

interview preparation

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Get organised Be prepared

1: Get the details right

Know when and where you're going.
Find out who's going to be interviewing you.
Make sure you have a job description.
Find out the dress code - dress smart to play it safe.

2: Know your target

Learn what you can about the company.
Keep an eye on news in leading weeks for stories about them.

3: Know yourself

Know yourself versus what they want.
Find out what they want and match yourself with that.
Quantify and qualify yourself.
Finally, re-read your CV.

4: Prepare for the obvious questions

Prepare for standard questions: strengths, weaknesses etc.

5: Prepare questions to ask them

What would you like to know? Their structure, promotion potential.

First impressions last

When you walk through the front door, remember you're already making an impression on your prospective employers

- Anyone from the receptionist to the managing director may directly or indirectly influence the final selection of candidates, or even the job winner.
- Inside the interview room, you'll be introduced to the other interviewers if there are any - look at them when greeting them, smile and carefully remember their names so you can address them throughout the interview.
- If the sun's in your eyes, or the chair is wobbly, say something rather than squirm and fail to concentrate on the interview; competent people find solutions and never settle for second best.

Questions to you

Consider these points when answering questions.

- Relax - imagine you're having a conversation with a friend.
- Listen - sometimes, people get so caught up in their feelings they forget to actually listen to the questions; slowing the pace will help you hear the questions and answer them correctly.
- Before you respond to more difficult questions, think about your answer and how you want to express them - this will help you speak more confidently.
- Why not practise talking slowly and evenly before you go - record your answers and listen to your pace and tone.
- Body language demonstrates how comfortable you are with your subject matter - if you're enthusiastic about what you're saying, smile and let your hands do the talking (but don't overdo it).
- Look at who you are talking to - but don't exclude other interviewers present.
- If you said something you didn't mean, and are worried it could damage your chances, simply rectify it by restating what you really wanted to express - don't hold back; it could be your only chance to get that point across.
- Be factual and honest about strengths and weaknesses - show that you recognise your weaknesses as characteristics you're striving to improve.
- Don't be over familiar with the interviewer(s).

Questions to the interview

This is a chance to show your enthusiasm and interest! However, don't ask questions for the sake of it or if they have already been answered during your interview. Think of sensible questions.

- What are the other people in the department like?
- How would their roles impact on mine?
- What training or induction is given?
- What would be my core responsibilities?
- What sort of one-off projects might I be given?
- What interaction would I have with other departments of the company, or with clients or suppliers?
- What scope is there for taking on extra work or being involved in any other aspects of the company?
- What plans do you have for expansion - how would these impact on my role?
- Where are the opportunities to progress within the company?

How to Give Examples at Interviews

P-A-R

Problem

What was the problem?

Action

What was the action you took?

Result

What was the result?

Always give answers with a positive spin.

How to Ace a Job Interview

1: Put the interview into perspective

You should make sure it's the right company for you, as well as be on your best form for them.

2: Be clear

What are your unique selling points?

3: Examples

Make sure you use plenty of examples as proof of your abilities. Be clear about the problem, action and result - making it unique.

4: Never assume

Don't assume the interviewer has read your CV. Go through it with them.

5: Never slag off

6: Prepare 3 questions

Prepare at least three questions. Think about what you want to know.

7: Listen

Listen and answer the questions asked.

8: Don't talk too much

Don't go into excessive details, but do engage them in conversation.

9: Do your research

Know the company. Bring snippets about the company up during the interview to show your knowledge.

Conclusion

- There may be an explanation of how the process will continue - if not, then ask; also try to find out when you should hear back - but don't push - some recruiters will not want to commit themselves to timescales until they have had time to consider all the candidates.
- Make sure the appropriate people know where you can be reached.
- Finally, thank your interviewer for his or her time, shake hands.
- Remember to say a personal goodbye to each person you talked with.
- Don't forget to acknowledge the receptionist as you leave, particularly if you have been looked after while waiting, such as having been given tea or coffee or if your coat and bag or briefcase have been taken care of.



questions

and how to answer them

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Questions and how to answer them

Why did you leave your last job?

The dreaded question 'Why did you leave your last job?' is not as difficult to answer as you would expect.

What They Really Want To Know

What they want to know is what you have learnt about yourself in the process of looking for a new job, and what you are hoping to gain by moving companies.

What They Don't Want To Hear

They don't want to hear you slagging off your boss, company, products, colleagues or focusing on the very negative aspects.

What They Do Want To Hear

They do want to hear you focusing on the benefits of a move and what you are looking to get out of a move. Make it very positive. Focus on the benefits, opportunities and development.

Questions and how to answer them

What are your strengths?

What They Really Want To Know

What the interviewer wants to know is how well you know yourself and your strengths. They also want to see that you have been able to pick out the strengths that are relevant to the job in question.

What They Don't Want To Hear

They don't want to hear typical clichés or phrases without an example to back what you are saying. They also don't want to hear about any strengths that are completely irrelevant to this job.

What They Do Want To Hear

They do want to see that you have actually sat down and thought about the strengths most relevant to the job in question. You could sit down and highlight the strengths needed for the job states in the job description. Be sure to also give them very specific examples of how you have used your strengths for your former employer.

Questions and how to answer them

Why should we hire you?

What They Really Want To Know

What the interview really wants to know is why they should hire you instead of someone else they are interviewing. They want to know that if they gave you the job, what would you be able to do for them. Look at the job description and know what they would require when you start working for them.

What They Don't Want To Hear

They don't want to hear what you want to get out of this, that you really need a job and that they should hire you because you are really good at your job.

What They Do Want To Hear

They want you to sell yourself to them. Be very specific about what is in it for them, and if they gave you this job, what would they get out of it. Focus on examples of the things they are really looking for, how you've done it already and how you can do it again for them.

Questions and how to answer them

Why do you want to work for this company?

What They Really Want To Know

They want to see that you've considered where you want to work and why.

What They Don't Want To Hear

Don't imply you want to work at their company just for an impressive addition to your CV.

What They Do Want To Hear

Show that you've researched their company. Sell yourself in relation to their specific products / services.

Questions and how to answer them

Tell me about yourself

What They Really Want To Know

Here the interviewer is asking you to present yourself in the best possible light, to give them your selling points for this particular role.

What They Don't Want To Hear

The do not want to hear about your life outside of work or what you do outside of work.

What They Do Want To Hear

They want to know that you have read through the job description and that you know what they are looking for. Tell them about yourself in a professional context. Think of yourself as a product, explain why people should buy you - don't just tell, sell.

Questions and how to answer them

What are your weaknesses?

What They Really Want To Know

Interpret the questions. What the interviewer really wants to know is what risks they are potentially taking by hiring you. It is also a stress question, and by asking you a stress question they can see how you react when it is thrown at you.

What They Don't Want To Hear

They don't want to hear that you have a huge weakness that can't be corrected under any circumstances, or something that would really negatively impact your performance on the job. They also don't want to hear about a personal trait that has no bearing on the job itself.

What They Do Want To Hear

They do want to hear you being honest about a minor weakness you have, and that you are doing something about it. You should turn the negative into a positive and show that you are not only aware of this weakness, but doing something about it.

Questions and how to answer them

Where do you see yourself in five years?

What They Really Want To Know

What the interviewer wants to know is if you have actually given any thought to your future career and if so, is there any obvious conflict between what they can offer or give you, and what you actually want.

What They Don't Want To Hear

They won't want to hear a really rigid answer, or any other very specific, very time framed goals that would just mean that you would be driving the show.

What They Do Want To Hear

They want to hear that you have given some thought to your future and there are certain things you are aiming towards. You should aim not to be too rigid or specific as to exactly when that's going to happen and how it's going to happen. The interviewer does, however, want to know that you are really enthusiastic about your profession and that you want to be the best you can be.

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| Accountancy | 028 9055 8020 |
| Sales and Marketing | 028 9051 2100 |
| Education | 028 9055 8000 |
