

Careers - Interviews

Interview skills

Interviews are a two-way communication. Not only are they a tool for employers to use to evaluate the potential employee, but they are also an opportunity for the employee to assess the job and the organization to see if they would suit.

There are some easy steps that you can take that will increase your chances of success at interviews.

Interviews for part time work, full time work and apprenticeships start before an applicant meets the employer. Therefore, preparation is vital! Preparation can give a person the upper hand. However, giving a good interview takes practice.

Before an application is submitted the applicant should:

1. Research the employer and make notes about the business.
2. Reflect upon past and present experiences and relate them to the position.
3. Think about future career goals.
4. Reflect upon the skills and expertise they can offer a potential employer/business.
5. Think about the skills and expertise they would like to be developed.
6. Reflect upon past experiences (volunteer work, hobbies and travel) and think about how they could be highlighted to a potential employer?

1. Research the employer and make notes about the business – it is an international business or domestic? What are its revenues? How many location sites does it have? What are the nature of its major products?
2. Write down a list of possible questions that might be asked. Use role play to practice responses until they can be answered confidently and comfortably.
3. Contact the HR Manager of the company or your recruiter, and find out what the dress code is for the company. Then dress one level of above. For example, if it is business casual, men can wear smart trousers, blazer/jacket. Women can wear a suit, dress or a skirt and smart top or trousers and smart top. Visual impressions are very important. Therefore, if in doubt, always dress on the conservative side.

The day before the interview the applicant should

1. Double check the interview location.

2. Email or call the employer to double check that everything is OK.
3. Get interview clothes ready – smart, clean and ironed.
4. Prepare a list of questions to ask. Write them down. Good questions to ask – “What’s it like to work here?”, “What’s a typical day like?” “Who would be my manager?” “Do you have any other employees my age?” “Do you have any expansion plans?”
5. Read the job description one more time and think of life experiences to illustrate the required skills for the role. Be prepared to talk about these in the interview.
6. Collect together everything to take to the interview.
7. Get a good night’s sleep.

Questions the applicant might be asked

Within an interview they will be asked a variety of questions. For example,

1. “Tell me about yourself.” Keep this brief, the applicant should focus on their current situation and why they applied for the job.
2. “What do you know about us?” The notes made by an applicant will be useful at this point. Give them some facts gleaned from the website.
3. “Do you have any questions for us?” The answer is always yes! Even if the questions an applicant had previously thought about have already been answered during the interview. Read the questions back to the employer with the answers that were discussed. It will show that you were paying attention.
4. “Give me an example of...” This is a way to test an applicant’s suitability for the role. Answers should be kept short and to the point.
5. “Anything else?” The interviewer is trying to get an applicant to add more detail to their answers.
6. “What are your weaknesses?” Steer away from negative descriptions and focus on lessons learnt.
7. “Tell me about a time when a team you were working on was unable to proceed due to some interpersonal conflict. How did you respond, and what role did you play on the team?”
8. “What are your key experiences and accomplishments?”
9. “How would you rank your achievements?”
10. “How would your friends describe you?”
11. “What is your reason for leaving your current job?”
12. “What are the most important things to you in a job?”
13. “What do you value in a supervisor?”
14. “How would you describe your management style?”
15. “What appeals to you about this job and organization?” Focus on the organisation, their culture or mission and job responsibilities.
16. “What qualities do you think make someone successful in our industry?”
17. “Why are you qualified for this position?”
18. “Give me an example of how you worked in a team?”
19. “Give an example of a situation where you demonstrated leadership.”

During the interview an applicant should consider the following:

1. **First impressions** take only 30 seconds. Establishing rapport, direct and sustained eye contact, a firm handshake, a warm smile, good posture, a well-groomed professional appearance, and a confident introduction are vital ingredients.
2. Everyone says that you must keep good eye contact in an interview. This doesn't mean that you have to hold their gaze the whole time! The most important thing is that you do what is comfortable. Look in the eyes of your interviewer for the length of time that you are comfortable with. Just don't look down at your feet or keep glancing around the room.
3. **Be yourself.** Employers want to get to know you. Let some of your personality out.
4. **Smile!** Nerves at interviews can stop a candidate smiling. People feel more relaxed when they smile.
5. **Speak clearly,** don't mumble as it portrays a lack of confidence. Some hand animation can suggest enthusiasm.
6. **Give brief answers.** Be concise and to the point as rambling tends to suggest that a person does not know the answer to the questions being asked.
7. **Listen** before answering. Allow the employer to begin the interview, but be prepared with some opening statements or questions such as, "I understand that this position involves..." or "What are you looking for in a job candidate?"
8. **Be positive!** Employers want to hire happy positive people. Never say anything negative about a present or previous employer.
9. **Try not to fidget.** Sit upright in the chair with hands placed on the table next to a pen and notepad.
10. **Be honest** and truthful.
11. **Be prepared** to talk about every fact that is on the CV.
12. **Keep things on a professional level** to avoid telling the interviewer something that should not be divulged.

At the end of the interview the applicant should:

1. Verbally thank the interviewer for their time.
2. Tell them that they want the job.
3. Ask when a decision will be made.
4. Get everyone's business card or ask a secretary for their names and email addresses. Thank the interviewer in writing or via email by expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to interview and learn about the organization; re-confirm their interest, and re-emphasize how their background might be of interest to the organisation.

Got the job?

Fantastic! Well done. The applicant should work hard and do their best. They should turn up for work a little bit early every day, stay positive and be professional.

Didn't get the job? The applicant should take heed of the following advice:

1. Don't take it personally.
2. Ask for feedback and learn for next time.
3. Apply for some more vacancies.
4. Ask for a little more help from friends and family.

The interview session would be led by **Mrs Hollie Jones (Mock & Interview Lead)** and supported by other English Staff later in 2021.

Interview guide

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