

Job interviews



How to do well in job interviews

Great, you've got that job interview – congratulations! Firstly, we want you to know that it's quite normal to feel nervous about going for a job interview. To help you prepare, we've put together some top tips on how to get the best out of your interview, from planning your journey through to obtaining feedback. These tips will boost your chances of a successful interview and will leave a lasting positive impression on your new employer.

Research

Boost your confidence and impress the interviewer. Before any other source, go to the company website. Find out as much as you can about the company: how it operates, what changes are taking place in the company's industry, its story, its challenges and its future opportunities.

Next, review the company on LinkedIn or by Google search to find out information about its environment such as its competitors.

It's worth writing notes as you read, and even taking them along to the interview.

Plan your journey and be on time

It's an obvious one, but however you are going to travel, whether by car or public transport, plan your route in advance. Where can you park? Where the nearest bus stop or train station located? If possible, do a trial run so you know how long it will take. Remember, bad traffic and train cancellations happen, so try to allow some extra time to accommodate any unforeseen circumstances.

Before you leave your house, make sure you have the phone number of your interviewer to hand so if you do run into problems on your travels, you can immediately inform them that you could be delayed.

Always aim to arrive 10 minutes early for your interview, which gives some breathing space to collect your thoughts and make sure you're calm. Do not forget to switch off your mobile phone while you're waiting.

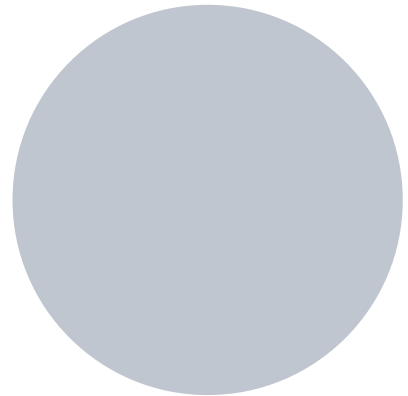
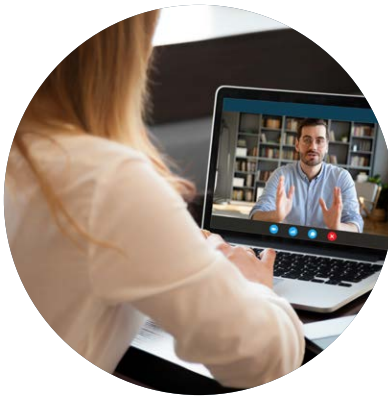
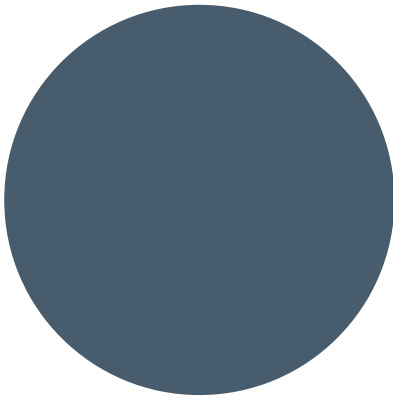


Dress code

If possible, pop in to a site of your prospective employer which will ensure you understand the dress code when being interviewed. Some companies prefer a more relaxed dress code, some may not. If in doubt, dress smartly! Many people like to think their personality and abilities are the only factors that matter when it comes to getting a job. The truth is, personal presentation can make a big difference too. Do not leave your outfit choice until the interview day itself. Plan it well in advance! Ensure your clothes are well-fitting, clean and ironed, and your footwear is clean.

Try to avoid wearing strong perfume or aftershave, however if you must wear fragrance, choose something subtle. Keep jewellery and accessories to a minimum.

It's sensible to avoid drinking alcohol the night before an interview, or smoking before your interview starts. First impressions should never be a smell of drink or smoke.



Video and online interviews

Many interviews are now held online. If you are not familiar with online meetings, try rehearsing with a friend so that you experience logging on and remember any access passwords. Find a comfortable sitting position, which uses a suitable background. Essentially, your interviewer can still see you! Do not compromise your chances by being too dressed down.

Prepare your answers

Consider your answers to typical questions that are asked at interviews, such as:

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What can you offer that other candidates can't?
- What positive things would your last boss say about you?
- How competitive are you?
- What salary are you looking for?
- Why did you leave your last position?



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Think about what you would say if you were asked any of these - or similar - questions, which often come up in interviews. It's advisable to write your answers down, then practice saying them out loud. Try to feel and sound comfortable and confident with what you say. However, don't learn your answers word for word, as you want to sound natural on the day itself rather than rehearsed.

One of the most dreaded interview questions is, 'What's your biggest weakness?' An effective way to answer this question is to think of a weakness you've taken positive steps to improve, such as a personal development or a technical job-related skill. Avoid answers similar to, 'I work too hard' or 'I don't have any weaknesses'. Try to show your self-awareness and that you recognise your weaknesses and have the initiative to remedy them.

Rehearse

Before the day of your interview, read through your CV and make sure you know it inside out. Your interviewer may ask you to run through your work history, so ensure you know it! You can take a copy of your CV into an interview, but try not to read from it or from any of your notes. You may also want to take along a few spare copies of your CV, in case you're being interviewed by more than one person.

Try to imagine what an interviewer might ask you about your work experience or anything else on your CV, then make sure your answers don't conflict with the information you've written down. If you have any gaps in your employment history, it's likely they'll ask you to explain them – you'll sail through the interview much more easily if you have your answer prepared. Also study the job description and your job application so that you know them like the back of your hand.

Avoid criticising companies you've worked for in the past, including former employers and colleagues, and try not to be arrogant, argumentative or controversial – unless, of course, the job you're applying for demands it.

Body language

It's not just what you say that counts in job interviews, it's the way you hold and represent yourself as well. Having good eye contact and a strong handshake upon greeting, both represents you have good listening skills and you are keen to impress.

Some essential body language dos and don'ts:

- Do check your posture - try to look relaxed but avoid slouching (being too relaxed may suggest you're bored and not that interested in the job). Sit up straight and keep your shoulders relaxed and facing forwards, or angled towards the person asking you a question
- Do make eye contact – though not to the extent that you're staring at your interviewer, aim to hold eye contact for a few seconds at a time. If you have more than one interviewer, make eye contact with all of them individually whenever they ask you a question
- Don't cross your arms as this could make you look defensive
- Don't fidget – avoid touching your face or hair and using your hands a lot while you're talking, too much movement can be distracting. Don't tap your fingertips or cross and uncross your legs. Most importantly, resist the temptation to bite your nails as it signals that you're nervous
- Don't forget to smile – especially when you first meet your interviewer(s). Find a balance, don't grin too much as it can be off-putting. Try to reflect your interviewer by smiling when they smile, even laughing a little if they laugh



Ask questions

It's a two-way street! Prepare some questions and ask your interviewer what you would like to know.

Asking thoughtful questions can show a prospective employer that you're interested in the job. So, don't get caught out! If you feel more comfortable, write your questions down, although memorising them will make you appear more confident and spontaneous during the interview.

There are lots of questions you could ask, but here are a few examples to get you started:

- Why has this job become available?
- What's the biggest challenge facing the person who takes the job?
- What will be expected of the successful candidate?
- What will the priorities be of the person taking this job?
- Will there be any opportunities for training or gaining new skills?
- Will the job allow me to use any particular skills or qualifications?

Stay calm

No matter how much you prepare, it's still natural to feel nervous during a job interview. If you can choose the time of your interview, opt for the morning – that way, you'll have less time during the day to feel tense. Practise using calming techniques during the run up to your interview:

- Get a good night's sleep – try a relaxing activity before going to bed and avoid caffeine (in tea, coffee, chocolate and colas) and alcohol
- Have a healthy breakfast and – if relevant – lunch
- Drink plenty of water to avoid getting dehydrated

Follow up

Before you leave the interview, feel free to ask when a decision will be made about who they will appoint. After your interview, try to get feedback on how it went.

If you send a follow-up note to offer your thanks for seeing you, do it within two business days. Use the opportunity to stress your interest in the company and the job, and remind your interviewer why you make you a good candidate.

Use the right names and titles of all those who interviewed you, and make sure your follow-up note goes to the right address (whether via post or email).

You may feel a little awkward sending a follow-up note at first, but doing so shows that you can be proactive, and it might just give you the edge over someone else the company is also considering.



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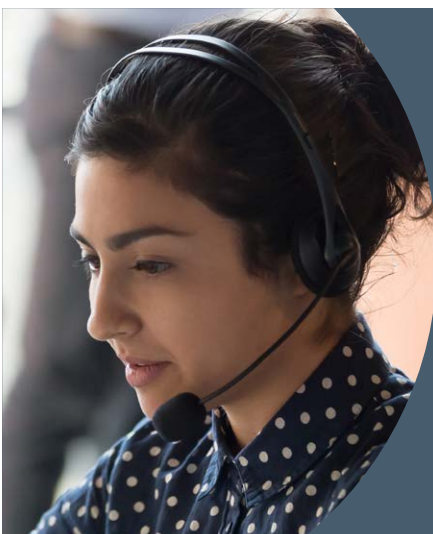


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Checklist before your interview

To keep you focused, organised and calm before you interview, below is a check list to ensure you are fully prepared.

- Your CV and work history
- The letter or email inviting you to attend the interview
- Any company information you have gathered including any notes you have made about the company
- Examples of your work, for example, reports, 360 feedback or personal development records
- Review information, references or achievement awards
- Questions you would like to ask
- Interviewer contact details
- Interview location and travel plans



The Licensed Trade Charity are available 24/7, if you'd like to talk about your situation, we can help you. Contact us for confidential, free of charge support. If you are experiencing any of the issues covered in this fact sheet, in the first instance call our helpline on:

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Our Helpline Team will listen without judging and will work with you as best they can to achieve a positive outcome. If you prefer, you can email: enquiries@ltcharity.org.uk or visit our website at www.licensedtradecharity.org.uk, it's full of useful information about the kind of issues we know people who work in the licensed trade face.

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