



Sellick Partnership
Recruitment Specialists

Your complete interview guide

Useful advice and tips
for your interview



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Types of interviews you might face

Telephone interview

A telephone call is usually a first-round screening to see if you are suitable to progress to the next stage of the interview, so making a good first impression is imperative. You should prepare for this just as you would for a face-to-face interview.



Top tip! Make sure you are in a quiet area, with good signal and sufficient battery – you don't want to be cut off in the middle of the interview. You are also at an advantage as you can have your CV and notes on the organisation you are interviewing with right in front of you!

Video interview

As Skype and FaceTime become more popular, you may be asked to do a video interview. You may be invited to an office or asked to connect at home using your own computer or mobile device.



Top tip! If you're not comfortable in front of the camera, make sure you practice to ensure you are presenting yourself in the right way. Dress smart and clear your backdrop – first impressions are a deciding factor in whether you will make it to the next step in the recruitment process.

Face-to-face interview

A face-to-face interview is the most common type of interview and can be a meeting between you and members of staff from the interviewing organisation. This may be one person, or multiple people depending on the company and the role.



Top tip! Start with a firm handshake, make sure your answers are concise and display positive body language.

Group interview and assessment centres

An assessment centre interview will bring a group of applicants together to do a combination of tasks and activities that test your suitability for the role. These will usually happen at the organisation you are interviewing for or at an assessment centre and will usually involve a series of tests/group activities. They give you the chance to demonstrate a wider range of skills than you would have been able to during a traditional face-to-face interview.



There are various types of tests and activities you may be asked to do at an assessment centre interview, including:

Group interviews – similar to a face-to-face interview but multiple candidates will be in the room at the same time. These can often be coupled with ice breaker activities and tests to judge your ability to work with others.



Top tip for group interviews: make sure you speak up, give your opinion and show your personality. It is also advisable not to be too over the top all the way through as this could portray a negative image of you.

Psychometric testing – psychometric tests are a standard and scientific method used to measure individuals' mental capabilities and behavioural style. They are designed to measure candidates' suitability for a role based on the required personality characteristics and aptitude (or cognitive abilities).



Top tip for psychometric testing: try not to anticipate the employer's requirement and answer the questions honestly. There are built-in checks to ensure your answers are consistent. Answer honestly; there are no right or wrong answers.

Technical testing – some roles will require you to have certain skills, and an interviewer may decide to test these skills in your interview. For example, for a finance role they may do a numerical test, or a managerial role may require a proofreading test.



Top tip for technical testing: there are various online tools dedicated to technical testing which you can use to practice.

Role plays – role plays are used to test the way you act in certain situations. For example, for a sales role you may be asked to role play a call where you have to sell something to a customer. This allows the interviewer to test your ability and also how you react under pressure.



Top tip for role plays: demonstrating confidence in role plays is extremely important – prepare for any possible role play questions you may be asked.

Working interview – a working interview is an opportunity for you to prove your job skills to an organisation. You will usually be asked to perform the duties of the job alongside a supervisor or future co-workers. Working interviews are also an opportunity to ensure that you are a good fit for the organisation.



Presentations during an interview

At some point in your career and as you progress into more senior roles, you may be asked to prepare and deliver a presentation. Usually you will be asked to deliver a presentation to assess the strength of your communication and organisation skills, your technical knowledge and abilities, as well as your commitment and enthusiasm for the role. There are more tips on building an interview presentation later in this document.



Top tip! Be prepared for follow-up questions. Use visual aids but don't overdo it on PowerPoint!



Before your interview

Decide what to wear

A job interview is your opportunity to make a great first impression with your potential employer. Dressing for success is a big part of the interview process. This is your only opportunity to make a good first impression, so getting it right is essential.

If you are wondering what to wear to an interview, the most important thing to keep in mind is that you must look professional and polished. While your interview attire depends on what job you're applying for, no matter what the position, you should look neat, tidy, and well-dressed.



Top tip! Remember, wear something reflective of the environment you may be working in. If in doubt dress smartly. It is better to be overdressed than underdressed at an interview.

Getting to your interview

Allow plenty of time for the journey and aim to arrive ten minutes early (no earlier). This will give you an opportunity to relax before your interview, but also won't put your interview under any pressure to meet you earlier. If you are unsure of how long the journey will take, always allow extra time, or if you have the opportunity to do a test run the day before at the same time. This will also allow you to test the route prior to accepting the job to ensure it is manageable should you be offered the job.

Use social media to your advantage

It is highly likely the hiring manager will look you up on social media prior to your interview date so it is advisable not to post anything unprofessional – including compromising pictures. If you would rather your interviewer not see the content on your profile check your privacy settings and ensure your profile is set to private.

It is also a great idea to update any professional profiles you may have and ensure you are active on these in the days leading up to your interview. Utilise sites such as LinkedIn to get a better understanding of the sector you are interviewing for, look up who may be interviewing you and ensure you are up-to-speed with all the company's latest activity. In doing so, you will show you are keen and it may give you some extra topics to discuss during your interview.

Research the company

Research the company through their website and social media pages such as LinkedIn and Twitter. Find out more about their vision, mission, values, competitors and issues that may affect the organisation and wider job sector.





Top tip! Websites like Glassdoor are a great way to not only learn about the company, but also their culture and what their employees think about working there. Use these sites to your advantage and make sure you are armed with enough general information on what the company is, for example, when it was formed, by whom and if they have won any recent awards or accreditations.

Research the role

Identify the skills, interests and experiences that the organisation is looking for by looking at their website as well as re-reading the job description. Read the job description fully and ensure you match your skills to the specifics of the role. This will allow you to discuss your strengths confidently and enable you to highlight why you think you are suited to the role you are interviewing for.



Top tip! If you are struggling with this part speak to your Consultant. They will be able to help you understand the organisation and may have some handy tips on what skills you should highlight during the interview.

Research yourself

Make sure you know your CV inside out so you can talk naturally about your skills and experience. Spend some time mapping out how your skills and experience relate to the role. You want to make it easy for the interviewer to see how you're a great fit, and relating your experience to their requirements is the best way of doing this.

Put your phone away

Most of us will pull out our mobile phone any time we have to wait. But if you are waiting in reception, don't automatically default to your phone. Instead, take that time to look over your CV and think through what you want to convey during your interview. Then, when your interviewer makes his or her appearance, you won't be caught off guard.



Top tip! Read any marketing materials or brochures in the waiting area – this will emphasise your interest in the role and could give you further talking points during your interview.



Preparing for your interview

Preparing for your interview is vitally important. From researching the role and company, to coming up with answers to commonly asked questions. The more research and preparation that you do prior to attending your interview the better it is likely to go. Below are some questions to ask yourself before your interview takes place. It may be beneficial to write answers to these questions down, and don't be afraid to take these into the interview with you.

Common interview questions

Impressing at interview stage is essential in securing a role. As part of the interview process there may be a mixture of basic questions and competency-based questions (to assess your skills and how you would apply them in the role and determine how you react in different circumstances). Here we provide valuable information regarding the format of a typical interview and tips on how to prepare.

Not all of these questions will be relevant, but this will give you a good idea of what you can expect to be asked so you can prepare concise and relevant answers.

Basic interview questions

Your interviewer will likely ask a set of questions that commonly appear in almost every interview. Below we have put a selection of these questions to help you prepare:

- ✱ **Tell me about yourself** – be brief and concise, presenting a synopsis of what your current role is, the skills that make you good at it and what would make you be of interest to the interviewer.
- ✱ **Why do you want to work for us?** – don't talk about what you want; first talk about their needs. Show you want to be part of an exciting company, underlining what it is about both the company and role that attracts you. Combine these with your beliefs on how you can make a definite contribution to them and to their specific company goals.
- ✱ **What would you do for us/what could you bring to us that we would benefit from?** – relate past experiences that represent success in working for previous employers and highlight your track record of providing creative, workable solutions. Select a couple of positive personality traits to underline the contribution you will make (e.g. 'thorough', 'diligent', 'dynamic').
- ✱ **What do you find most attractive about this position? Least attractive?** – list a couple of attractive factors such as the responsibility the post offers and the opportunity to work with experienced people/teams. Alternatively, say you'd need more information and time before being able to make a judgement on any unattractive aspects.



- * **Please give me your definition/understanding of the position for which you are being interviewed** – make sure you have a good understanding of the role you are going for, and any specific skills/experience required to do the job. Link these to your expertise.
- * **What do you enjoy about what you do/the field you work in?** – this is your chance to explain what motivates you to get out of bed! Focus on aspects of the role that you find interesting, what you get the most pleasure out of and what you find most rewarding. Being able to articulate these factors with commitment and the right degree of passion for your work can go a long way in impressing your interviewer.
- * **What would you say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?** – you should have two or three examples of strengths and should back them up with examples. Try not to be too negative about your weaknesses; try and use examples that could be seen as a positive e.g. ‘I am sometimes intent on completing an assignment and get too deeply involved when we are late.’ Try to be specific and unique. Everyone will be using similar responses here so try and make yourself stand out by thinking outside the box.
- * **Give an example of a difficult objective you have been set and how you have met it** – pick out a goal that you have achieved that would be similar to one you may be asked to do in this role. Briefly outline what it was, what made it ‘difficult’, how you approached it, the positive responses you got and the effect it had on the company.
- * **Have you got an example of how you have challenged the “way things are done”?** – make sure that this is a positive answer. Explain what you changed, the process of change involved and how the end result was better. Ensure you underline that it was beneficial to the firm and all those it effected, and point out that you won “buy-in” at every stage from identifying scope for change through to execution.
- * **Why are you leaving your current role/looking for a new role?** – be positive. Focus on aspects such as the need to develop yourself further, a desire to bring your skills to a new environment, the opportunity working for this company gives you etc.

Competency based questions

Competency-based interviews are becoming increasingly popular as a way to predict future performance. The interviewer will ask you to describe a situation which demonstrates your abilities that will be integral to the role you are interviewing for.

Answers to competency-based questions should be very structured and you should always try to answer using relevant past experiences, so we recommend the STAR technique, describing:

- * The **S**ituation
- * The **T**ask required as a result



* The **A**ction you took

* The **R**esult of that action

S Situation	T Task	A Action	R Result
Describe the situation	Describe the task you undertook	Describe the action you took	Describe the result of the action

Individual competencies refer to your personal attributes such as your flexibility, decisiveness, tenacity, knowledge, independence, risk-taking and personal integrity.

Example: Tell me about a time when your work or an idea was challenged.

Managerial competencies refer to your ability to take charge of other people such as leadership, empowerment, strategic thinking, corporate sensitivity, project management and managerial control.

Example: Tell me about a time you led a group to achieve an objective.

Analytical competencies refer to your decision-making abilities such as innovation, analytical skills, problem-solving, practical learning and attention to detail.

Example: Tell me about a time when you identified a new approach to a problem

Interpersonal competencies refer to social competence. Many workplaces function on the basis of project teams and the more collaborative they are, the more likely they are to thrive.

Example: Describe a situation where you got people to work together.

Motivational competencies refer to the things that drive you such as resilience, energy, motivation, result orientation, initiative and quality focus.

Example: When did you work the hardest and feel the greatest sense of achievement?

Remember, be yourself when answering competency questions; use real life examples and relate them to your experience, how you reacted or how it made you feel. These are not trick questions, but they are designed to create the best match between an individual and an organisation. With some preparation beforehand you will quickly realise that competency-based interviews represent an unprecedented opportunity to describe some of your finer moments to a captive audience.



During your interview

Put your game face on

Your interview starts the minute you walk into the organisation's office so ensure you treat everyone you meet as you would the interviewer themselves. Try and look relaxed, and if you are asked to wait in reception, do something to keep you calm. Reading the magazines often on the table is a great way of doing this. Please try and avoid using your phone.

Make a good first impression

First impressions count, so making it good is crucial. Most people will make up their mind on you within the first few minutes of meeting, so starting your interview off the right way is so important. Make sure you greet your interviewer (or interviewers) in a professional manner, look interested in what they have to say and project how enthusiastic you are to be there.

Body language

Body language is very important during an interview. The way an interviewer perceives your body language can make all the difference. Body language is especially meaningful in an interview as your interviewer will be paying as much attention to it as to what you have to say. You want to avoid nervous or bored body language like repeatedly crossing and uncrossing your legs or arms, fiddling with your hair or clothes, continually touching your face, scratching your head. Particularly avoid anything your interviewer might find annoying, like playing with a button or pen. Since some of these mannerisms are often triggered by nervousness, solid interview preparation and rehearsal may help you to feel more relaxed.

On the other hand, some body language can also show that you are engaged in the interview. Some positive examples of body language in an interview include leaning forward slightly to show your enthusiasm and nodding whenever is appropriate, particularly when your interviewer is making an important point. You should also ensure you smile at appropriate time during your interview, this will show the interviewer that you are interested in what they have to say and will stop you looking bored or uninterested.



Top tip! If you are prone to fidgeting try and practice sitting in a certain way before your interview. This will allow you to try various options to find out what is most comfortable to you.

Build rapport

It is important to build rapport with your interviewer, and small talk can be a great way of doing this. Open up conversation where you can, and always ask questions back throughout the interview. For example, if they ask about your weekend, answer politely and ask them



about theirs back. Small conversations like this will allow you to show your personality and may set you apart from other candidates.

Remember eye contact

A lack of eye contact during an interview can lead your interviewer to think that you are shy, disinterested, or dishonest. While you don't want to stare at your interviewer to the point of making him or her uncomfortable, do maintain eye contact as much as seems appropriate. If you are speaking to more than one interviewer, you can shift your gaze between them, but be sure to look each interviewer in the eye for at least a couple of seconds. Direct your answers to all of the people in the room.



Questions to ask the interviewer

Interviewers like candidates that come prepared and that seem genuinely interested about the role, so it is important to think about any questions you may have and ask them at the end of the interview (or during if the opportunity presents itself). If you need to, write your questions down and take them in with you. Here are a few examples of questions you might want to ask:

- * What are the future plans of the company?
- * What are your company's growth plans?
- * How large is the current team I will be working within?
- * Why has the vacancy arisen?
- * What does a typical day look like?
- * What advice would you give to succeed in this role?
- * What is staff retention like?
- * Do you have any training, study support or opportunities to pursue professional qualifications?
- * What are the prospects for growth and progression?
- * What is the salary for the role?
- * Is remote working feasible?
- * What is the annual leave entitlement?
- * When can I expect to hear from you?
- * How long have you been here?
- * What do you find most enjoyable about the role?
- * What is your background?



Top tip! Confirm the salary and benefits with your recruitment consultant prior to the interview rather than ask at the interview. By leaving your consultant to negotiate on your behalf you will often end up with a more comprehensive offer.



Presentation tips

If you have succeeded in getting to final interview stage you may be asked to deliver a short presentation to a panel. You will usually be given a specific topic to prepare and will be judged on:

- * The quality of your ideas.
- * The clarity of your thinking – for example if you are able to take a strategic perspective.
- * Your verbal communications skills, especially your ability to influence and engage your audience.
- * Your organisation skills: how well you prepare beforehand and manage your time within the presentation.
- * Your formal presentation skills where this is a key part of the job.

Here are our top tips to ensure your presentation goes down well during an interview.

Have a clear message – work out what you want to say in two or three sentences before elaborating your ideas. It is important to write this down and make this the theme of your whole presentation and refer to it regularly. Remember, in order to make an impact you need to have clear recommendations, backed up by convincing arguments.

Structure your presentation – make sure the structure of your presentation is clear and well laid out. You should include the following:

- * A short introduction explaining what the presentation is about and what you are going to cover.
- * Clear sections or themes within the presentation (there might be one slide per theme), ensuring your argument has a logical structure.
- * A summary of your arguments.
- * A clear conclusion with specific recommendations, identifying the resources required to deliver them.
- * Say thank you and invite questions at the end.

Less is more – Keep your presentation succinct and to the point. It is better to let the interviewer ask follow-up questions at the end rather than rushing which may mean they will miss your most important points. We would advise to keep presentation to three or four slides for a five minute presentation, or six or seven for a ten minute presentation. If you need to



produce a separate handout with additional information please do so, but ensure your presentation looks clean and uncluttered.



Top tip! You don't have to put all your points onto your slides – it is fine to put some top-line points on a slide but then elaborate on them verbally. If your presentation requires more detail, this can be given as a supporting hard copy handout.

Design of slides – keep your design simple. Use clear fonts and where possible use the company's logo and brand colours. This will show that you have thought about your presentation and put some effort into it. If you feel like you are putting too much on your slides, then you probably are. Don't fill your slides with too much text and use imagery or graphics where possible to make them as vibrant and interesting as possible. Less is more in this instance, and the cleaner your slides look, the easier they will be to read.

Manage your time – your presentation should not exceed the amount of time you have been given – if it is too short you can appear underprepared and if it is too long you may be cut off halfway through and penalised for not following instructions. It is always a good idea to have a timed run through of your finished presentation.

Do your research – make sure you have researched your topic thoroughly. Find out how the business has handled this issue or a similar situation in the past. You may also want to research what their competitors are doing in this field to get some ideas on what might work.



Top tip! Have some relevant facts and figures to illustrate key trends at your fingertips – this can enhance your credibility and show impressive levels of preparation.

Know your audience – before you start writing your presentation, think about who is going to be interviewing you. What are their job responsibilities, priorities and professional backgrounds? You can find out a lot through online research on sites such as LinkedIn. Think about your presentation from their perspective and consider what aspects of the topic will most interest them.

Predict follow up questions – go through your presentation and work out what questions the panel might ask, especially given their job roles and personal perspectives. Make sure you have an answer ready for these questions.

Typical follow up questions might include:

* Why are you recommending x option and not y?



- * What resources would be required to implement this?
- * How would you go about getting signed on to your recommendations with key stakeholders?
- * What are the risks of this plan of action and how would you minimise them?
- * How do your recommendations fit with the organisation's wider activities and strategies?

Test your presentation out – we would always advise that you run through your ideas for the presentation with someone else and test it thoroughly. Asking for feedback can help you discover if there is something obvious you have neglected to mention and to ensure your ideas are well understood by others. Also, make sure the presentation works to avoid any embarrassing mishaps on the day.

Take a backup – always make sure you have a Plan B if the technology is not working or a vital piece of equipment is not available. If you are delivering a PowerPoint presentation, email it to yourself as well as taking it on a stick just in case. It can also be helpful to print off some hard copies in case there are problems with the projector. You may wish to take a small clock in case the room doesn't have one, and you don't wish to keep checking your watch. It is also advisable to email your presentation to the company before your interview takes place. This way you are covering all bases in case any sudden mishaps happen.

Build rapport – the more familiar you are with your material the more confident you will feel. The best way to engage your audience is to maintain strong eye contact; avoid looking at the screen or reading notes. Use keywords on a card as prompts rather than memorising sentences as a 'speech' as this will appear more natural and most importantly remember to smile, this will put you and the panel at ease and make the experience much more enjoyable. It is also important to look up and not down at a piece of paper. Engage eye contact and ensure the interviewers can see your face and not the back of your notes.



After your interview

Closing the Interview

At the end of the interview we would strongly recommend closing the interview itself. This will give you the opportunity to address any concerns that the interviewer may have there and then.

Questions that you can ask at this stage are:

- * Do you have any concerns in offering me the position / taking me through to the next stage?
- * Based on the experience that I have, would you have any reservations on offering me this role?
- * Is there anything that I haven't answered in enough detail that you would like me to go over again?
- * Do you have any concerns or reservations on how I have come across in this interview?

Following up

After your interview it is important to get in touch with your Recruitment Consultant to discuss how the interview went. They will be able to go through any next steps with you if they have not been discussed during the interview. This will also let them know that you have completed the interview and give them information that may be helpful in following up.

Notify your references

Having suitable references is going to be essential for your job search and you don't want them to feel like they're being cold-called by your potential employer. So, if you haven't already, alert your references that they might receive a call or email regarding your application.



Common mistakes to avoid

- * **Have your own voice** – constantly agreeing with the interviewer is not always the best way forward. The interviewer will want to know your opinion on key topics. If you disagree, explain your thoughts in a calm way and put forward your arguments. This will show the interviewer that you have your own voice and that you are not afraid to stand up for your own views.
- * **Don't talk too much** – talking too much can have a negative impact on the way you are perceived. Allow the interviewer to speak and ask questions, and if you feel you are rambling stop and take a breath.
- * **Avoid talking negatively** – try to keep everything you discuss positive, especially if you are talking about your previous employer. Interviewers don't want to know how horrible your old boss was. Instead try to make everything a positive and talk about what you have learned and gained from your experiences rather than what was wrong.
- * **Always make time to prepare** – even if you are attending multiple interviews, prepare for each one individually. Each organisation will be different so it is important you spend enough time researching each. The best candidates will be able to answer key questions on the company they are interviewing for and be able to relate their experiences and skills to the role in question.
- * **Personal hygiene and appearance** – this is an obvious one, but make sure you are clean and well presented for your interview. Remember this is the first impression they will get of you so if you go in smelling of smoke or looking unprofessional it could impact your chances of being offered the role.



Top tip! Remember to listen carefully and never talk over the interviewer. They may be asking or telling you something important that you will miss, and it comes across as rude if you don't listen.



Final tips

- * Remember to use a firm handshake; it conveys a positive and confident persona.
- * Remember that honesty really is the best policy.
- * Demonstrate positive and open body language – don't slouch, and smile where appropriate and show enthusiasm for the company and position.
- * Find opportunities to sell yourself, relating your skills to the position.
- * Remain motivated and give positive responses.
- * Show that you have researched the company.
- * Take time to answer questions and give yourself time to think.
- * Seek clarification if you are unsure of the meaning of the question.
- * Keep your answers clear and to the point.
- * Ask when you'll be given a decision and when you can expect to hear from them.
- * Tell them you are interested in the job if you are.
- * Thank the interviewer for seeing you.



Your next steps

- * Download our free CV template and LinkedIn Guide to help optimise your job search!
- * Look out for our free guide on 'Online Branding for Professionals' to ensure you conduct yourself correctly on your social media profiles
- * Stay in touch with Sellick Partnership – once you have edited your CV we will review and assist with interview preparation. We will also start putting you forward for any roles.
- * Visit our website sellickpartnership.co.uk for further careers advice and the latest roles.



Top tip! Don't forget to call your Recruitment Consultant directly after your interview to give feedback! This will show your enthusiasm and could open up discussions about next stage interviews and or an offer for the role.

