



WhiteBaySearch

REACH YOUR PEAK



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

INTERVIEW TIPS AND ADVICE

How you present and market yourself at an interview is crucial in determining whether or not you secure the job you want. This guide provides you with best practice advice and tips on undertaking a successful interview.

Step One: PREPARATION

Preparation is the first essential step towards conducting a successful interview. The better prepared you are, the more confident you will be.

Research

Before your interview ensure you know the following:

- The exact time and location of the interview, route, transport options, parking and how long it will take to get there.
- The interviewer's correct title and pronunciation of his or her full name.
- Specific facts about the company. The company's website is often an excellent source of information. Make sure you know the company's history, financial position, mission, market in which it operates, competitors, latest news, products and services
- Facts and figures about your present and former employer. Refresh your memory on this as you will be expected to know a lot about the company for which you have previously worked

Dress

Dress like a professional, in a smart business suit with a clean ironed plain shirt and tie or blouse and dark shoes. Do not wear casual clothes even if you know it is company policy.

Review and answer preparation

Review your resume and ensure you are equipped to answer questions on the details you have supplied. Also review the job description and core competencies of the role. Examine your suitability and prepare specific answers before the interview that demonstrate your skills and competencies.

Examples of traditional interview questions you may be asked:

- Why did you choose your particular career path?
- What kind of role are you seeking?
- Why would you like to work for this company?
- What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now?
- What interests you about our products/services?
- What style of management gets the best from you?
- What are your major weaknesses and what are your strengths?
- What does 'teamwork' mean to you?

Questions to ask the interviewer

An interview is a two-way process. The interviewer will be trying to determine whether you are the right person for the role and you should take the opportunity to determine whether the potential employer will provide the career development and challenge that you seek.

Some questions you might ask include:

- Why has the position become available?
- Can you please give me a detailed description of the position?
- What is the culture of the company?
- What training programs are available to ensure continued career development?
- What plans does the company have for future development?
- What are the company's best selling products or services?
- What motivated you to join the company?
- What is the next step?

INTERVIEW TIPS AND ADVICE

Step Two: THE INTERVIEW

During the interview your strengths and areas for development will be assessed. In addition, specific personal characteristics will be examined, such as attitude, aptitude and motivation.

Interview Dos and Don'ts

- Do** arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for an interview is inexcusable.
- Do** greet the interviewer and thank them for their time.
- Do** shake hands firmly.
- Do** wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright in your chair and look alert and interested at all times.
- Do** be as charismatic as possible. It is very important you demonstrate your interpersonal skills during the interview.
- Do** be a good listener as well as a good talker.
- Do** smile and make eye contact.
- Do** describe your accomplishments and how they apply to the prospective role in a clear, concise way.
- Do** always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in a position where you can choose from a number of offers.

- Do Not** leave your mobile phone on.
- Do Not** chew gum during the interview.
- Do Not** lie. Answer questions truthfully and as close to the point as possible.
- Do Not** make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers.
- Do Not** talk about salary, holidays or bonuses unless the interviewer brings them up.
- Do Not** answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Make sure that you explain your reasoning fully.

Step Three: CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- If you are interested in the position enquire about the next interview stage. If the interview offers the position to you and you want it, accept on the spot. If you ask for some time to think it over make sure you are courteous and tactful. Set a definite date on which you can provide an answer.
 - Don't be too discouraged if no definite offer is made nor a specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to consult colleagues or interview other candidates (or both) before making a decision.
- If you get the impression that the interview is not going very well and you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show.

Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may intend to discourage you in order to test your reaction.

- Thank the interviewer for the time spent with you.

After the Interview

Lastly, and most importantly, call us immediately after the interview to explain what happened. We will want to speak with you before the interviewer calls with their feedback and decision.

ANSWERING BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

WHAT ARE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS?

Behavioural interview questions discover how you handled specific situations in the past and indicate how you may perform in the future. Follow the three steps below when preparing answers to behavioural interview questions:

1. REVIEW THE KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

Take a close look at the skills that are needed to be successful in the role so you can tailor your answers accordingly. The selection criteria can be found in the job description or the job advertisement.

2. PREPARE EXAMPLES

Relate your examples to the essential or desired skills in the position description. We recommend preparing your answers using the star structure. This structure allows you to provide concise, well structured responses and helps you avoid drifting off-track. **Situation** - what was the context? **Task** - what did you need to do? **Action** - what were the steps you took? **Result** - what happened?

3. PRACTICE RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

The quality of your answer is often related to the delivery of it. Practice giving answers to behavioural questions to ensure you speak clearly, do not rush and are as concise as possible.

Check out how we would answer these at:

www.whitebaysearch.com/videos

EXAMPLE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below is a list of commonly asked behavioural interview questions which highlight specific competencies and behavioural traits in the workplace.

Initiative

- Tell me about any ideas or processes that you have implemented in your current job.
- Have you ever suggested a new way to improve your team/project's performance?

Problem Solving

- Tell me about a complex problem you have solved. Walk me through the process you took.
- Tell me about a potential problem you have prevented from occurring.

Leadership Skills

- How do you go about allocating work for your staff? Can you give me an example?
- Tell me about a time when you have provided coaching to one of your staff.
- Tell me about a time when you have had staff members resist your leadership. What did you do to overcome this?

Decision Making

- Tell me about a recent decision you have made in your role. Walk me through your thought processes.
- What is the most difficult decision you have made in your current role?

Team Skills

- Tell me about a time when you had to work with a team of people you did not know.
- Tell me about a specific situation where you were able to help out a team member or colleague.

Project Management

- Tell me about a project you have managed recently. Walk me through your planning and tracking process.
- Tell me about a project you managed that didn't go to plan.

Analysis Skills

- Tell me about a project where you were asked to gather and evaluate complex information.
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to make a recommendation based on statistical information.

Time Management

- Tell me about a specific situation when you managed conflicting priorities. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when the project you were working on seemed in danger of missing a deadline. What did you do?

Building Rapport

- Tell me about a time when you have had to deal with a difficult customer/colleague. What happened? What was difficult about them?

Quick Learner

- Tell me about a time in your current role when you had to learn new skills quickly.

Negotiation Skills

- Tell me about a difficult negotiation that you had to handle.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

To Prepare for the Call:

- Write the interviewer's name, phone number and the time and date of the call at the top of your notes (Do this in advance for scheduled calls.) Then you can use their name with confidence during the call.
- Have a list of thoughtful relevant questions to ask – about the job, the company, the reason the job is open. Questions should be appropriate to your level; a senior executive and an entry level person should have entirely different questions. Even if you never get to ask them, planning them in advance makes a difference.
- Make a list of questions you expect them to ask you, and make some notes about your answers so you can answer with clarity. Don't use canned responses, but know what you want to say.
- Be ready and waiting for the call at least five minutes before time. Rushing into an interview is never a good idea.
- Have something to do in case the caller is running late. A book, email to check, anything that keeps you busy.
- Be alone in a quiet private place, so you can speak freely about without interruption.
- Plan for the call to last at least 30 minutes, but leave at least an hour in case it takes longer. Good interviews, in person or on the phone, often last longer than expected.

How to “look” good on the phone:

Remember, they are visualising you based on your phone persona, so:

- Smile when you talk, even you're alone or it makes you self-conscious. A smile comes through in your voice.
- Imagine the person on the other end is smiling, too. It will make you like them more, and that will show.
- To sound more energetic, stand up and walk around during the conversation.
- Be polite and warm in your tone and the words you choose. Talk like you're chatting with someone you already know who you really like and respect.
- Remember to breathe. Breathing relaxes your body, keeps your mind sharp and makes your voice sound better.
- Avoid profanity, even if the interviewer uses it. It rarely will make anyone think better of you.
- Listen as much as you talk, and listen with intention. Tune in to your intuition as you listen, rather than listening with half your brain while the other half is thinking about how to reply.
- Don't chew gum, eat or drink, even if it's lunchtime. If you're hungry, have a snack beforehand so you are clearheaded and not distracted by thinking about food.
- Don't talk too little or too much. Without body language signals to let you know how the other person is reacting to what you're saying, you will have to monitor yourself.
- Answer questions directly and succinctly, with a few sentences, and then pause so the interviewer can respond. Can't-get-a-word-in-edgewise interviews never make a good impression, nor do cryptic short replies.
- Be genuine and honest. Phoniness is a turn-off on the phone as well as in person.
- Take notes of what the interviewer shares. These will be invaluable as you prepare for the next steps.
- Let them know you're interested in the job and the next step. Honest enthusiasm works.
- Ask them where they are in their hiring process, and what that process is going to be.

Do not underestimate the importance of the call. A poor performance on the phone will mean you're out of the running. Whether it's a scheduled appointment or the phone rings out of the blue with someone who'd like to talk to you right then and there, extra preparation and awareness can make all the difference.

A few important tips:

- If it's a scheduled call, don't be late or miss the call. Punctuality is imperative. If it's not scheduled and you miss the call, don't have a silly voicemail message and make sure to return the call pronto.
- Don't be in a noisy place. Background noise, especially if it's kids or traffic, is very distracting to you and the person on the other end of the phone. Find a quiet place, even if it's inside your parked car.
- Don't forget to keep your phone fully charged.
- Don't say anything that contradicts your resume. Nothing says BS more than saying you worked somewhere five years when your resume says you were there for three.
- Don't be at your computer trying to multi-task. A good interview requires all of your attention. And they can hear you typing.

Keep in mind that you are not likely to actually be hired from a phone interview, but it's possible to get them to like you enough they're already picturing it. The goal of the call is to be invited to an in-person meeting where you can continue the conversations, and get an offer. Your job is to present your background and situation so you are very clearly the kind of person they're looking for. A successful phone interview results in an invitation to meet in person.