



Interview Preparation

Good interview technique comes from solid preparation and practice. Effective interview preparation links an understanding of yourself and your abilities with research about the job and the organisation you're applying to. The aim of this link is to demonstrate the benefits to the interviewer/s of employing you.

Interview preparation is also about what to take to the interview, strategies to help you arrive on time and consideration of what you're going to wear.

This is one of six handouts on interviews. For further information on the interview process including commonly asked interview questions, please see the handouts [Interviews](#), [Interview Practice](#), [Behavioural Interviews](#), [Case Study Interviews](#) and [Assessment Centres](#).

The importance of research

Just as it's important for you to understand your skills, the job and the organisation when preparing your job application, it's also important to go over and expand this information when preparing for an interview. Following are some ways to use your research skills for interview preparation.

- Find out all you can about the industry, the organisation and the job role in order to convince the employer that you want the job, you can do it and you'd fit with the organisation's culture. Although you should already have done this when putting together your application, additional information may have come to light since you applied for the job. Use the internet, newspapers, related publications and personal contacts to assist you. The sort of company information you're looking for would include the organisation's products or services, location (global or Australian-based only), size, structure and how it differs from its rivals.
- Reread your copy of your job application; after all, you were chosen for interview on the basis of this application because the employer thought you could have the required skills and qualities for the job. Familiarity with the content of the

job advertisement, your resume, cover letter and other related documentation is vital. This is because your answers (and perhaps some of the questions you ask the interviewer/s) will be an expansion of the information on your application.

- Compare your research on the employer and the job with what you have to offer. The employer is a prospective 'buyer' of your professional skills, so try to put yourself in the shoes of this 'buyer'. If you were interviewing for the role, what skills, attributes and qualities would you be looking for? Go over the selection criteria you addressed in your application and think about examples where you demonstrated the skills and personal attributes required for the job. These examples bridge your current and past skills and experience with the job's selection criteria; an effective example should connect what you have to offer and what the employer wants. For example, if one of the main criteria for a role is teamwork, it's likely that you'll be asked at least one question about your ability to work in a team. The more specific you are the better. The example you provide at interview may be drawn from a number of contexts - your studies, your workplace, your interests or your extra-curricular activities - but the skills gained from that example are highly transferable. When considering situations in which you've used a particular skill, don't discount an example if you've used it only in a social, and not a work-related context. A skill is a skill, wherever it's been acquired. If, however, you can think of a work-related situation in which you've used that skill, use the work-related example.
- Employers like to hear about specific examples as they provide evidence of your transferable skills. Employers also like examples as they provide an idea of a candidate's abilities and capacity to make a positive contribution. Write a list of your skills, knowledge and personal qualities so that you're clear about what you have to offer. To help you to do this, reflect on your skills and achievements.

- Prepare some well thought out questions to ask that show your initiative in researching the organisation and industry, and to demonstrate your interest in the role. Possible questions to ask are included in the handout **Interview Practice**.
- Practise your interview skills in front of the mirror, on tape or with someone who's prepared to give you feedback. For information on practice methods and commonly-asked interview questions please see the handouts **Interview Practice** and **Behavioural Interviews**.

Punctuality, what to wear and what to take with you

- Make sure you receive and record all relevant details from the person who contacts you by phone or e-mail about the interview, including the exact location and time.
- You can ask how long the interview will be and, if you wish, the name/s and job title/s of the interviewer/s. If the contact person can't give you the name/s at this stage, ask instead how many interviewers there will be and which areas of the organisation they work in. Knowing the areas they're from might give you an idea of the sorts of questions you could be asked by different interviewers and help you compile a list of questions to ask them.
- Place documents in a folder convenient to take to interviews and to draw from during the interview. Useful documents include:
 - a copy of your job application and resume
 - originals of your academic transcript and Higher School Certificate or equivalent (and photocopies in case they're requested)
 - references/testimonials from previous employers (and photocopies in case they're requested)
 - a list for the interviewer/s of referees and contact details (if these are not listed on your resume)
 - examples of your work e.g. reports you've written, projects you've worked on
 - a list of questions you'd like to ask
- Don't overcommit your time, as you can't be sure of exactly how long you'll be at each interview. If you do have more than one interview scheduled

in a day, each must be a number of hours apart and in close geographical proximity to the other. Two interviews in one day should be your maximum; after all, interviews can consume a lot of energy, and you want to feel at your best at each one you attend.

- Plan how to get to the interview. If you're driving and don't know the location, take a trial run the day before. Make sure you have plenty of change for rail and bus tickets, parking meters, motorways etc. Don't over rely on public transport. Take the bus or train before the one you'd usually take in case you're delayed. If the weather's bad on the day of your interview allow extra time to get there. Arriving late with excuses about transport difficulties due to the weather or other incidents doesn't impress employers and may get your interview off to a bad start.
- It's okay to arrive at an interview 10 minutes early in case you have to fill in an application form, but don't arrive too early or too late. For more information on completing application forms see the handout **Job Applications**.
- Plan what you're going to wear. Dress appropriately and, in general, conservatively. Everything about your appearance should reflect your professionalism and attention to detail. Employers don't expect you to wear expensive clothes but they frequently notice details like ironed shirts, polished shoes and clean nails and hair.
- Jewellery and makeup also need to be conservative. If you're unsure of whether an item of clothing or jewellery is appropriate for an interview situation, chances are that it's not appropriate. Before you go into the organisation's reception area, it's a good idea to check your appearance in the mirror at the public toilets.
- Turn off your mobile phone before you go into an interview.

Good interview technique comes partly from preparation and partly from practice. For information on how to practice for an interview, please see the handout **Interview Practice**.