

CANDIDATE TIPS

REFINING YOUR INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Interviews range from conversations lasting a few minutes to several formal meetings, sometimes with more than one interviewer.

The better prepared you are, the more relaxed and comfortable you will be when the interview questions begin. The following offers a few interview tips and suggestions on ways to refine your interview technique

RESEARCH

Gather information about the company and try to relate your experience to the specific duties of the job opportunity available. Prepare a list of questions you want to ask about the organisation and the position. These could include:

- Do you have a detailed job description?
- Why is the position available?
- What training and induction will be given?
- What prospects are there for personal and professional development?
- What are the company plans for the future?
- What attributes would you hope that I bring to the job?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- What skills and attributes do successful people at your company usually have?
- What do you like best about working at the company?
- What results are expected from me?
- What specific problems are you hoping to solve during the first six months?
- What communication style do you prefer?
- What are your goals for the department?



LOOK THE PART

Dress for success! At an interview it is extremely important to look, act and dress professionally as you won't have a second chance at making a good first impression. Ideally, a business suit should be worn. Clean shoes, clean finger nails and clean well groomed hair are important.

We can't overemphasise how important first impressions are. Research has shown that an interviewer has made an impression within the first eight seconds of meeting the person. The remainder of the interview is spent confirming this opinion, or turning this opinion around.

PLAN AHEAD, BE PREPARED!

Practice interviewing - Enlist a friend (better yet, a group of friends and colleagues) to ask you sample questions. Practice making eye contact.

Video record your practice sessions - Pay attention to body language and verbal presentation. Eliminate verbal fillers, like "uh," and "um." Practice using positive body language to signal confidence, even when you're not feeling it.

Handle logistics early - Have your clothes, resume, and directions to the interview site ready ahead of time, to avoid any extra stress.



ANTICIPATE LIKELY QUESTIONS

Behavioural interview questions are aimed at establishing various core competencies relevant to the role, such as teamwork, creativity and innovation, decision making ability, business awareness or conflict resolution. The interviewer is looking for examples of past behaviour that demonstrate these competencies.

Sample behavioural interview questions include:

- Describe a situation in which you didn't meet your stated goal, how did you handle it?
- Tell us about a situation in which you encountered resistance from key people, how did you convince the person or people to do what you wanted?
- Describe a situation in which you took the initiative to change a process or system and make it better, how did you identify the problem? How did you go about instituting change?

PREPARE INTERVIEW ANSWERS

Interviewers will follow up your preliminary answers with further questions about your actions. To prepare for these types of interview questions, the following tips might help:

- Review your research about the company and the position.
- Make a list of key attributes for your desired job.
- Write sample interview questions that are likely to uncover the attributes you identified as important.
- Create answers to the sample interview questions based on a template such as "Situation - Task - Action - Result" with specific details from your work experience. This is known as the STAR technique:

Situation - Describe a situation you were in eg. A colleague was struggling with performance.

Task - Tell them what you decided to do eg. I sat down with my colleague to discuss how I could help.

Action - Describe what you actually did eg. I gave my colleague examples of how I improved my own performance.

Result - Tell them what happened as a result of your actions eg. His/her performance improved dramatically.

Practice answering the interview questions and follow-up questions so that you are very familiar with several detailed examples.

Naturally it is better to use an anecdote with a positive outcome, but if this isn't possible explain what you learnt from the situation and how you would do it differently next time.