



Preparing for the Interview

You have been successful with your job application letter and CV, and at least one company has offered you an interview. What now?

An interview can last anywhere from 15 minutes to more than an hour, although the general rule is the longer the interview, the better. Being fully prepared for the interview is very important. This section gives you an idea of some of the questions the interviewer might ask. Try answering these questions yourself as an exercise. Keep in mind that the interviewer is trying to find out about you, to draw the best responses from you and to learn as much about you as possible.



There are certain standard questions for which you can prepare for. Practise them by yourself, with friends, with family and with your career counsellor. When practising, it may help to dress up in the outfit you will be wearing to the interview as looking smart will often increase your confidence.

INTERVIEWERS' QUESTIONS

The type of questions an interviewer may ask tends to fall into two categories, namely, the job and you.

- **Why should we hire you?**

This question will probably be asked early in the interview. It might be asked directly or indirectly (e.g. Why do you want to work here?). Answer this question by listing the skills that you can offer to the position – what you can contribute to the company, not how the company can contribute to your initial training.

- **What experience can you bring to the position?**

Be careful with this question. Most graduates do not have much working experience. The interviewer expects you to talk about things you have done which show responsibility and initiative. If you lack working experience, talk about the training and skills you have received, and connect them to the job you apply for. Emphasise that you are quick to learn and enthusiastic.

- **Are you willing to travel or work shift/overtime?**

There is no fixed answer to this question as it depends on individual circumstances, however, do not be preoccupied with your gains and loss. Unless you have practical difficulties, you can indicate your willingness under reasonable circumstances.

- **Why our company?**

Make sure that your knowledge of the company is comprehensive. Are they a large company with a good promotion structure? Are they an international company? Have they got branches in China where your language skills would be useful? Have they got a good graduate trainee scheme? Use the selling points in their company literature. Focus on the satisfaction that you will get by helping the company, rather than how the company can help you achieve your own goals.

- **Tell me about yourself.**

What is the interviewer aiming at? The focus is not so much on the information, but the way you talk about the subject you know best – yourself. Do you communicate well? If it is in a second language, how good is your English? Can you keep your information concise? Are you a talker, a listener, or a bit of both?

- **Name three weaknesses.**

This is one of the hardest questions to answer. Speak from a positive angle when talking about your weaknesses. You can opt to point out one or two weaknesses which have little adverse impact on the job you apply and have no relevance to the requirements for the post.

Another option is to say something like 'I suffer from being too punctual. I always like to arrive 10 minutes early. I also tend to work too hard'. You get the idea.

- **Name three strengths.**

This is your chance to promote strengths that will be advantageous for the job, such as communication skills, organisational ability and conscientiousness.

- **What salary are you looking for?**

Be careful if you are asked this question. You do not want to ask for less than they are willing to offer, nor do you want to ask for a lot more than they can pay. Have an idea of the current average salary for the position. If asked, turn the question back and ask what the range is for the position being offered.

Do not be the first to mention a figure. If you have to settle for less than you would like in your first position, do not be discouraged, once you have some experience, higher salaries will come as you become more attractive to companies.

- **Do you have any questions?**

Ask about the company or the job. Avoid any discussion of personnel benefits. These will occur during subsequent interviews when you are in a stronger negotiating position.

Some final advice: make sure you eat well before the interview. The adrenaline brought on by nerves, which is completely natural, could make you light-headed, so it is important that your health and sense of wellbeing are in top form for the interview. If you look good and feel good, you will perform well.

