

Preparing for an interview

## Before the interview

**Before the day prepare by finding answers to these questions:**

* What does the firm do?
* How big is the firm - is it part of a larger organisation?
* Who are their customers?
* What does the job involve?
* How can your skills match the job?

**Planning for the interview:**

* Do you need special facilities for a disability?
* Who is interviewing you?
* How many people interviewing you?
* How long is the interview?
* Will you be taking a test or giving a presentation?
* Plan your journey to arrive in good time
* Create the right image
* Gather the information you’ll need

**Prepare for probable questions, such as:**

* Why do you want to work here?
* Why did you leave your last job?
* Have you done this kind of work before?
* What did you do in your last job?
* What equipment can you use?
* How long have you been out of work?
* How do you spend your time?
* Why are you the right person for the job?
* Why have you had so many jobs?
* Why have you had so few jobs?
* Why should I take you on?
* Aren’t you over-qualified?
* How do you get on with people?
* What makes a good team member?
* How do you cope under pressure?
* What are your strengths and weaknesses?
* Where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?
* How much do you expect to earn?
* What was your attendance record at your last job?
* When could you start?
* Do YOU have any questions? - how does the firm see its development over the next couple of years? How will new legislation/technological developments etc affect the firm? What are the department's primary objectives over the coming year?

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## At the interview

**Do**

* Enter the room confidently.
* Shake hands firmly and introduce yourself.
* Smile!
* Be polite and friendly – 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

**Don’t**

* Sit down until the interviewer asks you to.
* Fidget, 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
* .

**Remember, most employers like people who:**

* listen
* answer questions with examples
* are brief and keep to the point
* come prepared, and
* appear confident.

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## What NOT to ask at interview

**What is the salary for this position? What does the benefits package include? When can I take my first holiday?**  
Avoid ‘me’ questions. Any question that puts your needs before the organisation’s will raise questions in the interviewer’s mind about your commitment All this sort of thing can be raised with the HR department if you are offered the job.   
  
**When do you expect to make a decision?**  
Instead you might ask more general question about how their typical selection process works. For instance, you could ask, "Are there typically several rounds of interviews before selection is made?" This will give you a rough idea of how long the selection process may take.  
  
**What does this company do?**  
If you haven’t done your research you shouldn’t be at the interview. Do, however, ask questions about the future direction of the company. This will demonstrate your interest in their success.  
**Did I get the job? When do I start?**  
If they think you are the lead candidate, they'll likely tell you about the next steps in the process. If they mention this, simply let them know you are very interested in the opportunity, and look forward to next steps in the process.  
  
**Do I really need to have qualification x as listed in the person spec?**  
Do not highlight your shortcomings! There's a chance you don't need it, but the company likely put it in the person spec for a reason. If they ask you about it first, you know they really care about it. If they don't, it may not be too important and you should leave the topic out of the discussion.  
  
**How many hours will I be expected to work? Do I have to work weekends/overtime?**  
You don't want to give the impression that you are planning to put in as few hours of work as possible. Instead you might ask what a typical work week is like.  
  
**How long would I expect to wait to get promoted or transferred?**  
This question implies you are not happy with the position you are being interviewed for. Instead you might ask what the typical growth opportunities are for people in this role