

What do employers want to know?

The job interview is the opportunity for employers find out the answers to the four key questions that concern them:

- Can you do the job?
- Do you want the job?
- Are you the best applicant for the job?
- Will you 'fit in' to the organisation?

Preparing for the interview

Many of the types of questions asked at an interview are predictable. However, that doesn't mean that job interviews are always easy! Preparation is the key to a comfortable and positive interview. You can prepare for your interview by:

- Reviewing the research you did on the organisation for your application.
- Reviewing the key skills and experiences you have already identified as demonstrating your 'major selling points' for this position in preparing your resume and application.
- Asking a friend or colleague to conduct a practice interview with you.
- Visualise how you will be confident and articulate at the interview, especially the opening few minutes and the end of the interview.
- Prepare what you will wear in advance, so that you're not rushing on the day of the interview, and dress appropriately – more formally than you would for the workplace.
- Plan in advance how you will get to the interview; if it is somewhere unknown to you, check where the venue is and how long it will take you to travel there, park your car, public transport timetables, etc.

Making a good impression

Impressions count! In particular, the first and last minutes of the interview can have a significant impact. To make a good impression, **DO**:

- Arrive a few minutes early, so that you can relax and prepare before the interview
- Shake hands, greet the interviewer/s by name, and wait to be offered a chair before sitting down
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewers throughout the interview
- Answer questions clearly, using examples to demonstrate your skill and qualities
- Answer questions honestly, neither underselling yourself or exaggerating your capabilities

Types of Questions

Open questions invite you to tell the interviewer about your skills and experience. When answering open questions, keep in mind the selection criteria and your particular strengths. Examples of open questions are:

- Would you tell us what attracts you to a career with us? How do you see your studies, skills, experience and personal qualities contributing to the work of the organisation?
- How do you establish a working relationship with new people?
- Where do you expect to be in 5 years time?

Behavioural questions seek examples of your past experience to predict your future behaviours and performance. Take the time to think of specific examples from your background of how your experiences have allowed you to develop, or demonstrate that you already have the specific skills that the employer is seeking. In giving examples, describe what the situation or task was, what action you took, and the result or outcome. Some examples of behavioural questions are:

- Describe a time when you had to cope with conflicting demands. How did you deal with this situation and what was the outcome?
- Can you describe a time where you have been required to perform as part of a team? What was the situation, what part did you play in the team and what was the outcome of the exercise?

Hypothetical questions are ‘what would you do if...’ questions and will assess your ability to think on your feet.

- Imagine that you are a member of a small team responsible for the development and production of an internal publication. Your team is dependent on another workgroup to provide the data which will form the basis of your publication. The deadline for completing this project is not able to be relaxed. (a) What factors do you think might affect the team's ability to meet the publication deadline? (b) What could the team do to ensure the project is completed on time?
- What are the key elements of measuring performance and how can you establish whether an outcome represents a success? More specifically, what do you think might be some key indicators of the successful performance of a national agency?

Leading questions suggest a logical answer, but don't simply say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Give examples and/or reasons to support your response.

Multi-barrelled questions are two or more questions asked at the same time linked to the same topic. Don't be afraid to ask for the question to be repeated if you can't recall the full question.

For further information about career related activities and opportunities contact the Careers staff at

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