



Interview Tips & Techniques

Candidate guide to Interviews

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INTERVIEW TIPS & TECHNIQUES

The interview process can be a very daunting and stressful experience regardless of your experience or the role you carry out. The interviewer not only wants to assess your experience, skills and qualifications for the job but also your appearance, enthusiasm and confidence in order to make a decision on the best candidate.

So, the key ingredients for you to have a successful interview are preparation, knowledge and making a first impression.

Our interview guide, based on Sitec's experiences and feedback has been created to help you with forthcoming interviews. Obviously every interview is different, but these tips and techniques will help prepare you to get the better of any nerves and give yourself the best chance of securing the position.

Pre-Interview

Research the company / Who is interviewing you

You will more than likely be asked specific questions about the company, so make sure you have researched topics such as the company history, and latest product launches. Also look for recent developments in their specific field so you are able to converse with confidence.

Practice your answers

As discussed in the **Your Questions** section below, there are certain questions that arise in interviews. It will make the experience more relaxing if you think about and practice what you will say should these come up.

Dress the part

Remember you have just one chance to make a first impression and first appearances are important. You are judged on how you look before you even shake hands. Make sure your shoes are clean/polished, your clothing is appropriate and that your accessories are subtle. Dressing above the job you are applying for shows a desire to succeed.

Expect the unexpected

Your interviewer may try to catch you off guard: It is impossible to plan for every difficult question, such as "How would your colleagues describe you?" but try to appear relaxed and in control. Ask the interviewer to repeat the question if necessary but do not evade it.

Develop a rapport

Show energy, a sense of humour and smile. Ask your interviewer questions about the company and any issues the business is facing.

Clarify anything you are unsure of

If you are not certain what is meant by a particular question, ask for clarification. At the end, ask the interviewer if there is anything else he or she needs to know about you. Do not be afraid to ask when you are likely to hear the result of the interview.

Ask questions

You should always have some questions for your interviewer to demonstrate your interest in the position. We suggest preparing a minimum of five questions, some which will give you more information about the job, and some which delve deeper into the culture and goals of the company. On Page 3 are example questions to assist you with this.

Stay calm

Being prepared will help you to keep calm and stay in control. Plan your route to the interview, allowing extra time for any unexpected delays, and have everything you need to take with you ready the night before.

Interview Questions

As previously mentioned, there is never a set format for interviews, but there are certain questions that always seem to come up. Below is a list of some common questions and a guide to help you answer these in a way the interviewer would want to hear. Obviously these are only our suggestions, and it is always best to personalise your responses. If you do get difficult questions, stay calm, take your time and think before answering.

Tell me about yourself?

This is usually the opening question and, first impressions are key. Try and keep your answer under five minutes, beginning with an overview of your highest qualification then running through the jobs you've held so far in your career. It is easier to follow the same structure of your CV, giving examples of achievements and the skills you have obtained in these roles. The interviewer(s) will probably take notes and ask for you to expand on any areas where they would like more information. If you are interviewing for your first job since leaving education, focus on the areas of your studies you most enjoyed and how these have led to you wanting this particular role.

What are your strengths?

Choose the three biggest attributes that you think will get you the job and give examples of how you have used these strengths in a work situation. They could be tangible skills, such as proficiency in a particular computer language, or intangible skills such as good man-management. If you're not sure where to start, take a look at the job description. There is usually a section listing candidate requirements, which should give you an idea of what they are looking for.

What are your weaknesses?

No one likes to answer this question when trying to sell themselves, it is best handled by choosing something that you have made positive steps to address. For example, if your IT ability is not at the level it could be, state it as a weakness but tell the interviewer about any training courses or time spent outside work hours used to improve your skills. Your initiative could actually be perceived as a strength. On no accounts say "I don't have any weaknesses", your interviewer won't believe you, or answer "I have a tendency to work too hard", which may be seen as avoiding the question.

Why should we hire you? or What can you do for us that other candidates can't?

What makes you special and where do your major strengths lie? You should be able to find out what they are looking for from the job description. State your biggest achievement and the benefit it made to the business.

What are your goals? or Where do you see yourself in five years time?

It is best to talk about both your short-term and long-term goals. Talk about the kind of job you'd eventually like to do and the various steps you will need to get there, relating this in some way back to the position you're interviewing for. Show the employer you have ambition, and that you have the determination to make the most of every job to get where you want to be.

Why do you want to work here?

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought. If you have prepared for the interview properly, you should have a good inside knowledge of the company's values, mission statement, development plans and products. Use this information to describe how your goals and ambition matches their company ethos and how you would relish the opportunity to work for them.

What salary are you seeking?

You can prepare for this by knowing the value of someone with your skills. Try not to give any specific numbers in the heat of the moment – it could put you in a poor position when negotiating later on. Your interviewer will understand if you don't want to discuss this until you are offered the job. If they have provided a guideline salary with the job description, you could mention this and say it's around the figure you're looking for.

Your Questions

The majority of interviewers will give you an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview. There is a good chance that everything you want or need to know about the job will have been covered over the course of the interview.

However try to focus on issues that are important to you and combine an interest in the company with an interest in the job. With role specific questions, look through the job description to see if there are any areas that you would like more information about. You should also get an insight into what the company would be like to work for. Below are some good examples of the questions you could ask about the role/company:

- Why has the position become available?
- What are the main objectives of the role and how does the company expect these objectives to be met?
- What are the measures used to judge how successful I am in the role?
- What obstacles are commonly encountered in reaching these objectives?
- What can I expect from you in terms of development and support?
- What aspirations do you have for me at the company?
- Where will the job fit into the team structure?
- What's the best thing about working at your company?
- What is the main thing the organisation expects from its employees?
- How do you build good relationships within teams?
- What is the turnover of staff throughout the company?
- Are there any plans for expansion?
- How would you describe the company culture and management style?

To show your interest and knowledge of the company's industry, it is also a good idea to have a question ready regarding a current event or issue in the market. For example, "How do you think the recent merger between your two main competitors will affect the future of the industry?" How well your interviewer reacts and answers your questions gives you a great insight into the company.

The interview isn't just for them to see if you're the right fit for the organisation – if you are confident about your skills and ability to do the job, you should also be making sure they are the right fit for you. Generally, it is not advisable to discuss pay or benefits at length, as this can make you seem more interested in purely financial objectives rather than what you can bring to them.

We wish you all the best and hope the above has helped you to focus on various interview scenarios and will aid you in completing a successful interview.

Good Luck!