

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES & TIPS

Before your interview

Research the company

If you are invited to an interview you should spend some time researching the company. This will give you confidence should you be asked any question on what the company does. It will also allow you to ask the employer questions. You could contact the company to ask for an information pack or you could look at their website.

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

what they do, make or sell?

who are their customers?

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 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. This is 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.

Plan your journey

Consider travelling to the company the day before the interview to check how long the journey will take. If necessary, ask the employer for directions, bus routes or details of where you can park your car. You should plan another way of getting there in case something unexpected happens (such as your car breaking down, or your train being cancelled). If you have a disability, let the employer know so they can make any special arrangements.

Creating the right image

Deciding what to wear for the interview will depend on what sort of work you will be doing. Decide what to wear and get your clothes ready the day before. You don't have to buy a new outfit. Aim for a neat, clean and tidy appearance, if you look good it will help you feel good.

Gather together the information you'll need at the interview

Remember to take a copy of your CV or application form to refer to. Prepare notes or cue cards to help if think you might need a prompt during the interview. Take items the employer has asked you to bring along – for example: references, certificates or your driving licence.

Re-read the job advert to refresh your memory and to make sure you haven't missed anything.

On the day

Before you leave

Give yourself plenty of time to get ready and make sure you've got all the relevant paperwork with you. If you are delayed, contact the employer as soon as possible to explain, apologise and arrange another appointment.

When you arrive

You should aim to arrive about ten minutes before the interview time. When you arrive give your name to the receptionist or whoever is there to greet you. Try to relax and keep calm, chat to the receptionist, or whoever greets you before going into the interview. This will help calm you and remember that the interviewer can be just as nervous as you.

At the interview

Accept that it is natural to be nervous and that you may have a fast heartbeat, clammy hands and 'butterflies' in your stomach. These are your body's natural way of meeting a challenge, and in small doses it can help you.

You will make an impression in the first few minutes. It takes this time for people to assess you and store this information. Once you have made a first impression, it's hardly ever changed. It's important to make a good first impression. If you're nervous your voice may sound shaky and squeaky. Practise deep, slow breathing before you get to the interview. This will slowdown your heart rate and help you avoid taking quick shallow breaths.

Things you should do

Here are some helpful hints and tips to help you during your interview:

enter the room confidently

shake hands firmly and introduce yourself smile

be polite, friendly and look the interviewer in the eye as soon as you enter the room

check that it's OK to use cue cards or notes during the interview

try to maintain eye contact with the person or people you are talking to
look interested and ask questions as well as answering
answer questions as fully as you can, avoid just saying 'yes' or 'no'
provide examples to prove your skills and achievements
tell the truth
ask if you don't understand a question
speak clearly
sell yourself – get your good points across and be positive
listen
answer questions with examples • keep your answers brief and to the point
come prepared
appear confident

Things you shouldn't do

Here are some things you shouldn't do in an interview:

sit down until the interviewer asks you to
fidget or slouch in the chair or fold your arms
swear – even mildly
criticise your past employers
interrupt
draw attention to your weaknesses
lie or be too enthusiastic – stay calm and stick to the facts