



CAREER GUIDANCE ABOUT INTERVIEWS

You've got an interview – Well done!

Now comes the hard work, convincing the interviewer that you are the best candidate for the job, can do the job better than the others and will bring enhanced benefits to their company.

PLANNING & PREPARATION

Good planning and some groundwork preparation will not only make you feel more confident but will definitely give you an advantage during your interview. Familiarise yourself with the job description and person specification. Using your CV, identify which skills you can apply to the job. What experience do you have which will enable you to fulfill the job description and person specification? This is what the interviewer will be trying to determine and will likely form some of their interview questions.

Do you know your strengths? Make sure you can give examples or evidence of these that are relevant to the job you have applied for. Do you also know your limitations? If questioned about your weaknesses, be prepared to show how you can overcome them with valid alternatives.



RESEARCH

Arm yourself with knowledge about the job and the company. Research their website, company literature and if possible talk to people who work for them or who have worked for them.

Exactly where is the interview taking place and at what time? If travelling by car, plan enough travelling time to allow for unexpected road works, heavy traffic and finding a parking spot. If you are relying on public transport, double check bus or train times and have alternative travel plans ready if required.

Take a copy of your CV with you and a list of questions you want to ask. Don't forget to take anything that the company has specifically requested such as your driving licence, ID, etc.

Who is interviewing you? Make sure you know the names of all the people involved.

BODY LANGUAGE

The way you stand, sit, express yourself and even your tone of voice can give away many of your true feelings and concerns. Unconsciously you can give the interviewer a totally different message to the one you really want to portray. Make sure you sit comfortably. Avoid slouching and don't sit defensively with your arms or legs crossed. Sit upright with your shoulders relaxed and don't fidget. Make eye contact throughout the interview but don't stare. Speak clearly in a controlled tone, neither too loud nor too quiet. Don't rush what you are trying to say. Take enough pauses and remember to breathe normally.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Dress to impress. What you wear and how you look will undoubtedly give your interviewer an initial opinion of you – make sure it's a good one. Generally it is recommended that you should dress smartly and reasonably conservatively, the dress code will be very much dependant on the role but most interviewers will expect to see you in a suit.

Make sure you remember to turn off your mobile phone before you go into the room. Remember that your first impression may be the lasting one!

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Pay attention throughout the interview – make sure you listen properly and don't ask questions on topics that have already been covered unless you are clarifying something.

- Listen carefully and wait for the interviewer to stop speaking before you speak.
- Check that you have understood everything that has been said.
- Ask open and probing questions to make sure you get all the information you need.
- Remain calm and confident throughout the interview.
- Let the interviewer dictate the pace of the interview.
- Make sure you have expressed your enthusiasm for the role and working for the company.
- Ask what the next steps will be. Is there a further interview? Will this involve a presentation or assessment?
- How will they inform you of their decision?
- Check that the interviewer has all the information they need.
- Thank the interviewer for their time and that you look forward to hearing from them.
- Don't forget to tell them you really want the job!
- Leave with a handshake and a smile.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

An interview is not just an opportunity for the interviewer to assess whether you are the person for them; it's also your opportunity to assess whether you want to work for them. Time your questions effectively. Be careful not to dominate the interview and make sure your questions demonstrate your keenness to work for the company.

Example questions to ask:

1. What are the key tasks and responsibilities of the role?
2. What is the reporting structure in the company?
3. Who is your line manager?
4. How is your performance assessed?
5. How was the job handled in the past?
6. Is there a company induction?
7. What support and guidance is available?
8. What are the company's plans for the future?
9. What is the working environment like?
10. What is the biggest challenge of the role?

GIVING THE RIGHT ANSWERS

Your interviewer is likely to have planned their list of questions, as well as probing further into any comments you make during the interview. Most of their questions will be HOW, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHO questions aimed at getting as much relevant information as possible from you, about you and how you work.

Listen carefully to the questions and make sure you answer them directly and confidently.

Don't be vague in your answers and make sure you can back them up with evidence or give examples.

Don't make off the cuff remarks you can't back up – the interviewer will undoubtedly pick up on such remarks and try to probe you further.

This is your opportunity to sell yourself – make sure you use the opportunity.

Turn negatives into positives. The interviewer will be trying to identify your weaknesses. Use this as an opportunity to show your strengths e.g. with examples of how you have overcome your limitations.

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What experience do you have that will enable you to do this job?
2. What is your greatest strength?
3. What is your biggest achievement?
4. Do you prefer working as part of a team or working alone?
5. How do you handle criticism?
6. Have you ever had a disagreement with anyone in the workplace? If so how have you resolved it?
7. Describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with?
8. How do you work under pressure?
9. Why do you want this job?
10. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

The golden rule is to listen, clarify the question if necessary, think about your response and then respond – in that order.

GOOD LUCK!

For more information:

infouk@gigroup.com
www.gigroupuk.com

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