

# Interview Skills

[Best Practice Tips & Hints](#)

# A Guide to Interview Skills

## Introduction

Interviews can often be daunting experiences and it can appear to be an art rather than a science to ensure you come across as effectively as you want to prospective employers. The following guide with its tips and hints aims to provide you with a framework to focus upon to maximise your interview performance.

## Pre- Interview

Once your interview has been confirmed you need to start planning.

Key things to consider include:

- When
  - Is the Interview?
    - Time & Date – Suitable for you?
    - When do you perform best?
    - How does it fit with your needs?
- Where
  - Is it?
    - Do you know where you're going? How long it will take?
    - What is the place like? The room layout?
- Who
  - Is going to be there?
    - What is their role?
    - How much do you know about THEM?
    - What can you find out about THEM?
- What
  - Is expected of you?
    - Format of interview?
    - Pre-work?
    - How long will it be?
- Who
  - Is the competition?
    - How many others being interviewed?
    - Any information on them?

## Interview Tools

There are three main tools that will enable you to prepare fully for the interview;

### Your Curriculum Vitae

Your CV has got you the interview so far but at interview you will need to talk through it at length and answer some challenging questions about your experience and abilities. Please see our CV Guide for further information. Check that you can talk through your CV from your earliest employment to the most recent, explaining reasons for moving from role to role.

If there are employment gaps on your CV can you explain the reasons – and the skills you acquired during those gaps?

## The Job Specification or Advert

Check that you have read the job specification thoroughly and you understand all aspects of the role required of you. There may be aspects of the role that you're not familiar with or maybe company specific. Talk to your Focus consultant to get further information on these before attending the interview.

## Company Information

Doing some research on the company can help you discuss key points during the interview. Press releases or the company's own website can be a valuable source of information on the latest projects, company values or strategic activity.

## The Interview

The Interview process can be split into three main areas;

### A. The Introduction

It takes just a quick glance, maybe three seconds, for someone to evaluate you when you meet for the first time. In this short time, the other person forms an opinion about you based on your appearance, your body language, your demeanour, your mannerisms, and how you are dressed.

With every new encounter or interview, you are evaluated and yet another person's impression of you is formed. These first impression can be nearly impossible to reverse or undo, making these first encounters extremely important, for they set the tone for the all the relationships that follows.

So, whether they are in your career or social life, it's important to know how to create a good first impression. Useful tips include:.

- Be on Time
- Be Yourself, Be at Ease

### Present Yourself Appropriately

The key to a good impression is to present yourself appropriately.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and so the "picture" you first present says much about you to the person you are meeting. Is your appearance saying the right things to help create the right first impression?

### A Winning Smile!

"Smile and the world smiles too." So there's nothing like a smile to create a good first impression. A warm and confident smile will put both you and the other person at ease. So smiling is a winner when it comes to great first impressions.

### Be Open and Confident

When it comes to making the first impression, body language as well as appearance speaks much louder than words.

Use your body language to project appropriate confidence and self-assurance. Stand tall, smile (of course), make eye contact, greet with a firm handshake. All of this will help you project confidence and encourage both you and the other person to feel better at ease.

## Small Talk Goes a Long Way...

Conversations are based on verbal give and take. It may help you to prepare questions you have for the person you are meeting for the first time beforehand. Or, take a few minutes to learn something about the person you meet for the first time before you get together. Is there anything that you know of that you have in common with the person you are meeting? If so, this can be a great way to open the conversation and to keep it flowing.

## Be Positive

Your attitude shows through in everything you do. Project a positive attitude, even in the face of criticism or in the case of nervousness. Strive to learn from your meeting and to contribute appropriately, maintaining an upbeat manner and a smile.

## B. Question & Answer

Most employers these days will look to find out information from you by using a style of interviewing called Competency Based Interviewing (CBI).

Competency based interview questions are slightly different to the style you may be used to.

They will tend to focus on past situations and your behaviour in those situations.

Questions are likely to start with:

"Please give me an example when. . ." or "Please describe an occasion" etc.

The interviewers will be looking for specific examples about exactly what you did in such situations, not what the team's role as a whole was, or what you would do in a hypothetical situation.

You will be asked to discuss the example in some detail.

It is likely that the interviewers will then follow with some probing questions, possibly clarifying a particular area. They will be interested in the outcome of the situation, whether there was anything you learned from the experience, etc.

## C. Closing the Interview

Make sure you close the interview on a positive note. Thank the interviewer for their time and take the opportunity to reaffirm your interest in the role. Let them know you are keen to gain feedback and you look forward to hearing back from your Focus Consultant. Try to avoid discussing salary expectations at this time. Do however ensure that when asked "Do you have any Questions?" that you do have a couple of appropriate questions that show you have thought about the role and the organization. You may find yourself invited back for a second interview where you are required to deliver a presentation or deal with a particular role play scenario – for details on how to respond to these please see our Presentation Skills Guide.

## Feedback

Regardless of how successful your interview process is, obtaining feedback on your performance is crucial in order for you to learn and to improve your interviewing technique moving forward or to help you prepare for the role you've just obtained!

For more information on any of these points or for further coaching on improving your technique speak to your Focus Consultant who will be able to advise you.