

# Interview Guide

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# So, you've got an interview!

Attending an interview can be really daunting, that's why we've put together this guide to help you land that dream job!

It covers interview tips, gives you examples of questions you might be asked and covers common interview mistakes, and how you can avoid them.

# The Different Types of Interview

## Competency Based/Behavioural Interview

A competency-based interview involves being asked questions which aim to find out how you have used specific skills in your previous employment and how you approach tasks and challenges. A good interviewer will want to know what you learnt from your experience, particularly how you might have done things differently, so be prepared to reflect on your performance. These interviews are based on the idea that past behaviour is a good predictor of future performance!

## Group Interview

One interview type you could find yourself faced with is a group interview, that you'll attend along with other potential candidates. This approach is often taken by employers when they're recruiting for a graduate scheme, or if they're looking for a strong leader who will outshine others in a group session. Often when thrown in to this group situation we try and act as we think the employer is expecting. However, you can't keep up this facade forever if offered the job, so be yourself, listen carefully to instructions, work effectively with the rest of the candidates, and you'll shine!

## Video/Phone Interview

Certain organisations may initially ask for a phone or Skype/FaceTime interview, so they can get an initial impression of you as a candidate. Often clients do this when there are many potential candidates available and they want to narrow the field. You need to prepare just as you would for a face to face interview, to ensure you advance to the next stage of the process.

## Technical Interview

If you're working in a role that requires a certain level of technical skill, you may be invited for a technical interview to assess your abilities. Particularly in Engineering or Accountancy roles, you may be set a task or asked questions related to your level of knowledge. Prepare in advance and look for example tests online so you can practice beforehand.

# Top Interview Tips

## Prepare, Prepare, Prepare!

Before you attend an interview, you need to take time to prepare! Not only to rehearse answers to standard interview questions, but also to get to know the business that you're visiting. You're bound to be asked what you know about the business, so do lots of research online to find out exactly what the company does, the areas in which they operate and key strategies that they may be promoting on their website. Also consider looking in to any recent news on their website as this will allow you to further improve your knowledge of the business and could also be a good foundation for discussion in interview. It's also a case of thinking about the logistics and how you're going to get there. Plan your route and allow plenty of time for traffic or getting lost! There's no worse impression than turning up late.

## Look the Part

Finding an appropriate outfit for your interview and ensuring you look well-presented is really important. If you're going for a role where you won't be required to wear a suit each day, doesn't mean you still shouldn't present yourself as a professional, well put together individual. It shows that you really care about getting the job and that you're willing to put in the effort required. So, pick an outfit that makes you feel confident, that looks smart and professional, and put your best foot forward. This is an important business meeting so consider taking along a neat and presentable file containing your CV (to refer to if necessary), the job description and any relevant qualifications. Make sure you have it ready for when the interview starts, as this will make you look professional, prepared and engaged. Also, always remember to switch off your mobile phone.

## Know your CV

It's important that you're really familiar with your CV, so the interviewer doesn't catch you off-guard! If you're shouting about a certain skill on your CV or you've put a key responsibility in a previous role, then you need to be prepared to be questioned about it. Acting surprised when they reference something from your CV, will make you appear unprepared and even a little dishonest.

## Study the Job Description

After landing an interview, you need to study the job description to truly understand what the interviewer is looking for. If the description calls for excellent attention to detail for example, you will want to tailor the discussion accordingly, and discuss examples from previous jobs that will exemplify this trait. Doing this helps the interviewer see how the experience from your previous employment can translate to the role you're interviewing for.

## Think About Your Body Language

Being slumped in your seat, not making eye contact with everyone in the room, or not smiling, can all send a bad message to the interviewer! You should sit upright in your seat and try not to fidget or switch your position too much throughout the interview. Fidgeting or fiddling, will be highly distracting for the interviewer and cause them not to listen properly to your answers. Make sure you build rapport and make really good eye contact with everyone that's

interviewing you, not just the boss! Everyone is in that room for a reason and will have their say on whether you get the job or not.

## Use Examples

First of all, you will need to carefully listen to the question being asked by the interviewer and give a relevant and considered answer. When it comes to discussing their skills, many candidates make the mistake of “telling” instead of “showing.” One of the best job interview strategies is to use examples to demonstrate your skills to the interviewer. For example, if one of your skills is successfully handling multiple tasks at once, providing an example of how you’ve done that in a previous role, will paint a picture for the interviewer. It also gives the interviewer something tangible to “hold on to” once the interview is over and helps him/her remember you when it comes to decision time.

## Remain Positive

You will always be asked questions like; “Why are you looking to leave your current role?” or “What are your weaknesses?”. The key to these questions is to remain positive. Reasons for looking to leave your current role should be based around the motivation to progress and join that business. Never talk negatively about your current employer as this may give the wrong impression about your attitude. In regard to your weaknesses; maybe focus on a previous weakness that you have worked on to overcome and develop rather than something you are not very good at or don’t enjoy. Always leave your interview on a positive note, thanking the interviewer for their time and letting them know that you look forward to hearing from them.

## Prepare Questions

It is important to demonstrate your preparation and interest by asking relevant questions around the role and the business. Try and prepare 3 to 5 questions about the business and the role that are not based on package or salary. For example, “What are the plans for this team /business in the next 12 months?”, “What are the main challenges in the business at the moment?” or “What opportunities are there in the business for progression?”

## Make Sure You Follow Up

It’s essential following your interview that you follow up by sending a quick thank you email via your recruitment consultant if you’re working with a recruitment agency or direct to the employer if you’ve applied directly. The note doesn’t need to be long, it can just be a simple thank you, to acknowledge the time they spent with you, and is a chance to re-iterate how much you would like the role. It’s also a good chance to note anything you forgot to say in your interview and want to make them aware of.

**REMEMBER: ALWAYS SELL YOURSELF!**

# Examples of General Interview Questions

You can never be too prepared for an interview! And though there are likely to be some questions you can ever prepare for, there are questions you can almost guarantee you're going to be asked.

## **Tell us a little about yourself...**

Start by giving a little rundown of your work history, picking up on key achievements and demonstrating how your career has developed. Preparing your answer in advance means you'll deliver it with more confidence and make a great first impression.

## **"What made you decide to apply for the role?"**

Interviewers want to find out why you're interested in their business, and also see what your expectations and understanding is of the role you've applied for. Here you should pick up on points from the job description that most interested you, and also show your passion and interest in learning more about their business

## **"Tell us about your experience and how it relates to the role?"**

Remember that the recruiter has seen your CV, so there's no need to recap your whole history and responsibilities. Instead pick out key areas you have excelled in, demonstrating each skill with a great example to back it up. Throughout your answer remember they want to know how each experience relates to the role so try to keep linking each point back.

## **"What are your strengths and weaknesses?"**

It's a clichéd question, but an essential one for hiring managers who want to see how well you know your abilities. Highlight each strength with an example, as the examples will be much more memorable when you have left the interview room. In terms of

weaknesses, this is always a tricky question, so be honest but not too critical. Pick a trait that can be interpreted as both a strength and a weakness, so you can put a positive spin on your answer. Try not to use terms like 'perfectionist' as it's a common and obvious answer, and makes it appear as though you are avoiding the question.

## **"Tell us about a challenging situation and how you've dealt with it."**

Take time to think about a time when you've really had to step up at work, perhaps deal with a difficult employee or a sensitive situation. When you're talking about the outcome, ensure you focus on your role in the process, and how you resolved the situation.

## **"Tell us about an achievement in your career that you're really proud of..."**

We're not good at boasting about our achievements, but here is your chance to really sell yourself. It could be a breakthrough with a member of your team, or perhaps you hit a target you initially felt was unachievable. Your answer to this question is a great opportunity to set yourself apart from other candidates.

## **"What do you know about our business?"**

Do your research! Interviewers are asking this question as they want to know how interested you are in the company and the role. The web is an amazing thing, you can learn about the business, but also competitors and the industry in general to ensure you can talk knowledgeably and with genuine interest.

### **“What are your career goals?”**

Be honest here, interviewers want to find out how you see your career developing, and more importantly whether you see it with their business. It's great for both you and your potential new employer to know what you want in the future, so they can be sure they offer you what you're looking for.

### **“What are your salary expectations?”**

It's always an awkward question, but interviewers want to make sure they can meet your expectations before they make any offers. Don't bring up the question yourself, this can be discussed if a job offer

is made. If the question is raised, give a wide salary bracket that would be acceptable, but always say that it's negotiable and focus more on how much you'd like the position.

### **“Do you have any questions?”**

The answer to this question should always be yes! You should prepare a few questions in advance, just in case the answers to a couple get covered throughout the interview. The interviewee is wanting to see how interested you are in the role and will make judgements about you based on the questions you ask.



# Examples of Competency Based Interview Questions

Competency based interviews tend to focus on past situations and your behaviour in those situations. Questions are likely to start with “Please give me an example when...” or “Please describe an occasion when...”.

## Relating to Achievement and Performance

“Describe an example of where you have introduced an improvement to help the business move towards business excellence.”

What resources did you use to implement your improvement and why? What milestones did you set for yourself and the team? What was the most challenging element?

“Tell me about your greatest achievement in your career to date.”

How did you reach that achievement/formulate a plan to reach that business objective?

How did you measure your success?

## Relating to Influence

“Talk about a complex situation you have dealt with which needed buy-in and support from others for it to be resolved.”

What made the situation complex and what approaches did you take? Who did you work with and why? What compromises did you make? How satisfactory was the outcome?

“When have you failed to get the right organisational buy-in to influence a situation appropriately?”

How did the situation arise and what steps did you take to recover it? What was the outcome?

“Can you think of an example when you influenced your Line Manager around to your way of thinking when they were set in their ways?”

What approach did you take? What was the outcome?

## Relating to Communication

“Give me an example of when you had to deliver an important communication?”

Which method did you use? How did you structure your material to ensure maximum impact? How did you measure its effectiveness?

“Give me an example of a specific time when it was important to keep staff in your business unit informed of what is going on?”

How did you ensure that everybody has access to your communication? How did you ensure that everybody received and understood the communication?

## Relating to Collaboration

“Tell me about a time when you have needed to work with others to find a solution to a work problem.”

How did you approach the situation? How did you utilise the different contributions of others? What was the outcome?

“When have you worked in a team where the members have not worked together effectively?

Why do you think this was happening? What actions did you take? What was the outcome?

## How should I answer competency-based interview questions?

It is certainly worth thinking in advance of your interview of examples you could use, and perhaps take along notes if you think this could help. Remembering the STAR approach will help you deliver a well-rounded, balanced answer that will be to the point:

<b>Situation</b>	an explanation of the situation that demonstrates the competency asked within the question
<b>Task</b>	an explanation of the task or tasks required of you given the above situation
<b>Action</b>	an explanation of the actions you took in relation to the above situation and task
<b>Result</b>	an explanation of the specific results that occurred as a result of your actions

## Common Interview Mistakes

Fail to Prepare,

Poor Body Language

Not Looking the Part

Not Telling the Truth

Talking Too Much or Not Enough

Being Negative About Your Current Employer

Providing Little or No Evidence / Examples of Experience

Having No Questions to Ask

Failing to Follow Up

# About Highfield Search Recruitment

We are a specialist recruitment business focussed on permanent, interim and temporary recruitment across Yorkshire and Humberside, Lincolnshire and the East Midlands.

Highfield Search Recruitment is a husband and wife team. Antony Gillon has been a successful recruiter for over 20 years, across a wide range of disciplines and levels of seniority and formed Highfield Search Recruitment three years ago. Anca Gillon has now joined to help support the continued growth of the company

We believe our success is down to our Responsive, Diligent, Resourceful, Cost-Effective and Bespoke way of working and our commitment to finding the right opportunity for every candidate.

Good Luck from us, we're sure you'll do great!

## Get in Touch!

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