

How to prepare for an interview - the importance of a first impression

Preparing for and attending interviews is a very important part of getting a job. Being prepared means you will feel more confident about going into an interview.

Attending job interviews can be a daunting task. It is amazing how many people think they will just “wing” it when it comes to a job interview but the reality is that you only get one chance to make a great first impression so get to work on some simple but highly effective preparation steps.

Being as prepared as possible is the key to success in the interview game so follow these tips to the letter.

Research

Visit the prospective employer’s website and browse through the “About Us,” “Employment,” “Careers,” “Our People,” and “Media” or “News” sections. Visiting the employer’s website is the bare minimum of work you should be doing to learn about your potential future employer.

You must also research yourself. Know your work history and training and education history inside out. Sounds obvious but again, you would be surprised how many people stumble when asked a question about their own background. Know the dates you held different roles as well as what you learnt or achieved in each role.

Rehearse

To help you approach the interview with confidence and a positive frame of mind, it is important to practise. Try asking a friend to interview you, using the questions and answers you have identified. Alternatively, you could practise in front of a mirror or by using video to capture your performance. The important thing is to verbalise your answers to questions, and not just think about them. This exercise can help you become more confident. It can also help you to visualise yourself in the interview in a positive light.

Interview Questions / Behavioral based Questions

This is where the question requires you to draw from your real life experience when answering. Questions will start with words such as “Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of ...”.

Read our behavioral interviewing document when you have finished reading this page. Again, go through your resume and think about work experiences you can use to answer the basic questions in the article.

You can also expect to be asked a question on why you are leaving your current job - or have already left it. Try to be as honest as you can without being negative. If something negative has happened such as you were terminated, then the advice is to prepare an answer that starts with a positive, goes to a negative and then ends with a positive.

Pre-interview check

Before the interview, find out the name and title of each and every person you will be meeting with.

Appearance

Take extra care with your appearance. Remember, you only get one chance at a first impression. Avoid sensory distractions such as loud ties, chipped nail polish, heavy make up, sheer fabrics, heavy ear rings, jewelry that jangles, overpowering fragrances and unwashed hair or hair that flops into your eyes or needs constant pushing back.

Feeling good

On the way to the interview, walk tall and smile. Strangers will smile back at you and the receptionist at the interview will be nice to you. By the time you hit the interview, you'll feel good. Remember, some butterflies in the stomach are okay so tell yourself those flutters are excitement.

Checking the venue

Make sure that you know where the interview is to be held. Work out how you will get there and how long the journey will take. If you can, it is worth making a trial run to the venue, preferably at the same time as your interview, remembering to allow a little extra time for unexpected delays. Be prepared for the unexpected; allow yourself plenty of time to look through your notes and prepared questions before the interview.

During the interview

- Don't say anything negative about a past employer.
- Don't interrupt anyone.
- We highly recommend using the STAR technique to structure your response;

S – Discuss the **Situation**

T – The **Task** involved

A – The **Action** you took

R – The **Result** you achieved

By using the STAR technique this will ensure that your answers are relevant, to the point, able to show clearly what you have done and how you achieved it. This will also ensure you deliver your response with an appropriate level of energy and enthusiasm and will help you not to waffle.

- Maintain good eye contact. If there is more than one person at the interview, talk to both or all of them - no matter how junior or seemingly incidental.
- Prepare something for when you are invited to ask questions – please refer to our “Questions to ask the interviewer” document. In regards to Salary and benefit questions we recommend you let your recruitment consultant deal with these issues directly with the Client.