



Interviews

To be shortlisted for an interview means that you have successfully completed an application form or produced an effective CV which has enabled you to stand out from the crowd, and meet the job criteria as specified by the employer. The employer must be impressed enough to want to find out more about you and to take your application to the next stage of the selection process.

Being interviewed for a job can sometimes feel daunting, however thorough planning and preparation can give you the confidence to help you to be successful.

The interview is a two way interaction. The employer wants to see if you are the right candidate for the role but, equally, it is also your chance to see if you would be happy to work for them. The interview process isn't about trying to trip you up or catch you out, it is about finding out what you are good at. It is an opportunity for you to breathe life into your application form or CV.

Types of Interview

- One to one interview
- Panel Interview
- Group Interview
- Case Study Interview
- Skype Interview
- Video Interview
- Sequential interview
- Telephone Interview
- Assessment Centre Interview

Preparation for an Interview

You should consider the following steps in readiness for your interview:

Research the employer: read any literature there is about the employer. Do not go in 'cold'. Always look at basic information such as company size, locations, products and services offered, turnover, organisational structures and competitors. Find out if the company has been in the news recently and why. Check out the company / organisations' website, broadsheet newspapers, relevant professional journals and

professional bodies. Then you should look for more detail about the position and department you are seeking to join.

Research the job sector: commercial awareness is extremely important so before you go for your interview look at developments within that particular sector i.e. financial downturns, changes to legislation etc. Try and think about how this could affect their organisation and impact on the role for which you are applying.

Understand the role you are applying for: this may seem like an obvious point, but feedback from many employers would suggest that candidates don't always prepare enough and sometimes don't even seem to know what job they have applied for! Read over the job descriptions and specification. If possible, try and speak to the person who is currently doing the job, or someone in the same department.

Re-visit your application form: when applying for a job always remember to keep a copy of your application form. Read this again before you attend your interview, as the organisation may pick up on information that you have given. Think again about why you want the job and how your skills, knowledge and experience match against the requirements of the role.

Prepare answers: try and anticipate what you think the questions will be; you can do this by looking at the job specification. Try and practice beforehand by arranging a mock interview with a Careers Adviser.

Prepare some questions to ask: always prepare some questions that you can ask the employer at the interview. Time is usually allocated for this at the end of the formal questions, but this will be made clear to you on the day. Asking questions creates a favourable impression and will enable you to understand more about the role.

Be sure to know why you find the job interesting: most employers will ask you why you are interested in working for them. Be sure to have a genuine and well researched answer planned.

Practical Preparation

Plan your journey: always make sure you know where you are going. Work out your journey time and always try to arrive 15 minutes early. If possible, drive to your destination a few days before your interview to familiarise yourself with the journey and the route, and always try to allow for traffic and unscheduled delays. Print off a map if needed. It is also a good idea to take a contact name and number with you in case you are delayed for any reason.

Check out exactly where your interview will be held, the building, floor, room number etc. Multiple businesses may be located in one building or across different sites.

Dress appropriately: make sure you have a smart outfit that is clean, as an interview is a formal occasion. Do not wear jewellery or accessories that are too distracting. Use common sense where piercings and tattoos are concerned. If you are unable to remove them, try and ensure studs remain small and any offensive body art is covered.

What to take with you: it may be a good idea to take a copy of your CV and application form as a reference/guide; also any relevant portfolios (particularly if you are applying for a role within the creative industries) and your certificates. It is acceptable to write questions down that you would like to ask and take them in with you. Whatever you do take into the interview room, make sure it is presented in a professional wallet or document folder.

If you have a disability: you will need to address the issue of disclosing your disability to the employer before the interview.

The Interview

Controlling your Nerves

Everyone feels a little nervous before an interview. In order to remain calm, the best advice is to prepare as much as you can before the day. Mock interviews can be arranged with a Careers Adviser in advance, which will help you to familiarise yourself with the process. This is also a good way of gaining feedback on your overall performance. Try and ensure you get a good night's sleep, set your alarm and make sure you leave yourself plenty of time to get to the interview. All interviewers are aware of how nerve-wracking an interview can be, so they should try to put you at ease.

On entering the interview room shake hands with the interviewer if appropriate and, when invited to do so, take a seat. Try to sit up straight and avoid slouching. Speak clearly and calmly. It is natural to feel nervous before an interview but you need to show that you can manage any anxiety. If an employer is looking for someone who can cope with pressure then the interview is a good guide for them.

Body Language

Body language is extremely important in an interview situation. The way you enter the room, your handshake, the way you sit, all give signals about your confidence, your interest and your manners. Although you will not be marked against this criterion it will be duly noted by the employer. Smiling is essential, and helps to strike up and maintain rapport with the interviewers. Try not to wave your hands around too much.

Maintain eye contact. Looking down or away from the interviewer can make you appear disinterested or insincere. With panel interviews, the best advice is to look at and answer the person asking the question, with a glance from time to time at the other interviewers to include them in your reply.

Interview Questions

By now you should have undertaken your research in preparation for your interview and will hopefully have a very good idea about the technical knowledge, experience and skills required for the role. The questions you will be asked will be based around these criterion.

Employers ask questions that are traditionally designed to help them understand you as a person: to gauge your motivation levels, your experience, your skills and certain aspects of your personality that may have an impact on your overall performance. They will have already been provided with a synopsis of this information from your CV or application form, so they are looking to clarify information within the interview process.

The following information describes the types of questions you are likely to get asked in a graduate interview:

Warm Up Questions

These are asked at the beginning of the interview and are designed to put you at ease. Common warm up questions are 'Tell me about yourself?' or 'Why have you applied for the position?' Keep your answers short and succinct aligning your experience to the role and highlighting your interest in the position/organisation. The interviewer can tell a lot about your personality from the way you respond.

Competency-Based Questions

Competency based questions provide employers with an idea of how you might perform in the workplace by asking questions that test how you have reacted to and dealt with previous academic, work or social situations. The questions will be focused upon your skills and will relate to the person specification of the job. You will be asked to give an example of a situation or task which led you to take a certain course of action. Probing questions will then be used by the interviewer to determine the course of action you took, what changes were created by those actions, and the effects of those actions on you and/or others.

When preparing for this type of questioning remember the STAR approach:

Situation – describe the situation that relates to the question being asked.

Task – what tasks did you identify that needed to be completed?

Action – what action did you take?

Result – How did you know that your actions were successful?

Ensure you choose examples that are as relevant to the role as possible, that were challenging and really show off your skills. Avoid saying 'we' to describe actions taken in a team, as the employer is not recruiting the team but needs to be clear what 'you' specifically contributed.

Your Questions to the Interviewer

It is normal for an interviewer to ask you if you have any questions at the end of an interview. Preparing some questions to ask the employer is a good way to show that you are keen and enthusiastic about working for the company. If you don't ask any questions some recruiters may interpret this as disinterest. It is advisable to ask between 1-3 questions at the end of the interview. If the interview panel have already covered the information as part of the process, let them know that all of your questions have been answered adequately.

Online Interviews

More and more employers are moving their interviews online as a result of the recent pandemic. You should prepare for an online interview in a similar way to a face-to-face interview.

- Don't forget to check the meeting link details that will be provided for you to connect on the day – Zoom? Microsoft Teams? Skype? – have you got the right application downloaded in advance? Is your microphone working?
- You must still dress smartly to help create the right impression
- Ensure that you are in a space that is free from distractions and noise, and ensure your background on the screen is appropriate

FINALLY...

- Research the organisation, the job and the sector
- Understand your strengths, skills and abilities and target them to the position
- Believe in yourself and be confident
- Prepare your answers in advance
- Prepare some questions to ask them
- Book a mock interview with a Careers Adviser to practice beforehand
- Plan what you are going to wear
- Plan your journey

Resources to help you with preparing for interviews

For further help with interview preparation check out our resources on StudentHub+. You can access our Interview360 tool and Graduates First AI Interview Simulator <https://studenthub.bolton.ac.uk>

Access LEAP Online at: www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline