



What can I expect in an interview?

Job interviews vary depending on the organisation. Some interviews will just involve a series of questions, while others might ask you to complete a task or give a presentation too.

☆☆☆ Top tips

01

Always arrive on time or slightly early. Try to avoid being there any earlier than 10 minutes before – they might still be in with another candidate and it will put pressure on them to see you.

02

Research the company and re-read the job description so you know exactly what they're looking for.

03

Always be polite and friendly to the person who greets you and takes you to the interview – they may well be asked what they thought of you!

04

Prepare a couple of questions about the role or the organisation, that aren't about pay, holiday or other benefits. It will show the employer that you're genuinely interested in the role, rather than just the salary.

05

Give examples for every question you're asked. Use the STAR model* if it helps you.

06

Dress smartly, but don't worry if you don't have a suit. A clean and ironed shirt or blouse, trousers or a skirt (no denim!) and smart shoes will do just fine.

07

Turn off your phone and any other devices before the interview.

08

Make eye contact with everyone on the interview panel – don't make assumptions about who will be making the decisions.

09

Don't be afraid to pause to think for a moment before answering questions. A few deep breaths or a sip of water will allow you to gather your thoughts before you jump in.

10

Think about the questions they're likely to ask you ahead of time and see if you can prepare a few answers for them. You don't need to memorise them, but organising your thoughts like this can be helpful, especially at the beginning of the interview.

*STAR model (situation, task, action, response)

Situation	Task	Action	Results
During my time working at Homebase, I showed leadership skills by helping to train new team members.	This required me to show them how to operate the till and navigate the stockroom.	I offered to let the new team members shadow me while I demonstrated how to put transactions through, and then swapped with them so they could try it themselves with my support in case they needed it and offering encouragement to build their confidence.	As a result of this, new team members felt empowered to do their roles and were ready to start working independently more quickly.

Common interview questions you can prepare for

Tell us about your career so far.

Hint: The key to answering this question is to pick out your most relevant experience. They might not need to know about your paper round when you were 14 and you won't be penalised for missing it out!

Tell us about yourself.

Hint: Be honest, but specifically highlight the things that will make you a great employee. Don't include personal information like marital status, how many children you have or your age – talk about your interests, your career so far and what your biggest qualities are.

Example: I'm a dedicated customer services professional with a keen eye for detail, and I have a particular interest in complaints resolution. I'm passionate about making sure customers have a positive experience so they want to come back again and again. In my spare time I like to play basketball, which makes me a great team player, and I've been using Duolingo to learn how to speak Spanish.

Why do you want to work for [organisation]?

Hint: This is where your research comes in. Talk about reputation, shared values, and things that matter to you. Do they have a real focus on customer service, which is something you're really skilled in? Is there a particular technology they use that you're excited to develop your knowledge of?

Example: I'm really excited about the possibility of working for [organisation] because I think we have a lot of values in common. I'm really passionate about wellbeing and making sure everyone is looked after and I think that comes across in everything the organisation does – you can really tell that the organisation is looking after not only the customers but also the employees.

We're interviewing several other candidates today. What makes you stand out?

Hint: This is usually one of the last questions, so take this opportunity to sum up why you're the right person for the job – focus on what you are, not what other people might not be, and highlight your experience, skills and interests, especially where you know these align to the values of the organisation or the role they're recruiting for.

Questions to ask at the end of the interview

It can be really difficult to decide what to ask at the end of the interview, and it can be tempting to go with something practical – but employers won't be impressed by you wanting to know the salary or holiday arrangements. While that's really important, you can find out all of that once you've secured the role. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- What is the culture like at [organisation]?
- What will the priorities for this role be in the first few months?
- Does this role work closely with any other departments?
- What sort of development opportunities are there at [organisation]?

Or, if you're feeling brave:

- Do you have any concerns about my application for the role that I could address for you now?

These all show that you're genuinely interested in the role, the organisation and reminds the interviewers that you mean business. Pick one or two that feel relevant to the role and listen to the answers they give – remember, an interview is about making sure the job is a right fit for you as well.