

Before the interview

Interviews require much research and planning. Generally, you should do the following when preparing for interview:

- Anticipate potential questions and prepare answers accordingly.
- Consider how you'll explain problematic aspects of your CV, such as leaving an employer or gaps in skills/employment.
- Contact your references, alerting them that you'll be interviewing and that they may receive a call.
- Fully understand the role that you're applying for by revisiting the job description, identifying what skills, interests and experiences the employer is looking for.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.
- Read the organisation's website, social media profiles and key literature ensuring that you're prepared to share your views and ideas on the company's values.
- Research the news, trends, competitors, history and opportunities of the organisation and its job sector.
- Review your CV and application form.

What to take

Your interview invitation should detail everything that you need, but generally you should take:

- a bottle of water;
- the address and postcode of the organisation so that you can search Google Maps on your mobile phone;
- details of the person that you must ask for upon arrival;
- exam certificates, examples of your work, and any further evidence of your past successes;
- pen and notepad;
- the job description and person specification;
- your CV, letter of application and interview invitation.

How to make a good impression

Generally, you should:

- answer questions clearly and concisely;
- ask relevant, thought-provoking questions at appropriate moments, as this can show that you're genuinely interested in the role and really listening to the interviewer;

- avoid talking about any personal problems;
- be as enthusiastic as possible;
- be well-mannered with any staff that you meet before the interview;
- display positive body language, speaking clearly, smiling frequently and retaining eye contact;
- don't badmouth any previous employers;
- give a firm handshake to your interviewer(s) before and after;
- highlight your best attributes, experiences and achievements, based around the skills that you've identified as important to the organisation, and evidencing them with practical examples;
- let your personality shine;
- relax and sit naturally, but without slouching in your chair or leaning on the desk;
- show your hands, as this is a sign of honesty;
- wear smart business attire with comfortable, polished shoes.

Tips for controlling your nerves

Nerves can make you forget to do things as simple as listening. This can result in you being thought of as unfriendly or inattentive. Some ideas for combating nerves include:

- being aware of the interview's structure, and the fact that they often begin with easier questions such as 'tell us about your time at university';
- exercising before your interview, as this burns off negative energy and creates feelings of wellbeing;
- pausing before answering a difficult question to give yourself thinking time, or asking for clarification if, at first, you're unsure what the question means;
- putting everything into perspective, reminding yourself that the worst thing that can happen is you not getting the job;
- taking a toilet break before the interview;
- taking deep breaths and not speaking too quickly;
- taking notes with you, writing down cues to highlight examples that you want to draw upon;
- thinking about positive and happy experiences before the interview starts, and visualising yourself in complete control during the interview.