

Interview Tips

Do your research and be prepared

You should never 'wing it' with an interview – find out as much as you can about the role you're applying for and prepare yourself to answer or ask questions about the role at the interview.

Before your interview, you should also check out the company's website. Most company websites have an 'About Us' section that contains key information such as:

- Company history
- Locations
- Divisions
- Mission statement

It is important for you to review this information and be familiar with it ahead of your interview.

Sometimes you will be asked to fill out a job application upon arrival at your interview – even if you have already submitted your resume. Make sure you bring along any key information (such as prior employment, graduation dates, referee contact information) in case you need it on the day.

Arrive early

Find out exactly where the interview is (including the room, building, street, suburb), and calculate how long it will take you to get there ahead of time.

Try to arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview is scheduled. While you're waiting you can be observing how the business functions. You'll get a sense of the atmosphere in the workplace – whether the staff are relaxed, happy, friendly or talkative – and an idea of whether you can picture yourself working there.

Don't be late! Walking into an interview even five minutes late gives a negative impression. Being late is a surefire way to get off on the wrong foot – especially if it is for a position where timeliness is important.

Look the part

A professional appearance and good grooming is very, very important irrespective of the job you are applying for. You are selling yourself – and you're going to be judged by your appearance, presentation and attitude.

You should dress smartly, in attire appropriate for the role. If you are applying for a professional position, a suit or equivalent business-appropriate dress should be worn. When interviewing for roles in less formal environments (such as a summer job at your local theme park), it may be appropriate to dress in a more casual manner. In any case, you should always ensure that:

- Your clothes are clean and pressed
- Any accessories or make-up is in keeping with a professional image
- Your shoes are polished
- You are clean-shaven, wearing deodorant, and using breath freshener if you need to.

Always remember that first impressions count. If in doubt, always opt for smarter dress over casual dress.

Be positive, confident and authentic

It's important to communicate well with everyone you meet in your search for employment. It is, however, most important to positively connect with the person who might hire you. Shaking hands, making eye contact and exuding confidence will help to win the interviewer over. Unenthusiastic, bored, cocky or arrogant behaviour will kill you dead in the water. Motivated, self-assured individuals are what interviewers like.

Don't ever be dishonest in an interview (or on your resume!). Falsely claimed degrees or certificates and criminal records always get uncovered at some stage – don't risk the trouble it can cause down the track and be truthful about your history.

Mind your interview etiquette

It should not come as a surprise that a certain level of etiquette is expected at job interviews. At all times ensure that you:

- Refrain from swearing, using poor grammar or using defamatory language
- Turn your cellphone off before the interview, and store it somewhere that it won't bother you for the duration of the interview
- Do not bring any coffee or food to the interview

- Do not enter into lengthy conversations about your personal problems.

Remember that you are there to prove you are qualified for the role – not to prove that you deserve the role.

Listen, take your time and give the right answer

If the interviewer asks you a question you were not expecting (there is always one!), don't be afraid to pause and think about your response. Try to stay relaxed – it is better to take your time and give a well thought out answer than to blurt something out that might not be appropriate.

Ensure your answers are succinct and to the point – don't ramble on. At the same time, make sure you give enough information to answer each question fully. As an interviewer it can be really hard work assessing individuals who don't say much – make it easy to impress by answering every question as completely as you can.

See below for a range of questions that you could be asked in an interview.

Don't be negative about your former boss, colleagues or workplace

Even if you hated your last job and you hated your old boss – don't admit this at your interview. As the saying goes, it's a small world – and it's a very real possibility that your interviewer may personally know the people or company you are speaking badly about.

You also don't want the interviewer to think that you may speak that way about his or her company if you leave on not so good terms.

Try to focus on the good things about your previous employment – being negative will likely make your interviewer cringe and is really one of the biggest no-no's there is!

Confirm your interest before you leave

At the conclusion of your interview, ensure that you confirm your interest in the position and ask what the next step is. It is a good idea to have a few questions prepared to ask the interviewer - this will let them know that you are motivated to take up the job and that you have done your research (**see below for a range of questions you can ask at interview when you're asked if you have any questions**).

After the interview, be sure to follow up with a thank you note to reiterate your interest in the position and the company.

Don't fret if you are unsuccessful

Even if you flub an interview, don't take it to heart – it happens to everyone. Try to look at it like it wasn't meant to be, learn from your mistakes, and move on to the next opportunity.

Popular Interview Questions (and the answers!)

Why do you want to work here?

They ask you this question to see if you've done your homework. Do you know all about the company and what their goals are? A good answer will include attributes of the company and how you are able to contribute towards them.

What job would you like to be doing in 5 years' time?

It's a big mistake if you haven't thought about this question and how to answer it. The answer will convey to the interviewer how genuine you are about your career and what you have put in place to achieve your goals. A good answer will also show off your ability to plan ahead and show that you have thought about the extents to which the new company can help you achieve your career objectives.

Why do you want to leave your current job?

There are two parts to this question:

1. Your career objectives
2. Your relationship with your current/former employer.

Are you looking for new challenges? New opportunities for personal growth? Do you want to develop new skills? Was your previous position secure? In your last position, was there room for improvement or advancement?

What are your greatest accomplishments?

Try to keep your answer to this question job related and be specific with examples of past tasks or projects in which you played a successful part – whether this was individually or part of a team. Should you have been involved in volunteer/community work or played sport make sure you talk about these experiences – they show that you can work effectively in a team or possibly have leadership attributes.

What is your greatest weakness?

Don't allow yourself to get led down a negative track here. Try to think of an allowable weakness (e.g. lack of knowledge or experience in a certain area) and then turn it into a positive. For example, talk about a time where you took steps to ensure a situation that exposed your weakness was better handled in the future.

What kinds of people do you like working with?

This is an easy one – people just like you! The key words to mention here are loyalty, honesty, self-respect, pride and dedication. This is an ideal question to show off your own attributes again.

Have you got any questions?

Make sure your answer to this question is 'yes'. Don't turn up with a great long list of questions but ensure you have done enough research to ask a few thoughtful questions – these can be about the role or the company. **(see below for a range of questions you can ask at interview when you're asked if you have any questions).**

More sample interview questions...

Common openers

- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What five adjectives best describe you?
- What can you do for us that someone else can't?
- Why should I consider you for this position?
- Tell me about your least favourite position.
- Tell me about your favourite position, and what role your boss played in making it so unique.

Achievement focused questions

- What makes you stand out amongst your peers?
- What has been your proudest accomplishment? Tell me about it.
- What would your current boss say makes you most valuable to him/her?
- Tell me what success means to you.
- What do you consider your greatest strength?
- How do you set goals for yourself?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- What motivates you?

'Pressure cooker' questions

- Tell me about your last performance appraisal. In which area(s) were you most disappointed?
- Where do you disagree with your boss most often? How did you handle the last time he/she was wrong and you were right?
- Were you ever in a situation where you had too many things to do in the time available? What happened and how did you handle it?
- What was your worst mistake last year, and how did you deal with it?
- How do you work with new and weak members of your group?
- What kind of people do you feel represent a challenge to work with and how do you best deal with them?
- You've changed jobs frequently. How do we know you'll stick around?
- You've stayed with the same company for years. Why did you decide to leave?
- I see you were unemployed for a period of time. Tell me about it.
- What do supervisors tend to criticize most about your performance?
- How does your boss get the best out of you?

Behavioural questions

- Tell me about the most difficult assignment you ever had. How did you go about completing it?
- Tell me about a situation in which your boss was upset with the way you did something. How did you handle your boss?

Management questions

- Tell me about a particularly difficult employee you were able to turn around and help to become a good, solid worker.
- Tell me about a decision you made on the job that did not work out well. How did you make that decision?
- What would you have done differently in retrospect?
- Tell me about an occasion when, in difficult circumstances, you pulled a team together.
- This position will be working with individuals who have been with us for a long time. How will you mesh with them?

Supervisory questions

- What type of supervisory training have you had in the past?
- Tell me about the type of people you have supervised.
- How have you handled a difficult employee?
- If you've had to fire someone, how was it handled?
- What characteristics do you look for in a possible new employee?
- How do you motivate employees if a pay rise is not an option?
- How would you supervise someone like yourself?

Working with others

- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- How would your co-workers describe you?
- What kind of people do you have trouble getting along with?
- What kind of people do you get along with the best?
- How do you handle a personality conflict with someone you must work closely with?
- How do you feel about socializing with co-workers outside of the office?
- What level of management are you most comfortable working with?

Working for others

- Tell me about your favourite boss.

- What attributes were lacking in your worse boss?
- How well do you feel your boss rated your work performance?
- Tell me about a time when you and your boss had a disagreement.
- What would your boss tell me about you?
- How do you handle having trouble with a boss?
- Is the customer always right?

Environmental questions

- How do you handle several important projects simultaneously?
- What do you do when things are slow on the job?
- Tell me about a task that you just couldn't seem to complete and why.
- Describe the top of your desk.
- What aspects of your job do you consider most critical?
- How important was communication and interaction with others on your job?
- Tell me about a big change at one of your last jobs and how you handled it.
- What is your opinion about the "chain of command"?
- How do you handle the stress in a fast-paced environment?

Past job performance

- Tell me about your last job.
- What unique aspects did you bring to your last positions?
- How much flexibility did you have in performing and making decisions in your last jobs?
- If you stay in your current position, what will happen there? How far can you advance?
- Give me an example of when you've demonstrated customer service skills.
- What were the three most important responsibilities in your last job?

Challenging applicants in the final rounds of interviews

- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about our organization/department?
- Tell me about your understanding of the job you're applying for.
- What would you say are the major qualities this job demands?
- If you retired from this organization, what would be your legacy?

Questions YOU can ask in interview....

You're almost through your job interview, and the interviewer asks:

“Do you have any questions about the role?”

When it's your turn for questions, what you ask can go a long way to helping you learn about the role – and even impress the employer. Having questions prepared can be a strategic move that sets you apart from other candidates.

Simply having no questions to ask when you're asked if you have questions suggests you're not prepared, haven't researched the company or are not interested enough in the role.

Asking insightful, thoughtful questions can help you gain a deeper understanding of the role you're applying for and ensure it's a good fit for you.

Below are some of the best questions to ask in an interview.

Choose a range of questions that matter most to you, and ask several of them with confidence.

These questions can help you determine whether the role is right for you, and show your potential employer that you're enthusiastic, interested and prepared. When it's your turn for questions, ask a range of them so you can close off your interview with confidence.

The role and expectations

- Could you tell me why this position has become available?
- What would a typical day in this role look like?
- What do you think are the three key qualities someone needs to shine in this role?
- Thinking about employees who've done this work previously, what set apart those who were good from those who were great?
- How long do you think it would take someone to be up and running in this position?

Leadership style

- How would you describe your leadership style?

- If a staff member comes to you with a problem, how do you usually address it?
- How do you like to delegate tasks?
- How do you monitor the performance of individual team members?
- What would you like me to know about you as a leader?

The team

The Hiring Manager may share basic information about colleagues, managers and explain the size of the team and company structure.

- Would I be working with a small or large team, and can you tell me a little more about the people I'd be working with?
- Who would I be reporting to and what would my contact with that person look like?
- Will I have a chance to meet my potential manager or colleagues during this process?
- How would you describe the dynamics of the team that I'd be working with?
- If I'm successful, do you have someone in my team who would act as a mentor or 'buddy' for the first little while?

Company culture

If you've done your research on the company, you may know these answers, but ask them anyway and listen carefully for the qualities most important to you. For example, employee appreciation, employee development opportunities, dress code etc.

- How would you describe the workplace culture?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?
- What would your staff say the most challenging thing about working here is?
- What are some of the biggest opportunities the company has at the moment and what does this mean for the staff?
- What makes people want to continue working at this company?

Training and development

These questions can help you find out if and how the company could help you stay on top of the latest news and best practices in your industry. For example, you may want to find out if you'd be able attend conferences or register for online courses.

- What types of professional development opportunities are offered?
- If I was offered this role, is there any training you think I'd need to undertake immediately?
- What do you imagine the career path to be for someone in this role?
- How do you help your team members grow and develop professionally?
- Can you tell me about your employee performance review processes?

Next steps

Learning more about the key objectives of the organisation will help to determine how you can play a part in achieving them. Asking about goals can also help you get a feel for the company's performance and any struggles it may be facing.

- What is the company strategic plan for the next 12 months, and how will it impact this role?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Could you tell me the timeline for making a decision and when you think I can expect to hear from you?
- Is there anything else you need from me to help you make your decision?
- Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you think is important for me to know about working here?