



Interview Tips

Do's

Make sure you have looked at the company's website and, if possible, looked up information on the company from Companies House or on www.worksmart.org.uk/company. Use this as a basis for some of your questions if you can, and make comments about what you have found out, ie "I liked your website, it was very user friendly" etc. A good section to look at is 'Company News' or 'About Us'. Look for things that have happened recently, ie "I saw on your website that you are in the process of launching a new product", or "I read in an article you are about to open a new office".

Some companies have extra brochures and information that they can send out from their website. If you have time before your interview it may be useful to ask for some to look through.

A number of candidates take a drive past the company's premises prior to interview to ensure they know where they need to go and how long the journey will take them. If you decide to do this mention it to the person interviewing, as it shows you have taken the time to prepare.

Surveys indicate that only 7% of the interviewer's opinion of you is based on what you say. The rest is based on your appearance and how you act and sound. ALWAYS dress smartly and ensure that you speak clearly and concisely. Greet your interviewer politely and confidently, and make sure mobile phones are turned off before you enter the building. Every interview begins from the moment you are in sight.

Be polite and friendly with receptionists and do not sit texting or on the phone whilst waiting for your interview. Potential employers quite often ask reception staff what you were doing whilst waiting – someone sitting quietly or chatting with the receptionist will be perceived positively.

Take a copy of the CV we put together for you, and ensure you have read through this prior to your interview. If the position requires you to have certain qualifications, or membership of a particular professional association, it is a good idea to take copies of your certificates etc with you to the interview. Compare your CV to the job specification. This will give you a good indication of the type of questions you may be asked.

Think about the type of questions you will be asked at your interview – some examples could be:

- What do you consider are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a time where you failed to deliver. Follow up with what you did to rectify this.
- What can you offer us that other candidates can't?
- What would your colleagues and friends say about you?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why should we take you on?
- Why do you want to work for us as a company?
- What do you know about us as a company and the services we offer?
- Could you suggest any improvements to what we offer?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years time? What are your ambitions?

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- What do you believe will be your biggest challenge with this new role?
- Why did you leave your previous jobs?
- What motivates you?
- What do you enjoy most in a job? What do you look for most in a position?
- What do you get most satisfaction from?

Some employers will throw in an unusual question such as “If you were a type of animal what would you be?” Don’t let this faze you. Don’t be afraid to ask for a minute to think about your answers. It is better to pause and give a considered answer than regret saying something because you felt under pressure to answer quickly. Make sure you fully understand the questions you are being asked before you answer. If you don’t, ask for clarification.

Try to keep your answers concise and to the point. People naturally remember bullets rather than long explanations, and will only remember the first 3 points you make. Make sure your top 3 are the important ones! Try, however, to avoid one word answers such as Yes or No.

Always give examples for the answers you give. If you have a particular skill think of a real example of when and how you have used it in the past to demonstrate it. If you believe a real strength of yours is leadership prepare an example.

Reflect the body language of your interviewer. If they sit forward and engage with you it will put them off if you lie back in your chair as you will appear disinterested. Equally, if you lean forward when they are relaxed and casual you could appear nervous or intimidating.

Sell yourself. No one else is going to. Be positive and friendly, and remember that if you have been asked for interview the company is already interested in you. It is as much an opportunity for you to find out about them as it is for them to find out about you.

At the end of an interview potential employers often ask if there is anything you would like to know about their company. Even if they don’t ask it shows a keen interest if you have some questions prepared. Below are some examples of the type of things you could ask, although it is always better to react to what you have been told during your interview. Actively listening and subsequently responding with questions shows a potential employer that you are interested in his company and, most importantly, the vacancy you are applying for.

Sample Questions

- What are the progression opportunities for this position?
- Do you actively support and supply training for employees?
- Do you have any expectations as to how long it would take to get up to speed for this role?
- Could you summarise the short and/or long term plans for the company?
- How many candidates are you seeing for this position?
- Based on this interview do you believe I would be suitable for the role? OR
- Based on this interview do you have any reservations about my ability to do this role?
- What do you believe will be the next stage after this interview?
- Could you tell me about the team I will be working with? Who will be my manager?

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- When do you expect to make a decision?

Always thank your interviewer for their time and shake their hand when you leave. You want their last impression of you to be positive.

Don'ts

Don't be late – ensure you arrive 10 minutes early and if, for any reason, you are running late call us.

Don't lie or exaggerate your answers. Your employer will find out and could potentially dismiss you if you were employed on that basis.

Don't blame other people for things you haven't achieved or for leaving previous jobs etc. Take responsibility yourself. All employers look for employees who get on well with a variety of people, so be positive about the people you have worked with previously.

Don't ask about salary and remuneration. However, if you are asked be realistic – know your market worth. If you give a figure in an interview this cannot be taken back later. It is better to say that your current package is £xx as opposed to making demands.

Don't take notes in with you. Ensure that you are fully prepared with information about the company, the role and yourself.

Don't appear arrogant and over confident. There's a fine line between selling yourself positively and coming across with an over-inflated ego.

Don't appear aggressive or argumentative. If you do not agree with a point your interviewer makes don't get into an argument with them.

Don't talk about politics, religion or any other topic which may be controversial. Try to find a common ground on which you are sure you and your interviewer will share an opinion.

Don't turn up with a hangover or smelling of smoke – try to get an early night before your interview.

Don't swear or use slang words.