



# achieving interview success

**Whilst there are no hard and fast rules for achieving interview success, it's wise to follow some basic guidelines if you want to give yourself the best chance of making a lasting impression.**

## **Be prepared**

The most important foundation for any interview is preparation. If you want to stand out for your knowledge, be sure to understand both the role and yourself.

- Know yourself
- Know the company
- Know the role
- Know the industry
- Know how you will add value

## **Know yourself**

The majority of interviewers will follow your CV as a basis for the meeting. It's therefore crucial that you can talk about your skills and experiences with confidence and understanding. Employers will want to know why each point has been included, so make sure you back up every statement with evidence.

## **Know the company**

Once your interview has been confirmed, find out everything you can about the company in question. Carrying out relevant research is the single most powerful tool in your interviewing arsenal, as it distinguishes good interviewees from bad ones. Researching a company is not just about how many offices they have and what products or services they sell; it's about understanding what their challenges and opportunities are, where their business is going, and how the role fits into this plan.

## **Know the role**

Before every interview, you should receive a job specification that will help you to prepare for the meeting. If you are applying for a job through a recruitment agency, a consultant should brief you prior to the interview. This information will allow you to structure your responses for maximum impact, as you can use the job spec to relate your experience to the role.

## Know the industry

Researching the company is a good way to impress, but if you really want to stand out then you need to find out about their wider environment. Display an in-depth understanding of their industry and competitors to show that you're reading around the subject and understand the environment you are looking to work in.

Websites - such as [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com) - provide up to the minute facts and figures about companies from around the world, while sites such as the [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com) are a good starting point for the latest company and industry news. Trade publications also offer a wealth of industry specific information and will highlight the issues that affect, or have the potential to affect, the company you are looking to work for.

## Know how you will add value

Employers will use the interview to explore whether your experience and expertise can meet their unique challenges. They will expect you to show an understanding of how you can help them to reach future goals so be sure to give this some thought. Think about why you want the job, how you would approach it, and how you'd make a difference; drawing upon previous achievements to back up each statement.

## Be sure to shine

### Positivity

Adopting a positive mindset is one of the most important factors in any interview. The interview may be an opportunity to display relevant skills, but it is also a chance to show that you are sufficiently motivated and proactive.

No matter how you feel about your current or previous employers, don't be tempted to display negativity as it could reflect badly on you. If an employer sees you as being quick to criticise, they could be mindful of your attitude, so make sure you focus on the good points.

### Good answer

Interviewers are not there to trip you up; a good interviewer will want to put you at your ease and make sure they get the best from you. When you're asked a question, don't be tempted to rush into an answer. It won't reflect badly if you take a few moments to compose yourself, so think about what you'd like to say and what you think they want to hear.

When answering questions be sure to use convincing STAR examples (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to evidence previous achievements and their relevance to the role in question. Talk positively about results to show that you are determined to succeed, but remain factual, sincere and clear in all of the points that you're making.

### Good question

Preparing incisive and relevant questions of your own is sure to impress at interview, but make sure you avoid run of the mill subjects. Asking questions that could easily be answered by a Google search will may you look ill-prepared.

### Finally

If you don't get the job, don't get downhearted. It's unlikely that you'll be offered every job you ever interview for, no matter how many skills you bring to the table. If you do get turned down, treat it as an opportunity to improve your future performance and ask for feedback; taking on board any comments when applying for your next job.

**Remember, interviewing is a skill and as they always say, practice makes perfect.**

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