



## PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

With interviews it is very much about the planning beforehand and ensuring that your personality shines through.

### **Interview Research before the interview**

Your performance in your interview depends upon how much research and preparation you have completed prior to the interview. Don't leave this until the last minute. Focus your research on the following areas:-

- *The Employer*  
What is the business truly about?  
What job sector does it operate in?  
What challenges does it face?  
Who are its main competitors?  
What major projects has it just completed?  
What are its culture and values?
- *Review the job description*  
Refresh your memory of how your skills and qualifications fit with what they are looking for. Why do you want the job and why should the organisation choose you over other candidates? Think of some examples that will demonstrate how you previously demonstrated the required skills and behaviours.
- *Interviewers*  
Who is interviewing you? Your invite to interview should give you this. Use LinkedIn and the company website to find out more about their professional interests and experience.
- *Travel*  
How will you get there? Do you have alternative routes if there are delays?

### **Types of interview**

- Telephone interviews – a way of doing an initial sift of candidates.
- Video interviews – either live or pre-recorded – particularly in use due to Covid-19, systems used include Zoom, Microsoft Teams or a bespoke video interview software.
- Face to face interviews – becoming less prevalent due to Covid-19.
- Presentation – opportunity to showcase your applied skills with a specific topic.
- Work trial – sometimes used to test your abilities within an actual role scenario.

### **Types of questioning**

#### *Closed*

One which can be answered very quickly, often with just one word such as yes or no

#### *Open*

One which forces a lengthier answer. An example is “Can you tell me a time when ....”

#### *Leading*

Drawing you down a specific path. An example is “why haven't you achieved more in your career”



### *Funnel*

Initially asked a very general question before following up with a more precise question

Just remember the essentials of a good interview

**E** ENGAGE  
**B** BRAIN  
**B** BEFORE  
**O** OPENING  
**M** MOUTH

- Give examples
- Never exaggerate your abilities
- Don't sound like a parrot .... Take time and effort to develop possible responses that give you confidence to respond

### **What to take to an interview (whether face to face or other formats)**

Ensure that you have everything you need such as:-

- Pen and notebook
- Your CV and interview invite
- Your academic certificates and work examples if requested
- Photo ID
- A bottle of water
- Money for transport and food

### **What to wear for interview**

What you will be expected to wear depends on the nature of the organisation such as size, the industry it operates in and the culture. If unsure, ask before you attend. The key is to be too smart than too casual. Whatever you choose, make sure that your clothes are ironed and your shoes are cleaned.

### **4 ways to make a good impression**

1. *Punctuality*  
Arriving late doesn't help anyone let alone yourself. Try and do your best and arrive in good time.
2. *Positivity and enthusiasm*  
Be polite and professional with anyone you meet before or after the interview. Try to avoid criticising previous employers.
3. *Body language*  
Once you're seated sit naturally without slouching in your chair or leaning on the desk. Remember to smile and retain eye contact. This applies whether you are face to face or virtual. If face to face remember to offer a handshake and make sure that you are firm with your handshake.
4. *Clarity*  
Answer all questions clearly and concisely.



## Telephone Interviews

These are often used as a means of sifting down candidates and making sure that you are suitable based on the job description, personality fit and experience required. It can be as short as 15 minutes or anything up to an hour. Essentially it is a way of checking that what you have stated in your CV or application form is actually correct.

### *How to prepare for a telephone interview*

1. Have a snappy elevator pitch that sums up who you are and your experience in a concise way. Start out at your current position and lay out your key responsibilities there. Then summarise your key educational and professional steps that you have taken to get there.
2. Make sure you know your CV and cover letter inside out.
3. Remember the sense of occasion, you need to represent both yourself but also how you would represent the new company.
4. Dress smartly, this will help you to feel more professional and you will carry out your telephone interview more confidently.
5. Be sure to smile too, as this naturally makes you sound enthusiastic.
6. When it comes to answering questions remember the STAR technique  
Situation: start by outlining the situation you were in  
Task: What was the task at hand? What was required of you?  
Action: What did you do? What action/s did you take and why?  
Result: Summarise the results of your actions.  
This will help you show your experience for the position, and to formulate your answers in a clear, concise and confident manner.

## Video Interviews

This format is becoming more and more prevalent, primarily as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, where businesses are not inviting candidates to site. They can vary in style and length.

### *How to prepare for a video interview*

1. Check out the format that the interview will take. There are 2 main formats but are very different experiences  
Live: similar to a face to face interview. In real-time you will speak to the interviewer or panel of interviewers via a video connection such as Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts or a bespoke video conferencing software. You should be given this information in your invite letter so will have chance to practice prior to the interview. Try to treat the conversation as you would a face to face interviewer and build a rapport with the interviewer.  
Pre-recorded: this a much less personal experience where you will be presented with a pre-recorded or written questions(s) on a screen and you will have to record your answer on video, often to a time limit. This helps interviewers as they can simply watch them at a time that suits them. However, it can be awkward for you as a candidate particularly if you are not used to recording yourself.



2. Choose your location  
Use a room where you won't be disturbed by noises and people.  
Use a clean and simple background – remember that a recruiter doesn't want to see your laundry!  
Think about the lighting – make sure you don't get a shadow.  
Close any software that might play notification sounds.  
Switch your phone to silent so you won't get distracted.
3. Dress appropriately  
This is your first opportunity to give a professional first impression. Wear the same outfit that you would have chosen to wear for a face-to-face meeting.  
Avoid too busy patterns and stripes as this can be difficult on a screen.
4. Try to avoid slouching, moving too much or touching your face.
5. Test your computer device, camera and any other software to make sure that they run properly. Make sure that the picture is clear and the sound quality is good. Check out your internet connection and have a back up available if things don't work.
6. Make sure your computer device is plugged in during the interview, as there is nothing worse than the battery running out.
7. If using an iPad or tablet get a stand to put it in otherwise the picture will wobble and you will hear constant rustling during the call.
8. If you are using a personal Skype or Google account, make sure that you have a professional username.

#### *During the interview*

1. Have a pen, notepad, a copy of your CV and any other notes set out on your desk.
2. When listening, nod and smile to show that you are engaged.
3. Use hand gestures, when appropriate.
4. Have a glass of water.
5. Dress smartly, this will help you to feel more professional and you will carry out your telephone interview more confidently.
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7. When it comes to answering questions remember the STAR technique  
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This article by the BBC will also give you some pointers on video interviews  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/business-53560928>

#### **Face-to-face interviews**

The format for face-to-face interviews are very similar to video interviews except you will likely to be visiting the location where you will be based if successful in gaining the role. Remember first impressions count!



### **At the end of the interview (whatever the format)**

At the end of the interview many interviewers ask candidates if they have any questions. This is your chance to ask a question or questions that may stand you out even further from other candidates. It will show the interviewer that you are interested and help you to visualise what it would be like to work there. Don't use this as a chance to enter into salary discussions or start date discussions.

Questions you could ask include:-

- What are the top priorities for my first 6 months in the job?
- How would you describe the team I will be working with?
- How would you describe the work culture here?
- What do you enjoy the most about working here?
- In what ways is performance measured?
- What training and professional development opportunities will be available?
- Where do you think the company is headed in the next five years?

The interviewer(s) should tell you what the next step is. But if they don't then remember to ask them. As with any interview, you should conclude by thanking the interviewer(s) for their time.

Send a follow-up email later that day (or the next day if your interview was in the evening). The message may help build a stronger connection with your potential employer and help you progress to the next step.

Should you have not heard anything by the date the interviewer stated then I recommend that you drop a quick note confirming that you are very interested in the role and are looking forward to hearing from them.

### **Not been successful after the interview?**

Should you not be successful ask for feedback. You might be disappointed, and naturally so, but asking and hopefully getting feedback will help you to understand where you might need to focus your attention going forward.