

**Step 18****The Interview**

The interview is the final job seeking hurdle.

While some are quite daunted by interviews, the key to performing well is preparation. Good preparation will make all the difference for even the most nervous of us.

In this section you will be get some tools and tips to help you perform at interview.

**Preparation:**

You will need to prepare in several areas. Below are the main ones.

- **Research:** Get as much information about the organisation as you possibly can. Do more than check their website. If you can find a contact within the organisation, then prepare some questions and ask them for information. Showing that you are knowledgeable about the organisation at interview is always a plus.
- **Meeting the employer's needs:** Examine the job role carefully. Identify what tasks and responsibilities are involved in the role, and list them. Match up and list what you can offer to satisfy each need with an emphasis on your strengths and unique selling points. Ensure that you have supporting evidence and examples for each item.

Use the tool given below to achieve this.

- **Questions you will be asked:** There are certain questions that you will almost always be asked. Follow this link [Interview questions](#) for a list of questions that are typically asked.
- **Questions to ask:** You will be asked if you have any questions. It is advisable to prepare some questions in advance of the interview. Some examples are given [here](#), but you are strongly advised to come up with your own.
- **Dress code and grooming:** Wear smart and business like clothes. A suit or smart plain trousers with a shirt and tie for a male are appropriate to most interview situations. A lady has more options, but should keep the emphasis on smart, neat and tidy. Pay attention to detail. Ensure your clothes are pressed, and your shoes are polished.

Good personal hygiene is a must, but do not overuse deodorants, aftershaves and perfumes or colognes. Females should only use makeup lightly.

These are the preparation fundamentals. There are more tips on the next page.

**You could write a book on the subject of interviews, and indeed there are several on the shelf of most bookstores. However - by applying the fundamentals given here, and adding some common sense most people can perform well at interview.**

**Matching what you have to offer with the needs of the employer is key, and good research will go a long way in that respect.**

## **Interview Tips:**

- Plan your journey in advance and allow enough time to ensure that you can comfortably be there fifteen minutes in advance. Allow for traffic holdups and looking for parking.
- Know your CV inside out and be able to support whatever you claim.
- First impressions count. Shake hands firmly with the interview panel (if they offer their hands) and smile. Avoid flashy jewellery, and strong perfumes/colognes etc.
- A little small talk is likely, usually at the beginning of the interview. Be prepared for this but do not waffle or ramble on.
- Being able to answer the interviewer's questions with credibility and being able to support what you say with strong content is the key to your performance and possible success.
- Understand the employer's needs, and emphasise what you have that helps meet those needs at every chance. Research and forethought will be of great benefit here.
- Listen very carefully to the interviewer's questions, and ask for clarification if you are in any way unclear about what is being said.
- Keep answers concise to the point. Support your answers with examples where appropriate, but beware of overstating the point. Avoid any content that someone on the panel may have cause to say 'So What?' in their own minds.
- Speak clearly with appropriate volume to ensure that you can be heard properly. Avoid monotone, trailing off, muttering, and weak tones. Use your voice to express strength and confidence.
- Don't slouch in your seat. Sit straight and upright in a comfortable position without looking stiff and rigid. Let your posture, display enthusiasm, confidence and positivity.
- When asked a question make eye contact with the interviewer and answer the question. Your eye contact can be shared with other interviewers. Good eye contact does not mean staring.
- Keep your arms unfolded and in a relaxed position appropriate to your posture.
- There are several ways to show that you are really listening. Leaning forward when a question is being asked, occasionally reflecting a question or summarising a question, and nodding to indicate that you understand the question. If you don't understand a question ask for clarification.
- Be aware of pen clicking, finger tapping, leg bouncing, ear pulling or other nervous gestures.
- Ensure that they know clearly that you want the job, and emphasise summarily what you can offer at the end of the interview if possible.

### Interview Tips Continued...

- Do not outspoke the interviewers. Short and to the point is best, elaborating only where appropriate, and with content that supports your point.
- No jokes. Trying to be funny is one of the quickest ways to fall flat on your face. Being upbeat, friendly and open is good, but you are not there to entertain.
- Be aware of using appropriate language and grammar and avoid slang and weak language like 'I suppose' 'maybe' and 'fairly okay'. Saying that you'd be good in the job because you 'suppose' is not a good plan. Avoid negative language especially if it indicates that you may be a bit of a 'whinger'.
- Don't assume jargon will be understood. Note if a particular interviewer uses jargon when asking questions and if one does, then it is okay to use a little, but always focus your answer on the individual(s) who has used it with you. Remember - they may be the only ones that understand you!
- Thank your interviewers by name and shake their hands.
- Always send a thank you note. You might not get the job this time, but there may be a next time.
- Do a self-evaluation of your performance. Use the evaluation information to improve. **Self-evaluation checklist.**

## Typical Interview Questions

- **Tell me about yourself**

Don't give too much detail at this point. Give a broad but role relevant overview. About six sentences will do. Open with a brief mention of where you last worked, and perhaps why you are no longer working there. Summarise your key skills relevant to the role the employer wants to fill. Tying in to your personal pitch may be helpful.

- **Why do you think you are qualified for the position?**

State your relevant skills, experience, and qualifications.

- **What are your strengths?**

Give up to three strengths, supported with examples.

- **What are your weaknesses?**

Do not state a weakness that is relevant to the job role. Mention your weaknesses as areas that you are trying to improve on. Have two ready, but only give the second one if asked. Some weaknesses can also be interpreted as strengths. For example; One could state that their weakness is that they are too independent. That could be interpreted as a positive in a role where working on your own initiative is valued.

- **What did you like most about your last job?**

Tell them what you enjoy about work with a focus on what is relevant to the position you are being interviewed for.

- **What did you not like in your last job?**

Keep your answer short. Pick something that is not relevant to the current position. Do not speak badly of your former employer. For example; if you are applying for a 9 to 5 job, and your previous job had unsocial hours, you could mention that you didn't like not being able to be with your family over the weekends.

- **What do you know about our company?**

Research – research – research.

- **Why should we hire you?**

Summarise why you are suited and emphasise your unique selling points.

- **Do you have any questions?**

Have at least two. Do not ask about money, perks or holidays.

- **What do you see yourself doing in five years' time?**

Ensure that what you say can happen within the framework of the organisation you are being interviewed by. You can also state that you see yourself working within the organisation, and being part of it.

## Typical questions you can ask

**These questions are only samples of typical questions you might ask. They may not be appropriate to some situations or roles and you are strongly advised to come up with your own. Two or three questions will usually suffice.**

**Finding questions that demonstrate experience and familiarity with the role are always a good idea.**

**Again, good research can pay enormous dividends here.**

**Is there an orientation period?** This can be rephrased to a 'training in' period in some cases.

**Will I be working as part of a team and if so what will be the roles of others on the team?** Do not ask unless it is unclear that you will be working as a team.

**Who will I be reporting to?**

**Will my role be supported (by personnel/resources/administration/etc.)?**

**Are there particularly busy times that I will need to be able to respond to?**

**What's your busiest time of year?**

**Are there opportunities to grow as an individual within the organisation?** Only ask if you are fairly sure that the company is proactive in this area.

**Is it mainly (Brand/type) equipment/software that you use for the ....process?** This is a good question if you have experience in the area and have knowledge of typical processes/equipment/resources or whatever specific to the role.

**Who are your typical clients?** Only use with care.

**Do I supply my own work wear and safety equipment and if so what are your requirements?** This applies in some industries like construction, fishing and others. It is a good question if you already know that they supply the equipment where many of their counterparts do not. It is an opportunity to look impressed.

**I understand that you provide ..... can you tell me a little bit about that?** This can work well if the organisation has a product, scheme, or service that is unique. The interviewers may be proud of their 'unique' creation and be only too delighted to discuss it.

**What is the most difficult part of the job - do you think?** Even where they don't know, they will most likely give an opinion. Do not push it if you think their opinions have holes.



**Post Interview Evaluation and Review Tool**

It's easy to get disheartened when you complete the final hurdle - the interview - only to be informed later that you did not get the job. There is however another way to look at it.

You should consider every interview as a step to improving your interview performance. To learn from your interview experience it is a good idea to carry out a post evaluation of your interview;

The following 2 templates will help you to do this.

*Note: You should carry out this evaluation at the earliest opportunity, following the interview.*

<b>Post Interview Evaluation and Review Tool Part 1</b>	
Did I highlight strengths and USP's relevant to the job role?	
Did I give examples of the above?	
Was I open and friendly?	
Did I let them know that I had a genuine interest in the job?	
Were my answers concise and to the point?	
Was my research of the organisation adequate to answer questions relating directly to the organisation?	

## Post Interview Evaluation and Review Tool Part 2

What questions were difficult?

How would I handle those questions now, in hindsight?

What could have gone better?

What would you do differently in future?

What went particularly well?

What did you learn about yourself?

What did you learn about interviews?

Any other important observations?