



*planning for an interview

Prepared by Prospectus
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*research the organisation

If you are invited to an interview, you should spend some time researching the organisation as this will give you confidence should you be asked any questions on what the organisation does. It will also allow you to ask the employer questions. You should always look at their website and see if any further information is available to you.

It's helpful to find out the following things about the employer:

- What they do?
- Who are their customers or service users?
- What sort of organisation are they?
- What is the job likely to involve?
- How can you best fit your skills to match the job?

Plan for the interview

Find out what the interview will involve to make sure you're well-prepared. If you have a disability, all employers must make reasonable adjustments for you to have an interview. If you need the employer to make particular arrangements (for example, to help you get into the building), contact them before your interview to make sure they can make these arrangements.

You should think about who will be interviewing you. If it is the person who would be your manager if you got the job, the interview may be more detailed. If it's the personnel manager, the interview may be less detailed but could still be as testing.

Find out how many people will be interviewing you and their positions in the organisation. This will help you prepare for the kinds of questions they may ask.

Finding out how long the interview is likely to last will give you an idea of how detailed the interview will be. You should also find out if you will have to take a test or make a presentation.

Plan your journey

Find out where the interview is and go there the day before, taking a note of how long it took you to get there. If you need to go by bus, plan the journey beforehand. Plan an alternative route just in case of an accident or road works on the day of the interview. If you have a disability, ask about disabled access to the building.

Appearance

Always turn up to an interview dressed smartly and professionally. First impressions are important, so take your time and get it right.

Make sure you bring everything you need

- Any relevant paperwork (for example, proof of ID if required)
- Copy of CV
- Copy of covering letter
- Any information you've gathered about the organisation

*on the day of the interview

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview. Try to arrive 10 minutes before the interview. If you are delayed, contact your consultant to explain why so that we can try and get another appointment for you.

Try and stay calm. Everyone gets nervous going into an interview – if you have done your preparation and researched the organisation (and possibly the person interviewing you) this will make you feel more confident.

Questions to ask them

All employers will expect candidates to have questions to ask at the end of the interview. It's important to make sure you have some questions prepared, to show you're genuinely interested in the role and engaged with the interview process. Your questions should be specific to the job and the organisation, but examples could include:

- What is the next stage in the process, and will I receive feedback on this interview?
- Why do you work for this organisation?
- Are there development opportunities for someone in this role?
- What have previous people who have held this role gone on to do?
- What will be the main challenges I will face in the first six months?

Interview dos and don'ts

Do:

- Enter the room confidently
- Shake hands firmly when you introduce yourself
- Be polite and friendly - look the interviewer straight in the eye as soon as you enter the room
- Look interested - ask questions as well as answering
- Answer questions as fully as you can - avoid yes and no answers
- Provide examples to prove your achievements
- Ask if you don't understand a question
- Try and speak as clearly as possible
- Sell yourself – be positive about your achievements
- Speak clearly and concisely when answering questions

Don't:

- Sit until invited to do so
- Fidget or slouch in the chair
- Criticise former employers
- Interrupt your interviewer
- Draw attention to your weaknesses

*questions they may ask you

What do you know about our organisation?

This is a real opportunity to impress the employer. If you have done your preparation correctly then tell them what you know about their work. Don't be afraid to bring notes, you can't be expected to know everything about the organisation.

Why do you want to work there?

Talk about the employer's reputation as an employer, including any training they offer. Make sure they know you're interested in the type of work they offer.

What qualities and experience do you have to offer the company?

Make sure what you say reflects and expands on anything you have said about yourself in your CV, cover letter and/or application form.

What are your strengths?

Focus on professional strengths and use a range of examples.

What are your weaknesses?

Be very careful with this question – it's possible to be honest, but to turn a negative statement into a positive (for example, by saying that you'd welcome training in areas of weakness). You should show that you're aware of your weaker areas, but also that you're aware of how they can be addressed.

Why did you leave your last job?

Explain briefly and honestly the reasons why your last job ended. Remember that your past employer could be approached for a reference, so you should mention anything that your prospective employer should be aware of from the very start.

What did you do in your last job?

You should describe:

- All skills and duties relevant to the new position
- Equipment and software packages used
- Your responsibilities
- Type and level of people you've dealt with
- Length of employment
- Any promotions
- Development in the role

Could you tell me about a project or task in your present job which you feel you have done particularly well and are proud of?

You should make sure you're well prepared for this type of question in advance. Give as much detail as you can, and talk about the final outcome of the project. Explain what you've learned, and how you've built on this experience.

How long have you been out of work?

How did you spend your time?

Talk about what you've been doing to look for work, as well as any volunteering you might have done, and any relevant hobbies/further education.

What makes a good team player?

Talk about good communication, flexibility, co-operation and the importance of a good sense of humour.

How do you think your colleagues and friends would describe you?

Good words to use include honesty, trustworthiness, reliability, dedication and focus.

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