

# How to Prepare for a Job Interview.

For many people attending a job interview can be a nervous experience but it is one that with **preparation and confidence can distinguish you from other candidates who may have similar skills**. This document is designed to cover often neglected areas that can help you boost your personal confidence and increase your chances of making a positive impact with a prospective employer.

Most companies will have already decided that you could potentially do the job before they interview you. The purpose of the interview is to explore your experience and personal qualities and see if you are the right person for the job. For that reason the impact you make as a person is vital to your success. An initial way to do this is to include a **thoughtful covering letter** with your application. This should go beyond your expression of interest and include why you think you are the right person for the role and the qualities you can bring.

## Stage 1 – Promote yourself.

Check the job description and ensure you can **provide examples** of where you have used the skills required in previous positions. Do not neglect to include **transferable skills** that may be useful for example retail/customer service experience may be useful when dealing with situations for caring positions and self taught computer skills will be useful in office situations. Always include any **job based training** you have received even if you don't have certificates to support it.

**Create a file** to take with you of past achievements / qualifications and your CV to have on hand during the interview. This may

include information about you that is not included in your CV or covering letter. This can also include evidence of **voluntary work / social activities**. As well as showing you have prepared this will also act as a reminder to yourself to share this information during the interview.

## Stage 2- Understand the Company.

Many applicants do not take the time to research the company they are hoping to work for. Understanding the companies' nature of business / size and locations will show you are prepared and really interested in the role. All this information can be found on a **company's web site**, look for recent press items in the media section if they have one so you are aware of topical issues. It might also be useful to do a **Google search** for extra information. This information can sometimes be used to inform your questions at the interview, for example if a company is looking to expand you may ask about opportunities in other areas of the business. If a company has won an award it's a good idea to mention that you know this as it will show awareness and people will enjoy having good news reflected back at them.

## Stage 3 – Prepare yourself.

An interview is a **two way process**, it is your opportunity to make an impact and present yourself as a quality candidate. You can increase both your confidence and chances of being employed by preparing for the questions you will asked during the interview.



Questions you will almost certainly be asked are

**‘Why do you want this job?’** – Whilst money may be a legitimate response it will do little to create a perception that you are a person to have on their team. Reframe the question as to why this role is attractive to you. This can include issues such as location / the nature of the work/ fitting in with child care/ fitting in with lifestyle/how the hours / shift will suit you. You should endeavour to present yourself as the obvious choice for this role. Write these reasons down so you have them clear in your mind and reread them prior to the interview.



**‘Why did you leave your last role?’** – be honest as many companies will take up references. There are many reasons for leaving a role and interviewers will often ask this to check out honesty. Have your reasons clear so you don't seem evasive or look like your hiding something.

Other questions to expect are **‘what do you know about our company’** which you will be well prepared for if you have done your research and questions about previous experience and gaps in your CV. A good technique is to **mentally rehearse answers** to these questions or even get someone to run through them with you as a mock interview prior to the real thing.

#### **Stage 4- Make a good impression.**

Always arrive early for an interview and remember **the interview starts from the moment you walk through the door.** It is not unusual for interviewers to ask the opinions of receptionist or other people you may meet within the company.

**Grooming and dress** will help you make the right impression and should be appropriate for the role. For a warehouse position dress will be more casual but attention to hair hands and shoes will be important. For office based roles dress as though you already have the job so they can see you will fit into their environment.

As you wait for your interview use the time to run through your file and questions and try to relax. This will build your confidence. **Practice deep breathing** if you are particularly nervous and drink water if you feel your throat is dry.

**The first 3 minutes of the interview are particularly important** as this is where people will gain their first impressions of you. On entering the room introduce yourself as you shake hands. Not everyone will shake hands so cultural greetings may vary. Always try to present open and positive body language with good eye contact and plain direct answers. Initial questions will be there to set the scene and this is where you may be asked about the company.

Have a pen and paper with you as they may give you information. Making a few notes will show genuine interest and preparedness.

#### **Stage 5 – Show you're interested.**

Always have a couple of questions about the company or role to ask at the end. These questions may be prompted by your research or emerge during the interview but **always**



**have a couple written down.** Companies want people who are interested in doing the job rather than just turning up so your questions will show you have thought about things and want to **make sure the role is right for you.**

### **Stage 6 – Finish on a positive.**

A positive close to the interview can leave a lasting impression with those conducting the interview. They should tell you when they will be making a decision but if they don't ask. You may also need to know how they will communicate that decision to you i.e. phone or email. Thank people for their time and say you hope to hear from them soon. Some companies are happy to give you **feedback on your interview technique** if you are unsuccessful. It can be informative to receive this feedback however not all companies will have the time or inclination to do this. It's important to remember that you will not be successful at every interview and there will be many reasons for this which may have nothing to do with your technique. Other candidates may be better qualified or have experience that more closely matches the job requirements. By ensuring you learn from each interview and reflect on how it went you will increase your confidence and chances of success.

### **Further Information**

There are lots of websites that can help you prepare for interviews and YouTube have many videos outlining good interview technique and handling interview nerves. There are also good videos on body language. Many of the online job sites also contain valuable advice.



**"If I don't get a pay-raise soon, I'm gonna blow the lid off this crummy zoo."**