



PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

An interview is a meeting between an employer and a job seeker that takes place after applying for a job and being short-listed for the position. The interview is an opportunity for the employer to evaluate you and for you to assess if the job and the company is right for you.

Types of interviews

Employers use different types of interview formats, depending on the company and type of jobs they are seeking to fill. For larger organisations you may already have undertaken a type of assessment test before you are invited to an interview. For others, you may face several types of interview formats throughout the selection process. The most common formats of interviews are:

The key to a successful interview is preparation as this helps you to feel confident, answer any questions concisely and make a great impression. Don't leave this until the last minute.

- **face-to-face meetings** with one or more interviewers (a panel) is still the most commonly used format. They typically last between 45- and 60- minutes and the questions may be competency- or strength-based.
- **telephonic interviews** with one caller used early in the application process to filter large number of applicants. They typically last between 15- and 30- minutes with questions related to confirming your interest in the role, knowledge about the company and your credentials. If you are successful, you will be invited to a face-to-face or video interview.
- **video calls** which last between 30- and 45-minutes using zoom, teams or a similar app are increasingly popular among large employers particularly for graduate programmes. Video interviews can be live or pre-recorded with the latter (in which case you will be required to answer a set of questions or respond to a number of statements) becoming more popular.
- **assessment centres** which you will attend with several other candidates, enable employers to compare the performance of lots of applicants at the same time. You will participate in presentations, team exercises, psychometric tests and sometimes complete case studies to demonstrate your knowledge and skills. Assessment centres lasts the entire day and may be held online as well as face-to-face.

You might be required to attend more than one interview: a telephonic screening interview to secure your place in the more in-depth second face-to-face interview followed by an assessment centre.

When invited to an interview

An invitation to an interview may come a few weeks after applying for the job, so ensure you keep a copy of the relevant advertisement, the job requirements, and the job description if it was included in the advertisement.

Request and note the following details:

- Date and time of the interview
- Exact location and directions. Find out how long it will take to get there if you are taking public transport or an uber; find out where to park if you are taking your own transport





- If you need to prepare anything specific or bring anything to the interview
- The name of the caller/emailer, the names of the interviewer(s)
- How long the interview will take

What to research before the interview

An essential part of preparing for the interview is to conduct research on the employer, the job you're applying for, the interview panel and the questions you can expect.

- **Employer** – ensure you understand the business of the employer – the sector, industry, the context within which it operates, its values and culture, challenges and competitors it faces. Check its website and LinkedIn pages.
- **Job** – be clear you understand what is expected from the job, the knowledge and skills required and why you are a good fit for it. Can you explain why you want the job, why the company should choose you over other candidates? Read the job description again and again.
- **Interview panel** – try to find out who will be interviewing you. Use LinkedIn and the “About Us” section of the company website to find out more about the interview panel’s interest and experience. This may help you establish a positive rapport with them.
- **Questions you can expect** – this is available in our handout: Handling interview questions. Also consider questions you might want to ask the panel and prepare about five questions about things not covered in the advertisement, website or the interview.

Ways To Make A Good Impression

- Do a mock interview – practice at least once before the actual interview. Book an appointment with one of the Career Service Consultants to do so; record yourself answering common questions and review them
- First impressions count - be punctual
- Show enthusiasm for the job and be positive about yourself
- Watch your body language – maintain eye contact (if it a video interview – remember to look into the camera), give a firm handshake, don't slouch – sit naturally upright, remember to smile frequently
- Dress professionally (as if you already have the job)
- Answer all questions clearly, audibly and concisely; pause before answering a question to give yourself time to think; don't speak too quickly

Virtual interviews

For online telephonic interviews, plan and test the following well before the interview:

- ✓ Ensure you have access to a quiet space or book a virtual interview room with Career Service
- ✓ Make sure you have enough battery life on the device you are using
- ✓ Test call to check the connectivity and stability of the phone or internet line
- ✓ Test your camera and make sure the lighting is good (e.g. no bright backlight)
- ✓ For video calls, dress smartly and check that the background is clean (e.g. they can't see your unmade bed or a pile of dishes!)





- ✓ Frame the camera to include your upper body so you appear natural and there isn't a focus on the top part of your head, which can happen when using a webcam
- ✓ If using zoom or teams or a similar application, make sure that your username and profile picture are appropriate and professional (e.g. NOT @cheekySquirrel99 or @soccerHooligan32).

Presentations

If you are presenting something in the interview, you will need to cover logistical items as well as some technological ones. Check that you do the following:

- Have multiple copies of digital files (e.g. on flash drive, in the cloud, emailed to the interviewer, and/or on your computer if you are taking one).
- Test the format on different devices or file types, as layouts may alter during conversions
- Bring any equipment you might need, including power cables and adaptors - ask if you are unsure of what is available
- Limit animations and embedded clips that could malfunction.

Within 24 hours of the interview:

- Send a short email to thank the employer for the opportunity to interview for the position, mention something you have learned or enjoyed about it.
- Send any additional information you were asked for or offered to send during the interview

What happens after interview?

- After the interview, ask when you will be informed of the outcome and thank them for the opportunity
- **You are invited to a second interview:** you need to start preparing
- **You get a job offer:** This is wonderful news! The offer normally outlines the conditions of your employment (e.g. the salary they are offering, the amount of leave, the length of the contract (if not a permanent position) and working hours). Make sure you know and understand all the conditions before you sign; you may wish to negotiate the terms before
- **You get a rejection:** Accept the decision graciously (keeping up your professional impression) and ask for feedback on why you did not get the position. This will help you to prepare better for the next interview or identify skills that you need to acquire. You don't hear from them again - this is frustrating! During the interview, you should have asked for next steps and a timeframe of when you can expect to hear back. If that period passes with no news, it is acceptable to contact the organisation asking for feedback.

