

INTERVIEW TIPS



BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Research the company as thoroughly as possible – the absolute minimum requirement is to have spent time looking at the company website but much more thorough research is a good idea
- Plan your journey and make sure that you know where you are going and how long the journey will take you
 - If you are travelling by train think about train times and always make sure you have a back up train in case the one you intend to catch is delayed or cancelled. Be sure you know how long the journey between the train station and the interview location will take
 - If you are traveling by car you should know where you are going to park, how much parking will cost and how much allowance to make if you are traveling in rush hour
 - It may be advisable to do a practice run, at the same time of day in advance of your interview
- Turn off your mobile phone

HOW TO PRESENT YOURSELF

- Always aim to arrive around ten minutes early. This gives you time to use bathroom facilities to freshen up after your journey or to relax if your journey has been hectic. Most importantly it means the person who is interviewing you will not be kept waiting
- Always attend interviews in smart, clean business attire and try to avoid wearing anything that could be considered flashy. For men this means a two piece suit and a tie – even in hot weather. For women there is a little more flexibility but modesty should be your aim. Don't over do it on the perfume or cologne and try to keep any piercings or tattoos out of sight
- Greeting your interviewer with a firm handshake and a smile is the best possible way to start
- Eye contact is very important during interviews
- It is important that you appear relaxed and confident but make sure that even if the interviewer is very friendly and informal that you do not become over familiar. Stick to professional responses and avoid long, rambling answers
- If you are a smoker it is probably a good idea to have some mints or gum to remove any lingering odour

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Tell me about yourself
 - You need to have a short statement prepared in your mind but be careful that it does not sound rehearsed. Unless specifically asked about your personal life stick to work related items and try to talk about things that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Be clear, concise, positive and enthusiastic with your response. If you can't be enthusiastic about your history then who can?
- Why did you leave your last job?
 - Whatever the reason, stay positive, never refer to a major problem with management or colleagues and never speak ill of the organisation. Look for a positive reason such as a new opportunity or the chance to be involved in something you really believe in
- What experience do you have in this field?
 - Be specific and make sure that you relate it to the position you are applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can
- Do you consider yourself successful?
 - Make sure that the answer to this question is yes. A good explanation is that you have achieved specific goals you have set yourself and are on track to achieve others
- What do co-workers say about you? / What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?
 - Think about this in advance and be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers or a supervisor that back up what you have been saying about yourself
- Are you applying for other jobs?
 - Be honest but try not to spend too much time on this area and focus on how great an opportunity the position you are being interviewed for would be
- Why do you want to work for this organisation?
 - Your answer should be based on the research you have done and should relate to your long term career goals. Sincerity is extremely important here
- What kind of salary do you need?
 - A loaded question so try not to answer it. Instead, say something like, "That's a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position" if the interviewer pushes further then give a wide range based on your knowledge of the industry and the company
- Are you a team player?
 - You are, of course, a team player. Try to have examples ready that show when you have performed for the good of your team
- How long would you expect to work for us if hired?
 - Don't be too specific, give an answer along the lines of "I would expect it to be a long time" or "as long as you and I both feel I am doing a good job"
- Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?
 - Do not make a joke of this or make it seem like you enjoy firing people. Make sure you get across the point that if it is the best thing for the company and absolutely needs to be done you

will not shy away from your responsibility

- Have you ever been asked to leave a position?
 - Be honest, be brief and if you have been asked to leave a position avoid saying negative things about the people or organisation involved
- Explain how you would be an asset to this organisation
 - This is a question you should be waiting for as it gives you a chance to highlight your best points and relate them to the position. Make sure you give a little advance thought to how you answer this
- What are your key strengths?
 - What ever you say here, make sure you back it up with examples. Numerous answers are good
- Tell me about a suggestion you have made
 - Have one ready and make sure it is a good one, something that that was accepted and implemented and was successful. If possible try and find one related to the position in discussion
- What irritates you about co-workers?
 - Another trick question. Limit you answer to a short statement that you get along with people fine
- What kind of person would you refuse to work with?
 - As above but answer the question by explaining that it would take disloyalty to the organisation, violence or lawbreaking for you to refuse to work with someone
- Tell me about your dream job
 - Another tricky one. It is unlikely to sound convincing if you say the job you are interviewing for is your ultimate dream job but if you describe a different, more fulfilling position you will give the impression that you may not be satisfied in the position if hired. Think about an answer along the lines of "A job where I love the work, like the people, can contribute and can't wait to get to work in the mornings"
- Why do you think you would do well at this job?
 - Give several reasons and include skills, experience and interest
- What is more important to you: the money or the work?
 - Keep it simple with something along the lines of "Money is always important, but the work is the most important". No boss wants to hear that you are only in it for the money
- Tell me about a problem you had with a supervisor
 - This one is simple. You can't think of any specific problems you have had with a supervisor
- What has disappointed you about a job?
 - Stay positive and don't pick on a trivial thing. Safe areas include: the work was not challenging enough, constant threat of redundancies, not enough responsibility. If you have to mention something specific then make it clear that it was out of your control
- Tell me about your ability to work under pressure
 - If you are going to say that working under pressure is a skill you have then be prepared to back

that up with examples

- Do your skills match this job or another job more closely?
 - Your skills match the profile for this job. What ever you do, do not make the interviewer think that you have your eye on a different position
- Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends? Would you relocate for the job?
 - Only you know the answer to these questions so be honest as saying yes in order to secure the position will only cause problems later on
- Would you put the interests of the organisation ahead of your own?
 - Yes you would. Now is not the time to worry about ethics and philosophy
- What have you learned from mistakes on the job?
 - You need to have an answer here but make sure that you chose something that ends with a positive lesson learned and that you will not do it again
- Do you have any blind spots?
 - If you know about your blind spots then they are not blind spots. We all have our faults and it is the interviewers job to find yours so don't make their job easy for them
- What qualities do you look for in a boss?
 - Stay positive and stay as general as possible. All bosses like to think that they lead by example, are fair to all employees and have a sense of humour so stick to something like that
- What could affect the company's business?
 - If you have done your research then this one should be easy, market factors, political change or economic instability. Make sure it relates to the company you are interviewing for instead of a generic company
- What is your main weakness?
 - Another one that you must prepare for as it will almost always come up. Make sure that your answer does not give the interviewer cause concern. Look for an answer that could be seen as a strength, e.g. "I find delegating tasks to others hard" or "I can never say no". What ever you say you need to follow up by letting your interviewer know that it is something you are aware of and have been working to improve
- When was the last time you had to show initiative? / When was the last time you went the extra mile at work?
 - You need an example to prove that you are committed, flexible, adaptable, quick thinking or creative so plan for this in advance. Something along the lines of working extra hours or volunteering for extra responsibility in a time of need would work well
- Which element of your last job did you most enjoy most and why?
 - Be truthful, and give examples. Highlight your strengths and try and make specific to the role you are being interviewed for

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

Read the job description carefully and choose questions based on the skills/duties in the spec.

- Is this an existing post or newly created post? “Do you offer any training – what would this be?”
- How many candidates are you interviewing at this stage – will you be holding second interviews?
- Ask about company growth and direction
- You may wish to discuss salary – although this is normally more appropriate to discuss at second interview
- If it is a sales based position, it is usually appropriate to ask about commission structure. Most employers would expect an ambitious sales person to want to know more about commission
- How soon are you looking for someone to start?
- Training opportunities?
- When were you established?
- How many staff do you have?
- Who are some of your major clients?
- Who are your main competitors?
- What do you do differently to make you more successful?
- Who would I be reporting to?
- What type of person do you feel will fit in with the existing team?
- What other departments do you have? Will I be involved with them in any way?
- How would my day be split? What will I be doing the highest percentage of the time?
- Questions you should not ask:
 - Don't ask questions about benefits or holidays – only ask about things like this once an offer has been made
 - Unless specifically mentioned in the job spec then an interview is not the time to ask about flexible working or working from home
 - Don't ask really general and un insightful questions such as ‘can you tell me about the company’ or ‘what is the culture like’
 - Don't ask questions that someone who has been on the company website would know the answer to
 - Don't ask if overtime will be required, instead ask what a normal or typical day will be like for the role
 - Don't ask why the previous person in the role left, ask instead if it is a new role or if you are replacing someone
 - Don't ask to leave the interview early or when it is likely to end. Make sure that no matter how long it takes your schedule can accommodate it. In general the longer an interview takes the

better your chances of being offered the job. A hiring manager will not waste hours or introduce you to the team unless they are thinking you are a good fit

First Impressions are very important, but so are last impressions. Make sure that you end on a positive, confident note that the Interviewer will remember.

If, at the end of your interview you want to work for the company and would be keen to receive an offer then say so.