



# Interview Preparation

## Firstly, well done on securing an interview!

This is your chance to shine and make a good impression to a future employer and hopefully these questions will help you prepare for your interview.

## Preparation is key to all interviews, your preparation should therefore include:-

- Gathering information on the organisation (history, other offices, their competitors, products, etc)
- Establishing the location of the interview and, if necessary, doing a practice run to make sure you get there on time and know where to park
- Planning your appearance (smart business dress)
- Preparing questions to ask
- Preparing yourself to reply to the interviewer

## At the Interview

- ✓ Always make sure that you are aware of the position that you are being interviewed for.
- ✓ Research the company as much as possible before you go in and make sure that you are aware where the interview will take place.
- ✓ Plan to arrive 15 minutes early.
- ✓ Phone **before** anticipated time of arrival, if for any reason you are going to be late. Please phone both the Interviewer and Allstaff.
- ✓ Be clear as to whom you are seeing, their position and whether they will be your line manager.

Remember the expression **“You never get a second chance at a first impression”** and you will be on show the minute you enter the car park.

Make sure that when you meet the interviewer you shake hands firmly, smile and stand tall.

Don't sit down until the interviewer asks you to. Then make sure you sit up straight in your chair. Don't lounge back no matter how informal the interview may be.

Do not assume that your interviewer has recently read your CV, they may have been interviewing several people that day – however try to use expression such as **“as you can see from my CV... I have been ...”**



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If asked to talk through your experience/CV – make the overview brief and highlight your experience that is relevant to the role you are applying for.

If you do not understand a question or it is not specific enough, ask them to re-phrase or be specific.

If you have been asked to do a presentation, make sure that this is prepared and you have practiced it a number of times so that you do not simply read the presentation out. The organisation want to see your presentation skills alongside the content of the presentation you have written and prepared. Take along a few printed versions of the presentation with a note section at the bottom of each page, just in case there are any technology issues on the day.

## POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

What are the growth plans of the company?

Who are the company's competitors (you can use the research you have done already to help with your answer and show you have done your research)

How have others progressed within the organisation?

Where does the position fit into the overall organisation?

Who are the key people I would be working with?

What will I be doing for the highest percentage of the time?

What is the most rewarding aspect of this job?





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## **POSSIBLE QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED BY THE INTERVIEWER**

What are your good points/how would your boss describe you? (Strengths)?

What are your weaknesses? Explain how you overcome them.  
Why do you think you are suitable for this position?  
What motivates you?

Why did you leave your last job?  
Why does this vacancy interest you?  
What do you know about our company?

What aspects of your last job did you enjoy?  
What are your long-term career goals?



How to Answer  
**Interview Questions**  
about your weaknesses

### **Helpful tip for answering 'What are your weaknesses?'**

You can say you don't know of any that would prevent you from doing an excellent job in the position you are discussing. If pressed, you can turn this into an opportunity to talk about the kind of workplace you hope to enter. You might say that you prefer not to work in an environment where there's no teamwork or where you don't have a sense of why your work matters. Another good answer along those lines, which turns your "weaknesses"

into strengths: "I work better in a team environment, despite the fact that I'm a self-starter and think well independently" or "I never say no" so they see you as a hard worker.

Make sure any 'weaknesses' you mention are NOT the key skills that they are looking for in the role. Also always have a solution to your weakness – it is good to recognise weakness within yourself and to show you are doing something to combat that weakness.



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## Do's and Don'ts

### Always:

✓ **Make sure your attire is appropriate for interview**

Clean and pressed business attire (no cardigans and nothing too revealing), polished shoes (no flip flops), conservative jewellery, clean, tidy hair and subtle makeup.

✓ **Turn your mobile phone off!**

✓ **Do not smoke before you go in!**

✓ **Be a good listener**

You may miss something very important that they are trying to explain to you.

✓ **Always illustrate interest in the company, even if this particular role is not suitable**

Another position may become available to you.

✓ **Use the interviewer's name**

Although interviews are relatively formal, using first names can put people at ease.

✓ **Observe the interviewer's reactions**

Body language is a great way of knowing how well or badly you are doing and can allow you to raise your game if needs be.

✓ **Answer questions directly and specifically, and avoid long pauses**

Be precise, don't waffle and ensure you are answering the question.

✓ **Describe your accomplishments in quantitative terms**

Use %, £ or time saved wherever possible.

✓ **Display confidence in your past achievements**

Today you are selling your most valuable product – 'YOU'.

✓ **Ask questions that reflect preparation and logical thinking**

- What will you expect of the person you hire?
- What results are you expecting the person to produce?

✓ **Be honest when answering questions about current salary and benefits**

Do not try and be clever or appear greedy when discussing required salary. Remember part of our role is to negotiate salary/package on your behalf. The client may also be interviewing a number of suitably skilled candidates who may illustrate more commitment to their company by offering more flexibility in terms of salary. If in doubt,





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explain that you are negotiable in terms of salary for the correct position, or that salary is something that you want to give more thought to and then leave the rest to us.

✓ **End negatives with a positive**

Avoid questions where the answer to whether or not you have specific experience, is a single no. Instead, always be honest and admit that you do not have the experience but end the sentence on a positive note. e.g. *"No, but I am sure that I can learn it quickly"*

✓ **At the end of the interview shake the interviewer's hand, thank them for their time and confirm your interest in the role**

You can also ask when you will get a decision.

## Never:

- ✗ **Be aggressive or arrogant**
- ✗ You can put people off in an instant, even though you did not mean to seem that way.
- ✗ **Answer questions with just yes or no**
- ✗ Always explain your answers fully, it shows you are a good communicator and are interested.
- ✗ **Argue, lose your cool or show nervousness**
- ✗ Confrontation or inability to maintain control will not reflect well on you.
- ✗ **Criticise past or present employers**
- ✗ It shows lack of respect and could draw you into a conversation that you did not want to have.
- ✗ **Highlight weaknesses**
- ✗ It will encourage the interviewer to explore this further.
- ✗ **Attempt to read documents on the interviewer's desk**
- ✗ People are very territorial and protective of their belongings and this could be seen as a challenge to their territory.



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## What are Competency Based Interviews?

Competency based interview questions are used in an effort to make the interview process as standard and as fair as possible and it is a technique which is being used increasingly in many organisations.

Competency based interviewing can sometimes be referred to as 'Structured Interviewing' or 'Evidence Based Interviewing' and there are two common approaches; one is to ask a series of questions, targeted at each of the core competencies while the other involves in-depth probing questions with the interviewer actively listening for clues which provide evidence that the candidate possesses the necessary skills.

The word competency is widely used in business environments and refers to the skills that are necessary to achieve an effective performance level in the job. Every job will have a set of key competencies, some of which are essential and others desired and all are required to do the job properly.

## Examples of Common Competencies

- Communication Skills
- Delivering Results
- Interpersonal Skills
- Use of Initiative
- Planning and Organising
- Analytical Thinking
- Strategic Thinking
- Building Relationships
- Developing Others
- Team Work

When preparing for a competency based interview the experienced interviewer will draw up a list of questions relating to each competency and all directed towards discovering if the candidate has the necessary skills. It is a good idea to look through the job description and/or person specification for the essential and desired competencies so that you can prepare some answers prior to the interview.



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## Questions asked during Competency Based Interviews

The most common types of questions asked in competency based interviews are behavioural based. These are also called Situational and are used as a tool to discover how your behaviour in a previous role or situation can contribute to your performance in the job being recruited for.

These will usually start with phrases such as:

- Tell me about a time when you....
- Give an example of a situation where....
- Describe a scenario....

Your interviewer may also choose to ask direct questions such as:

- How would you rate you communication skills?
- Describe your management style?
- What is your leadership philosophy?
- This is your opportunity to give examples and tell the story of

When you have demonstrated and proven the competencies you are being asked about within a work environment. If you cannot think of a specific example at work has there been a time outside of work e.g. at school/university, during voluntary work or within your leisure activities (e.g. a sports team) that you can utilise? If possible, try to avoid describing how you 'would' approach a situation - only do this if you cannot think of real life examples.

An excellent way to structure your answers to competency based questions is to use the STAR technique:

### Situation

Explain which role you were doing at the time and the situation you found yourself in

### Task

What were you aiming to achieve from the situation?

### Action

What did you do? Why did you do it? What were the alternatives?

### Results

What was the result? What did you achieve through your actions and did you meet your objectives? This is where your answer can really shine to an interviewer if you detail the result in a quantifiable way e.g. money saved (either a £ amount saved or a % saving), time saved, increased output/productivity, reduced error rate, customer satisfaction, repeat business etc.



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Good luck and please remember to call Allstaff straight after your interview to let us know your thoughts!

