

# INTERVIEW

## TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

“One important key to success  
is self-confidence.

An important key to self-  
confidence is preparation.”

Arthur Ashe



# Before the Interview

## Get to know the employer

### DO:

**Carry out some research** about the company/ organisation/ institution in general. How long have they been around? What services or products do they offer?



**Read the company's mission statement** and pick out any specific values or ethics which seem important to them. Make a note of how these same ethics and values apply to you.

**Search for any relevant news stories** which mention the company and familiarise yourself with their social media accounts. Pick out anything of interest.

**Identify how this organisation sets itself apart from its competitors.** What is the organisation's main selling point?

**Speak to a current employee** from the company, or read past employee reviews online.

### DONT:

Make uninformed assumptions based on unreliable information on the internet.

## Plan your journey

### DO:

**Double check the address of the interview.** Bear in mind that the interview will not always necessarily take place in the company's main headquarters.



**Decide how you plan to travel to the interview and figure out how long it will take you.** Apps like Google Maps or Citymapper can help you with this.

**Plan to arrive 30 minutes before the interview.** This way, you definitely won't be late.

**Set aside extra travelling time in case of traffic or other disruptions.**

**Ensure your phone is fully charged** for the journey in case you need to double check directions or get in touch with the interviewer.



### DONT:

Leave the house at the last minute with no time to spare.

## Keep calm and rest

### DO:

**Make sure to get a good sleep** the night before the interview.



**Make sure you have prepared well in advance** to ward off any unnecessary anxiety.

**Practice some simple breathing techniques** to use in case you get nervous.

**Remember that you are already good enough for the job on paper.** The interview is just a chance for you to prove your knowledge and show off your personality.

**If the interview is in the morning, get up early and make time to eat breakfast and have a drink before you go.**



### DONT:

Stress yourself out. The more worried you are, the harder it will be.

## Focus on your appearance



**DO:** Dress smartly and professionally in clothes that have been freshly washed and ironed



**DO:** Women should apply make-up sparingly, using neutral colours to create a natural look

**DO:** Dress smartly and professionally in clothes that have been freshly washed and ironed

**DO:** Men should pay attention to facial hair, making sure that it is even and neatly trimmed.

**DO:** Channel your personality into your outfit. Your individuality is your biggest asset



**DONT:** Wear tight, revealing clothing, excessive jewellery or sportswear.

**DO:** Wash, dry and comb your hair, style it neatly and attempt to keep any loose strands from blocking your face.



**DO:** Adapt your outfit to suit the role. For example, if you are interviewing for a job in a creative agency, you may benefit from showing off your own quirky style.

**Read the following pages and fill out the information before your interview...**



## Practice your questions and answers

**DO:**

Research some stereotypical interview questions and practice answering them.



Ask a friend or relative to role-play an interview situation with you.

Speak to someone who already works in the role you are interviewing for. Find out the qualities and characteristics they need to do their job.

**DONT:**

Don't arrive at your interview unprepared and uninformed.

## Plan what to bring

**DO:**

**Double check your invitation to the interview.** Check to see if the interviewer has asked you to bring anything along.

**Print out a copy of your CV** in case the interviewer has forgotten or misplaced it.

**Bring along a recognised form of ID.** Your passport or driving licence will do.

**Gather together any awards, certificates or examples of your previous work** that are relevant to the role you are interviewing for.

**Put together some ideas which you could implement if you did get the job.**

**Pack a bottle of water, a snack, breath mints, a pen and a notepad**

**DONT:**

Don't overload the interviewer with documents and information. This will distract them from getting to know you as a person.

# Before the Interview

## Question Practice

### Practical Information:

Job Role:

Date:

Time:

Interviewer Name:

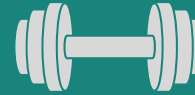
Address:

Read the following questions and fill out the information before your interview...



## About You

What are your biggest strengths?



1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

What are your weaknesses?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

## About the Job

What do you know about the company/role?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

What skills and qualities do you think you need to be a good ..... ?

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....



**Think!**

How do you display these qualities?

## About the Job

### What are your salary expectations?

(We know this can be awkward so we recommend you check out the National Careers Service website and figure out the average salary for this role.)



£

## The Future

If we hire you, what will you bring to the workplace?

Where do you see yourself in the future? What are your goals?



1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

## About Your Experience

Tell us about your relevant experience:

Education:

Work Experience:

Life Experience:

Hobbies:



**Think!**

How are these experiences relevant to the role you're applying for?

Describe a time where you encountered a problem at work or in life.

Tell us how you handled the problem? What were your *actions* and what was the *result*?

What is your greatest achievement?

# Before the Interview

It's Question Time!

**Ok, so you've practiced answering the questions, but how about asking them?**

It is important to remember that an interview is a two way street and before you commit to a new role, you need to know as much as possible about the job.

Of course, we do not recommend that you immediately put the interviewer in the hot seat and start grilling them as soon as you arrive. Instead, we think it's best to wait until the end of the interview when the interviewer will most likely ask you if you have any questions. In any case, we advise you prepare a set of questions before you go in.

If you're stuck take a look at the following advice.

## Good Questions:

Are there any opportunities for further training or progression?

Can you tell me more about the team I would be working with?



What are the biggest challenges in this industry/sector right now?

What targets do you expect new employees to meet in their first few weeks/months?

What are the next stages of the interview process?

These questions are good because they show that you are eager and willing to find out more about the role itself. These questions will also help you clarify what to expect and what is expected of you.

## Not So Good Questions

What does this company/organisation do?  
How old is the company?

What is the holiday and/or flexitime policy for staff?



What other benefits are there available for employees of the company?

What will I be doing if I get the job?

How much will I get paid?

These questions aren't all bad. In fact, you will certainly want them answered at some point. However, asking these at an interview suggests that you haven't done your research, or that you are more interested in the job benefits than the role itself.

## Now it's Your Turn

In preparation for your interview, try to come up with some questions which are relevant to the specific role you have applied for:

1.

2.

3.

# The Good, The Bad & The Plain Funny of Interview Answers

Before you continue with your preparation for the interview, here are a few examples we gathered to get you going.

Some are really good, some are pretty bad and some that are simply so funny they just deserve to be told.

## The Good

One applicant delivered prepaid Chinese food to the recruitment company, including a fortune cookie with his name and phone number.



A guy looking for work in marketing posed as a delivery guy and handed out a box of doughnuts to each company he wanted to impress. The tagline was great too: "Most resumes end up in the trash. Mine – in your belly"

Interviewing for a great tax consultancy, a candidate was once asked this: "Let us say you are working in a team and a person from your team has been reckless and neglecting his work. This is affecting the team's performance. You have noticed this, and you're not supposed to report it to the higher authority. How would you deal with this situation?". The candidate said simply: "I would let him be and mind my own business" then proceeded to explain: Without any proper authority, I cannot take any actions against my fellow co-worker. This is the responsibility of the manager and he shall take care of this. Leadership does not mean acting without any authority, it means acknowledging the limitations and acting within the boundaries."



## The Bad

"I had a guy answer his biggest weakness question with, "Waking up on time and coming to work." He recruiter just sat there in shocked silence before he followed up with, "I really like sleeping in."



During one interview, a candidate's phone rang, and she answered it. After the interviewer asked: "Do you have any further questions for me?" her reply was "I didn't get the job, did I?"

A candidate actually sent his sister to be interviewed in his place.





# The Good, The Bad & The Plain Funny of Interview Answers

## The Plain Funny

Do not answer the “about you” with your latest drama. A guy once talked about how an affair cost him his job during his interview.

For the line “Choose one word to summarize your strongest professional attribute” one woman wrote, “I’m very good at following instructions”.



An individual applied for a customer-service job. When asked what he might not like about the job, he said: “Dealing with people”.

A guy showed up drunk for his interview. The interview did not last long, but by the end of it, the guy was crying about his uncle who had passed away. When the recruiter asked how long it had been, he answered: 6 years.



## Outside the Box

A guy was once asked to jump from a window if he wanted the job.

The office was on the 7th floor of the building. After a minute or two of debating it, he jumped.

The employer walked up to the window and congratulated the candidate for getting the job after the future employee jumped off the window sill, inside the room.

The recruiter never specified whether he should be jumping in or out of the building. He just asked the candidate to jump. Thinking outside the box, got him the job.





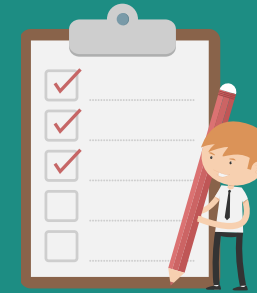
# Before the Interview

## Pre-Interview Checklist

If you've followed our advice up to now and filled out the empty spaces in this booklet, then you are **almost ready** for your interview.

However, just to be safe, let's do a last minute check.

**Tick off the boxes as you've done them:**



Research the employer

Find out what past or current staff say about the job

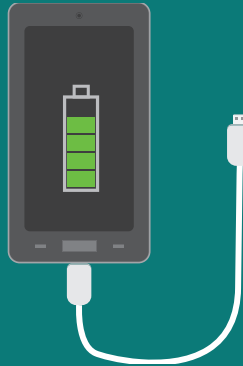
Decide on a suitable outfit



Plan your journey



Charge your phone



Plan for your travel or parking costs

Prepare your documents



Decide on anything else you need to bring

Allocate time for food before the interview



Prepare some questions for the interviewer



Fill in the empty spaces in this booklet

Practice answering interview questions

**Well done!**

You've ticked all the boxes and you are nearly good to go. However, first, we think you should check out our tips on how to behave during your interview on the next page...

# During the Interview

## First impressions count

### DO:

**Get there with at least 10 minutes to spare.** You do not want to arrive feeling flustered or sweaty. Wind-swept hair is good for a walk on the beach not for an interview.

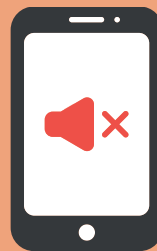


**Mind your body language.** Keep eye contact, have an open body posture and look focused and engaged.

**Future employers assess manners and communication skills to understand whether you will fit well within a team.** Do not swear, keep the jokes in a "safe" zone and be mindful of office etiquette.

**Be respectful to everyone on the panel.**

**The handshake is important.** Not too weak, not too firm, but we all have a different style. Ask a few friends to practice with you.



**Switch your phone on to silent or have it on flight mode.** Even if you're not expecting a call, your friends and family will probably want to know how the interview went. Messenger and WhatsApp notifications will quickly become annoying.

### DONT:

Be too relaxed. Drape an arm around the chair, slouch and put your feet up. Ask for a drink and check if there's any cake to go with that. After all, who doesn't like cake?

## Get talking

### DO:



**"Tell me about yourself" is a cue to get your key selling points across.** Looking for a job is like advertising yourself on a marketplace. When a potential customer is interested in the product, be prepared to close the sale by putting across the best-selling features of your product.

**If there is a question you do not have an answer for, it's ok to say so.** You can always make a note of it and answer it in your follow up email. Your interviewer will appreciate that more than a bluff attempt.



**Anticipate any gaps in your CV and prepare your defence ahead of time.** This will lay aside any concerns that you may not be the right fit for the job.

**The question: "so why are you looking to leave your current role?" is not an open invite for you to badmouth your former boss** – however tempting it may be

### DONT:

Get the interviewer to share the gossip on your future colleagues and managers. Share any disapproving comments about co-workers.

# During the Interview

## The assessment stage

**DO: Individual assessments and in-tray exercises – Organising, prioritising and delegating are the skills you should be putting across.** Watch out for any side notes or comments.

**DO: Group activities – This is a way to set yourself apart from the crowd, but also a way for your future employer to see how well you play with others.** Be prepared to open the conversation, keep things on track, and see that everyone has a chance to contribute.



**DO: Presentations – Short and simple and always prepared and rehearsed.** There is nothing worse than an hour-long rant, where you will bore your audience to death. Equally bad, a gruelling 10 mins where you prepared exactly nothing.



**DO: Personality and psychometric tests – There is no right or wrong here.** Just make sure you stay true to yourself. There is no point in answering what you think the employer might want to hear, because you cannot really predict what the employer wants to hear.

### **DONT:**

If you are in a group assessment, do not stop talking over your colleagues. You need to shine and steal the spotlight at any costs. Make comments about everything and anything. The employer needs to see you have something to say. Constantly.



### **Finally**

Remember this is your time to decide if the job is a right fit for you as well, not only if you are the right fit for the job.

# After the Interview

**So, you're nearing the end of the interview. You've answered and asked questions to the best of your ability, and now the end is in sight and you can relax, right?**

Wrong. While you are still in the room, you are still being judged, so it is important to keep up impressions until you are safely out of the building. Follow these simple steps and you are sure to leave a lasting impression:

## Step 1

### Offer up any outstanding information or clarifications:

Although the interviewer may have finished asking you questions, you may have some additional things to add.

For example, you may have brought along some examples of your work / professional or academic references that you would like to pass on.

Alternatively, you may feel the need to clarify on one of your previous answers. While you may feel conflicted about doing this, you must remember that this is your last chance to show yourself in a good light.



## Step 3

### Deliver your closing statement:

This is just a quick sentence or two which sums up the interview and reminds the interviewer why they should choose you.

For example, you could say something like this: "Thank you for meeting with me today. It's been really great to find out more about the role and I am looking forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any further questions for me, please feel free to get in touch."

## Step 2

### Find out what happens next:

Before leaving an interview, it is important to discover what happens next.

Asking questions about the next steps shows the interviewer that you are enthusiastic about the recruitment process and keen for the job.

However, most importantly, these questions help you to develop your own expectations and reduce the stress of waiting for an answer.

## Step 4

### Final impressions:

Now the talking part is over, all that's left to do is leave the interviewer with a good impression of you when you leave the room.

Smile warmly, offer a firm handshake, try not to rush off and make sure to thank them again for their time.



# After the Interview

What now?

Once you've left the interview, the rest is up to fate.

If you haven't heard back by the time the interviewer stated, feel free to send a follow up email to check where they are in their recruitment process and ask when you can expect to hear back.

**?** Think!

How do these points compare? What did you do well? What would you do differently next time?

## If you got the job

### Congratulations!

All your hard work has paid off! It's time to start your new role and get moving along your career path.

If you want more advice about climbing the career ladder, check out our career development booklet. But for now, take time to enjoy your success!



## If you didn't get the job

### Not to worry!

You did your best and you were up against some serious competition.

Most employers only interview the most promising candidates and they have a hard time choosing between potential employees.

The chances are you just missed the mark. In this situation, we think it's really important to contact your employer for some feedback and discover what it was that held you back.



## Feedback

Whether you got the job or not, feedback after an interview can prove extremely useful.

So once you've heard the news, send a quick email to employer and ask them if it's possible to arrange a feedback phone call or email. This information will help you to understand your position and will work to your benefit in the future.

Reflect on your own performance and note down three personal feedback points here:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....

After receiving feedback from the employer, note down three points they made here:

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....