

# Job Interviews

If you have made it to a job interview typically you've done well to pass the first hurdle in getting a job! You now have the chance to meet the employer face-to-face and to convince them that you're the right person for the job.

Job Interviews can typically last from anything from 10 minutes up to one hour. However it would appear that from research that it takes only 90 seconds to make a first impression and selectors make up their minds about a candidate's personality within just the first four minutes of an interview! You should then make the best use of those crucial first few minutes to create the right sort of impression.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

Prepare well beforehand

- Research the employer, READ THE COMPANY BROCHURE, ANNUAL REPORT
- Find out what skills the employer is looking for - check the information given on the job advertisement
- Make a list of key points you want to get across

## Don't forget the skills that employers want:

- Communication skills - presenting, listening
- Organisation and planning skills – being able to prioritise your workload and work unsupervised
- Working in a team - listening to other people's points of view, being constructive and joining in with ideas
- Problem solving - being able to find alternative solutions
- Flexibility - being able to adapt to changing working environments
- Time management - being able to prioritise and organise

## On the day of the interview

- Dress appropriately, be clean and tidy - a dark business suit is usual. Remember to polish your shoes!
- First impressions count - from the moment you walk through the door and are greeted by the receptionist. They could be asked for their impression of you!
- Smile and shake hands with the interviewer
- Be prepared for any questions and give good examples (the employer will remember)  
Make sure you answer the questions asked!
- Give yourself time to answer. If you don't understand say "Can you clarify the question please".

- Answer as fully as possible. Make it easy for the selector to see that you are right for the job but don't talk too much.
- Watch your BODY LANGUAGE - don't fidget! Try and remain calm and confident. Keep eye contact with the interviewer.
- Be ENTHUSIASTIC and as natural as possible. It will show in your voice and in your face.
- Give the interviewer something to remember you by! Have your own questions ready to ask and use the opportunity to return to a point you want to either clarify or elaborate on.
- Remember to smile, shake hands and say 'thank you for seeing me' at the end of the interview

Good Luck!!

## Interview Questions

The bulk of the interview will be taken up with their questions, but a good interviewer will always leave time for you to ask questions of your own. It is a two-way process. While the interviewer is trying to decide whether you're right for the company you need to think "is this right for me"? By asking questions of your own you will obtain the information you need to make the right decision if the job is offered to you.

Not only is this an essential way of extracting information, it's another opportunity to make yourself look good by highlighting your strengths, showing off your research efforts and demonstrating your enthusiasm. If you don't ask questions it will look as if you are not interested.

## Potential Interview Questions

1. Why do you want to work here?

Mention the following:

- The good reputation of the firm
- Any other positive information you have about them (for example, their training record, or their equal opportunities policy),
- The job will give you the opportunity to do work that interests you.

2. Why did you leave your last job?

Be positive. Don't use this as an opportunity to criticise your previous company. For example, if you left for health reasons, point out that you are now able to carry out all the duties for the job you are applying for. If you were dismissed, say that you take responsibility for your actions and have learnt from the experience.

3. Have you done this kind of work before?

- If you have, tell them the skills and experience you have and how you can use them in this job.
- If you haven't, describe other work experience that is relevant to this job or which will help you learn this job quickly. Emphasise your interest and your enthusiasm to learn.

4. What did you do in your last job?

Describe the following things:

- Skills and duties relevant to the new job  
Your responsibilities
- How you worked with others
- If you worked with customers and, if so, how you worked with them  
How long you were there
- Whether you were promoted, and
- Responsibilities you volunteered to take on.

5. What kinds of equipment can you use?

- Name the types of equipment you can use that are relevant to the new job.
- Mention any relevant qualifications or training you have had.
- Tell them the length of time you have used this equipment.

6. How long have you been out of work and how do you spend your time?

Describe the following:

- What you have done to look for a job
- Mention any voluntary work you have done
- Mention any further education, study or training you have taken part in, and
- Mention your hobbies and leisure activities – if appropriate!

Try to link what you did to the skills and experience the employer is looking for.

7. What makes you think you are the right person for this job?

Tell the interviewer about the following:

- The skills and experience you have which are relevant to the job, and
- The personal qualities that you bring to the job.

8. Why have you had so many jobs? You could say the following things:

- You wanted to widen your experience in different types of work or in different companies
- Many of the jobs were temporary, and
- You would rather be in work than out of work.

9. Why have you only had one job?

You could say the following things:

- You had several jobs within your last company
- The job offered you the opportunity to develop, and
- You enjoyed the work.

10. Why should I take you on?

Be ready for this question and answer confidently and positively:

- Describe your skills and experience and how relevant they are to this job
- Tell them you are enthusiastic and willing to learn, and
- Tell them you are hard-working, reliable and capable.

11. Aren't you over-qualified?

Emphasise the following:

- You are looking for something different, and
- You can take as well as give instructions.

12. How do you get on with people?

- Describe how you have worked as a team in the past.
- Give examples of your ability to get on with people at all levels.
- Give examples of how you have provided good customer service, if this is relevant.

13. What makes a good team member?

Describe the skills needed, for example:

- Good communication skills
- Flexibility
- The ability to adapt to change
- The ability to co-operate with other people, and
- Having a good sense of humour and so on.

Give examples of how you showed these in previous work situations or leisure activities.

14. How do you cope with pressure?

Describe pressures in previous jobs using a recent example (for example, how you coped with a deadline that had been brought forward, how you completed a rush order or dealt with staff shortages).

15. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- Strengths – the employer should already know your strengths from your application but you may want to emphasise particular skills relevant to the job by giving examples.
- Weaknesses – start by describing parts of your last job which you found difficult and then explain how you overcame these difficulties or be brief but honest (for example, 'I can sometimes be a little too enthusiastic').

Remember: Employers value people who can admit their mistakes rather than blaming their failings on others.

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

Explain that you would ideally like to be working for the same company but to have developed within it.

17. What wage do you expect to earn?

If the wage level is negotiable, be prepared to negotiate. The difficult thing to decide is where to start. If you tell them a wage that is too high, you could price yourself out of the job, but if you give an amount that is too low you could lose out. Before going to the interview, try to find out about wage levels in your area (for example, look at similar jobs advertised with your Jobcentre, in newspapers or on the internet). You might be able to use this information in your negotiations. If you are really not sure, then say you would expect to receive the going rate for the job.

18. How often were you absent from your last job?

- If you were hardly ever off work, say so.
- If sick leave has been a problem, explain why and reassure the employer that you have sorted out the problem.
- If you have had time off because of a disability, discuss this openly, including the possible solutions – be positive.

19. When would you be available to start?

As soon as possible! Do not put any barriers in the way.

20. Do you have any questions?

You may like to prepare for this, as it is almost always asked at an interview. Asking some questions (but not too many) can show you are interested. One or 2 of these may be appropriate.

- Do you offer ongoing training and development?
- What will my first job be?
- How soon will I hear the result of my application?
- Does the company carry out performance reviews and if so, how often?