

TOP TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

Tip 1: Preparation Is The Key To Success

- Take time over application forms. Fill them out neatly and thoroughly. Take special care to avoid spelling errors.
- Try and find out some information about the company and note down your key findings.
- Prepare a list of questions you would like to find out the answers to during the interview.
- Practise your interview technique with a mock interview – this can pay huge dividends especially if the person helping you to do this is an experienced interviewer and can give you constructive feedback. Practising answering challenging questions beforehand and hearing your replies allows you to sound more confident during the actual interview.
- Plan your interview attire carefully. Avoid under-dressing to over dressing. If you're not sure what's required, err on the side of more formal dress.
- Keep jewellery and perfume or after shave to a minimum – a heavy or cloying perfume or aftershave can
- Before you leave home, check to see that you have with you a pad and pen, extra copies of your CV, just in case, letter(s) of recommendation, references or other documentation to support your qualifications e.g. portfolio, samples of your work etc) where appropriate.
- Plan your journey and arrive in plenty of time for the interview. Look up the location on the internet with Streetmap. Arriving 15 mins. early will give you time to relax and prepare yourself mentally.
- If you smoke, avoid smoking immediately before going in for the interview. Smokers often do not realise how long smoke lingers on clothes

Tip 2: Making A Good Impression

- Remember the importance of non-verbal communication. Smile, stand tall, keep your energy levels high and remember to make eye contact.
- When shaking hands, make sure your grip is firm - (but not too firm - don't cut off the blood supply!).
- Sit up straight and avoid fiddling!
- Let the interviewer start the dialogue. Listen carefully and be sure about the question before you answer. If in doubt, ask for clarification.
- When faced with an interview panel, direct your response to the person that asked the question. Maintain eye contact and try to use the same tone and language that the interviewer used.
- Even though you may have prepared a few good questions beforehand, allow the interview to flow naturally and bring them in at an appropriate time.
- Ask questions to find out if the company's values, philosophy and approach are compatible with yours. Remember, you are interviewing the company as much as they are interviewing you.

Tip 3: Communicate a Positive Attitude

- Ensure that you tell the interviewer about your skills. If you don't, no one else will! Prepare some examples of past experience that illustrate your skills. Don't make the interviewer work harder than you during the interview.
- Emphasize what you can do for the company and indicate that you expect to make a contribution.
- Let the interviewer know that you are keen and willing. Give examples of this from your past experience.
- Demonstrate that you are committed to learning. Give examples of learning experiences (e.g., independent study, professional development, education, workshops, etc.). Have a plan for future development. This also communicates your commitment to learning.
- Show that you are flexible. Employers want employees who can adjust, work well with others and fit into a new environment without complaints or special requests. Tell a story from your experience that illustrates your flexibility.

Tip 4: Prepare To Answer Difficult Questions

- Practise answering difficult questions before the interview so that you are less likely to be thrown by challenging questions
- Welcome all questions with a smile.
- Take your time. If you don't understand a question, ask for it to be repeated or clarified. Develop the answer in your head before you respond. You don't have to rush, but try not to answer hesitantly. Give direct, honest answers
- Don't be afraid to ask questions in return.
- Avoid making negative comments about previous jobs or the people you worked with
- Avoid negative comments complaining about responsibilities you were given in a previous position

Tip 5: Go For A Strong Finish

- Take the initiative and demonstrate your interest by asking when the company want the position filled by.
- If you want the job, say so! It's always worth stating that you are very interested in the position and give the reasons why you are qualified, stating any strengths you many have forgotten to mention earlier
- Enquire what the next step is in the process is. Ask if there will be additional interviews and when they plan to make their decision
- Smile and thank the interviewer(s) for their time

Tip 6: Follow-up

- After the interview, send thank you letters or notes to each person with whom you interviewed. This gives you the opportunity to detail anything you may have forgotten during the interview and also, it is polite and professional to say "thank-you"

- Treat the interview as a learning experience. Use this opportunity to evaluate and improve your techniques. Note down: What went well in the interview? How can you improve?

If you treat interviews like experiments, you can't fail – experiments simply provide you with information about what did and did not work!

It is easy to become disheartened about lack of success in interviews, but try to remember there could be any number of reasons as to why you were not successful. It could be that someone had already been earmarked for the position – it does happen! It may be that the interviewer had a particular type of person in mind – this does not mean that you were not good enough!

Every interview is an opportunity to learn and improve your techniques. You may have several interviews before you connect with the right job so take time and debrief after each one and decide what you can learn and take forward to the next one.

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Good luck!

I hope that you have found these tips useful.

If you would like help in preparing for interview, increasing your confidence, dealing with interview nerves or simply help in deciding whether you are making the right career decision for you, do contact me.

Best wishes

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