

How to Prepare for an Interview

You may have been offered an interview for a sixth form or college, an apprenticeship programme or with an employer for a job. Whichever it is there are some basic tips and advice below that may help you.

Most people feel nervous before interviews which is normal and most interviewers will be aware of this and try to put you at ease. Do remember an interview is a chance for the interviewer to find out information about you but it is also an opportunity for you to find out more about the sixth form, college, apprenticeship or the job.

You normally have some time to prepare before the interview date, use this time wisely and carry out lots of preparation, as preparation will help you feel more confident on the day. There are many types of interview including face to face, telephone and video call, for all of these, preparation will assist you.

Try to find out as much as you can about the organisation or employer before the interview as this demonstrates your interest and motivation, the internet is a great resource for this type of preparation. Also try to find out as much as you can about what to expect on the day of the interview e.g.

- Will you be interviewed by just one person or by a panel?
- Will it be one interview or a series of interviews that take place throughout the day?
- Will you need to give a presentation of any sort?
- Do you need to take examples of your work along to the interview?
- Do you need to take any documents to the interview such as a passport, National Insurance (NI) number?
- Will you be taking any type of assessment test or be expected to audition on the day?
- Will you be expected to take part in any group activities on the day such as role play?
- Will you be given a tour of the organisation or work place during the day where you can ask questions of students, trainees or employees?

Tips for Interviews

- Find out where the interview will take place, how long it will take you to get there and plan your journey, giving yourself plenty of time. If it is possible practise the journey the day before.
- Plan what you are going to wear before the interview day, dress smartly and lay out your clothes the night before.
- Make sure that you also lay out anything that you need to take with you to the interview the night before e.g. passport, exam certificates, the interview letter and map, your mobile phone just in case you need to make contact with the employer/organisation if for instance your train is cancelled and you are going to be late. However always remember to turn the phone off at the entrance of the interview building.
- Read over your application or CV the night before the interview.

- Always make sure that you have prepared answers to the ‘Possible Questions’ suggested later in this document.
- Leave early on the day of the interview, plan to arrive about 15mins before the interview time so that you can present yourself to the receptionist, visit the toilet, and comb your hair if necessary.
- Remember to smile pleasantly at anyone you meet on the interview day. If the chance arises, shake hands firmly with the interviewer whilst maintaining eye contact. Sit down when invited to. Sit up straight, do not slouch and try to keep your hands calmly in your lap rather than move them around when you are speaking.
- Listen to each question carefully. Take your time when answering the questions: make sure you understand the question and take your time if you need to think.
- Try to avoid simple yes or no answers even if the interviewer asks a closed question, always elaborate. Try to answer the question simply and concisely.
- Always be positive about yourself and your experiences.
- Always be honest and do not exaggerate or lie. Never be negative or blame a teacher, prior employer etc. Do not mention or make confessions about anything negative in your past unless directly asked.
- Even if the interviewer asks about your weaknesses try to turn your answer into a positive e.g. ‘I would not say that I.T. is a major weakness but I may benefit from some up to date training on spreadsheets. I am always willing to update my skills and learn new things’.
- Prepare some questions to ask at the end of the interview - use it as an opportunity to find out more about the role and the company/organisation and to show your enthusiasm and interest. (Don't ask about money or benefits just yet!)
- At the very end of the interview if the interviewer has not yet informed you, do ask when you are likely to hear from them regarding the outcome of the interview.
- If you do not hear about the outcome of your interview by the date agreed, wait a day or two and then follow the interviewer up with a polite telephone call asking if a decision has been made.
- When you eventually find out the outcome of your interview do ask for feedback on your performance, whether you have been successful or not.
- If you have been successful that is great.
- However if you have not been successful this time, try not to take it personally, it may just be that another candidate was better qualified or had more suitable experience. Give yourself a short while to recover from the rejection and then get back to completing new applications and preparing for future interviews, sometimes it takes a while but those that keep on trying tend to eventually be successful.

Tips specifically for Telephone Interviews (Read all of the information above as lots of it will still be relevant to Telephone Interviews)

- The advantage of a telephone interview is that you can refer to your CV and/or notes whilst being interviewed. So keep these documents within easy reach.
- You may have been given a particular day/time to expect your telephone interview but if not and you have been applying for a variety of jobs keep the essentials in a

specific area close to the telephone, e.g. a list of brief notes on the jobs/employers that you have contacted in some way, your paperwork as mentioned above i.e. your CV, a pen and notebook so you can make notes that you may want or need to refer to after the interview. Remember an employer may come across your CV in a pile on his/her desk at any time and suddenly decide to give you a call so try to be prepared.

- If an employer calls and you are in a place where you cannot easily take the call e.g. out with friends or driving let the call go to voicemail. It is better to return the call as soon as you can once you are in a quiet place away from distractions and noise. Make sure you have a professional sounding voicemail, just the way you should have a sensible email address if you are job hunting or applying for sixth form or college places.
- Be prepared – make sure you have thought about the possible questions that may come up – see ‘Possible Questions’ suggested later in this document.

Tips for Video Call or similar Interviews (Read all of the information above as lots of it will still be relevant to Video or similar Interviews)

- Make sure that you feel calm and have all of the relevant information with you before you take the call.
- Practise by recording yourself to see how you appear and sound whilst talking in front of a camera
- Choose a suitable place in your home for your video call, somewhere that is quiet and where you will not be disturbed or distracted. Make sure there is nothing embarrassing or inappropriate in the background.
- Be prepared – make sure you have thought about the possible questions that may come up – see ‘Possible Questions’ suggested later in this document.

Possible Questions

No one knows for sure the questions that you will be asked in an interview, however below is a list of possible questions that it may help you to prepare answers to prior to the interview:

Job/Apprenticeship Interviews

- Why do you want to become amechanic?
- Why do you want to train/work forBMW?
- What makes you think you have the skills and qualities to become a successfulmechanic?
- What strengths do you have?
- Tell me about your weaknesses?
- What experience do you have that may be relevant?
- How have you handled a difficult customer? – Competency questions are quite common nowadays, so you may be asked how you have dealt with different situations. Being familiar with the job description and person specification for the job

which will basically tell you what the employer is looking for in you, may help you prepare for these types of questions.

- What hobbies or interests do you have that may be relevant to this vacancy?
- What are your long term career plans once you are trained?
- Where do you see yourself in five/ten years time?
- Do you have any questions?

Sixth Form/College Interviews

- Why have you applied for this course? (A Levels - particularly maths, economics & French / BTEC in Engineering / IB Diploma)
- Why have you applied to this sixth form/college?
- Tell me more about your current studies, especially those linked to your sixth form/college post 16 course choice?
- What career plans do you have?
- Tell me about any work experiences or volunteering experiences – where did you go and what did you learn?
- What hobbies/interests do you have?
- What skills and personal qualities do you have?
- Do you have any questions?

Do try and think of other possible questions yourself, as has been said previously, the more prepared you are the more confident you will feel.

A few tips on being SAFE!

The vast majority of interviews are very straightforward and there are no problems but please read the tips on safety below:

- Do always tell your family and friends about your interview, where you are going and what time you are expected to be back.
- Do make sure that you have a way to get home after the interview, if the interview is being held outside normal working hours tell your family how and when you will be travelling home or try and arrange a lift.
- Do make sure the interview is being held on the organisation's premises or in another public or official place.
- Do not agree to be interviewed over drinks or a meal, or in a car park or any other informal place.
- Do not ever accept a lift from an interviewer.
- Do not feel that you have to answer personal questions that have nothing to do with the position that you have applied for.

*If for any reason you feel uncomfortable before or during an interview, trust your instincts and leave and return home immediately, possibly ring your family as soon as you are in a safe place. Your safety is the most important thing always.

Lastly it only remains for me to say GOOD LUCK

Mrs Vicki Banbrook – Careers Adviser

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