

# **INTERVIEW SKILLS**

**A STUDY PROJECT UNDERTAKEN:**

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

Congratulations, you have an interview! You have done well to get this far – you are 90% of the way to getting that job. The employer wants to meet you to find out more about you, to see if you will fit in the organization, whether you are committed and motivated and to find out more about your skills and achievements. Now you need to prepare for the interview, because if you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail. Whoever makes the best impression at the interview gets the job!

It is for the interviewer to see if you match the requirements of the job. These will naturally vary with different jobs but are likely to include:

- Your personal qualities
- How well you express yourself
- Your motivation and enthusiasm

The recruiters will already have an indication of these from your initial application but now the interview will assess you in person.

It is also your chance to meet somebody from the organisation and assess them: are they offering what you want?

## **2. PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW**

What was in your CV or application form which interested the employer? Those being interviewed probably have similar skills and achievements, so you need to show that you are the right match. You need to check the company website and look at any company literature (if there is any) to find out as much as you can about the organisation. Remind yourself what you put on your application form/CV. A valuable tool you need to prepare is a statement about yourself so you can answer the key question which is often asked – ‘Why are you applying for this job?’. So practice talking about yourself by preparing a ‘Career Statement’. Can you list two or three things you are good at? Can you list two or three skills and combine them all into a sentence or two? Make sure you know exactly where the interview is taking place. The building may have several floors so you need to allow time to get to the right floor. Plan your route – how long will it take to get there? You need to allow time for problems with transport, parking, bad weather etc. your interview e.g. the services of an interpreter or someone to meet you at the entrance, then you must inform the employer of this beforehand.



### 3. THE PHONE INTERVIEW

Due to a company's geographic location, travel costs, and divergent schedules, a phone interview may often be your initial contact with a prospective employer. Therefore, we're offering some phone interview tips.

**Objective** - The idea behind a phone interview is to gain an invitation for a personal interview, and to gather more information for future steps in the process.

**Preparation** - Have a pad, pen, and a copy of your resume near the phone. Use a phone in a quiet area. Avoid any background noise.

#### **Speaking**

- a. Smile and be enthusiastic. Your enthusiasm will carry through to the interviewer.
- b. Speak in a conversational manner, and be sure to speak loudly enough to be heard. Speak with some inflection and tone.
- c. Let the interviewer do most of the talking. When s/he asks you a question, expound upon the answer. Use the opportunity to sell your skills and experience.
- d. When the interview is over, let her/him know that you are very interested in scheduling a personal interview at her/his place of business.

## **4. DRESS FOR SUCCESS**

You also need to prepare what you are going to wear in advance. What you wear does not have to be new, but it does have to be clean and neat. Dress smartly in an outfit which is comfortable to wear and fits. It is probably preferable to wear a suit of a dark, plain colour and men should wear a tie. Women can wear a skirt or smart trousers with a coordinating jacket. Your shoes should be comfortable and clean. Your hair should be neat and remember to keep any jewellery to a minimum. Your visual appearance is very important and you want to make the right impression. Looking good will also boost your confidence.



## **5. BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**

Take a copy of your application form/CV with you in a folder, a pen and paper and the interview contact number, just in case you are delayed and need to contact them. Make sure you arrive in plenty of time, but not too early. About 10 minutes is perfect as this gives you time to freshen up, calm yourself, perhaps with deep breathing exercises and to take the opportunity to get a 'feel' of the place. Remember your interview starts the moment you enter the building and anyone you speak to may feed back to the interviewer. Be pleasant to the receptionist and take time when waiting for your interview to note what is happening around you. You should have turned off your mobile phone by now. Can you get a feel of the atmosphere of the company? Your interview is not just about the company finding out about you – it is a two-way process as you should also be finding out about what it would be like to work there. When you are called in for your interview take a deep breath and be C A L M. This is it!!

Here are 11 things you should do in the 15 minutes before a job interview:

- Stay calm
- Arrive early, but don't go inside
- Be friendly to all receptionists and security guards.

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- Decide on one or two things you want to be remembered for
  - Stop rehearsing
  - Breathe
  - Focus on your posture
  - Don't check your voicemail, email, or social media accounts.
  - Briefly review your notes, but don't do any additional research.
  - Look in a mirror
  - Think happy thoughts



## **6. DURING THE INTERVIEW**

Give a firm but gentle handshake when you meet your interviewer(s), sit when invited to do so, make direct eye contact and remember to smile. From the moment you meet, your communication with the interviewer forms part of the decision-making as to whether to recruit you; in fact most decisions are made within the first three minutes! So, you need to be aware of both your verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

### **Verbal communication**

- ♣ Show genuine interest in the position
- ♣ Listen and answer the questions asked
- ♣ Never argue a point
- ♣ If you do not understand or hear a question, ask for it to be repeated
- ♣ Do not interrupt

### **Non-verbal communication**

Appearance and mannerisms are VERY important – think of body language and facial expressions

♣ Put your feet squarely on the floor or cross your legs at the ankle

♣ Put anything you are carrying on the floor

♣ Rest your hands in your lap

♣ Nod your head to show you are listening

♣ Do not fidget

♣ Be serious but do not forget to smile



## 7. TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- ♣ Tell me about yourself
- ♣ Why have you applied for this job?
- ♣ Why have you applied to this company?
- ♣ What evidence can you offer that demonstrates you have the skills we are seeking?
- ♣ Can you give me an example of a problem you have solved?
- ♣ Why did you choose your particular degree?
- ♣ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- ♣ Where do you see yourself in five years time?
- ♣ What do you do in your leisure time?

Many books have been written giving ideas on how to answer these and hundreds more interview questions. Your confidence in answering them comes from your preparation. Your career statement will be a strong support to you here as well as any examples you have thought about which you could use as evidence. You do not have to rush an answer – take a second to think about what you are going to say. If you are



asked something about which you have no knowledge, be honest and say so. You should also prepare some questions you want to ask the interviewer. This will demonstrate that you are interested in working for them and that you have been actively listening throughout the interview process.

**Here are some examples:**

- ♣ In what ways will the duties of the post change or develop in the next two to three years?
- ♣ Who will I be responsible to?
- ♣ What is the training philosophy of the company?
- ♣ How will my success be measured?
- ♣ What happens next?

## **8.AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- ♣ Thank the interviewer and shake hands
- ♣ Remember that the interview does not finish until you have left the building
- ♣ If you have not heard from the company after the agreed time, contact them to find out if they have had time to make a decision.

## 9. Conclusion

### DO:

- ♣ Remember that first appearances count – how you dress and act
- ♣ Smile, make eye contact and acknowledge all members of an interview panel
- ♣ Shake hands in a firm but gentle way, not crushingly strong
- ♣ Wait to be asked to sit down
- ♣ Make sure you sit correctly and comfortably before starting
- ♣ Show interest
- ♣ Answer the question asked
- ♣ Keep positive at all times

### DO NOT:

- ♣ Be late
- ♣ Fidget or look at your watch
- ♣ Argue



- ♣ Put anything on the interviewer's desk
- ♣ Say anything negative
- ♣ Appear indifferent
- ♣ Appear aggressive or act in a superior way – nobody likes this!
- ♣ Show too much interest in money and holidays