

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

From researching the company to deciding what to wear, spending time on interview preparation is essential if you're going to put in a good performance and secure the job

### Types of interview

There are a number of different types of job interview. In some cases, you'll only need to succeed at one of these to land the role. In others, particularly at large graduate employers, you may face several interview formats throughout the application process.

- **Face-to face** - the traditional and still most common form of interview. You'll attend the employer's office and be questioned on your suitability for the job by an individual or panel. Face-to-face interviews usually last between 45 minutes and two hours, and may be preceded or followed by tests and exercises. The questions may be strengths-based or competency-based.

- **Telephone** - most often used by employers early in the application process to filter large numbers of applicants down to a more manageable number. If you're successful you'll typically be invited to a face-to-face interview or assessment centre. Expect a telephone interview to last around half an hour.

- **Video** - increasingly popular among large employers, particularly for applications to graduate schemes. Video interviews can be live or pre-recorded, and will tend to last around half an hour.

- **Assessment centres** - enable employers to compare the performance of lots of candidates at the same time. You'll attend an assessment centre with other applicants and take part in tasks such as presentations, team exercises and psychometric tests. Assessment centres usually last a full working day.

### Practice job interviews

It's a good idea to do at least one mock interview before the real thing. Your university careers and employability service will help you to practice your interview technique.

You can also write and practise answers to common interview questions with someone you trust - possibility even recording yourself and then reviewing your performance.

### What to take

Ensure you have everything you need, such as:

- pen and notebook
- your CV and interview invitation
- your academic certificates and work examples if requested
- photo ID

- breath mints or gum
- a bottle of water
- money for transport and food.

### **What to wear to an interview**

While many employers still expect candidates to dress smartly, a growing number encourage casual wear at work, making it trickier than ever to choose an interview outfit.

What you'll be expected to wear depends on factors such as the size of the company, the industry it operates in and the culture it promotes. For example, a small creative agency may have different standards to a major accountancy firm.

If you're unsure on the dress code, ask before attending the interview. The key point to remember is that it's much better to be too smart than too casual. Only opt for a more casual outfit if you're absolutely certain that's acceptable - if there's any doubt, always go for smart business attire.

Whatever you choose, make sure that your clothes are ironed and your shoes are clean.

### **After the interview**

As your job interview comes to an end, make sure you find out when you'll be informed of the outcome - and thank the interviewer for giving you the chance to attend.

Make some notes about the questions that were asked and how you answered them while the interview is still fresh in your memory. This will help you prepare even better for any future interviews.

There are three potential outcomes:

- **Success** - if you're offered the job, make sure it's right for you by discussing it with friends and family, and double-check details such as the salary before deciding whether to accept.

- **Rejection** - if you're unsuccessful, don't be too downhearted as graduate employers receive large numbers of applications for every role. Email the company to thank them for the opportunity and request feedback from your interview so that you can improve your performance next time.

- **Further steps** - interviews are typically the final stage in the application process, but if the employer has not been able to make a decision you may be asked back for a second interview.

### **4 ways to make a good impression**

As you're preparing for the interview, think about ways you can show yourself in a positive light. Among the best techniques are:

1. **Punctuality** - arriving late will increase your stress levels and give the employer a bad first impression, so do your best to arrive in good time.

2. **Positivity and enthusiasm** - be polite and professional with any staff you meet before or after the interview and, if you're feeling particularly nervous, remind yourself that the very worst thing that could happen is not getting the job. During the interview, respond to questions with positive statements, be enthusiastic about the job and avoid badmouthing your previous employers or university tutors.

3. **Body language** - give a firm handshake to your interviewer(s) before and after the session. Once you're seated, sit naturally without slouching in your chair or leaning on the desk. Throughout the interview, remember to smile frequently and retain eye contact.

4. **Clarity** - answer all questions clearly and concisely, evidencing your most relevant skills, experiences and achievements. It's perfectly acceptable to pause before answering a difficult question to give yourself thinking time, or asking for clarification if you're unsure what a question means. When answering, don't speak too quickly.