

# Get interview ready



How to prepare and present your best self

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# Introduction:

The Day has arrived, your application has been noticed and you've got to the interview stage – well done! This resource is designed to help you prepare and present your best self at interview. Its aim is to help you:

- Know and understand the recruitment and selection process
- What it might involve & what employers are looking for
- Know and understand how to prepare in the best way possible
- Increase your chances of success (getting the job!)
- Feel more confident and...

...Shine!



# Section One: What is an interview?

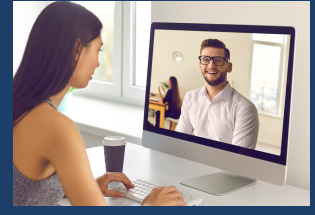
Usually with one person, or a panel (2 or more people)



**Face to face**



**By phone**



**Virtually**

Sometimes as part of a larger process +/- you may have more than one interview

Where the  
interviewer/s  
ask the  
candidate  
questions

Where  
candidates'  
answers  
indicate their  
suitability

Used by  
employers  
seeking to  
hire

An opportunity  
for the  
candidate to  
ask questions

**An interview  
is...**

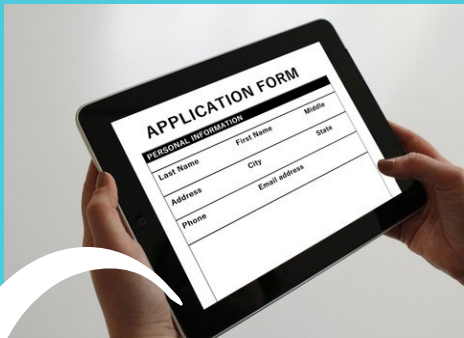
A form  
of assessment

Where employer  
and candidate get  
to know each other



# Section One:

What the recruitment and selection process involves / may involve



## Application Form:

Often online, sometimes through CV and a covering letter.



## Candidates Shortlisted:

Employers read each application and create a shortlist of candidates.



## Assessments:

Some employers create tests for candidates – online or at an **Assessment Centre**.

\*Examples may include simple Maths or English test, an Aptitude Test, writing an email, doing a quiz or completing a questionnaire online. Assessment Centres can involve a day of tasks. Employers may watch how candidates perform in group work tasks (assessing teamwork/leadership skills) or completion of an in-tray exercise (assessing priorities), or present a Powerpoint presentation (often prepared by candidates ahead of the day).



## Interview:

By phone, virtually or face to face. Some jobs require more than one interview, or different types of interview at various stages.



*They  
want  
You!*



### Job Offer:

If you have been successful at every stage and the employer feels you are the best candidate – you will receive the offer of a job – often verbally first. Then, if you accept, formally, in writing.



### Employment checks:

The final stage before starting your job is the point at which employers will apply for your 'references' (e.g. your Teachers/Leaders/Tutor are asked to formally write about you.) Other checks – such as ID, NI No., Police Checks (if working with children/vulnerable people or dealing with classified information, etc).



When employment checks are complete + satisfactory – you will be given a START DATE!



**Please note:** Companies and organisations have their own recruitment and selection procedures.

- Order of events are usually as above, but may vary.
- Check with each company what their recruitment and selection process involves.

## Section Two:

# The importance of studying the job description

When an employer is looking to recruit a new employee – they will create a Job Description – this often includes sections such as:

- Role description
- Responsibilities (e.g. what you will do day-to-day)
- About the company/organisation goals and expectations

Specifics about what they are looking for in a prospective employee:

- Essential and desired skills
- Personal qualities/attitude
- Expected behaviours
- Qualifications required/preferred
- Experience and knowledge

By studying the Job Description – you can glean exactly the things the employer is looking for – and match your skills to them!



## Researching the company

Understand the history + future goals of the company/organisation

Shows enthusiasm + effort  
(both liked by employers!)

## Benefits of researching the company

Discover where you can \*'add value' to the company / organisation

Discover the values + culture of the company/organisation

\*Adding value to a company / organisation is where you bring/use your skills and strengths for its benefit (helping it to maintain standards/or even improve/grow)





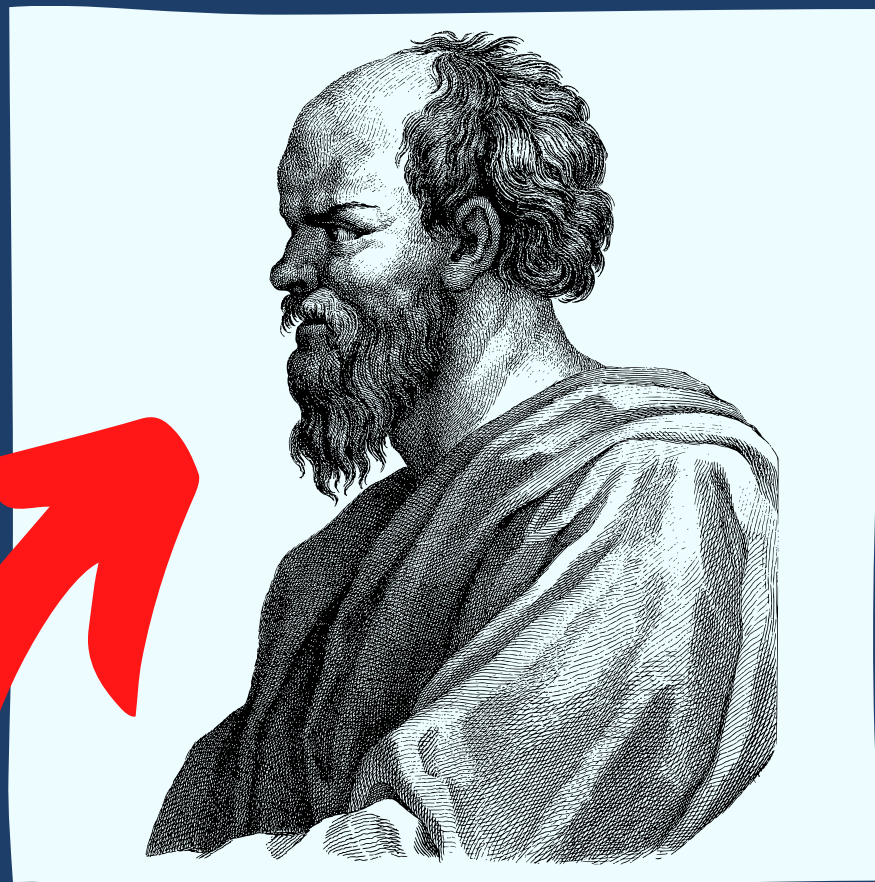
# Section Three:

Self-awareness – knowing your strengths, skills, qualities and weaknesses

this is key in helping you find the right job and career for you; and to being successful with applications and at interviews.



Socrates said: "Know thyself"



= wise





## Strengths:

What you're naturally good at

## Skills:

Ability to do something well through practice

## Qualities:

personal characteristics e.g. patient, honest, enthusiastic

## Interests:

What you are drawn to/ what inspires you

**What makes me, me?**

## Motivation:

What energises you/ leads you to action

## Values:

What is important to you

A word about weaknesses – we need to be aware of these, and how to express what ours are. We can do this in a way that is positive and shows we are keen to improve parts of ourselves. Remember, we are growing every day.



Some examples of skills, qualities, and weaknesses you could discuss at interview and examples of evidence for them:

## Skills....

**Adaptability**

**Analytical skills**

**Commercial awareness**

**Communication**

**Creativity**

**Critical thinking**

**Decision Making**

**Flexibility**

**Initiative**

**Innovation**

**Investigation**

**I.T. Skills**

**Leadership**

**Negotiation**

**Networking**

**Numeracy skills**

**Organisation**

**Presentation skills**

**Problem-solving**

**Research**

**Resilience**

**Teamwork**

**Time management**

### At school:

\*Studying subjects

\*In class/working with others

\*Responsibilities

\*Extra-curricular clubs and activities

### Outside of school:

\*Hobbies

\*Being part of sports teams

\*Being a member of a uniformed organisation – e.g. Army/Air/Sea Cadets, Scouts, Girl Guides

\*Dance, Drama classes

\*DofE

\*Band, Orchestra

\*Voluntary work

\*Work experience

\*Part-time job

\*Youth Club ...

...any more you can think of?

## Personal qualities (personality traits)....

**Adventurous**

**Approachable**

**Compassionate**

**Calm under pressure**

**Caring**

**Creative**

**Curious**

**Dependable**

**Determined**

**Discreet**

**Encouraging**

**Fair**

**Friendly**

**Generous**

**Hardworking**

**Honest**

**Independent**

**Innovative**

**Loyal**

**Optimistic**

**Patient**

**Persistent**

**Reliable**

**Respectful**

**Sense of humour**

**Understanding**

### Weaknesses:

Talking about weaknesses at an interview requires a lot of thought and preparation.

It is important to be honest, but not scupper your hopes – e.g. by saying "I'm always late" or "I don't like working with others" it may put employers off. Stating certain weaknesses, such as those listed below, and how you are working on them works best. Here are some good examples you could use:

- 1) "I sometimes focus on the details too much. I'm working hard to learn to see the bigger picture and focus on the most important aspects of a task."
- 2) "I struggle to say 'no', and this can mean I take on too much. I am practising thinking about what is manageable. I may not necessarily need to say 'no', but I can discuss when/how I might be able to do something."
- 3) "I love working as part of a team, but sometimes it has been difficult for me to work with certain personalities. I am learning not to take things too personally and find positive ways of encouraging and motivating others."
- 4) "I have been working hard to improve my confidence by learning new skills and developing those I already have both in school/work and during my spare time. This is really helping me feel more confident. I keep track of my progress by...."

# Section Four:

## Preparing for common and difficult interview questions with confidence

The key to making **ANY** and **EVERY** interview **successful** are...



**PREPARATION  
+  
PRACTICE**



To be good at most things, we need to **prepare** and **practice** – Imagine yourself as a sports person preparing for a match or a race – you would need to think, train, & practice.

Yet, instead of a sports person, you are an Interview Candidate and you want to be successful and get the job.

**\*Remember – the more interviews you attend, the better you will become (especially if you keep preparing and practicing).**

The next step is where we begin to draw everything together by considering how to answer both common and difficult/challenging interview questions...You CAN do this!



# Common and more difficult interview questions



- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you know about the company/organisation?
- Why would you want to work for us?
- What can you bring to the company?
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Tell me about an achievement you are proud of.
- If you were an animal, what would you be? (Consider this answer in relation to skills, and, if possible, in relation to the job – just one example – "I think I would be an ant as I am very hardworking and work well in a team." There are many more great possible animals and answers – be creative!)
- Tell me about a challenging situation and how you overcame it.
- What makes a good team player?
- What motivates you?
- Do you prefer working in a team or by yourself? (Top tip: It is often a good idea to mention you are able to do both and are developing the skills for both. Remember to consider the Job Description and what the company are looking for when answering the question.)
- What are your hobbies and interests outside of school?
- What can you offer us that someone else cannot?
- Are you leader or a follower?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- If you were Prime Minister for the day, what changes would you make?

Top tip – Consider the job description in relation to these questions.

To help you with these questions, we have created some podcasts and added some resources in the section further below. For now, below are some tips on what to include/demonstrate and what to avoid...





## Include / Demonstrate:

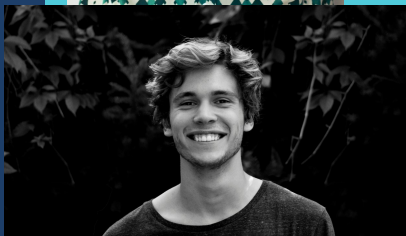
- \*Enthusiasm
- \*Interest
- \*Friendliness
- \*Positivity
- \*Respect
- \*Be polite
- \*Talk about your skills and strengths – especially in relation to the Job Description
- \*Practice altering your tone – rise and fall of your voice
- \*Smile!
- \*Take your time / breathe
- \*Research and study the company and Job Description – match your skills.
- \*Practice answering the questions at home / with a friend
- \*Be open to constructive criticism / help
- \*Ask questions

## Avoid:

- \*Being late
- \*Being negative
- \*Speaking badly about other people, employers, school, anyone! (it can reflect badly on you)
- \*Sharing weaknesses which reflect badly on you or where you are not showing a willingness to improve
- \*Not answering a question (it is ok to say you need time to think. Remember – your preparation will hopefully mean you feel less stuck when answering)
- \*Over-exaggerating
- \*Being rude or ignoring other employees
- \*Being easily offended
- \*Talking about money or holiday entitlement
- \*Saying you will be in the interviewer's chair in 5 years – it's great to have goals but this may unintentionally come across as arrogant

# Interpersonal skills and interview etiquette

It can be very helpful to discover how we come across to others. We are always communicating with and to others, even if we are unaware of how. Interpersonal skills and body language are very important in life and the world of work. Etiquette is a word we use to describe expected types of behaviour – here we will focus on professional behaviour for the workplace. Below are some things you can practice and aim to include on the day of your interview:



- Dress smartly with clean shoes. Prepare in advance
- Have a shower, wash your hair + look your best!
- Smile and make eye-contact
- Greet those you meet with a warm 'Hello, my name's ....it's nice to meet you.'
- Remember to breathe!
- Speak s-l-o-w-l-y (we tend to speak more quickly when we are feeling nervous)
- Aim to sit up straight
- Try not to fidget (sometimes focusing on the other person and what they are saying can help with this)
- Show you are listening / interested - nod your head, say "yes/no" or answer at appropriate points. It's ok to smile / laugh if something is funny
- Ask Questions (prepare some good questions ahead of the day if you can)
- Take a deep breath...and relax!
- Try to enjoy the process. View it as a learning opportunity
- Remember all the fantastic strengths and skills you have - share them!
- If you make a mistake, that's ok - just smile and say something like "...I'm sorry may I start that sentence again? " (remember, everyone makes mistakes)

# Section Five:






**Ideas for great questions you can ask the Interviewer/s at the end of the interview**  
(N.B. Ask 2-3 questions – interviewers like this)

- What would a typical day in the position look like? When you ask the interviewer this question it's your chance to learn more about the day-to-day responsibilities and work involved in the job.
- How will my performance be assessed?
- What do you expect the ideal candidate to accomplish during the first three months?
- What are the biggest challenges the company is facing at the moment?
- What are the biggest opportunities the company is considering at the moment?
- What do you like best about working here?

**What are the next steps in your hiring process?**  
(This question will help you learn when you might hear if you have been successful.)

# Section Five:

## 1 week before interview checklist:

-  Check Invitation to Interview letter/email and with the employer if you need more clarification. Note interview day details.
-  Re-read the job description and your application. Make notes. Focus matching your strengths and skills to the job description.
-  Practice answering interview questions with friends and family. Get their feedback and make notes of best answers.
-  Prepare and pack your "Interview File". Include:
  - a copy of your CV
  - a copy of your Application Form
  - details of interview day – date, time, place, etc. (add it the your calendar on your phone)
  - Documents – e.g. NI Number, Passport, Driving License, Birth Certificate (whatever the employer requests you bring.)
  - Ensure you have asked two people to be your 'Referees' – i.e. those who will write a reference for you (you should ask potential Referees at Application Form stage –e.g. Tutor, Teachers, Team Leaders, Employers, etc.)Prepare your Interview outfit – wash & iron them. Clean your shoes, and any accessories, etc.
-  Prepare your journey / log-on details.

# 1 day before interview checklist:

- ✓ Check everything ready within the checklist on the previous page.
- ✓ Check you have a lift organised or money for transport (e.g. do you have correct change for the bus? which stop do you need to get off at? etc.). Charge your phone and check log-on details.
- ✓ Have one last read through of your CV, application and notes from your practice interview questions.
- ✓ Have an early night and re-check everything is ready ahead of the big day tomorrow.
- ✓ Remind yourself of all your skills and strengths and what **you** bring to the world! Think positively about YOU.





# And on Interview Day...

## Remember...

**Get up early, shower, put on your interview outfit – looking great!**

- **Set off/log-on in good time**
- **Be respectful and polite to everyone**
- **The interviewer wants to bring out the best in you**
- **Smile!**
- **You've got this**



## And... breathe!

If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again!  
(There's always something else just around the corner.)

# Further resources:

- <https://barclayslifeskills.com/i-want-to-prepare-for-an-interview/school/>
- Careerpilot : Get information : Apprenticeships : Tips – Interviews
- Top Interview Tips: Common Questions, Body Language & More – YouTube
- Tell Me About Yourself – A Good Answer To This Interview Question – YouTube
- Interview Question: “What Are Your Weaknesses?” And You Say, “...” – YouTube
- How To Be Confident In Interviews – YouTube





**“Success is where preparation and  
opportunity meet.”**

**Bob Usner**



**DON'T  
STRESS.  
DO  
YOUR  
BEST.**



*Be your best self today*



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TRUST

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**January 2022**

