

Interview Hints and Tips

If you have an interview lined up, it means the effort you've put in so far has paid off! Next, you will need to know what to expect.

Purpose of an Interview

- An interview allows an employer to get to know you better and assess whether you are the right person for the role.
- You will also get a feel for the company culture yourself to see if you think the position is right for you.
- It is an opportunity for you to ask questions, learn more about the business, the role, and the team you'd be working in.
- Your interview serves as your chance to impress the employer and ultimately get the job.

Interview Format – Not all interviews will be the same, but follow a similar format

- An interview usually involves a single candidate with one to three people representing the employer.
- Often lasts from 15-60 minutes; this could be longer depending on the interview style, e.g. you may be required to do a presentation or task, but you should have been notified at an earlier date to prepare.
- You may be informed more about the role, the company and the team.
- You will receive questions to assess your strengths, motivation and personality.
- You will have the chance to ask any questions.
- You will be told about the next stage and when you will hear something about the outcome – if not, ask and show you are interested!

Preparation

- **Research, research, research** - You may hear it a lot, but research is key. Read information on their website and social media pages to find out about the company, their target audience, tone and general message, and search them online to look for any news articles or awards associated with them.
- **Familiarise yourself with the role** – Re-read the job description and familiarise yourself with the position and what they're looking for.
- **Industry knowledge** – Brush up on industry knowledge to show you have a general interest in the current industry, e.g. naming certain specialist publications or sites.
- **Test run** – Google Maps will give you an idea of where to go and potential commutes; remember to take into account rush hour and leave yourself plenty of time to get there. If possible, do a test run before so you know exactly where you're going and don't get lost on the day.
- **Double-check** – Re-read any emails and correspondence between you and the employer to check you have the right date, time, address and contact details.
- **Documentation and presentations** – If you have a presentation to prepare or documents to bring with you, don't wait until the night before! Treat the presentation the same way as

you would an assignment and take your time to impress and prove your capabilities. Put your documents into a folder rather than rushing to find everything – planning ahead will help you relax.

- **Prepare questions for the employer** – How will you be challenged within the role? How could you impress the employer within the first six months of working there? What does the interviewer like about working there?
- **Re-visit your CV** – Know your CV inside and out in case an interviewer asks you to expand on a certain section.
- **Think about the role** – Why do you want this role? Why do you deserve it? What makes you stand out from the crowd? Don't just think of how the experience will benefit you, but what you can bring to the company.

The Big Day

- **What to wear** – Dress smartly and avoid distracting bright colours and big accessories, unless you are applying for a role requiring you to show your personal style or fashion sense, e.g. creative industries. Check out our resource 'Interview Tips – What to Wear' or visit these companies who can help with workwear:
 - <http://smartworks.org.uk/>
 - <http://www.thesuitworks.co.uk/>
 - <http://www.suitedforsuccess.co.uk/>
- **Punctual** – Leave early to make sure you arrive on time and are able to have one last read of your notes.
- **Body language** – Eye contact is important and try not to fidget. Remember to smile!
- **Breath** – Don't be afraid to ask questions or pause between answers to give yourself time to think and not talk too quickly.
- **STAR technique** – Don't respond with 'yes' or 'no' and instead give memorable and unique examples using the STAR technique to describe different situations and your role in delivering the outcomes:
 - **Situation**: What was the situation and when?
 - **Task**: What was the task and what was your responsibility?
 - **Action**: How did you complete the task or meet the challenge?
 - **Result**: What was the end result? Emphasise your accomplishments and what you have learnt.
- **Stay positive** – Stay positive even if you think the interview isn't going as planned, and don't say anything negative about your past or current employer. Show them what you have to offer and believe in what you can do.
- **Specific experience** – Don't panic and pretend you have experience that you don't. Instead, talk about what you do know and show how keen you are to learn.

What the Employer is Thinking

- 'Is this person suitable for the role?' – Will you be able to do the job to the standards they require and integrate within the team?

- ‘Will they like the job and working here?’ – This will be shown in your enthusiasm and motivation for the company, role and industry!
- ‘Are we going to enjoy working with this person?’ – Go beyond your experience; personality fit is very important, especially within a smaller company. It is key that you and your potential employer share the same attitude about the role and working together.