

THE INTERVIEW TOOLKIT

Preparing for your interview

This toolkit has been planned to help you to think carefully, plan and prepare for interviews. No-one can go through the interview for you, so careful preparation is the best way to ensure success. If you are really serious about getting this job, don't let yourself down by failing to prepare.

You may think that some of the areas are too obvious to mention; remember though that the secret is in the detail. You don't have to fill it in laboriously so long as you think about what it's asking you. Better to think it through now than be caught on the hop later.

This toolkit contains a series of charts for you to enter questions, ideas and comments and will cover these topic areas:

- Interview profile
- Researching the organisation
- Preparing what to say
- Preparing your skill stories
- Asking your own questions

In addition you will find a useful interview checklist and an interview review form for you to use.

If you are using this toolkit to prepare for an interview, we recommend that you save the document onto your computer or a floppy disc before adding any text. This allows you to open and create a new version for each interview.

When you have finished, you can print off the document and use it as a reference for your interview.

YOUR INTERVIEW PROFILE

Company/Organization:	
Position applied for:	
Date of interview:	

What type of interview is it (e.g. panel, one-to-one, etc.)?

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Who will be interviewing me?

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Where will the interview be held?

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How long will the interview last?

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What will the interview involve? E.g. tests or a presentation

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How did I get the interview?

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
direct application (responding to an advertisement)	<input type="checkbox"/>
speculative approach (sending CVs to target companies)	<input type="checkbox"/>
networking and developing contacts	<input type="checkbox"/>
via a recruitment consultant	<input type="checkbox"/>
via the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>

RESEARCHING THE ORGANIZATION

Researching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• researching the organisation• researching the position• finding out more about the interview
Preparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• preparing what to say• preparing what to ask
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• planning what to wear• planning what to take• planning how to get there

- What does the organisation do?
- What are the organisation's size, structure and locations?
- What are its products and services?
- What is its market position and competitors?
- What is its organisational strategy? (i.e. in what direction is it going?)
- What is its financial position
- Who are the key players within the organisation?

PREPARING WHAT TO SAY

Examples of 'core' interview questions:

About you

- "Tell me about yourself"
- "How would your colleagues describe you?"
- "What are your key strengths and weaknesses?"
- "What specifically have you got to offer us?"
- "How do you manage people? – describe your style, methods, relationships"

About your last position

- "What did you like most/least about your last job?"
- "Why did you leave your last position?"
- "What do you think about your previous employer?"
- "Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?"
- "Why did they / didn't they promote you?"

About the position you are applying for

- "Why do you want to work for us?"
- "Why should we offer you the position?"
- "What do you know about the position you are applying for?"
- "What personal characteristics do you think are needed for this job?"
- "What interests you most about our products and services?"

About your goals and ambitions

- "What are your long-term career objectives?"
- "What do you look for in a job?"
- "Describe your ideal job please"
- "Where do you see yourself in 3 years time?"
- "Describe what you feel has held you back from more advancement"

About your accomplishments

- "Give me an example of when you have managed change in difficult circumstances."
- "What do you consider to be your biggest accomplishments to date?"
- "Did you make any changes to the routine of your job? Why?"
- "Have you ever started something up from scratch or made a new product grow?"
- "How do you respond to pressure and deadlines?"

Are you really clear about your answers to these interview questions? If you have any doubts you need to download the [Top Interview Answers](#)

Remember the importance of competence and compatibility? They can test competence but they can only experience whether they think you're compatible.

RECORD YOUR ANSWERS TO SOME 'CORE' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You will find all the help you need in the [Personal Marketing](#) section

“Tell me about yourself.”

Capsule profile

Position profile

Career Overview

“What Are Your Key Strengths And Weaknesses?”

Strengths

Weaknesses

How do you talk about your strengths and weaknesses?

Weaknesses can be turned into positives by placing them in the past and showing that they are being worked on.

Example:

“My main weakness was in attending to admin duties – keeping up with filing and the like. I saw this was affecting other people so I've really worked on improving this area.”

More examples to help you with this section at [Key Strengths](#)

“WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST POSITION?”

Write your Exit Statement here

Tip

Let this follow on naturally when you have come up to the present day with your [career overview statement](#). When you answer the “Tell me about yourself” question add this on to the end of your career overview so that you pre-empt the “why did you leave?” question.

You’ll feel much more in control by getting it out of the way, rather than waiting for the moment when it crops up! Especially important if there is any negative emotion, say, following a redundancy.

Example

“...and my last role at XYZ Limited was a promotion to Team Leader following my success with the Townsend contract. I’d managed to reduce the debtor days outstanding to 42 on average from 62 and everyone was pleased. However when we were taken over by the Copley Corporation, they centralised the accounts administration department and so a number of management jobs including mine were made redundant. I enjoyed my time with XYZ and learned a lot but I’m pleased to be here discussing this job with you today”

See if you can write yours in the box above.

Asking your own questions

Top tips

Ask pertinent questions which demonstrate that you have a real grasp of what the job entails and that you have thought about your career. You should also use this opportunity to satisfy yourself about any aspects of the job or organisation. Remember, it’s a two-way process!

Don’t ask questions that you could have answered yourself with some simple research. It is inadvisable to ask about the pay and benefits at this stage – although there may be an opportunity for you to raise the issue.

Main Questions I want to ask the interviewer

Record your questions here so when the time comes you sound interested and knowledgeable. Get some ideas of what to ask at [Closing Questions](#)

YOUR INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Things you should do – at least a week in advance

		Tick
Confirm your attendance.		
Choose an outfit appropriate to the organisation and the occasion		
Take your outfit to the dry cleaners if required.		
Get your hair cut or styled.		
Decide how you are going to travel to the interview.		
Car	Plan your journey – check road works.	
	Ensure that you have enough fuel for the journey.	
	Check parking arrangements at the interview location.	
Train	Book your ticket in advance.	
	Find out about taxi availability at the other end.	

Things to do – on the evening before the interview

	Tick
Press/iron your outfit.	
Clean your shoes.	
Cut and clean your nails.	
Set your alarm	

Items to take with you

	Tick
A copy of the job advertisement.	
A copy of your CV and application letter .	
A map showing the location of the interview.	
Any relevant company/product literature.	
The names and job titles of the interviewers.	
Your diary.	
Copies of any reports, or examples of your work, Anything else you may wish to refer.	

Suitable referee details.	
Pen and paper.	

After the interview

monitor	Make a list of any action points that were agreed in the interview.
evaluate	Make a written evaluation of the performance of both parties (you and the interviewer).
thanks	Write or email (as appropriate) a letter to the interviewer, thanking them for their time and expressing a continuing interest in the position

Action points

No.	Details of action point	Who?	Done?
1.			
2.			
3.			

Written evaluation

- How did I do?
- What did I learn?
- What could I have done better?
- Any outstanding questions I should have asked?

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