

# Interview tips

Congratulations on getting an interview. This is your opportunity to sell yourself in person. An interview is also your chance to see what you think about an employer.

## Before the day

- You will probably be asked to phone to confirm that you will be going along to the interview. It is a good idea to double check the date and time. Find out the name of the person to ask for when you arrive on the day
- Make sure that the employer knows if you have any additional needs for the interview. Do you need access for a wheelchair or help with seeing or hearing?
- Read any information you have been sent. Do you need to take anything with you? Do you have a neat folder or case to carry documents in?
- You might be asked to take evidence of your exams or qualifications with you
- Will there be a test on the day? Do you need to prepare or practise?
- Find out more about the employer. Visit their website. Try a trade directory in a local library.
- Try to find out more about the career you are being interviewed for. Think about how you would answer:
  - Where do you see yourself in 3 or 5 years' time?
  - What do you think are the main challenges facing this organisation in the next few years?
- Plan your journey in advance. Do a practise run to see how long it takes
- Decide what to wear - go for something smart, but comfortable. Allow time for things to be washed and ironed ready for the big day.

## Try to work out the types of questions an employer may ask

- Look at the Job Description and Person Specification – what are they looking for?
- You may be asked:
  - Why have applied for the job?
  - What do you think you can bring to the organisation?
  - What work experience do you have?
  - What are your strengths?
  - What are your weaknesses?
  - How would you deal with a difficult client, customer or situation?
  - What do you do in your spare time?
- Always give a full answer to a question. Never just say 'yes' or 'no' and clam up. Give examples from your own experience to illustrate a point if possible
- There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions. Work these out in advance. Some questions are:
  - What kind of training will I be doing?
  - Will I be able to study for further qualifications?
  - What opportunities are there for promotion?
  - Are there any new developments planned to the organisation? (If you have done a bit of research in advance, you may be able to impress them by asking about specific projects or new services).

## On the day

- Make sure that you look smart and that your personal hygiene is good. Hair should be well groomed, nails clean etc. Don't use too much perfume or aftershave. Keep jewellery and make-up moderate.

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- Check that you have all the documents you need with you including their contact details. Take a couple of pens in case you have to write. Keep everything together in a folder or case
- Read what you said about yourself on your application form or CV. For example, if you have said that your hobby is reading, you may be asked about the last book you read
- Arrive for your interview at least 10 minutes early
- Turn off your mobile
- When you arrive, make sure that the receptionist knows you are there.

## A note about personal safety

- It is a good idea to check out the location of an interview with people you haven't met before. Most interviews are held on company property during normal office hours
- Make sure someone knows you are going for an interview and what time they should expect you back at home or school/college.

## At the interview

- Try to stay calm throughout the interview and be as natural as possible. The interviewer should make allowances for nervousness
- Don't sit down until you are asked to
- Sit comfortably and don't fidget or slouch
- If you are interviewed by more than one person, always answer the person who asked the question
- Try to maintain good eye contact and SMILE!
- Be truthful in your answers. A good interviewer will soon spot lies or exaggerations
- Don't be personal or familiar. Remember that you might be meeting your new boss
- Don't criticise teachers or past employers (even if they deserve it!)
- Don't interrupt and never swear, even mildly
- Don't chew gum or smoke
- Answer questions as fully as possible, don't just say 'yes' or 'no'. If you don't understand a question, it is OK to ask the interviewer to explain
- If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the interviewer (but try not to do that too many times)
- Show that you are interested in the job
- If the interviewer misses a point, which you feel is important, you can introduce it yourself... 'May I just mention something else...?'
- Ask any questions you feel have not been covered
- Always thank the employer for their time.

## After the interview

- You will usually hear by phone or letter if you have got the job
- If you are offered the job, always make sure you let the employer know that you will be taking it. You will need to agree a start date.

## If you didn't get the job, don't be too downhearted. Treat it as a learning experience to help you with the next interview

- Make a note of the questions you have been asked. Think of better answers to any of which didn't go well or you didn't expect
- Think about phoning the employer for feedback. Many employers keep interview notes which might help you with future job applications and interviews.

## Tips for telephone/Skype/FaceTime interviews

You may be asked to speak to an employer on the phone or via Skype/FaceTime so they can decide if they want to interview you face to face. To prepare for a phone interview:

- Have the job advert, your CV and application form to hand
- Have a pen and paper ready to make any notes
- Make sure you're in a quiet room with the door closed
- If it's Skype/FaceTime, dress smartly
- If it's via phone, get online if you can, you can quickly look up things the interviewer may refer to

## Tips for group interviews

A group of applicants will be placed in a room and given tasks or questions to answer so the employer can compare you with the others and see how you perform in a team.

- You'll be asked to introduce yourself – keep it simple, say who you are, where you go to school, why you applied for the job and maybe something interesting you've done recently
- Sit up straight, stay engaged (switch your phone off!), make eye contact and be polite
- Follow the same advice as for the face to face interviews
- Don't show off and try to undermine others, but don't blend into the background and say nothing either. Basically be the best version of yourself and you will come across as genuine
- Don't swear, shout, insult the others, get angry/aggressive/loud or speak over anyone
- Do smile, nod, hear others out, ask questions and generally look enthusiastic.