

# APPRENTICESHIP AND JOB INTERVIEWS

Many employers still hold interviews where it's just you and them. Increasingly, though, you might find that employers will conduct a phone/skype/video interview or invite you to an assessment session where a number of applicants are seen together – given tasks to do, or group activities. They then work out who are the most suitable candidates, who might then be interviewed.

To help you feel more confident, it's a good idea to plan for your interview or assessment before you go. It's worth knowing that the first few minutes of an interview are crucial – first impressions count! In assessments there are likely to be people watching and recording, and anything you do may make a difference to whether you are successful.

An interview or assessment is your chance to see what you think about the employer, as well as for them to decide if they want to employ you. It's understandable to be nervous, but remember that a lot of people might not have even got to this stage, so you are doing well to get this far.

## PREPARATION TIPS

If you are asked to confirm that you will be going along to the interview or assessment, make sure you let them know. If you can't make the date they have offered, it may be possible to rearrange it.

Decide what you will wear and allow any time needed for things to be washed or ironed. Make sure you look smart and clean and are comfortable in whatever you choose to wear.

Find out how to get there, how long it will take, and what the travel costs will be. Try online information like the [National Express West Midlands website at nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands](http://National Express West Midlands website at nxbus.co.uk/west-midlands) or the Network West Midlands journey planner at [www.networkwestmidlands.com](http://www.networkwestmidlands.com). You can also call Traveline on **0871 200 2233** for bus and rail information.

If you have any special needs, such as taking a facilitator with you or wheelchair access, make sure you let the employer know.

Check if you need to take anything with you to the interview or assessment or if there are any tests you need to prepare for.

Try to find out in advance whether it is an interview you are being given, or an assessment. This will help avoid any surprises on the day.

## INTERVIEW TIPS

- Think about the questions you might be asked and how you will answer them. You can find some examples of common interview questions below - see 'On the day'
- Think about what you can offer the employer – your skills, abilities, motivation and experience. Think of some practical examples of things you've learned and achieved, and how you can best use this information in the interview
- Try and gather some information about the employer and their products or services – see if they have a website and do some research if you can.
- Think of some questions that you can ask the interviewer – this is your chance to find out more about the role. If you don't ask any questions, the employer may feel you are not really interested in the job.
- Some examples of questions you could ask include: What kind of training will be provided? Will I have a chance to gain any qualifications? What are the prospects for progression in the company? How many people will be on my team? Are there any new developments planned for the company? You may already have done some research around this, so you could impress the employer by asking about specific products, services or projects. **DON'T** ask questions about pay or how much holiday you will get.
- Find someone who will help you with a practice interview, so you can try out your answers.

## ASSESSMENT TIPS

It's harder to prepare for an assessment session since you probably won't know what you might be asked to do.

If the employer has given you any information about what will happen when you attend, study it carefully so that you can be as prepared as possible.

Even if you are taken by surprise – for example, asked to do something you have no experience of or knowledge about – be ready to do your best.

Everyone else might be in the same position as you, so if you seem confident and capable and are able to keep going under pressure, that will help you look good.

Remember, the better prepared you are for your interview or assessment, the less likely you are to be nervous on the day.

# ON THE DAY

**DO**

ARRIVE ON TIME, IDEALLY 5 OR 10 MINUTES EARLY

**DO**

MAKE SURE YOU ARE LOOKING CLEAN AND SMART

**DO**

SMILE AND BE FRIENDLY

**DO**

SPEAK CLEARLY

**DO**

ANSWER QUESTIONS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE

**DO**

LOOK AT THE PERSON YOU'RE SPEAKING TO

**DO**

FOCUS ON YOUR STRONG POINTS AND BE POSITIVE ABOUT YOURSELF

**DO**

ASK SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB ROLE OR COMPANY – THIS WILL SHOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE JOB

**DO**

SHOW THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO LEARN, IF ASKED ABOUT SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T DONE BEFORE.

**DON'T**

SMOKE/VAPE

**DON'T**

CHEW GUM

**DON'T**

LEAVE YOUR MOBILE PHONE ON

**DON'T**

JUST ANSWER "YES" OR "NO" – AN INTERVIEW IS YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE AND ONE-WORD ANSWERS DON'T TELL ANYONE MUCH ABOUT YOU

**DON'T**

AND FINALLY, DON'T WORRY IF YOU HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD A QUESTION – JUST POLITELY ASK FOR IT TO BE EXPLAINED FURTHER

# WHAT TO EXPECT

The list below is the general pattern that most interviews follow including interviews for Further Education or Higher Education. Remember that all interviews are different, so these are only guidelines. You may be interviewed by more than one person, or you may also be asked to do some sort of assessment test or exercise. Whatever happens, just do your best.

**1** INTERVIEWS USUALLY START WITH WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND HANDSHAKES.



**2** THE EMPLOYER MAY CHECK GENERAL FACTS ABOUT YOU, SUCH AS CONTACT DETAILS OR QUALIFICATIONS.



**3** THEY WILL USUALLY ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU AND YOUR EXPERIENCE AND WHY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE JOB.



**4** THEY WILL WANT TO FIND OUT WHY YOU WOULD BE GOOD IN THE JOB, BASED ON YOUR PAST EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL QUALITIES.



**5** YOU WILL PROBABLY BE ASKED TO GIVE EXAMPLES FROM YOUR PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, WORK EXPERIENCE OR VOLUNTARY WORK TO SHOW HOW YOU HAVE USED SKILLS OR ABILITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU MAY BE ASKED TO TALK ABOUT A CHALLENGE YOU'VE OVERCOME, A TIME YOU'VE PROVIDED GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE OR A PROBLEM YOU'VE SOLVED.



**6** YOU WILL USUALLY BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS YOURSELF.



**7** AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW, THE EMPLOYER WILL TELL YOU WHEN THEY ARE LIKELY TO GET BACK IN TOUCH WITH YOU TO LET YOU KNOW THE RESULT.



# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During the interview, the employer will ask questions to find out more about you, your experience and your ability to do the job.

Here we've given some of the most common types of interview question, with some ideas of how you could answer them.

## WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR THIS COMPANY/DO THIS JOB?

This is a good opportunity for you to show how much you know about the company and the job. For example, from your research you may have found out that the company is the biggest of its kind in the area, or that they invest a lot in staff training.

## WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?

This is a good chance to talk about your personal qualities and how they have helped you succeed at work or in your studies. Again, give practical examples of things you have achieved.

## WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS' TIME?

The employer will want to know that you are ambitious and enthusiastic. Find out what opportunities there are to progress in the company, and talk about any you are interested in. For example, if you are applying to be a sales assistant, there may be a chance to become a department manager in future.

## WHAT CAN YOU BRING TO THIS JOB/COMPANY?

This question will give you a chance to talk about your skills and experience. Don't forget to give real examples of how you have used your skills, in work, at school or college or in your free time.

## WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES?

To make this into a positive, try to think of a weakness that you have overcome in the past. For example, if you tend to be shy, emphasise how you have learned to be more outgoing at work or school.

# ASSESSMENTS

There are many different types of assessment and there isn't really a typical example we can give. However, the preparation you would do for an interview would be equally helpful here.

**BE READY TO JOIN IN AND TRY NEW THINGS, IF REQUIRED.**

**REMEMBER THAT ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING YOU DO MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO THE OPINION THAT THE EMPLOYER IS MAKING ABOUT YOU.**

**DON'T THINK OF THE OTHER PEOPLE BEING ASSESSED AS "THE ENEMY" – GETTING ON WITH THEM, AND BEING A GOOD PART OF A TEAM MIGHT BE THE SORT OF THING AN EMPLOYER IS LOOKING FOR.**

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- ◆ Employers will usually let you know by telephone or letter if you are successful.
- ◆ After an assessment, you might be called back for a further session or for a more formal interview.
- ◆ If you are offered a job, always make sure that you let the employer know whether you are accepting it.
- ◆ If you are not offered a job this time, don't be disheartened – it happens to everyone at some point. Look at this interview as good practice for your next one.
- ◆ If you didn't get the job, you could try contacting the employer and asking for some feedback about the reasons why, and how you could have done better. It can be helpful to know if there were any particular things that you could concentrate on improving, ready for your next interview or assessment.