



How-to Guide | **Preparing for a job interview**

Use this guide to help you:

- Prepare for different types of job interviews
- Understand what an employer will look for in an interview
- Prepare materials you can share in an interview
- Understand different types of interviews and selection processes

Preparing for job interviews is an important part of the job search. To make sure you are well prepared, try to find out who will interview you, what format the interview will take and if there will be any tests or assessments.

If tests or assessments will be involved, try to find out what they are for so that you can do some practice before the day of the interview.

Interviews can be formal and structured or informal and conversational. They might be face-to-face or over the phone. However, all job interviews are designed to assess three things:

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|--|
| EXPERIENCE |
| ✓ Do you have the experience, knowledge and skills to do the job? |
| MOTIVATION |
| ✓ Will you be motivated by the job and stay with the organisation? |
| FIT |
| ✓ Are you going to be a good fit for the team? |

An interview is also your opportunity to work out whether the organisation is somewhere *you* would like to work. Have a look at the company's website to

get to know important information on their business, processes and current staff to help you prepare.

What questions to expect

Interview opening: Who are you and why are you here?

- Be prepared to introduce yourself in 2–3 minutes and talk about relevant work experience, specialist skills, what you enjoy about work and why you have applied for this role
- Do your research and ensure you can refer to what you know about the company and the role you are applying for
- If a recruiter is interviewing you, be prepared to talk about your work preferences, e.g. the kind of role, company, work environment, management style and salary you are looking for (recruiters do not always have a specific role in mind and could be interviewing you for future roles)
- Be short, factual and positive when discussing your reasons for leaving past jobs

Questions the interviewer might ask:

- *Can you tell me a little about yourself?*
- *Why did you leave your last role?*
- *What appeals to you about this role?*
- *What do you know about the role and our company?*

Interview middle: What motivates you and what will you bring to the role?

- Be prepared to discuss your strengths and areas of development (think of your own perspective and also what positive things past managers or peers might say about you as a worker)
- Be ready to give examples of work experience similar to the job you are applying for. Talk about when you have demonstrated relevant skills, achieved results or handled similar situations or challenges
- Be prepared to talk about situations that are relevant to this role. How would you manage them? Why would you do it that way?

Your previous work experience is important, but it is also important to show that you are adaptable and willing to learn new skills in a new role.

Questions the interviewer might ask:

- *What have you liked most/least in your previous roles?*
- *What do you consider to be your greatest work achievements?*
- *What is your greatest strength/weakness?*
- *What is the most difficult work situation you have faced?*

Behavioural questions:

- Tell me about a time when you ...
worked in a team, handled a difficult customer, demonstrated initiative, showed flexibility, solved a problem, made a difficult decision, motivated others, went the extra mile, managed a stressful situation, had to prioritise work to meet a deadline, received criticism, made a mistake or experienced conflict, etc.
- Try the following format when providing examples

Situation – *‘When I was at Company X in the role of Y there was a situation where ...’*

Actions – *‘My responsibility in that situation was ...’ ‘The approach I took was ...’*

Result – *‘As a result of how I handled the situation ...’ ‘The outcome of the situation was ...’*

Interview closure: Why you and what’s next?

- Prepare a list of questions to ask the interviewer. Your questions should show your interest in the role and should also help you decide if it is the right role for you. They can also help you understand the next steps in the interview and recruitment process
- Be ready and prepared to answer a final *‘Why you?’* question. In your response, try to show that you understand what the role requires and show how your skills and strengths meet these requirements.

Questions the interviewer might ask:

- *When can you start?*
- *Do you have any leave planned in the coming months?*
- *What are your salary expectations?*
- *Do you have referees we can contact?*
- *Why should we hire you over someone else?*
- *Do you have any questions?*

Things you might like to ask:

- *Is this a new position or am I replacing someone else?*
- *Will I have a handover period with that person?*
- *What is the timeframe for the recruitment process?*
- *When would you expect the person who is successful to start the role?*
- *Who would the successful person work with on a day-to-day basis?*

Useful tips:

Follow-up

- If you can, ask for the interviewers' contact details so you can follow up the interview with a thank-you note and to show your interest in the role

Phone screening interviews

- Many companies start the interview process with a phone call to discuss the job and to create a shortlist of applicants who will be invited for in-person interviews. You might want to let the call go to your voicemail so that you have a chance to get ready before calling them back
- Keep a list of roles you have applied for handy (including the recruiter's name) so that you know which role they are ringing about when they call
- Make sure you have a quiet space, free of distractions, to take the call. Make sure you have a copy of your resume handy
- Listen carefully to the questions and take your time answering them.

Panel interviews

- It is common within government, academic or large organisations to be interviewed by a panel (usually three people)

- Panel interviewers usually ask questions based on the key selection criteria for that role

Body language and dress code

- Research shows that first impressions are more about your general appearance, facial expressions and body language
- Visit the organisation before your interview and/or use [Google Maps](#) to check how long it will take to get there. This will also help you understand how employees there dress.
- Talk to your *jobactive* provider if you need help [sourcing suitable interview clothes](#) (e.g. Fitted for work)
- Relax and focus on building a relationship with the interviewer

Managing nerves

- Know your resume so that you are able to speak to it – including facts and figures about your former employers
- Experiment with ‘power posing’ before your interview. Plant your feet widely and throw your hands in the air. You may feel a bit silly, but this can change your body chemistry and make you feel more confident
- Focus on what you can learn from the experience. This is your opportunity to learn about what you do and don’t want in a job. It is also an opportunity get some interview practice
- Focus on the interview being a two-way process. Knowing that you are both conducting an interview of sorts will help you to feel more relaxed

Keep it simple

- Don’t try to remember too much when going into an interview. Think about what you know about the job and then identify the top three things you want the employer to know about you.

| What I know about the job/company | My top 3 selling points |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Tasks, skills, results● Organisational values or culture● Personality fit and culture | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3. |

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