

Job Interviews – A Guide

You have applied for a job and you have been invited by the organisation to attend an interview – congratulations! This guide provides a starting point for learning about interviews and some of the things you can do to prepare. Additional resources on Interviews in this series include the *Interviews – Practice Questions* handout

Types of Interviews

The format of the job interview can vary; some of the more common formats include:

- Telephone – They may seem informal, however they are similar to a one-on-one interview. Telephone interviews are commonly used as a screening process to the next stage of a recruiting process. Try to find a distraction-free environment so your full attention is given to the interviewer.
- One-to-one – One representative of the organisation is present to ask you questions.
- Panel – When two or more representatives of the organisation are present to ask you questions. It is important to address each panel member throughout the interview and not just the person asking you questions.

Group interview – A group interview involves several applicants being assessed together. An employer's motivation for using this format might be to look for a particular character type, to see how you behave in a certain environment, to see how people work in a team, or because it is an efficient way to process multiple candidates.

Preparing for the Interview

Employers are looking for candidates who have the skills and attitude that match the position's selection criteria and the organisation's culture. They want to know:

- Can you do the job? Do you have the aptitude, experience and/or qualifications appropriate for the role.
- Will you do the job? Do you have the right attitude and are you enthusiastic about the position and the organisation?

Will you fit in? Do you fit within the organisation's culture and workplace environment, and do you understand what your contribution to the team will be?

Self Evaluation

Think about how you can demonstrate that you can do the job, that you have the motivation to succeed in the position, and will fit within the company. When doing a self evaluation, you might:

- *Consider why working in this industry and occupation is important to you*
Why did you originally choose this career pathway? What makes you passionate about your work in general and this job in particular?
- *Recognise your skills and qualities, both personal and professional*
You need to be able to talk about them confidently and easily during your interview. Research what the organisation is looking for and prepare relevant examples of your skills and personal qualities.
- *Think about what you have learned in your degree*
How are you going to convey to the employer what you have learned throughout your course?





- *Think about what you have learnt from your experiences*
What have you learnt from your work experiences and extra-curricular activities? Some may be very relevant to the position, but all paid and unpaid employment experiences contribute to your labour market knowledge and personal awareness.
- *Put yourself in the employer's shoes*
If you were an employer, what would you want to know about a job applicant?

Researching the organisation

- *Look through the advertisement*
There is a lot you can find out about the organisation here. Sometimes you will find an overview of the company and the key selection criteria that the organisation seeks. The job advertisement will usually be able to give you a clear understanding of what you will be required to do within the position.
- *Look at the company's website*
You should find useful information on the organisation's culture and values. You might also find information on up and coming projects or issues that are affecting the firm.
- *Speak with people in the industry, or in a similar organisation*
This is a great way to find out what the culture is really like within an industry, and get a feel for how you might fit in. It might also provide an opportunity to ask some questions before you get to interview.
- *Review issues directly related to the industry*
Newspapers, industry specific journals or even professional associations often discuss issues that might directly affect the organisation you are applying for. Having an understanding of how current events and issues in the market directly affect the business' core operations will demonstrate good business acumen.

Practice

Practicing for an interview is a great way to prepare you for what to expect. While practice will never replace the actual experience of an interview, it can provide you with important feedback on where you might need to improve. You might want to practice using the following suggestions:

- Use the services offered by Monash University Employment and Career Development – you can book into an interview skills workshop (careers.monash.edu)
- Ask a friend/family member if you can practise with them
- Have a look at the *Interviews – Practice Questions* help sheet for more information.

Before the Interview

Gather all the information you need; when you have researched the organisation, thought about your reasons for applying and understood how your skills and experience match the job requirements, you should then double check you have everything you need before attending the interview, including:

- The time, date and address of where your interview will be held – obtain a contact number to call just in case you are running late or something unexpected happens. If the location is new to you, consider visiting the day before, just so that you'll be sure exactly where to go on the day.
- The format and style of your interview – what type of interview will you be attending and what are the names and position titles of your interviewers?
- A professionally presented portfolio – including any documents you have sent to the interviewer (e.g. resume and cover letter), original copies of your qualifications, certificates and achievements, and any written references.

During the Interview

- *Be on time*
First impressions are important, so first of all you need to show up to your interview on time. Planning how to get to your destination and arriving 10-15 minutes early will provide you with some time to prepare yourself calmly for the interview.
- *Dress appropriately*
The way you present yourself is an important part of making a first impression. Part of your presentation is how you dress. Find an outfit that you feel confident in and is appropriate for the role you are applying for. Your appearance should look professional.
- *Remove any distractions*
Turn off your mobile phone, take off your sunglasses and put them out of sight!
- *Greeting*
Confidently shake your interviewer's hand, greet them appropriately, and smile. If you smile, you will feel better, and so will your interviewer.
- *Eye contact*
Look people in the eye (without staring) when speaking with them. If you are being interviewed by a panel, start eye contact with the person who asked the question, but make sure you include the other members as you continue your answer.
- *Use open body language*
Non verbal communication can have an impact on the success of your interview. Be aware of how you behave in an interview. Use body language that shows you are listening and interested. Examples of this might be sitting slightly forward and upright in your chair (making sure you are still comfortable) and demonstrate that you understand and are listening.

Fiddling with your clothes, hands, feet, hair could be interpreted as signs of anxiety, and uncertainty about your ability to do the job. Similarly, habits such as repetitive foot tapping can be distracting. Most people will experience a degree of nervousness during an interview; try to avoid making it obvious.

Answering Questions

- *Make sure that you listen to the whole question*
Some people have a tendency to start answering the question in their mind before it has been fully asked. Consider what has been asked and if necessary, give yourself a moment to construct your answer. It is alright to seek clarification if the meaning of the question is unclear.
- *Speak clearly*
Answer questions with enthusiasm in your tone and language to engage your interviewer. Pace yourself in a way that allows you to keep the interviewer interested in what you have to say. Speaking too fast, too slow, too loudly or too quietly can make it difficult for the interviewer to understand what you have to say.
- *Be honest*
Provide your responses honestly. If you have been honest in your application, then the employer has already seen enough potential in you to want to interview you.
- *Be specific*
Interviewers can't read your mind; be specific and provide them with evidence and details about your achievements and skills.
- *Your chance to ask questions*
Towards the end of an interview you will usually be given the opportunity to ask questions. This is an ideal time to demonstrate that you have researched the organisation and that you have a strong interest in their product or service, so make sure your questions reflect this. It is also your chance to clarify information that may influence your decision on whether or not to accept the job if offered to you.

Concluding the Interview

In closing the interview, employers usually outline the next step in the selection process. If not, ask when a decision will be made and if/when you will be notified of the outcome.

Make a closing statement reiterating your interest (and ability) in the position and thank the interviewer for the opportunity to meet. Smile as you say goodbye.

It is worthwhile to reflect on your performance after leaving the interview. Record the questions asked and note the examples you gave. Evaluate which responses need improvement. This will assist you for subsequent interviews.

What Happens Next?

Once your interview has finished, it can be a good idea to write a thankyou letter or e-mail to the employer for taking the time to meet with you, and to restate your interest in the position. Unless stated otherwise, usually an employer will get back to you within the week after your interview. If you are not contacted, you have an opportunity to ring and politely ask how the selection process is going and when a decision might be made. Regardless of the outcome, ask for feedback on areas where you can improve your interviewing skills.

Job interviews are a source of some apprehension for all jobseekers. However, the more experience you have in the interviewing process, the more skills and knowledge you will develop.

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This Information was current at the time of writing and is intended as a guide only.

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