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## Interview advice

Research shows that people make their mind up about someone in the first few seconds of meeting with them. So it's best to get off to a good start from the outset.

No matter how well qualified you may seem 'on paper' for a job, when recruiting, an employer will still be interested in your personality and presentation. Indeed with more than one suitable applicant for a role, interview performance is often the deciding factor. This makes the face to face meeting a critical part of the recruitment process and you will need to impress from the start.

Following the interview preparation guidelines below will help overcome any interview nerves and instill confidence for a productive meeting with your potential employer.

### Practical tips

Double check the date, time and location of the interview and be familiar with the name and title of the interviewer. Take your interview confirmation letter with you.

Prepare your interview outfit in advance - all of it. Ensure your appearance is both smart and comfortable.

Familiarise yourself with the journey to the location, to ensure you arrive in plenty of time. If driving, do a 'dummy run'. Check timetables and book train tickets in advance. Anticipate delays, especially on unknown routes. Contact your interviewer swiftly if you are unavoidably delayed on the day.

Do not arrive over-laden with belongings! Take any requested certificates, references etc, a spare CV and a notepad and pen. A mobile phone is always useful, but ensure it is turned OFF before arrival at reception.

Be punctual for your meeting but it is inadvisable to arrive more than half an hour early. Leave yourself enough time to visit the toilets and tidy up if necessary.

Remember that you start making an impression on your prospective employer the moment you arrive at reception. Be courteous to the receptionist and any other staff you may meet prior to your interview. Their opinion of you is often sought and may even have some influence on the final selection.

### Research

Find out as much information as possible about your prospective employer in advance. Many now have websites which are packed with information. Familiarise yourself with mission statements, past performance, future goals and current analyst ratings. Be aware that if your prospective employer does have a comprehensive website, you may seriously compromise your chances if it becomes apparent you have not taken time to research it.

If there is no company website, it is still easy to research your employer. All national newspapers and professional magazines have online sites with archive articles. You can also utilise web search engines just by entering the company name. Talk to anyone you know who has worked at the organisation. If all else fails do try phoning the company and requesting general information.

### The interview

- Greet your interviewer standing, with a strong, firm handshake and a smile! Good body language is vital. Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Speak clearly and confidently. Try and maintain a comfortable level of eye contact throughout.
- A standard interview will generally start with an introductory chat, moving on to questions specific to your application and experience. General information about the company and role may follow, finishing with an opportunity for you to ask your own questions.
- Be familiar with your CV and prepared to answer questions from it. Similarly, ensure you have read any job description thoroughly and think of ways in which your experience will benefit your potential employer.
- LISTEN to what is being asked of you. Think about your answers to more difficult questions and do not give irrelevant detail. Give positive examples from your experience to date but be concise. Avoid one word answers however. Prepare yourself in advance for likely questions (see next section for common interview questions).

- Be ready to ask questions that you have prepared beforehand. This can demonstrate you have thought about the role and done some research on the organisation. Ensure they are open, thus encouraging the interviewer to provide you with additional information.
- Show your enthusiasm for the role, even if you have some reservations. These can be discussed at a later stage.