



Interviews Tips

Experienced interviewers will quickly spot a candidate who is poorly prepared, who lacks interest or has little motivation. In these situations the interviewers ask themselves “Why did the candidate bother turning up, why waste their time and ours?”, and often within the first few minutes of the interview have decided not to give the candidate the job. So what can YOU do to prevent this scenario? Well, above all be enthusiastic and follow the advice below:

Do your homework

Research the role and the company/ organisation - you should have done some of this when you were applying. Find out more about the company’s products, services and structure. Look at their website. Do you know anyone working at this company/ organisation? They might be able to help you.

Know the job

Ensure that you are as informed about the job as you can be. Make sure you read any information they have sent you about the job, and try to remember as many details as you can. This way, when responding to questions, you can talk about the job confidently, e.g. you can say for which of the duties you can do by using your transferrable skills, or even better you can already have prepared an example from a previous job.

Keep a copy of your application

You have obtained this interview on the basis of what you wrote on the application form or CV. Go through the application at least once before the interview and ask yourself some questions about your motivation for the job, your skills and abilities. Get friends/ family, school staff or your careers adviser to go through questions with you. You can anticipate some of the obvious questions:

- Why are you applying for this role?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Why should we employ you?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Give me an example of your team skills?

Dress appropriately

First impressions count. Every company has its own clothing culture – if in doubt, go to their offices and observe. If the dress code is casual – be smart casual for your interview. (Remember, people who already work for the company are not likely to be judged on what they wear). On the day, bring a comb or hairbrush, deodorant, an umbrella and a handkerchief/clean tissues. Keep make-up and jewellery minimal.

“My bus was late...”

Unacceptable! Plan your journey. Find out where you are supposed to be and do everything to ensure you are going to be at least 15 minutes early (chance to ‘freshen up’ before the event).

Take your interview letter with you, plus mobile phone just in case the delay is totally unavoidable – at least can telephone the company to let them know what is happening.

Body language

Don't slouch or avoid eye-contact (especially important when being interviewed by a panel). Smile when you introduce yourself. Try not to fiddle with hair, clothing or earrings because you are nervous. Practise the art of the handshake with someone you know – in the UK a 'firm' handshake is preferred. Don't forget to thank the interviewer(s) before you leave.

Handling those nerves

Perfectly natural, but get them under control. You need to come across as interested and enthusiastic. For some people, deep breathing just before the interview can help and remember your successes – don't set yourself up to fail by focussing on what you don't know or can't do.

The difficult questions

Oh yes, you will get them, no matter how well you have prepared. Questions are often based on the criteria given in the job advert, website or person specification. Focus on these areas and anticipate questions. For the more difficult and unexpected questions, give yourself a few seconds to think – interviewers will expect this. If you don't understand a question – tell them. This is better than answering a question incorrectly, and it shows you can ask for help when needed. Challenging questions come in all shapes and forms. From "Sell me this paperclip" to "Describe yourself in one word". They are designed to see how you react to pressure and if you can think on your feet.

"Is there anything you would like to ask me"?

Be ready with a few interesting questions to ask at the end of the interview – but not something that has just been answered. The interview is a two-way process so make sure you have prepared a list of questions you would like the answers to.

Finally

Be professional, enthusiastic and confident in your abilities – the company has already seen your potential through your application form or CV and is looking for reasons to take you on, not to reject you. Remember they need you as much as you need them. Be positive. However, if the result is not a job offer, try to obtain feedback and use it as a learning experience ready for your next interview.