

How to:

# Ace an interview



## OUR TOP TIPS FOR LANDING THE ROLE

Your CV did a great job highlighting your skills and experience. Your covering letter nailed why you feel you're the best person for the job. Now you're through to the interview stage, and it's a chance for you to prove yourself to your potential boss in the flesh.

This HR GO guide will arm you with the practical know-how you need to prepare and succeed.

# BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW

## What happens in an interview?

The traditional one-to-one meeting isn't the only interview around. You might be interviewed over the phone or via video, by a panel of people or be asked to take assessment tests.

Your HR GO consultant will tell you what you can expect on the day, including:

- What's likely to happen in the interview
- How many interviews and interviewers you'll have (plus their names and job titles)
- Who else you're likely to meet, and when
- If there'll be any psychometric assessments
- If you'll be expected to deliver any presentations

## What to find out about the company

Ideally you'll seem well-informed and enthusiastic about working at your potential new company.

So head online to find out:

- The products and services the company offers
- When it was established
- How many people work there, and how many offices, branches or sites there are
- Who are its main rivals
- The company vision and mission statement



**Tip!**

Can you find your interviewer on LinkedIn? Knowing as much as you can about them will give you an advantage as you might be able to chat about their role in the company and how it would relate to yours.

Being the right 'fit' for a company can sometimes be as important as your skills and experience. So jump into the company's social media to get a feel for how they do things - and glean ideas on things you can bring up:

- Are they supporting any charity initiatives?
- What about team-building activities?
- Have they won any awards?

## What will you be asked?

There are standard questions which you'll probably be asked based on your CV - questions about work, the job you're being interviewed for and your life outside work.

Preparing thorough replies in advance will help you feel more confident (even if the exact questions don't come up).

Show you're interested -  
do your research on the  
company





# BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW

## Expect these questions about the company

1. 'What do you know about us/our company?'
2. 'Why do you want to work for this company?'

Get the edge by putting a personal spin on your answers, rather than reeling off dry facts. Talk from the heart about why the company appeals to you and how you feel you could contribute to where they're heading.

## Expect these questions about your experience

1. 'Tell me about a time when...'
2. 'Give me an example of when...'

Interviewers are looking for proof that you have the skills and experience they're looking for and will be capable in the job.

Study the main duties and responsibilities in the job spec and prepare specific and detailed examples of when you've demonstrated these in action. As a guide, start by explaining the situation, then talk about what you did to resolve the problem, and then explain the end result.

## Prepare your own questions to ask

Towards the end of the interview, you'll be asked if you have any questions. If you don't ask any, you'll seem unenthusiastic about the role.

Here are four you could ask:

1. How did this job vacancy come about?
2. Can you talk me through a typical day in the role?
3. What are the challenges facing the team/department/organisation?
4. After I've been in this role for three months, how will you measure my success?

## Getting yourself prepared - Check arrangements for the day

It's important to confirm where you'll be going and when. If possible, do a dry run of the journey beforehand as it's crucial to be on time or arrive early (arriving late means you'll be flustered, plus suggests you may always be late for work).

You'll feel more confident if you know:

- Which building the interview will be held in
- The nearest car park or train/tube station
- The dress code and general culture

If in doubt dress too smart  
rather than too casual



# THE DAY OF THE INTERVIEW



## Tip!

It's good that the interviewer sees you've prepared for your interview. So write down or print out your questions & carry them in a clear folder, which you can put on the desk in front of you.

## Meeting your interviewer

- Smile and stand up when they approach
- Give them a firm handshake and introduce yourself
- Keep eye contact as much as possible
- Be prepared for small talk on your way to the meeting room, even if it's just about your journey or the weather

## Winning body language during the interview

- Speak clearly and distinctly and make sure that your voice sounds warm, especially if the job involves communication skills
- Smile and use hand movements and facial expressions to emphasise your enthusiasm and to support what you're saying
- Try not to cross your arms as it looks defensive
- Be yourself. Your potential employer wants to see the authentic you



## Tip!

Be pleasant and polite while you're waiting to be seen. The receptionist might feed back to your interviewer, too!

## How to answer questions like a pro

- Listen attentively to questions and think about your reply before you speak (even if you've rehearsed them at home)
- Answer questions with more than a simple 'yes' or 'no'
- Don't understand a question? Ask them to explain or rephrase it (this shows good communication skills)
- Don't know the answer to a question? Be up front and say clearly that you don't know, but would like to find out
- Try to stay calm and collected if you're being put under pressure - this might be a test of how well you cope in tricky situations
- Tell the truth. If you exaggerate your skills or experience, you'll probably be found out
- Never criticise your previous employer or colleagues (even if you feel you've been treated badly) – it's unprofessional and suggests you'll bring a bad attitude into your new job

## Tell them why you should get the job

- Be enthusiastic about the job and the prospect of working for the company
- Use convincing examples to show what you've achieved in previous roles and what you could contribute to this one
- Talk positively about results and benefits, profitability and productivity
- Get your point across in a factual and sincere way
- Keep calm... Remember that most interviewers don't set out to catch you out. It's their job to ask challenging, probing questions so they get to know you better

Most interviewers take just 90 seconds to form their opinion of you



# AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

## *At the end of your interview*

The final stages of an interview are also crucial because they're how an interviewer remembers you, especially if they're meeting multiple candidates. So aim to wrap things up on the right note, showing how enthusiastic you are about the role and the company.

Before you leave, shake hands and thank them for the chance to learn more about the job and the organisation. It's fine to ask what the next steps might be as this shows confidence and enthusiasm, but:

- Don't ask your interviewer how you did
- Don't put pressure on them by pretending you've had another job offer
- Don't try and negotiate your salary/terms of employment (save that for when you have a job offer)

## *Immediately afterwards*

Call or email your HR GO consultant to let them know how things went. They'll be able to tell you what happens next and when you're likely to hear more news.



## *If you got it...*

If you're successful, your HR GO consultant will let you know and help you through the next steps of negotiating salary and terms, including a start date.



## *If you didn't...*

Don't be too down-hearted or take it too personally. Faced with a choice between yourself and another candidate with the same skills, qualifications and experience, someone else could have been a slightly better fit.

Instead take the opportunity to get as much feedback as possible and put all the learning to good use in your next interview.

*Above all, be yourself. Your potential employer wants to see the authentic you*

