



Pareto
The Job Interview Top Tips



The Job Interview

So, your CV has been sifted from the pile of applications and you're through to the next round: what now?

The job interview is a dreaded yet necessary evil that can take on many forms and continues to serve as the main recruitment process of choice for employers. It gives your would-be boss the opportunity to delve beneath the written information on your CV and find out more about you as a person, and how you might fit into the business. So when it comes to your interview, how can you be sure to shine and stand out from the rest?

"If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail"

It's an age-old mantra but there's a reason it's become a cliché. Preparation is the single most important rule of thumb when it comes to your job interview and can mean the difference between walking away with an offer and being shown the door: don't fail to prepare.

Research the company and position.

A lack of knowledge will indicate a lack of interest, so get ahead and consult your good friend Google. Review the company website, get your hands on the company literature and read, read and re-read the job specification until you are comfortable you know exactly what the company would be expecting from you. Has the company won any awards?

Do they have a news section with information about their recent achievements or upcoming events? Check their social media channels. Knowledge is, after all, power: use it to your advantage. But be sure not to simply regurgitate facts: demonstrate that you understand what the challenges are facing the business and what skills you can bring to the table to help overcome them.

Who am I? Review your CV.

If it was the tool of choice that got you into that interview room, then it's all the information that company currently holds on you and the chances are, they've looked at it in detail. Ensure you are completely familiar with your own history and try to spot those questions that are likely to arise. Why did you choose to volunteer or take a year out? What was the reason for that low grade or the subjects you chose?

Drop the script; grab the buzz phrases.

Too many candidates make the mistake of rehearsing their answers word-for-word until the whole interview becomes a false and contrived mess. Don't try to memorise your interview responses: there is no way to know what you will be asked and this can cause unnecessary stress. Instead, grab a few buzz phrases or keywords you're keen to get in and ensure you have them to hand, keeping the interview as natural as possible.

Practice makes perfect.

You're not acting out a play and can't know for sure how the interview will pan out, but going through the basics ahead of time will help you feel more in control. See if you can get a friend to help you out by running through a faux-interview, and iron out the niggles that could arise on the day. Pay attention to how you sound, how you stand, and simple tasks like shaking hands or looking your interviewer in the eye. If you know how to overcome hurdles such as that awkward moment when you don't know what to say ahead of time, the real deal will go much smoother.

Where, when, how?

Sounds simple, but it's one of the easiest and most common mistakes made by interviewees around the globe. Where is your interview? How are you getting there? What's the situation with parking, public transport or how far are you going to need to walk? Plan ahead and leave yourself plenty of extra time. Better early than late. You're on top of your company knowledge and know your CV inside out. The day has come and it's crunch time. How can you ensure it goes smoothly?





On the Day

Dress professionally.

It should be a given but it's surprising just how many graduates continue to fail to underestimate the power of the suit and tie. For girls, the boundaries are even more blurred: if in doubt, go too smart over too casual.

Arrive on time.

Try to be at the interview 10 minutes early: if you're too early, walk around and try to relax. If you're running late, be sure to keep the interviewer informed.

Make the right impression.

Many interviewees fail in the first three minutes of entering the room. Use positive body language and rise to the challenge of those early judgements based on your appearance and demeanour.

They're simple but powerful tips, so ensure you remember to:

- Give a warm handshake
- Maintain eye contact
- Use the right term of address ('Mr' or 'Mrs' X is always safe: don't go for first-name terms, even if previous communication has seen it used)
- Hold a strong, upright structure (no slumping or fidgeting)
- Smile and show enthusiasm, energy and interest
- Speak clearly and slowly, taking time to consider your answers
- Don't cross your arms
- Don't just answer: ASK. Demonstrate interest in the business and role by asking questions.
- Keep the tone professional. Don't lapse into the banter you use with your mates- and try to keep phrases such as 'you know', "like" and "I mean" out of the conversation.

Key Questions

The key purpose of the interview is to find out more about you and questions are the centre point. Below are just some of the most common questions you're liable to be asked in a job interview.

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- How have you overcome those weaknesses/what steps have you taken to address those weaknesses?
- What is your greatest achievement?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Why do you want this job?
- Why do you want to work in sales/this industry?
- Why do you want to work as part of this organisation?
- What do you know about XXX company?
- Why should we employ you?
- What qualities can you bring to the role?
- Which skills do you have which you feel are relevant to the position?
- What relevant experience do you feel will help you within this role?
- How would your friends describe you?

Tell me about a time you have...

- Worked well as part of a team
- Shown initiative
- Demonstrated leadership skills
- Achieved a goal
- Overcome a hurdle or barrier to success
- Persuaded others





- What do you feel you will do well in this job?
- Why did you leave your previous position?
- What is the hardest think you have had to cope with in a work environment?
- When starting a new job what are some of the things that you were most concerned about in those first few days?

There are always going to be curveballs, deviations on the basics and often industry or company-specific questions that you may not necessarily be able to anticipate. However, it's a good idea to have a practice at answering some of the core questions to ensure you have relevant information and responses to hand, and they look to adapt and modify those to the specific wording of your interviewer.

“We’ll be in touch”: The Close

The close of the interview is equally as important as the first few vital minutes. Don’t resign yourself to your fate and slip out of the door without leaving a lasting impression.

Ensure the interviewer knows you are interested in the job and ask what the next steps are. Use positive language and indicate confidence in your performance, opting for “I look forward to your call to discuss the next steps of my application” over “So should I wait for your call?” If your interviewer seems evasive, it may help to ask for their feedback by enquiring as to whether your specific accomplishments are relevant to the requirements of the position.

This gives you a last stop opportunity to tailor your skills and potential to what the employer is looking for.

Thank the interviewer for their time and ensure you close with another handshake. It may also help your case to follow up with an email or letter expressing your interest and enthusiasm for the role, ensuring you stay in the interviewers mind.



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