



# interviews

## what are interviews for?

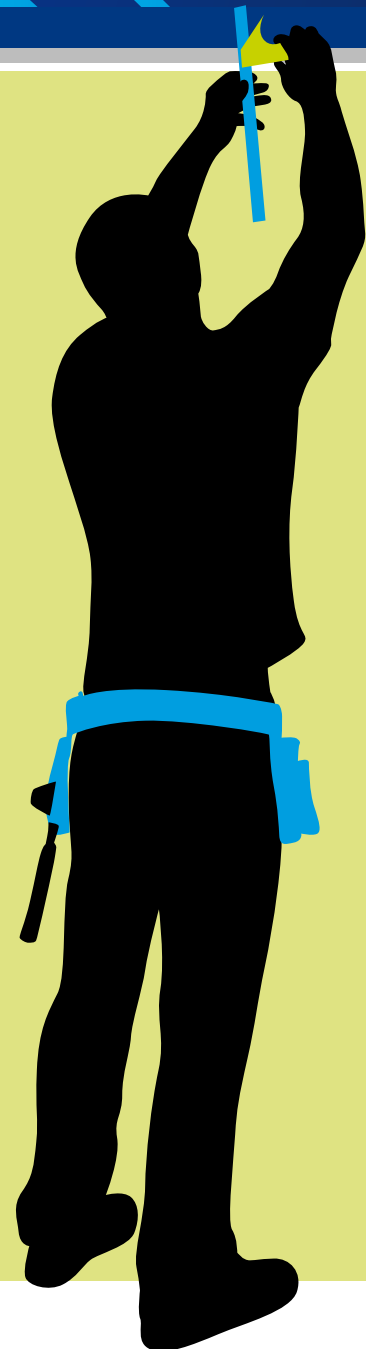
Interviews allow employers to see you in person and check whether you match up to your application. They want to know if you can do the job, adapt to the working environment and how you'll relate to other employees.

The better prepared you are, the more fluently you will be able to talk about yourself and relevant issues at the interview.

### First Impressions

First impressions are crucial. An interview may last for 30 minutes or more but studies have shown that someone forms judgements about you within four minutes of meeting you and that these judgements affect their subsequent impressions. Research shows that first impressions are made up of the following:

- **55%** visual impact, i.e. dress, facial expressions and body language;
- **38%** tone of voice;
- **7%** from what you actually say. All is not lost if you are very nervous at the outset but try to create the best first impression you can – a warm smile and firm handshake will help.



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### Body Language

Much of the impact you create at interview is based on your visual and non-verbal presentation.

Non-verbal presentation is made up of the following:

- How you look
- How you walk, sit, act
- Eye contact
- The style, tone and delivery of your voice
- How confident you appear to be



### Practical Preparation

#### What format is the interview?

Don't be afraid to ring up and ask:

- How long will the interview last?
- Are there any group exercises?
- Do I need to prepare anything?
- Are there any other tests or selection methods being used?

#### Where is the interview?

Make sure you:

- Know how to get to the venue and how long the journey takes;
- Have maps, train times, etc in advance
- Check for any planned disruptions to road or rail services;
- Leave plenty of time so you are not rushing;
- If necessary, find out if travel and overnight accommodation are paid for;
- If you have a disability, check the physical access to the premises and indicate any additional support that you might require in the interview.



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### Health and Safety

Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return (leave an address and phone number). Beware of going into private dwellings for an interview.

### What to take?

- The interview letter, with the name of the interviewer and their address and phone number.
- A map of how to get there.
- A copy of your CV and/or application form.
- A note of the key points you want to make and any questions you want to ask.
- Money for a taxi in case you are running late.
- A number to call if you are going to be late but remember to switch your mobile off before going in to the interview.
- A small bottle of water.

### What to wear?

- Make sure you are dressed appropriately for the position for which you are being interviewed. If in doubt, wear a suit.
- Ensure you maintain good standards of personal hygiene but avoid using overpowering deodorants, aftershave or perfume.
- Your hair should be neat and tidy and your shoes and clothes clean.

It is a good idea to avoid alcohol the night before an interview. Smokers should resist the temptation to have a cigarette on the way or whilst waiting for an interview. The smell will be noticeable as you walk into the interview room.

### Types of interviews

Interviews take many different formats. Always ask in advance what format your interview will take.

- **Telephone interviews:** often used by an employer at the screening stage. Make sure you are well prepared when they ring you. Make sure you are in a quiet place and try to use a landline. If you are using a mobile make sure the battery is fully charged and that you are in a place with a good signal. Have your CV and application form and any notes to hand.
- **Face to face interviews:** These are one-to-one interviews with the candidate and the interviewer.
- **Panel Interviews:** These involve several people sitting on a panel. The actual number of interviewers can vary but there is usually a chairperson to coordinate the questions, a specialist who knows about the job and a HR Manager.
- **Group Interviews:** Several candidates are present and will be asked questions in turn. A group discussion may be encouraged and you may be invited to ask questions to the other candidates.
- **Sequential interviews:** These are several interviews in turn, with a different interviewer each time. Usually each interviewer will ask questions to test different sets of competencies/capabilities.
- **Portfolio based interviews:** If the role is within the arts, media or communications industries then you may be asked to bring a portfolio of your work to the interview, in which case the questions will centre on your work. You will talk in depth about the pieces you have chosen to present in your portfolio.



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### Typical Interview Questions

Interview questions are designed to find out if you are the best person for the job. Give examples of things you have done whenever possible to back up your answers. Examples can come from your academic, working or leisure interests.

Questions may be competency/capability based or scenario based. Very occasionally interviewers may seemingly ask irrelevant questions to see how you react under pressure. If this happens, do not panic. Interviewers are not looking for a right or wrong answer; they are more concerned about how you behave and whether you can stay calm under pressure.

### Examples of questions:

- **Why have you applied to us?**

Talk about the employer and what attracts you to the company. Be specific – reputation, training, ethos, nature of the work – employers are wary of generalisations.

- **Why should we offer you the position?**

Match the skills required for the role with your relevant skills and experience. Be specific and give examples of things you have done to back up your answers whenever possible.

- **Tell me about yourself.**

Give relevant information about your skills, achievements and experiences. Don't waffle and try to stick to criteria that matches the job description.

- **What is your greatest achievement?**

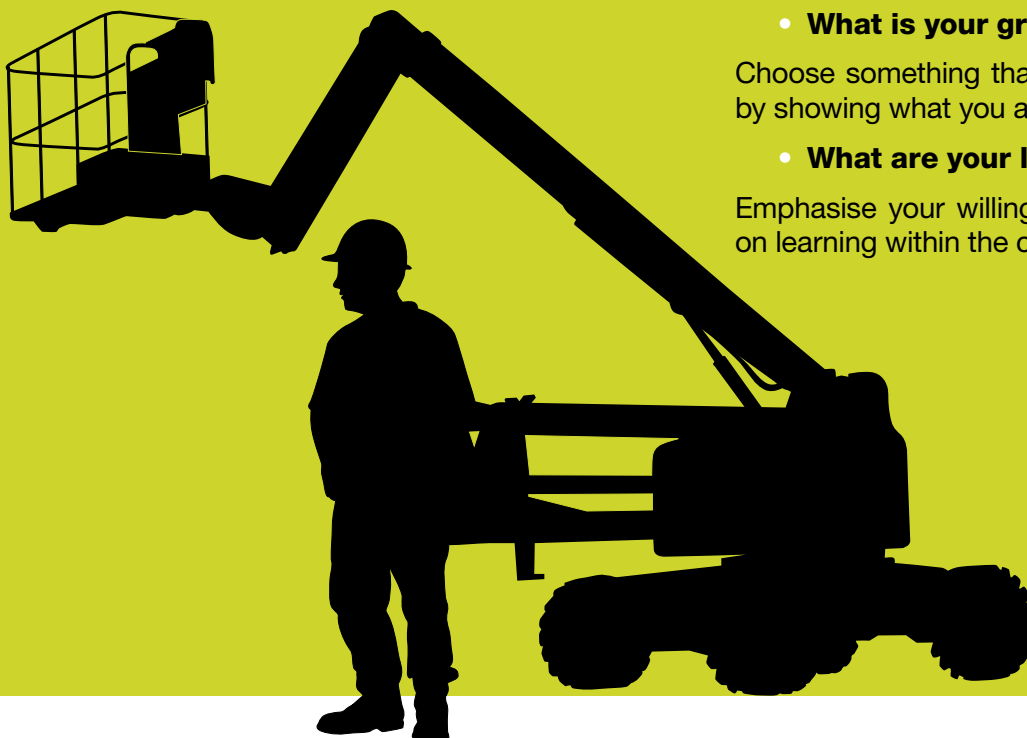
This is your chance to reveal a lot about your personality and what motivates you. Talk about something that emphasises the positive aspects of your character and demonstrates the skills you have that are relevant to the job.

- **What is your greatest weakness?**

Choose something that you can turn into a strength by showing what you are doing to overcome it.

- **What are your long term goals?**

Emphasise your willingness and motivation to carry on learning within the company.



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### Knowledge about the job itself

It is important that you know as much as possible about the job you are applying for.

#### Ask yourself:

- What does the job involve?
- What skills will I need?
- What examples can I give from work, academic study or outside interests to show I have the skills the employer is looking for?

### Knowledge about the organisation.

This will demonstrate your interests and enthusiasm for working for this particular organisation and will help you to prepare some questions to ask the interviewer. All employers will expect you to display some understanding of their business, its size and the sector in which it operates.

#### Ask yourself:

- What do I know about this organisation?
- What attracts me to this organisation?
- What relevant work experience have I got?
- What experience do I have of relevant technical skills/techniques?
- What kind of training/additional skills would I like to gain?

### What next?

It is a good idea to ask the interviewer when you can expect to hear from them. If the interviewer says they will contact you by a certain date it is customary not to contact them until that time.

Make a list of the questions you were asked. Always keep a diary of interviews you have attended, and your thoughts about the job and company. If you were unsuccessful ask for feedback. This is vital as it is the only way to find out what you can improve for next time.

