
Preparing for an Interview

Interviews can be daunting, but they are also an opportunity for you to understand the position and the company you are being interviewed for to help you make a good career decision. Armed with this knowledge, you can make sure you get as much out of the interview as the interviewer!

Preparing for an Interview

- Research the prospective employer. Know the basics about the company and its services.
- Identify key strengths and experiences that directly relate to the role. Focus on these when answering questions.
- Know why you want the job and prepare your own questions to ask during the interview.
- Contact your referees to ensure they are still available to give a reference. Make sure you brief them about the role you have applied for.
- Dress appropriately and if in doubt, conservatively.

Arriving at an Interview

- Arrive early. Allow 10-20 minutes in the vicinity
- Enter the premises 5-10 minutes before the interview.
- Be professional with everyone you meet.
- Introduce yourself politely and professionally.
- Greet the interviewer by their name.
- Shake hands firmly.
- Don't forget to smile!

During the Interview

- Answer all questions honestly. Be prepared for common interview questions and know your answers, don't answer questions with "Yes" or "No". Provide explanations where possible.
- Don't assume the interviewer knows how to gain information. Be prepared to offer it to get your key strengths across.
- Formulate your answers before you speak, take a moment if need be. Look the interviewer in the eye when talking and be aware of your body language.
- Be alert and interested at all times. Listen through eye contact and non-verbal expressions, such as nodding your head. Remember not to interrupt the interviewer.
- Be personable, as well as professional.

Closing an Interview

Ask if there is anything else you can provide, such as additional references or work samples and remember to:

- Reconfirm your interest in the position and ask about the next step in the process.
- Shake hands with the interviewer and thank them for their time.

Don't be discouraged if an offer isn't made or salary expectations discussed.

Ask Questions

Relevant questions show that you are engaged and interested in the role and the company you are interviewing for. Great questions to ask early in a job interview are; 'What are you most hoping to find in the person you employ?' and 'What would be my first priorities in the role?' The earlier you can ask these questions, the sooner you can start tailoring your answers to the employer's requirements.

At the end of the interview ask the interviewer if they have any questions about your suitability for the role. This may give you the chance to counter any objections.

Lastly, if you don't already know, ask what the next steps in the recruitment process are and potential timeframes.

Common Interview Questions

What are your strengths / weaknesses?

Concentrate on your three key strengths and ensure they are a requirement of the job you are applying for. Give specific examples to demonstrate why it's a strength. Everyone has a weakness. Minimise your weaknesses by emphasising your strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits. Select a trait and then explain how you work to overcome your weaknesses.

Tell me about yourself.

Generally, when an interviewer asks this question they are looking for information on a professional level, not personal information. Begin by talking about past experiences and proven success, mention your strengths and abilities and conclude with a statement about your current situation.

Why should we hire you?

What can you offer our organisation?

What makes you unique? This will require an assessment of your qualifications, experiences, knowledge, skills and traits. This is a good opportunity to summarise your five key strengths. Discuss what you would do in the new job and don't concentrate on your job history. Focus on the future, not the past.

Why do you want to work for our organisation?

The interviewer is looking for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought, not sending your resume just because there is an opening. Conducting research into the organisation will assist you with your responses.

What are your current responsibilities?

Summarise the key responsibilities and tasks performed in your current role and emphasise certain skills you utilise that are required in the new role.

What are your goals?

In general, it is best to talk intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. Choose realistic goals that are attainable short-term. Only discuss professional goals.

Why are you wanting to leave your current job?

Focus on what you want in your next job and avoid talking about issues and concerns in your current role. Do not criticise your current employer or manager.

When are you most satisfied in a job?

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. It is a good idea to relate an example of a job or project you enjoyed, so the interviewer will get an idea of your motivational factors.

Tell me about a time when...

Interviewers often ask for examples of on-the-job experiences. This technique uses your past experiences and behaviours as an indicator of your future success. You might be asked about situations when you:

- Demonstrated leadership
- Worked as part of a team
- Worked on a major project
- Handled criticism
- Managed change
- Made a good/poor decision
- Solved a problem
- Met/missed a deadline
- Shown initiative
- Managed conflict

Example Question: Teamwork is very important in our organisation. Can you provide an example of how you contributed to effective teamwork?

Answer: *Recently, working in a team of five engineers, we were challenged to deliver a project within a tight timeframe and without any quality defects. Early in the project I suggested and thereafter arranged weekly meetings. This enabled the team to communicate progress, set and allocate mutual goals, and work through difficulties together. As a result we were able to anticipate issues well in advance, report them to our client and reach a resolution quickly.*

At times it was important to take on tasks outside the scope of our role to get the job done - I was happy to do this and others in the team followed suit. The extra hours and the team commitment meant we were able to achieve our objectives.

What are your salary expectations?

If asked about your salary expectations too early in the process, say you would rather postpone that discussion until you have more information about the position. Turn the question around and ask what their salary expectations are. If you must quote a salary, provide a salary range not an exact figure, which leaves room for negotiation.