

Interview advice



CAREER
STUDIO

How do I prepare for an interview?

Preparing for an interview is key. You need to make sure that you review everything you have told the company on your CV, covering letter or application form. This is the only information they have about you, so you may be asked to expand on this information further.

Examine the job description and person specification to understand the key skills and attributes they are looking for in the successful candidate, as they may ask you to provide examples of these skills and attributes in interview questions. Think of some anecdotes from your work experiences, volunteering opportunities, part time work or university experiences to demonstrate how you have demonstrated these skills.

Conduct some research into the company to understand their core values, ethos and the direction they are driving the business in. Make sure you think about how you will tell them why you want to work for that specific company and why you have applied for the available role, as they will usually ask you why you want the job within the interview questions.

What will my interview look like?

Interviews can come in various formats and employers use several different assessment methods to enable them to decide who the best candidate for the role is. It is important that you understand what the different types of interviews are assessing and how you can best prepare to do as well as possible in them.

Telephone Interviews are often a precursor for further stages of the interview process. You will need to make sure that you are in a quiet location and that your phone is fully charged before the interview begins. Remember that your tone of voice needs to convey enthusiasm as the interviewer is unable to read your body language.

Video Interviews can be part of the vetting process or the final stage of the interview process, especially for roles based overseas. These interviews often take place on platforms such as Skype. The majority of video interviews that take place are live, but it is becoming more frequent for companies to ask you to

upload a pre-recorded video as part of their interview process.

You need to make sure that your camera and microphone are working beforehand by testing the software. Try to choose a quiet location with good lighting and a neutral background to ensure that the interviewer can see you and they are focused on your answers to their questions.

Psychometric Tests are often used as part of the interview process. There are two main types of psychometric tests, personality tests and aptitude tests which are usually completed either at home or at an assessment centre.

Personality tests assess your interests, behaviours and values to understand what type of person you are and often to assess if your personality would suit the role and the company's values and approach to working. Answer the questions as honestly as possible and there is no need to prepare for these before the interview.

Aptitude tests assess your cognitive or reasoning ability and are a good way for employers to differentiate between candidates with similar experiences. It is important to practice these aptitude tests before you need to complete the test and there are many practice tests that you can access online.

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Group Interviews are usually included within an interview to assess your team working and interpersonal skills. They may be on a topic related to the role or it may be something very generic. It is important that you display strong teamwork and communication skills by not dominating the discussion and allowing others a chance to speak.

In addition, you need to ensure that you are providing thoughtful and constructive arguments to show the interviewers your initiative and your ability to solve problems and generate creative ideas.

Panel Interviews are the most common type of interview format used, but panel interviews can take many different forms. As well as the format of the interview, the types of questions that an interviewer asks will vary by interview.

The questions they ask can focus on you providing evidence to demonstrate the skills they are looking for in a candidate or they can also chronologically examine the content of your CV to ask for further information or clarification.

The interviewer may ask questions which will test your technical ability to ensure that it is of a high enough standard for you to be successful in the role. They may focus on your portfolio or give you hypothetical case studies or scenarios.

The STAR interview technique can help when answering questions in which you are asked to provide real life examples.

You can structure your anecdote using this format:

S - Situation – set the stage for the anecdote and provide context

T – Task – provide information on what your role was in the situation

A – Action – tell the interviewer how you as an individual dealt with the situation or tackled the challenge

R – what was the outcome of your actions

What should I do on my interview day?

It is important that on the day of the interview you make sure that you dress professionally even if there is no mention of the dress code in the interview notes. You must ensure that you arrive at least fifteen minutes early to the interview and that you know where you are to go.

Some companies may ask you to bring documents such as evidence of your qualifications and your passport to the day and if they do, ensure that you have them all ready. It is important to be polite to everyone you meet, you never know who they are and what influence they may have on the decision-making process.

At the end of the interview they will usually ask you if you have any questions for them and it can be useful to prepare at least two questions to ask at the end of the interview. Asking a question will show your enthusiasm to learn more about the company and the role. You must ensure that it isn't a question that you should already know the answer to, and it is a question which shows your interest in the company or role. Unless invited to, don't talk or discuss holiday

entitlement, this can be spoken about if you are offered the role.

How can I get further support?

Further advice about interviews can be found at the following websites:

https://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/careers/

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips>

You can receive peer to peer career support from our Career Coaches via our Digital Career Studio.

To get in touch you can:

- Email careers@staffs.ac.uk
- Telephone 01782 294991
- Or ask a question on our online chat at www.staffs.ac.uk/careers.

Other leaflets in this series:

Assessment centres

Psychometric tests

How to write a CV

Available online at www.staffs.ac.uk
or from the Career Studio