



Succeeding at job interviews

Congratulations, all the hard work you did in your application has paid off and you have gained an interview! Now comes the next important step. The interview process is placing you in a competitive environment, where you are assessed against other applicants. To ensure you have a positive and successful experience, it is essential you are WELL PREPARED. To make a good impression at the interview, follow these steps.

1. Prepare yourself.
2. Develop your job interview techniques.
3. Evaluate your performance after the interview.

If you concentrate on having these simple things organised, this will ensure you are calm when it comes to the interview. It is important you have these basic steps covered so you can be completely focused.

Personal presentation...it's not just how you dress

We usually make an assessment about a person's character within the first few seconds of meeting them. Therefore, that first impression we make with a potential employer is crucial and often underestimated by job seekers. There is often no second chance. Your character will be judged on a number of things including how you look, the language you use, the way you greet the person, the way you talk and the way you dress.

How you speak, and what you say

Do you come across as confident or arrogant? Are you surly or too quiet and timid? Do you speak clearly or do you mumble? Most employers are looking for a person who speaks politely and confidently. If your first contact with an employer is via the telephone, the way you address them and the way you make your enquiry and carry on a conversation is absolutely critical.

Your choice of words is vital. Do not use words the employer may consider to be swearing. Answer questions clearly and honestly and don't waffle on. It may help to practice what you want to say.

Body language

What messages are you communicating by the way you stand, greet a person and generally hold yourself? The outside of our body is like a window to the inside. Be prepared to shake the hand of the employer you are meeting and make it a firm, positive handshake.

Cultural sensitivities

When you are dealing with most employers, it is important you look them in the eye and maintain eye contact while you talk with them. This shows confidence and respect. However, this is not always appropriate for all cultures. Many people of indigenous cultures do not make direct eye contact. Just be aware of these sensitivities and they will be greatly appreciated as a mark of respect for that person.

What we wear

Think carefully about what clothing to wear. If it is a gardening job you are applying for, don't go dressed in a tuxedo. On the other hand, if the job is with an up-market clothing boutique, your favourite tracksuit won't be the best choice. If you have body piercings, just be aware that a more conservative employer may not like that stud through your tongue or brow. It may be advisable to take out visible body piercing that can create a problem for you. Once you gain the position, you can check with the employer if it is OK for you to wear piercings/personal jewellery.

The basic rule is to be smart and dress appropriately for the position for which you are applying. Try to see things from the employer's point of view.



Don't sweat the small stuff – basic preparation

Learn about the job and the company

Research the company well, find out as much as you can about what they do and be prepared to answer questions about this. Also use any information you have gathered to assist you in telling them why you want to work there.

- **What would you be doing?** Know as much as you can about the job you are applying for and where the job role fits into the organisation. If there are selection criteria, these will give you a good idea of the work you would be undertaking. The job advertisement will also give you information.
- **What do they do?** Find out what the company makes, sells or offers. The more you know and understand the products and services produced by the business, the better prepared you will be.
- **Who are they?** Find out about the employer, where the business is based, try telephoning the Marketing or Public Relations Unit for any information or try to obtain a copy of the company's annual report if it is publicly available. You may know someone who works there or be able to get information from their website, Yellow Pages, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA, Shire Council offices or your local library.

Know what to take

Take all the details of the company, including who will be interviewing you. If for any reason you are running late – you **MUST** call and advise of your situation and also advise you will get there as quickly as possible.

Take your Employment Folder which contains:

- Your resume and a copy of your application, especially if you had addressed selection criteria.
- Qualifications, school records (if appropriate) and evidence of the levels completed.
- Any certificates or special awards relevant to the job and written references if you have them.
- Samples of your work or hobbies that may be related to the job. For example, a model, samples of typing, art portfolio materials, copy of a report you have written, etc.

Know how to get there

Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. This gives you time to gather your thoughts, check your appearance and ensure you are at the right location.

- Double check the address of the business and make sure you know how to get to the exact building location.
- Check bus timetables, parking availability and street directions so you know you will arrive on time.
- If in doubt, do a trial run – go to the company beforehand and time yourself getting there.

Decide what to wear

Remember your first impression counts! Use your common sense when choosing an outfit according to the requirements of the position. It is better to be conservative in your choice of outfit.

- Decide what you are going to wear and have it ready the night before and have everything organised.
- Dress to suit the occasion.



Smile and be yourself. A firm handshake and friendly greeting is essential. The interviewer/s will expect you to be nervous, so take a few deep breaths and begin!



At the interview – Develop your job interview techniques

The interview process can be very daunting. Depending on the position, it can also vary from one to six people on a panel. In some cases, you may be given time to read through questions prior to facing the panel. Other interviews may involve psychometric testing.

You may have experienced phone interviews and/or group interviews. All are designed for two things: the employer deciding whether they wish to hire you and you also deciding whether you really want the job. In every scenario, preparation is the key to your success.

Remember, the employer will be deciding on three main things...

- 1 Can you **do** the job? (your technical and transferable skills and experience, training and/or potential)
- 2 Do you **want** the job? (your motives for applying, enthusiasm and career goals)
- 3 Will you **fit in** to their team? (your personal skills, values and attitudes)

After the interview...what next?

After the interview, evaluate your performance. This will help you in future interviews. Consider the things you did well and the things you could improve on.

Each interview is not a win or lose situation. It is an opportunity for you to learn and gain experience for next time. Usually, you will not know straight away whether you have been successful in the interview or not. You will be contacted by telephone or email. Now you'll just have to wait!

If you find your interview to be unsuccessful, make sure you still look at the experience positively. It was a learning opportunity for you.

Always ask for feedback from the interview, as the information you receive may help you with future interviews. Strangely enough, it may also make you feel better if you know you were very close in getting the job – next time it could be you!



“Take from it what you can and move on...”