

Interviews

An Overview

Interviews

Congratulations! You have been invited by an organisation to attend an interview. This means an employer knows a lot about you from your resume and application and considers you eligible for the job. This guide provides a starting point for learning about interviews and some of the things you can do to prepare.

Types of Interview

The format of the job interview can vary; some of the more common types include:

Panel – When two or more representatives of the organisation are present to ask you questions. It is important to address each panel member throughout the interview and not just the person asking you questions.

Group interview – A group interview involves several applicants being assessed together. An employer's motivation for using this format might be to look for a particular character type, to see how you behave in a certain environment, to see how people work in a team, or because it is an efficient way to process multiple candidates. You are likely to be required to undertake some form of group activity.

One-to-one – One representative of the organisation is present to ask you questions.

Telephone – Telephone interviews may seem informal however they are similar to a face-to-face one-on-one interview. Telephone interviews are commonly used as a screening process to the next stage of a recruiting process. Try to find a distraction free environment, in which to undergo this interview so your full attention is given to the interviewer. It may also be a good time to review the professionalism of your Voice Mail message. It would be unusual to be interviewed by a recorded message system on the phone, but it has been known to happen, so imagine that you are talking to the interviewer directly, and do listen back carefully to your answers.

Skype / Google Handouts / Webcam based interviews - Please note interviews may be conducted through Skype or other video mediums now, particularly if it is an interstate position. You should treat these in a similar way to telephone interviews but be aware that your clothing is appropriate for an interview. It is important that the background behind where you are sitting is not distracting and it gives a favourable impression.

Preparing for the Interview

Think about how you can convince an employer that you can do the job, have the motivation to succeed in the position and will fit within the company. When doing a self-evaluation, you might:

- Consider why working in this industry and occupation is important to you and make some notes
- Recall why you originally choose this career pathway? What makes you passionate about your work in general and this job in particular?
- List your skills and qualities, both personal and professional. You need to be able to talk about these confidently and easily during your interview. Link this aspect of your audit to the research you have done into what the organisation is looking for and prepare relevant, targeted examples of your skills and personal qualities.
- Think about what you have learnt in your degree
- Decide how are you going to convey to the employer what you have learned throughout your course and how this is relevant to the requirements of the organisation
- Identify what you learnt from your work experience and extra-curricular activities. All paid and unpaid employment experiences contribute to your labour market knowledge and personal awareness.
- Put yourself in the employer's shoes. If you were an employer, what would you want to know about a job applicant? Identify concerns they may have from your resume so you can address them if asked, for example about relevant experience, if you were only in a similar role for a short time etc.
- If you addressed Key Selection Criteria (KSC) as part of your job application the interview questions will be framed around these. So make sure you re-read your KSC document and consider how you will present these examples verbally for an interview. Using the STAR method: Situation: Task: Action: Result

Before the Interview

Gather all the information you need. When you have researched the organisation, thought about your reasons for applying and understood how your skills and experience match the job requirements, you should then double check you have everything you need before attending the interview, including:

- The time, date and address of where your interview will be held – obtain a contact number to call just in case you are running late or something unexpected happens. If the location is new to you, consider visiting the day before, so you'll be sure where to go on the day.
- The format and style of your interview – what type of interview will you be attending and what are the names and position titles of your interviewers?

What to take to the interview

It is important that you feel that you have everything you need for the interview, so be prepared early, some of the things to consider are:

- A professionally presented portfolio/folder with plastic sleeves– including any documents you have sent to the interviewer (e.g. resume and cover letter KSC document), original copies of your qualifications, certificates and achievements, and any written references.
- Maybe take along proof of your ability to work in Australia, whether this is a visa or passport. Consider taking along a photocopy and the original so you can leave them with a copy. Occasionally you will be asked to take something to interview related to your work, or something you have made, this could be a sample essay, project or picture of something you made in a practical/lab situation. It is important that you choose something of which you are proud and can talk about in depth – however as in all preparations for interviews, it is of primary importance that you follow the interviewer's instructions.

During the Interview

Be on time - First impressions are important, so you need to show up to your interview on time. Planning how to get to your destination and arriving 10-15 minutes early will provide you with some time to prepare yourself calmly for the interview. Always give yourself twice as long as you think you might need to arrive on time

Dress appropriately - The way you present yourself is an important part of making a good first impression. Part of your presentation is how you dress. Find an outfit that you feel confident in and which is appropriate for the role for the position you have applied to. Your appearance should look professional and it is better to be slightly overdressed than too casual. You needn't buy new clothes for the interview, it is more important to look neat, clean and well ironed than have the latest fashionable designer suit/ dress etc.

Remove any distractions - Turn off your mobile phone, take out your earphones, Bluetooth etc. and remove sunglasses and put them out of sight! They are distractions and will give the impression that you are not focused.

Greeting - Confidently shake your interviewer's hand, greet him or her appropriately, and smile. If you smile, you will feel better, and so will your interviewer.

Eye contact - Look the interview in the eye (without staring) when speaking with them. If you are being interviewed by a panel, start eye contact with the person who asked the question but make sure you include the other members as you continue your answer.

Use open body language - Non-verbal communication can have an impact on the success of your interview. Be aware of how you behave in an interview. Use body language that shows you are listening and interested. Examples of this might be sitting slightly forward and upright in your chair (making sure you are still comfortable) and demonstrating that you understand and are listening. Fiddling with your clothes, hands, feet or hair could be interpreted as signs of anxiety and uncertainty about your ability to do the job. Similarly, habits such as repetitive foot tapping can be distracting. Most people will experience a degree of nervousness during an interview; try to avoid making it obvious.

Concluding the Interview - In closing the interview, employers usually outline the next step in the selection process. If not, ask when a decision will be made and if/when you will be notified of the outcome. Ask a final question which you formed from your research of the organisation and/or make a closing statement reiterating your interest in the position and thank the interviewer for the opportunity. Smile as you say goodbye. It is worthwhile to reflect on your performance after leaving the interview. Record the questions asked and note the examples you gave. Evaluate which responses need improvement. This will assist you for subsequent interviews.

What happens next

Once your interview has finished, it can be a good idea to write a thankyou e-mail to the employer for taking the time to meet with you and to restate your interest in the position. Unless stated otherwise, usually an employer will get back to you within two weeks after your interview. If you are not contacted, you have an opportunity to ring and politely ask how the selection process is going and when a decision might be made. Regardless of the outcome, ask for feedback on areas where you can improve your interviewing skills.

Remember, like anything, the more experience you have in the interviewing process, the more skills and knowledge you will develop. Also, don't forget that job interviews are a source of some apprehension for all jobseekers; you won't be the only candidate feeling some anxiety.

