



POSITIVE CAREER ADVICE

# HOW TO ACE YOUR INTERVIEW



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## ***"JOB INTERVIEWS ARE LIKE FIRST DATES. FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT"***

Attending an interview can feel like a daunting prospect, particularly if it's your first one, and you are not sure what to expect. Interviews are simply a chance for an employer to get to know who you are and whether you will be a good fit for their organisation. It's also your opportunity to find out more about the role and whether you would like to work for them.

Whether it's preparing for exams, being a sportsperson or acting in a show, you wouldn't rock up to an important event without putting in lots of effort. It's the same with interviews, and the good news is that the more prepared you are, the more relaxed you will feel.

### **Preparing for your interview**

Be in no doubt that if you do your research before an interview, you will impress a potential new employer. A hiring manager needs to feel reassured that you are enthusiastic about their role with their company, not just any position with any company.

Doing your homework in advance of the interview will help you to align your answers to the interview questions. It will also enable you to ask the hiring manager intelligent questions during the interview helping you to establish whether you will be happy working for them if you receive a job offer.



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## WHAT TO RESEARCH PRIOR TO YOUR INTERVIEW

**Research the company** - Spend some time reviewing the company website. Pay particular attention to their 'work for us' page, which will inform you about how they look after their staff and the benefits and training that they offer. Ensure that you fully understand the nature of their business, the size of the company and their heritage.

**Understand the company mission and values** - Many companies showcase their company/corporate mission. A company mission statement is usually a short sentence describing its purpose. Company values are the beliefs and principles that guide the company's actions.

Values are essential as you will want to work for a company where your beliefs match those of the company. Having an understanding of the company mission statement will show that you have an interest in the bigger picture and how you, if successful, will play your part in the company achieving its mission.

**Understand the role you are applying for** - This may seem obvious, but it's incredible how many interviewees don't fully appreciate the extent of the position they are applying for. By understanding the levels of responsibility, the role comes with will help you to pitch your answers at the right level. It will also help you to consider the added value you can bring to the company as a young, energetic interviewee.



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## WHAT TO RESEARCH PRIOR TO YOUR INTERVIEW

**Research for press releases, awards, and recent news** - Some company websites will have a page showing recent news updates. If a company does not have a page, Google the company name/Industry and see what comes up. Also, take a look at their social media pages on LinkedIn and Facebook. Showing an interest in topical issues and a genuine understanding of their sector will work in your favour.

**Understand the format of the interview and who will be interviewing you** - Don't be afraid to contact the company to ask about your interview. Knowing what to expect will alleviate your nerves. Find out if the interview process involves any tests or assessments and ensure you know how many people will be interviewing you and their names.

**Plan your journey** - Do a dry run of the journey if you can before the day of your interview. Travel at the same time of day so that you can take into account the traffic. Aim to arrive 10 minutes before your interview time.

**Dress to Impress** - Whether it's a face-to-face interview or a video interview, you need to dress appropriately. Have a look at the 'Work for us' page to see if there are any pictures of people working to give you a guide. Always err on the side of caution. You are better turning up smarter than casual. Ladies, be careful of too much jewellery and makeup. Ensure that you also iron your clothes the night before.



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## ANTICIPATE YOUR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Write down a list of questions that the interviewer might ask you in the interview. Enrol the support of a family member or teacher to ask them to ask you questions. Review your CV and think about any areas of weaknesses they may mention and consider how you will respond to them. While you do not want to sound too rehearsed and robotic, you do not want to get caught off guard.

Here are a few of the most commonly asked questions for those in their early careers.

**Why do you want this job?** A predictable question as it's so important. Your response to this question should demonstrate that you have done your research about the company and the position. Use your knowledge to connect your skills and interests. Find something specific about the employer that attracts you to the position/company. It could be their training and development, their public image, or their mission etc.

**Describe a time when you have worked effectively as part of a team?**

We call questions like these competency-based questions. An employer will be looking for a specific example of when you have worked as part of a team. So, try to avoid giving just a general response. Describe the **Situation**, the **Task** you had to complete as a team, the **Action** you took and the **Result**. For more information on the STAR technique, this [video](#) and [guide](#) feature specific examples.



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**What are your strengths?** A great question to ask as this is where you can showcase your most relevant skills and attributes. Sometimes, it can feel uncomfortable to answer this question as you won't want to appear that you are showing off or boasting. A simple way to get around this is to respond as if someone else is describing your strengths. For example, "My lecturers often compliment me on my curiosity. I am never afraid to ask a question if I am unsure and would like to find out more. Asking questions has accelerated my learning and my ability to achieve higher grades, a strength I feel will be necessary for the workplace to ensure that I am as productive as possible. Another strength is my reliability. I rarely took a day off school or college. I appreciate that reliability and commitment will be essential to the workplace too".

**What are your weaknesses?** A question which many dread. To respond well to this question, think about something that you have worked hard to improve. For example, you may have struggled to feel confident meeting new people.

"When I was younger, I wasn't very self-confident. I didn't find it easy to speak to people who I didn't know. When I started my Saturday job serving in the local fish and chip shop, I was initially very nervous. However, I soon realised that the more I did it, the more confident I became. By the end of time I left there I was confident building rapport, I recognised the regulars and knew their favourite orders, and I was able to deal with complaints".



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### Do you have any questions for us?

The worst thing you can say is no, I do not have any questions. Preparing questions in advance will be essential. It's perfectly acceptable to write them down in a neat notebook not only does this show that you are well-prepared you won't forget what they are. Remember, you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you. You need to ensure that if you receive a job offer that you will be happy to accept. Avoid questions about sick pay, money, holidays, etc.

Here are a few questions to consider;

- What is a typical career path for this position?
- Can you provide me with more information on the training programme?
- Will I be working as part of a team? If so, can you tell me more about the team?
- Why do you like working for the company?
- How will my performance be assessed?

By asking the right questions, it will show the interviewer that you have a genuine interest in the position and the company.

Finally, think of how you can **stand out from the crowd**. It could be that you have an insightful question about the industry/company from your research or you take a portfolio of relevant work.

Good luck!

