow for rush hour or heavy traffic or any delays.

You can even do a 'dummy run' prior to the interview to check how long the journey will take.

If you need to, you can ring to ask the employer for directions, bus routes or details of where you can park your car.

If you have a disability, make sure to tell the employer so that they can make any special arrangements that are necessary

Create the Right Image

Decide what to wear and get your clothes ready the evening before. You don't need to buy a new outfit as long as you aim for a neat, clean and tidy appearance. Make sure they are ironed and tucked into the appropriate places! Don't go over the top with perfume or aftershave. Same with jewellery, less is more! If you have piercings and cannot take them out, cover them with tape. The same applies to any visible tattoos.

Research

Before attending any job interview, it's a good idea to research the organisation and familiarise yourself with the following (it's really simple to do research on a company or organisation via their website or via www.glassdoor.co.uk):

- Size of the company, number of employees
- How long have they been operating – do they have more than one site?
- Know what they do, make or sell
- What the job involves – understand the skills required for the position

You will impress interviewers with your knowledge of the company and it will show initiative and that you are genuinely interested in the company. A lack of research shows poor enthusiasm or even laziness. This is a common error so it could give you the edge over the other candidates.

What to Take with You

Take a copy of your CV or application form to refer to. You may wish to take your record of achievement as well. Take any items that the employer has asked you to bring, i.e. driving licence, references, certificates etc. Re-read the job advert to make sure that you haven't missed anything. If you take your mobile phone, make sure that it is switched off during the interview.

The Interview

Get to the interview early. Have a drink of water before the interview so you do not dehydrate and lose your voice during the interview.

Be calm and relaxed, if you feel nervous and on edge you will appear that way to the interviewer. You have no need to be worried; the interviewer is just the same as you and will probably be as nervous as you.

When asked questions take a few seconds to think of your answer and do not speak too fast because you need to give a clear answer that the interviewers will understand.

If you are being interviewed by a panel or more than one person try and have eye contact with all the people on the board rather than just one person.

If you do not understand a question, do not struggle to answer it, ask the interviewer to repeat it and explain it.

Interviewers want people who can show they have the required skills for the job, they are not after entertainers, so do not go over the top trying to be funny.

Try and think of some questions so that when they ask you if you have any questions at the end of the interview you will not be lost for words. Do not ask about pay or holidays as this may give the employer the impression that you are not interested in the job. A good example question is to ask about training opportunities.

Avoid saying anything negative, if you did not enjoy a past job, you do not need to say this in the interview. Try and word things without being negative, for example if you left a job because you did not enjoy it, say that you left because of lack of job satisfaction.

Do not be afraid to sell yourself. This may be your only chance to go for this job so do not be modest or shy, make sure you mention your good points, why you think you are the person for the job and what you think you can bring to the organisation.

Many interviews include time for a test that will be relevant to the job (for example if you are going to admin job you may have a typing test). Although the type of test can vary from job to job here a few tips to help prepare you for tests:

Read the question thoroughly before you rush into doing the test because you may miss out some vital information

If you have several questions to do, spread your time evenly rather than spending too much time on one question.

If the test is a written test then write the answers clearly so that whoever is marking can understand your answers.

If your interview requires you to do a presentation then make the most of flip charts and any visual aids that are offered to you.

Body Language

There are studies and statistics which state that 60% of the impression you make is through your body language. To make a strong first impression, you need to:

- Always shake hands firmly with your interviewer and smile! Try to be calm and relaxed. If your mouth is dry, ask for a glass of water.
- Maintain eye contact and if you are being interviewed by a panel or more than one person, try to have eye contact with all of the people rather than just one person.
- Speak clearly and if you don't understand a question, don't struggle to answer it, ask the interviewer to repeat it and explain it.
- Don't fidget.
- Be honest. Don't lie in an interview. You never know when it will come back to haunt you!

Reasons for Poor Job Interview Performance

- Lack of interest in the organisation
- Not understanding the role or the job description
- Poor answers to interview questions
- Nerves and lack of confidence
- Not listening properly to questions
- Poor impressions and body language
- Being negative
- Lacking questions to ask

10 Tips for a Good Interview

- Assume the interview starts the moment you enter the building
- Listen to the question and if you don't understand it, ask for clarification
- Engage all interviewers with eye contact
- Always back up everything you are saying with examples from your own experience
- Avoid taking notes in with you and never read from them if you do
- Always have questions ready for the end
- Know what you have said in your application and be prepared to discuss the details
- If they don't tell you, ask when you will hear about the outcome of the interview
- Thank the interviewer by name
- Smile

3 Things Employers Look For

- Can you do the job? – Do you have the knowledge and skills
- Do you want to do the job? – Are you motivated to do it?
- Will you fit in? – Do you have the relevant values and personal qualities?

Employers Wish List

These are the generic skills that all employers look for:

- Communication skills
- Customer service skills
- Team workers
- Problem solving skills
- Enthusiasm
- Motivation
- Commitment
- Organisational skills
- Initiative
- Interpersonal skills

Interview Questions

There are three main types of questions that will be asked at an interview: motivational, technical and competency.

Motivational Questions

These questions are designed to test your motivation for the job and the organisation. For example, they may say:

- Why do you want to work here?
- How much do you know about our organisation/company?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years time?

Technical Questions

These questions relate to your ability to use the technology you have learnt from any work experience. For example, they may say:

- What systems and software are you competent in?
- What experience do you have of using?

Competency Questions

These are questions based on the general competencies all employers expect from workers (team skills, communication skills, problem solving etc). The STAR model can be used to answer competency questions.

S - Situation

Briefly outline where you were and what your job was.

T - Task

Explain the task you did, what had to be done?

A - Action

What specific actions did you take to overcome the difficulty?

R - Result

What were the results and what did you learn?

You could answer a competency question in the following way:

“During peak season at Anyshop, I worked with my store colleagues to meet branch sales targets set by head office. It was important that all members of the team were positive and remained enthusiastic even though the shop was very busy. I contributed by meeting all of my personal targets and helping my colleagues close sales. I learnt that helping out team members rather than simply focusing on my own goals improves productivity and makes for a happier work environment.”

Questions You May Be Asked

Why do you want this job?

Think carefully about this question. Stress the positive aspects, which have attracted you to apply for this position and do not mention the negative aspects of your current job or the job in question.

What qualities do you think will be required for this job?

Their advertisement for the job may help you a little bit, but you should also think of the other qualities that may be required. These may include leadership ability, communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving, analytical skills, etc.

What can you contribute?

Tell them about your achievements in your previous position(s), which are relevant to the new position you are applying for. This is your chance to shine.

Tell me about yourself

Your CV introduction is a helpful start. Focus on your positive points and keep this to a brief couple of minutes. You should give a brief outline of where you are from and where you want to be going.

What do you know about this company?

This is your chance to impress the interviewer with your knowledge of their company. Give them a run down of their products/services, sales figures, news, company figures, customers, etc.

What can we (the new company) offer that your previous company cannot offer?

Again do not mention money. Stress opportunities for personal growth, new challenges, etc.

Why should we employ you?

The answer to this question will be based on your previous experience and achievements, which relate to the company. You could add that you think there is a good fit between you and the job, and do ask the interviewer for their opinion.

Why did you join your previous company? Why are you leaving now?

Always be positive about your reasons for joining and leaving a company. Be very careful that you do not say anything negative about your present employer. If you do, the new company will wonder what you will say about them when you leave. You might want to stress that you are looking for a new challenge and that you feel that the company who is interviewing you fits the bill!

What interests do you have outside work?

Your hobbies and interests can tell an employer a lot about you. Think about which interests will paint the right picture of you given the position you are discussing and include whether you are sociable or solitary, and whether you can take on 'leadership' roles.

Why do you want to work here?

Mention the following, the good reputation of the firm or any other positive information you have about them (for example, their training record, or their equal opportunities policy), and that the job will give you the opportunity to do work that interests you.

Why did you leave your last job?

Be positive. Don't use this as an opportunity to criticise your previous company. If you left for health reasons, point out that you are now able to carry out all the duties for the job. If you were dismissed, say that you take responsibility for your actions and have learnt from the experience.

Have you done this kind of work before?

If you have, tell them the skills and experience you have and how you can use them in this job. If you haven't, describe other work experience that is relevant to this job or which will help you learn this job quickly. Emphasise your interest and your enthusiasm to learn.

What did you do in your last job?

Describe the following things: skills and duties relevant to the new job, your responsibilities, how you worked with others, if you worked with customers and, if so, how you worked with them, how long you were there, whether you were promoted, and responsibilities you volunteered to take on.

Why have you had so many jobs?

You could say the following things; you wanted to widen your experience in different types of work or in different companies, or that many of the jobs were temporary or you would rather be in work than out of work.

What makes a good team member?

Describe the skills needed, for example, good communication skills, flexibility, the ability to adapt to change, the ability to co-operate with other people, having a good sense of humour and so on. Give examples of how you showed these in previous work situations or leisure activities

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Strengths – the employer should already know some of these from your CV/application form, but you may want to emphasise particular skills relevant to the job by giving examples.

Weaknesses – start by describing parts of your last job which you found difficult and then explain how you overcame these difficulties or be brief but honest.

How often were you absent from your last job?

If you were hardly ever off work, say so. If sick leave has been a problem, explain why and reassure the employer that you have sorted out the problem. If you have had time off because of a disability, discuss this openly, including possible solutions. Remember to be positive.

Do you have any questions?

You need to prepare for this one as it's almost always asked at an interview. Asking some questions, but not too many, can show you are interested. One or two of the following may be appropriate;

Do you offer ongoing training and development?

What will my first job be?

How soon will I hear the result of my interview?

You can also use Glassdoor to have a good realistic view of the employer such as: company history feedback from employees and even some questions they might ask you at the interview.

YouTube has short videos of interviews for different companies and roles.

Specific Questions by Sector

Care:

Do you have any Criminal Record?

Can you do manual handling?

What do you do if you find your patient collapsed on the floor?

Catering/Hospitality:

Do you have a food and hygiene certificate?

Do you know the temperature that raw chicken should be kept refrigerated at?

How do you prevent cross contamination?

Retail/ Customer Service:

Can you use a till?

How would you deliver excellent Customer Service?

How would you deal with an angry customer?

How would you help a blind person in your shop?

Administrator:

How many words per minute can you type?

What computer programs can you use?

What is GDPR?

Can you transfer calls?

Can you do charts on Excel?