

Careers and Employability Service

How to prepare for and handle interviews

Introduction

Congratulations on being invited for interview, but don't think the hard work stops here. Make sure you give yourself enough time to prepare and practice, especially if you have had limited interview experience. Knowing what to expect and how to prepare will give you a head start and will also help you to manage your nerves on the day.

Before the interview

- Check the details: *Where* is it? *Who* will be interviewing you? *What* is involved on the day?
- Preparation, preparation, preparation! Know what is required from the job in terms of skills and abilities
- Know yourself: re-read your application form and CV and be ready to give more evidence of the skills/experience required. Be clear *why* you want the job
- Know the employer: research the whole website, beyond the recruitment pages. Be aware of current issues in the sector through further research via the internet and social media
- Anticipate likely questions and prepare answers based on your experience and skills
- Prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview which demonstrate that you have done your research
- Practice out loud or in front of friends/family

On the Day

- Dress smartly, even where the dress code is casual
- Arrive early and give yourself time to gather your thoughts
- Be pleasant to everyone you meet – they may be asked for their opinion of you
- Shake hands confidently when introduced and make good eye contact
- Smile as this creates a positive impression
- Try not to fidget as this can be distracting for the interviewer
- If it is a panel interview focus on the person asking the question but include other members of the panel through good eye contact
- Listen carefully to what you are being asked; don't be afraid to take a moment to think before you answer or clarify the question
- Be honest
- Speak clearly and not too quickly
- If you are unsure whether you have answered the question in enough detail, you can offer to elaborate
- Show enthusiasm. Demonstrate that you really want the job!

Afterwards

- Thank the interviewer/s for the opportunity and for their time
- Review your performance and think about what you can do better next time
- If you are unsuccessful, ask for feedback. This is an excellent way to improve your performance

Useful resources – books available from the Careers Centre

- Brilliant Interview – Ros Jay
- You're Hired! Tips and Techniques for a Brilliant Interview – Judi James
- Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions – Martin John Yate
- You can also access books on interviews as e-books.
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/e_resources/e_books.html

Useful resources – website links

- The Careers webpage on Interviews:
www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/applying/interviews.html
- Prospects Interview Tips:
www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips_how_to_prepare_for_an_interview.htm
- TargetJobs Interview Tips:
targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-techniques

For further advice on interviews the following webpages may be of interest:

- **All About Careers – Interview tips:**
<http://www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/interview-tips>
- **WiseBread – How to answer 23 of the most common interview questions:**
<http://www.wisebread.com/how-to-answer-23-of-the-most-common-interview-questions>
- **Reed.co.uk – Telephone interviews do's and don'ts:**
<http://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/blog/2012/september/phone-interviews-dos-and-donts>
- **The Guardian – First impressions count:**
<http://careers.theguardian.com/careers-blog/first-impressions-count-interviewer-bias>
- **UK JobSite – What to wear for a job interview:**
<http://www.learnist.org/what-to-wear-for-a-job-interview/>
- **Career Realism – Master your nonverbal communication:**
<http://www.careerealism.com/interview-tips-master-nonverbal-communication/>
- **Career Geek – 5 tips to sell yourself effectively in an interview:**
<http://www.careergeekblog.com/2012/07/17/sell-yourself-interview/>
- **UK JobSite – Top 5 tips to prevent interview failure:**
<http://www.learnist.org/top-5-tips-to-prevent-interview-failure/>
- **The Guardian – 10 things not to say in a job interview:**
<http://www.theguardian.com/money/2012/may/10/10-things-not-to-say-job-interview>
- **The Undercover Recruiter – 10 classic job interview blunders you must avoid:**
<http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/10-classic-job-interview-blunders-you-must-avoid/>