

Dos and don'ts for interviews

People feel anxious about interviews for various reasons. You might feel pressured because of the need to perform well and succeed. Preparation is key to reducing some of the worries you may have around performance, whilst also increasing your chances of securing the job. Knowing what to do and what not to do can make the difference between receiving a job offer and missing an opportunity. Hiring managers can often tell how prepared people are for an interview and that can affect the interview scoring.

What to do at an in-person interview

Job interviews are crucial for making a positive impression on potential employers and securing a job offer. Here's a step-by-step guide on what to do at an interview:

Before the interview

- **Research the company:** Learn as much as you can about the company, its mission, values, products, services, and culture. This knowledge will help you tailor and pitch your responses during the interview.
- **Review the job description:** Carefully read the job description to understand the key responsibilities and requirements for the position and to help form some relevant questions.
- **Prepare your answers and practice:** Anticipate common interview questions and prepare thoughtful responses that highlight your skills and experiences. You could practice them with a friend or family member. Be concise and focused in your responses and ask them for supportive feedback.
- **Questions for the interviewer:** Prepare several questions to ask the interviewer. This shows your interest in the role and company. For example, you could ask about the company's future strategy, the shape of the team, training and development or expectations for the role.
- **Dress appropriately:** Choose appropriate attire that aligns with the company's dress code. When in doubt, it's better to be slightly overdressed (formal) than underdressed (informal).
- **Gather necessary documents:** Bring extra copies of your CV, a list of references, and any other documents requested by the employer such as passport, qualifications, etc.

During the interview

- **Arrive on time:** Aim to arrive at the interview location a few minutes early. Punctuality demonstrates your reliability. If you do arrive late, an apology and short explanation would help to provide context.
- **Professional greetings:** Be polite and professional with everyone you meet, from the receptionist to the interviewer.
- **Confident body language:** Offer a firm handshake, maintain good posture, and make eye contact. Your body language should convey confidence and openness.
- **Active listening:** Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions and respond thoughtfully. Avoid interrupting, and ask for clarification if you don't understand a question. If you are struggling to find an answer you could ask to come back to the question at the end to allow for time to reflect.
- **Answer questions concisely:** Be clear and concise in your responses – providing sufficient detail to illustrate your experience and expertise. Be aware of rambling or going off-topic and feel free to take pauses to allow you to refocus. A quality response is better than a quick response – so take your time. Sometimes people find it helpful to repeat the key points in the question to reaffirm the areas to explore and give time for them to form a response. Alternatively, you could take a notepad and pen and write down those keywords.
- **Highlight your achievements:** Use specific examples from your past experiences to demonstrate your skills and accomplishments. Quantify your achievements wherever possible. Saying you can do something isn't enough. In elaborating, the panel will get to know more about you which is critical.
- **Show enthusiasm:** Express your enthusiasm for the role and the company. Employers are often looking for candidates who are genuinely interested in the position.



- **Address weaknesses positively:** If asked about weaknesses or challenges, frame your response in a way that shows how you've worked to overcome them or learned from your experiences.
- **Use professional language:** Use professional and polite language throughout the interview. Avoid slang or overly casual language and where possible, don't use acronyms.



Be prepared for technical questions:

If the role involves technical skills or knowledge, be prepared for technical questions or tests related to your expertise.

After the interview

- **Follow up with a thank you:** Send a thank-you email within 24 hours of the interview. Express your appreciation for the opportunity and reiterate your interest in the position.
- **Reflect and learn:** After the interview, take time to reflect on your performance. What went well, and what could be improved for future interviews?
- **Prepare for additional rounds:** If there are more interview rounds, be ready to build on the feedback and insights from your previous interviews. Ensure any reflections and learnings are explored beforehand.
- **Stay positive and patient:** Job hunting can be challenging, so try and maintain a positive attitude and be patient. It may take time to receive an offer but there is no harm in asking when you might hear and sending an email if you haven't heard.



A handy tip to remember, interviews are not just about demonstrating your qualifications; they're also an opportunity to assess whether the company and role align with your career goals and values.

Finding the right cultural fit is essential for job satisfaction. Interviews are often scored on various aspects of the job description and your responses but your demeanour and manner will also help the interview panel assess whether you would be a good fit for the team or department the role is within.

What to do at a virtual interview

Virtual interviews have become increasingly common, and there are several key steps you should take to ensure a successful virtual interview. So whilst the above still holds true in a virtual situation there are additional aspects to consider below:

- **Test your technology in advance:** Check your internet connection, camera, microphone, and any necessary software (e.g., Zoom, Skype, or Teams) before the interview. Ensure you've downloaded the most recent version and test that everything is working properly.
- **Choose the right location:** Select a quiet, well-lit space with a clean and uncluttered background. Make sure you won't be interrupted during the interview by family, friends, pets, etc.
- **Dress professionally:** Dress in professional attire from head to toe, just as you would for an in-person interview. This will help to put you in the right frame of mind for an interview and boosts your confidence in the setting.
- **Position your camera correctly:** Position your camera at eye level. This allows you to maintain good eye contact and appear more engaged with the interviewer.
- **Eliminate distractions:** Inform family members or roommates of your interview time and ask for their cooperation in minimising noise and interruptions. You could even put a sign on the door to remind.
- **Prepare your interview space:** Have a copy of the job description, your CV, a notepad, and a pen within reach. This way, you can reference key points and take notes during the interview.
- **Maintain eye contact:** Look into the camera, not at the interviewer's image on the screen. If you have multiple screens or a split screen, ensure you have positioned the view of the panel central to where your camera is - otherwise you may be looking in a different direction which could be off putting. Feel free to engage with the panel such as nodding when they speak, as opposed to sitting completely still.
- **Speak clearly and slowly:** Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. Enunciate (pronounce words, sentences, etc., especially in an articulate or a particular manner) your words and use a natural tone of voice.
- **Technical difficulties:** If you experience technical challenges, such as the internet dropping, be sure to have someone you can contact to inform them when you might be back online.
- **Positive body language:** Sit up straight and maintain good posture. Use positive body language, such as nodding to show you're actively listening.
- **Stay calm and flexible:** Technical glitches or unexpected interruptions can happen. Stay calm, and be flexible in addressing these issues if they arise. You could always have a backup option should your laptop crash or another room to go in should you need it.



What NOT to do at an interview

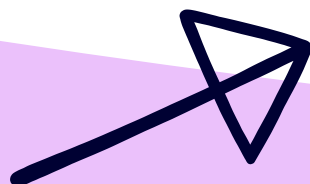
Here are some key things you should avoid doing during a job interview:

- **Arriving late:** Being late for an interview doesn't make a great first impression. Plan your travel or log in to a virtual interview early to ensure you arrive on time. If you are late, you should apologise and state brief reasons why.
- **Dressing inappropriately:** Dressing too casually or inappropriately for the position and company culture can leave a negative impression. Always dress professionally/formally.
- **Talking negatively about past employers:** Avoid speaking negatively about previous employers, coworkers, or supervisors. Maintain a positive and professional tone. If something was difficult then you can relay this in terms of how you rose to the challenge and reflected.
- **Not researching the company:** Not knowing anything about the company and the role you're applying for is unprofessional and could potentially gain you negative scores during an interview.
- **Being unprepared:** Failing to prepare for the interview is a common mistake. This includes not practicing answers to common interview questions and not having questions to ask the interviewer.
- **Using your phone:** Using your phone during the interview, whether to check messages or browse the internet, is unprofessional and could be viewed as disrespectful. Keep your phone out of sight and on silent. If for any reason you must have your phone visible and with sound, you may at the start wish to share why this is, so that it doesn't negatively impact on your interview.
- **Overemphasis on salary and benefits:** It's important to wait for the right time to discuss compensation and benefits. Bringing it up too early in the interview can give the impression that you're primarily motivated by money.
- **Being overconfident or arrogant:** Confidence is good, but arrogance can be off-putting. Avoid appearing overconfident or dismissing the contributions of others. Humility and teamwork is often appreciated.



Lack of enthusiasm: A lack of enthusiasm or passion for the job can be off-putting. Show genuine interest and enthusiasm for the position and company.

- **Interrupting the interviewer:** Interrupting the interviewer while they are speaking could be perceived as disrespectful. Wait for them to finish before responding.
- **Rambling answers:** Giving long, unfocused answers can be a problem. Be concise and to the point when answering questions.
- **Not addressing weaknesses:** When asked about weaknesses or areas for improvement, don't avoid the question. Acknowledge areas where you can improve and discuss how you're working on them.



- **Inadequate communication skills:** Poor communication, including lack of eye contact, speaking too softly, or not listening actively, can hinder your interview performance.
- **Bringing up personal issues:** If it is essential to your wellbeing and comfort during the interview then you could let them know at the beginning but usually other personal issues would not be referred to. Focus on your expertise, experience and the job at hand.
- **Bringing up controversial topics:** Avoid discussing controversial or sensitive topics, such as politics or religion, during the interview. Depending on the job you are interviewing for, those topics may be relevant, in which case you could talk about them in an open, balanced and inclusive manner.
- **Being unprepared for behavioural questions:** Behavioural questions (e.g., “Tell me about a time when...”) are common in interviews. Not having prepared examples can give the appearance that you haven’t thought this through.

- **Not following up:** Regardless of how you feel about your performance at the interview and indeed the outcome, it’s positively regarded if you thank the interview panel for the opportunity.



Not maintaining a positive attitude:

Regardless of the circumstances, maintaining a positive attitude throughout the interview is better than complaining or coming across as negative. An interviewer will be looking at how proactive and constructive you are.

By avoiding these common interview mistakes, you can present yourself in the best possible light and improve your chances of landing the job.



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