



How to...

prepare for an interview

if you are 13–19



How to prepare for an interview

An interview can be for a job, a course or training, or for joining a group or club. An interview can be nerve-wracking and depends a great deal on how you approach it. It could be 30 minutes that changes your life.

The employer, or course provider has obviously been impressed with your application – the purpose of the interview is to find out more about you. At the interview you need to convince the interviewer that you, rather than anyone else, are the best applicant.

Figures suggest that around 90% of employers use interviews to find the right person for their vacancy.

You will usually have at least a few days' notice of an interview – make good use of that time and be prepared. But remember, you may have been short-listed from dozens of applicants – you've done very well to get this far!

*An interviewer's impression of you will be made up in the following way:
body language and image – 70%
tone of voice – 20%
what you say – 10%.*

Doing your homework

- Find out about the organisation you want to work for, or the course you want to take. The Internet or your local library or is a good place to start.
- Think about your experience, personality, and skills – do you match the type of person that is needed for the job or course? Think of examples from school, work, or spare time activities. Compare your CV with the job description.
- Make sure you know where the interview is taking place. How will you get to the interview? How long will it take you to get there? Make sure your route is safe.
- Do you know the name of the person who will interview you, how to pronounce their name, and their position in the organisation?
- Get your portfolio of work, exam certificates, and other examples of achievements ready to take with you.
- You may be asked to do tests or a presentation. You will be told about this in advance, so make sure you prepare.
- Get a good night's sleep!

First impressions

First impressions count – most interviewers make up their mind about candidates within the first five minutes of meeting. Your success at the interview may depend on how you look or act as soon as you walk in. Look smart, clean, and professional. Be confident, if you don't believe in yourself, then why should the interviewer? But don't be too 'pushy'.

Other things to consider:

- Make sure you arrive on time.
- Wait for your interviewer(s) to shake hands first, and sit down only when invited to do so.
- Always treat your interviewer(s) with courtesy. Make eye contact, it shows you're listening. If you are being interviewed by more than one person, make sure you look at the person asking the question.
- Don't fidget or slouch.
- Remember to thank the interviewer(s) for their time.

Following these simple rules will allow the interviewer(s) to concentrate on you, and not be distracted.



Questions, questions

Listen to the interview questions carefully. If you don't understand a question, ask for it to be repeated. Try to avoid yes and no answers – give as much information as you can, but don't talk too much. Be honest – don't pretend to have done something you haven't. Questions will vary from interview to interview, but here are some examples:

Q: Why are you interested in this job/course?

Tip: What parts of the job/course description appeal to you and why?

Q: What makes you think you are suitable?

Tip: Here you can link your skills and experiences to the job.

Q: What are your strengths/weaknesses?

Tip: Link your strengths to a part of the job. Turn a weakness into a strength, for example – "I tend to take my time at things because I want to get things right".

When you are given the chance to ask questions, you could ask:

- Will I have a supervisor to ask for help when I need it?
- Will training be provided – if so, where will that take place?
- How much will I earn? Particularly if the vacancy didn't say.

Write these down beforehand in case your mind goes blank!

How to handle job offers

If you are successful with your interview you may be offered the job over the phone. Listen carefully to information about job conditions, working hours, pay, etc. If you are unsure ask questions, or ask for a bit more time to decide. If you are offered the job in a letter read it carefully.

Once you have accepted, your employer must give you a statement of terms and conditions (contract) within eight weeks. Read this through very carefully before you sign it. In particular, check the following:

- Salary/pay details.
- Job title.
- Holiday entitlement.
- Start date.
- Training details.

If you're unsure about anything in the contract ask for more information, or talk to your Connexions Personal Adviser (PA).

Once you've signed the contract and returned it with your acceptance letter, you've entered into a legal agreement to take the job – so only sign when you are absolutely sure.

If you decide not to take the job send a polite letter, as soon as possible, expressing your thanks for the offer.

What if I don't get the job?

Don't get too upset if you're not offered the job – there will be plenty of others to apply for. You may find it useful to ask the interviewer for feedback, so that you can improve your interview technique. Interviewers are usually quite happy to do this.

Talk to your PA if you feel you are getting turned down for lots of jobs. It may be that you need to:

- improve your CV
- improve your interview technique
- think about other types of work
- talk about support, such as e2e, to help you get into work.



Additional sources of information

- www.connexions-cd.org.uk
- www.connexions-direct.com
- www.apprenticeships.org.uk

To get in touch...

with your PA or to find your nearest Connexions centre go online to www.connexions-cd.org.uk or give us a call on **0800 9755111**. Calls from a landline are free and you'll be connected to your nearest centre. Calls from a mobile may be subject to a network charge – you'll be connected to our head office, but we can redirect you to your nearest centre.

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HT4-06.10 Printed on 100% recycled paper

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