Interview Technique

Congratulations, you have an interview! The employer wants to through your application form/CV that you have appropriate qualifications, skills and experience for the post. Once the relief and excitement wears off and you start thinking about the interview itself, it can suddenly become a very daunting prospect, especially if you have not had a great deal of interview experience. By the end of the interview you need to have convinced the employer that you are the right person for the job, which sounds very easy. The solution is thorough preparation which takes both time and practice.

Organisations conduct interviews to find out more about the candidate and to assess whether they are suitable for the role. They will assess the candidates:

- interest in, and motivation for, the job
- skills and experience needed for the role
- how knowledgeable they are about the organisation and sector

Remember

- You need to provide examples from your experience to back up your suitability for the post.
- Preparation is EVERYTHING!

Type of interview

- **Face to face interview**: This is usually between you and one or two interviewers
- **Panel interviews**: These involve several people sitting as a panel, usually with a chairperson to co-ordinate the questions. This type of interview is popular in the public sector.
- **Group interviews**: Several candidates are present and will be asked questions in turn. A group discussion may be encouraged and you may be invited to put questions to the other candidates.
- **Telephone interviews**: A telephone interview will usually be given to candidates who have passed the online application and/or psychometric test stage of the graduate recruitment process, and is used to sift out applicants to be invited to a face-to-face interview or assessment centre.
- **Video Interviews**: This is a ‘virtual’ interview where you will be given a set of questions and then have to record your responses in video format.
- **Skype Interviews**: These are live link up interviews conducted through your computer.

Interview preparation

**Re-read your application / CV**

Make sure you can elaborate on the information provided in your application / CV and consider examples, of skills and competencies that match the company’s needs.

**Practicalities**

Ensure you know exactly where the interview will be held, and check your travel arrangements for getting there in plenty of time. Wear appropriate clothing.
Telephone interview

An increasing number of employers are using telephone interviews at some stage in the recruitment process. The questions may focus on general competences and skills required for the job. They may ask questions based on your CV or application form & your interest in the job and the organisation. Approach a telephone interview in the same way as you would a face-to-face interview.

Find out more: stir.ac.uk/careers/students/applying/interviews

Video interview

The use of video or skype interviewing is becoming increasingly common amongst graduate recruiters. You will either receive a set of questions that you must record responses to in video format, or you will have a live link up with the employer and they will interview you through your computer. The benefits of this are that you don’t need to travel to an interview, but you need to ensure you are familiar with the technology, everything works correctly and you follow the same guidelines for preparation as with any other type of interview.

Find out more: prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips

Strength-based interviews

Strength-based interviews are a new approach that some graduate recruiters are moving towards as a way of finding out what candidates enjoy. While competency-based interviews focus on what you can do, strengths-based interviews focus on what you like doing. It is considered to be more accurate, based on the assumption that a person is naturally more enthusiastic about skills that they enjoy using and therefore likely to be more effective in the workplace using those skills. When answering, it’s important to think about experiences where you have felt most effective and engaged. Employers will also take note of your body language and tone of voice, which provide cues to what you have enjoyed.

For further help and tips: https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-types

Competency-based interviews

Employers identify the skills and abilities (competencies) that are essential for working in their organisation and they use these as selection criteria for choosing new recruits. Job descriptions and adverts often list the key skills required for a role and many graduate employers also highlight the core competences they look for on their recruitment websites.
The **STAR Technique** is useful when preparing your answers for competency based questions.

- **Situation**: Briefly describe the where/when/who.
- **Task**: Outline the task or objective (what you hoped to achieve).
- **Action**: Describe what you did - focus on your role and your input.
- **Result**: Detail what the outcome was, and what skills you developed as a result.

*For further help and tips: [jobs.theguardian.com/careers/interview-advice](http://jobs.theguardian.com/careers/interview-advice)*

**Questions to ask the employer:**

At the end of the interview, you may be given the chance to put your own questions to the interviewer. Ask about the work itself, training and career development: not about holidays, pensions & bonuses! **Prepare some questions in advance**: it is OK to write these down and to refer to your notes to remind yourself of what you wanted to ask.

These are just a few ideas - you should certainly not attempt to ask them all and remember it’s best to formulate your own questions tailored to your circumstances and the job you are being interviewed for! Make sure you have researched the employer carefully, so that you are not asking for information which you should be expected to know already.

- Is there a fixed period of training for graduates?
- Where would I be based - is this job function located only in ...?
- How often is a graduate's performance appraised?
- How would you see this company developing over the next five years?

**Further help**

- **Mock Interviews**: Try to practice your interview technique before attending your first interview. The Careers and Employability Service provides one-to-one practice interviews and group sessions. More information online at [stir.ac.uk/careers/students/advice](http://stir.ac.uk/careers/students/advice)
- **Workshops**: The Careers and Employability Service offers a variety of workshops on interview technique. More information online at [stir.ac.uk/careers/events](http://stir.ac.uk/careers/events)
- **DVDs**: We have an AGCAS DVD entitled ‘Making an impact….the Graduate job interview’ available to view on the Careers and Employability Service VLE pages.
- **InterviewStream**: Register with your University email and try out common interview questions. Access it via the stirling.interviewstream.com (read their terms and conditions before registering).

*This publication can be made available in different formats. Please contact the Careers and Employability Service for further information: careers@stir.ac.uk*