

INTERVIEW 101

First of all, the members of the panel want everyone to do well in the interviews. We want the interview to be a positive experience for you!

In a job interview you can help create a positive image of yourself by preparing a few key elements: -



If attending the interview in person, make sure you know where you're going! Arrive 5 – 10 minutes early.

If attending virtually, make sure you've got the correct software downloaded and you're familiar with using it. Check that your internet connection is stable and is therefore less likely to 'drop out'. Also, check the level of lighting (so the interview panel can see you clearly) and any potential background noise.





You can take notes to the interview to use as a 'memory refresher' when answering questions.

It's also ok to make notes during the interview if you wish e.g. writing down the question just asked to keep you focussed.

Avoid distractions:

- Ensure any pets / other people have been removed from the room
- Switch your phone off (mobile and landline)



REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

Sometimes employers will ask if you require any reasonable adjustments to be made to the interview process due to a disability. This is to ensure that any necessary arrangements, facilities or assistance are in place to support you. If you need to discuss this, contact the organisation in advance of the interview.

VISUAL:

Your outfit and general appearance is important. Ensure you are dressed in a smart, professional way – even if the interview is being held virtually.

Body language is as important, if not more so, than your outfit. If the interview is in person, walk with purpose.



Hold your head up high...fidgeting can be taken as nerves. For example, if you're sitting on a chair that rotates, please don't swing it back and forth or spin round.

Make eye contact with the members of the interview panel - looking at the floor or away from the interviewer may show a lack of confidence.

AUDITORY:

Means your tone of voice, its pitch (high or low), and how quickly you speak. These will all impact on how confident you come across. Only talk when you have something to say, think first before speaking.

It's fine if you need a moment to think before answering a question, but saying something like 'just give me a minute to consider my response' will show the interviewers that you're considering your answer.



It's also ok to ask for the question to be repeated or rephrased – we rather that you asked than give us a completely unrelated answer!



Back your voice up with natural hand gestures.

We naturally talk with our hands...sometimes when nervous people put their hands in their pockets or sit on them, which can create a look of awkwardness.

KINAESTHETIC:

This is all about your handshake, which says a lot about you. A firm handshake says you are professional and makes you appear confident. Dry, warm hands can inspire confidence. Cold, clammy hands are an unconscious turn-off. Don't cross your arms either, as this gives off the vibe that you're closing in on yourself.



BE NICE:



Be nice to everyone you meet, from the receptionist to cleaning staff to security guards. You'd be amazed to find out who knows who in the workplace. Being friendly and open will have a positive psychological impact on your interviewer.

Several experiments have concluded that when you look at someone who is happy you start to feel happy as well, which is a great tool for rapport building in the job interview. Being nice also means being considerate...ask if it's OK to take your jacket off; when filling your glass with water, offer it to do the same for your interviewer.

TIMING:

The interviewers may be meeting with several people for the role and therefore on a timetable for the day. You will often be told at the start of the interview how long it is expected to take. Be mindful of time management and the length of your responses. It is a balance between giving all the necessary information but not talking for too long.

READING SIGNALS:

Learn to read the signals of the people interviewing you to guide your responses. If they seem disinterested or bored it may be a sign that you've been talking for too long, shorten your answers and try to re-engage them. If you find the interviewers are asking a lot of follow up questions, you may wish to consider expanding your answers.





WHAT TYPE OF QUESTIONS WILL I BE ASKED?

You can never really know what questions will be asked in an interview. So, it's a good idea to have some examples prepared in advance. These should be flexible enough so that you can adapt them to a number of different questions.

There are 2 main types of questions, behavioural and operational.

BEHAVIOURAL questions are designed to discover the applicant's personality traits e.g. what would you do in certain situations.

- Describe a time when you took initiative on a project.
- What would you do if you disagreed with another team member?
- How would you manage multiple projects?

OPERATIONAL questions are aimed at discovering technical skills e.g. your range of knowledge on a specific subject.

- Tell us about your knowledge of Microsoft Office?
- How do you structure your working day?



Have a read through of the Job Description and the required skills and attributes (sometimes listed as Essential and Desirable skills). Pay close attention to skills that match your specific qualifications and soft skills.

Do a bit of research on the organisation you're interviewing with. The company website can be a great source of general information.

Try to have a few examples in which you can talk about yourself clearly and in a positive way. Use the STAR method (see below).

Review your examples and make sure they're related to the job you're applying for. You want to show the interviewers that you are the best person for the job and that you have the necessary skills required for the role.



Consider transferable skills – you may not have done something identical to what's being asked but you may have done something similar.

Get feedback from others. A friend or teacher can help you prep by giving you a mock interview.

Be truthful. Getting caught in a lie will undermine your credibility and could damage your career prospects.



Think about any job or organisation related questions you would like to ask the interviewers, there's often an opportunity for this to happen. Have a couple of questions ready to ask (but not loads as the interviewers may be on a tight schedule). If you're successfully offered the role, there'll be opportunities to ask any further follow up questions.



ANSWERING QUESTIONS:

Use the **STAR** method when answering questions, it'll help keep you focussed. You can also use the STAR method on your CV or application form to highlight your skills and experience.

	S	T	A	R
Prepare	Situation	Task	Action	Result
Listen to the question	Explain the situation, provide context and background.	Describe the task, problem, challenge or goal that you had to address. What needed to be done and why?	Explain what you personally did to complete the task or achieve the goal. Highlighting any desirable traits the interviewer is looking for.	Explain the positive outcome, benefits or savings as a result of your actions. Highlight any quantifiable results.
Think of an example				
Plan your response				
	'A customer complained...'	'We faced a shortage of...'	'I solved...' 'We calculated...'	'The result was...'
	Try and be concise whilst giving all the necessary information			

SITUATION:

Briefly describe the context and background in which your example takes place. This sets the scene for the interviewer so they can picture you in the situation.

Be as specific as possible whilst keeping your answer brief and to the point.

TASK:

Then describe the task, problem, challenge or goal that you had to address. What needed to be done and why? For example, working as part of a team to complete a tight deadline or resolving conflict of some kind.

ACTION:

This requires you to explain the action you personally took in the situation. Your action should have a positive effect and should reflect some of your key skills e.g. organisational, communication, conflict resolution or any other applicable skills.

RESULT:

This is where you explain the result or outcome of the action that was taken. It's a good idea to highlight what you learned from the experience and what you achieved.

SO, IN SUMMARY: -

1. Be professional, be interesting and be nice...your dress, small talk, answers to questions should all be consistent in giving the impression that you're a great person to work with and have around.
2. Use nonverbal cues to your benefit. Present yourself in the best light and learn to read the signals of the people interviewing you to guide your responses.
3. Be encouraged by the fact that you've made it this far. Being chosen for an interview is definitely a good sign. Let that fact allow you to relax so that you present yourself in the best possible light.
4. Avoid distractions. Switch your phone off, and if attending in person get there at least 5- 10 minutes early.
5. Be prepared. Think about potential questions that you may be asked and have examples ready. Use the STAR method.

