

Interview Tips



It's only natural to feel nervous or a little bit shaky before interviews. It's part of our job to do as much as we can to make you feel more at ease about every interview (whether organised by us or not), as we really want you to succeed.

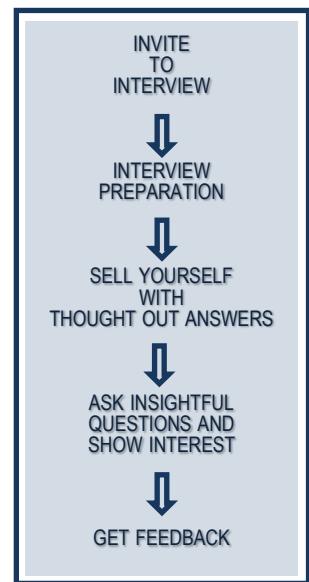
There are lots of things you can do to make sure that you are as prepared as possible, so we thought we'd write them down for you so that when you do secure an interview you can start planning immediately. Some may seem very obvious to you but believe me it's the most obvious ones that people fall down on.

Before the Interview - Plan as far in advance as possible !

Research

Do your homework on the company itself. Look on the website, read the news pages to see what is going on currently with the business, look at their corporate aims or mission statement. Don't overwhelm yourself with information you know you won't remember but try to remember key points and make it known that you have done your homework, refer to their website, their products or something you have read in the newspaper about them. Also see if anyone you know can tell you anything about them. Don't forget, your Recruitment Consultant should know a lot of information about the company and the culture so please take the time to discuss this with them.

Try to find out as much as you can about the structure of the interview and who will be conducting the interview. If you expect to meet one HR Manager and end up being interviewed by a panel of 5 Directors this may throw you off balance immediately. Similarly if you are required to do any tests that you were unaware of this may send you into a panic. Forewarned is forearmed.



Prepare

Make a note of some questions for the interviewer; these make them feel you have thought about the position and the company. Stay away from questions like "how many days holiday do I get" or "how often do you get pay rises". Instead ask questions about the role itself or the company, like "What training opportunities does the company offer?" or "In what way is performance measured and reviewed?" If you find that all the questions you had written down have been answered during the interview, tell the interviewer that, as that will show them that you had taken the time to think about questions beforehand and not make them think you don't have any at all.

Put together an interview pack, including the following:

- A copy of your CV (the version you sent them) along with any other documentation you sent them, eg; covering letter
- The job description/advertisement
- Any research documents, such as printed pages of the company website

- Copies of references/testimonials
- Relevant educational/qualification certificates, if appropriate
- The list of your strengths against the job description and the responsibilities of the role
- Some examples of your top skills and attributes
- Your prepared questions

Plan

Make sure you have studied the person specification and job description, to link your key strengths and skills with what the company is looking for. Try to talk in “their language”, and practice out loud to make sure what you want to say comes out in the way you want it to.

Prepare for answers to the most common interview questions....”tell me about yourself” or “talk me through your CV”. These are normally asked to ease you into an interview, so prepare a short, 2 or 3 minute response that you can give comfortably, and practice it out loud! Then follow with a short summary of your career to date, do not get defensive or hide any gaps in your CV if you have them, just find a way to explain them that will fill the interviewer with confidence in you.

Think about how to answer the more difficult questions, like “what are your weaknesses” and “where would you like to be in five years time”. Remember, all weaknesses could be turned into a positive, for example someone who is impatient could also be described as passionate or someone who is shy could be described as reflective. Think about example situations, so you know what to say when asked “give me an example of when you have given excellent customer service following a complaint” or “tell me about a time when you have had to meet extremely tight deadlines and how did you do it”.

Dress professionally and conservatively at all times. It is always best to prepare what you are wearing; make sure it is clean, ironed and ready to go so you don’t get into a panic last minute. Make sure your shoes are polished, you are clean shaven and your make up/nail polish is natural looking and presentable. Whatever you do, don’t go into an interview chewing gum (yes it does actually happen!), also make sure there are no overpowering smells like cigarette smoke or strong perfume or aftershave.

Ensure you know the interviewers name, position within the company and exactly where they are located at the company. Make sure you know where you are going and you leave plenty of time to arrive 5 minutes early for interview. Plan where you are going to park and make sure you have enough change if you need to pay for parking. It is best to do a trial run to make sure you know what to expect on the day.

During the interview

For any “physical” interviews, shake hands firmly with the interviewer(s) at the beginning and end of the interview; a friendly expression will indicate that you have a positive relationship led approach; maintain good eye contact. If you have more than one person interviewing you, look at the person asking the question when you reply but glance at the other interviewers from time to time.

If you are invited to a virtual interview make sure that you find a suitable space, free of distractions. A quite place with strong WIFI connection is preferable. Make sure that you dress appropriately, as you would for any interview and that the background is appropriate for a video call. If you can’t find a good spot blur the background when on the call.

Keep your answers to the point and don't go off on a tangent. Give yourself time to think and collect your thoughts, especially when asked a complicated question. If you don't know, admit it and never lie. Don't be scared to think about the answers to the questions you are being asked. You don't need to respond within a millisecond and sometimes people rush in due to nerves and answer incorrectly, slow down and think about your answers.

Be yourself! That's who they want to see and in the end, it's who you need to be if you are going to be happy in this role.

Interviewers are often as nervous about the interview as you are. Help them to make the right decision by ensuring they understand you, your skills and your attributes by offering some specific examples of these. And tell the interviewer if you are interested in the role. Remember an interview is not just so the interviewer can find out about you, it is also for you to establish whether or not this is definitely a role you want to do and a company you want to work for. Take mental notes on what the reception feels like and the relationship the staff have with each other.

Make sure you know what the next steps are at interview, when (and how) you will hear feedback and also what the next stage is. Is there a second interview?

After the interview

If you are not successful, ask for feedback as to why and see this as positive and constructive so you can prepare yourself for the next interview.

If you are successful; well done. And don't forget to prepare just as well for the second interview.

All that is left to say is good luck; We hope this helps you to land your dream job!!

