

## Checklist: Preparing for a job interview

A job interview can be scary. How do you make a good first impression? How do you answer difficult questions? How do you approach non-verbal communication? At the Career Service we can help you with all of these aspects. Using the checklist below, you can go into your interview self-confident and well-prepared.

### 1. Goal of a job interview

A job interview is a good way to find out whether you and the organisation are a good match. The interviewer will want to know whether you meet the job requirements (the rational factor) and whether you fit within the department or organisation (the emotional factor). You will in turn want to know whether the job or internship and the organisation meet your wishes and expectations.

### 2. Preparation

- a. The organisation
  - a. Do some research on the organisation and sector: their mission, vision, values, company culture, news, and recent developments.
  - b. Make sure you know who will be conducting the interview. Google the interviewer and check their LinkedIn profile. Make sure you know who you will be talking to.
  - c. Find out how to get to there and how long it will take you. Leave on time.
  - d. Make sure you have the contact details of the interviewer and organisation at hand.
  - e. Re-read your letter and CV so you know precisely what you wrote. Print out the letter, CV, and vacancy, and bring them along.
  - f. What is the dress code within the organisation? Dress accordingly, but do not overdo it. Make sure you feel comfortable. If in doubt, better too formal than too casual.
- b. Practise answering questions
  - a. Analyse the vacancy. What are the key tasks? What qualities do they require? What kind of person is the organisation looking for?
  - b. You can find many [job interview questions online](#). Take some time to think about what questions you are likely to get.
  - c. Think beforehand of how you want to answer. Use the STARR method:



An example of a question: Are you good at teamwork? And can you give an example to show it?

Situation: During my studies I had to do a research project with a group of fellow students.

Task: My task was to keep an overall view and make sure everyone completed their tasks on time.

Action: I created an overview of all tasks and deadlines and made sure everyone made the deadlines.

Result: We all really enjoyed working together, and the project was a success.

Reflect: There was an evaluation afterwards. The feedback I received was that I could have been more pro-active as we approached the deadline and there was still no input. I will remember this in future. The group really appreciated my communication skills within the team.

This looks like a long and artificial answer, but if you practise it for a while, it will sound more natural and shorter and clearer. Make sure you leave out irrelevant details! This will give the interviewer a good idea of who you are, and they can always ask follow-up questions if needed.

- d. Be aware of your non-verbal communication. You can practise this by answering a question using the STARR method and filming yourself with your telephone. Pay attention to what you do when you talk: make eye contact, sit calmly and with a straight back, do not use your hands too much when you talk (avoid fiddling with accessories on the desk), smile and make sure your voice is not too monotonous.
- e. Think of questions you may want to ask about the job or the organisation. This shows that you are interested and that you have thought about it.

### **3. Arrival**

- a. If you are early, go for a short walk and enter the building ten minutes before your appointment.
- b. Be polite to everyone from the moment you enter the building.
- c. Check one last time that look representative and your telephone is switched off.
- d. Give the interviewer a firm handshake. This makes for a strong first impression!

### **4. The interview**

- a. An interview is a two-way street, so be curious and ask questions!
- b. Remember to maintain an open attitude: turn your body towards the interviewer, keep your back straight and your hands folded loosely on your lap or the table, and make eye contact with the interviewer.
- c. Speak calmly.
- d. Keep your answers short and your story 'simple' – avoid complicated language use.
- e. Let the interviewer know if you do not understand a question.
- f. Do not be afraid of thinking about a difficult question for a few moments. Just say: "That's a difficult question; I have to think about it for a moment." This makes you appear strong and confident. A good answer is better than a quick answer that was not thought through properly.
- g. Do not initiate salary negotiations during the first interview round; this is usually reserved for the next round. Do find out what you can expect, though, so you are not taken by surprise if the topic comes up after all.
- h. If you find this helpful, take notes for the next interview.
- i. Ask about the next step in the procedure. When can you expect to hear from the organisation? Will there be more selection rounds?

### **5. After the interview**

- a. If you do not hear anything from the organisation for a while, do not hesitate to contact them. Make sure not to sound desperate or impatient, but simply ask how things stand.

- b. Are you through to the second round? Well done! You are one step closer to getting the job.

### **Preparing for the second round**

- a. Ask what the second round entails. This differs per organisation. It could be an interview with the department manager, an assessment (a case study to complete at home or on location), or an employment conditions interview.
- b. Second interview
  - a. Ask about the goal of the interview.
  - b. Find out who you will be talking to. Look them up.
  - c. Prepare the questions. In this round, you can expect more open questions about your work experience and suitability for the job. Now that you have a better understanding of what the job entails, you are better able to explain why you are the best candidate. Make sure you prepare your answers (STARR).
- c. Assessment
  - a. There are different kinds of assessment. The most important components of an assessment are the interview, IQ tests, personality tests, role plays, exercises, assignments, and of course the final report.
  - b. You can find practice assessments online, for example at [www.123test.com](http://www.123test.com).
  - c. On the Career Service website, you can find more tips on completing assessments.
- d. Employment conditions interview
  - a. An appointment for an employment conditions interview in principle means that you want the job and the employer wants you. The goal of the interview is to agree on a number of things, such as contract type, salary, working hours, commuting allowance, and schooling opportunities.
  - b. Find out who you will be talking to. In most cases, this will be the department manager and an HR officer. Look the interviewers up.
  - c. Big companies or governmental offices have all jobs scaled at a specific level, but this is not always the case with smaller companies. Make sure you read the employment conditions listed in the vacancy before the interview. Read the collective labour agreement and check the company's salary scales.
  - d. Make an inventory beforehand of your current and desired employment conditions, including holiday allowance, leave hours, thirteenth month, profit distribution, fixed expense allowance, commuting allowance, study costs, mobile telephone, laptop and/or tablet, working from home, and relocation allowance. Think beforehand how you stand on these matters and what your lower and upper limits are.
  - e. Think beforehand about possible solutions for points on which you expect disagreement: you can usually negotiate employment conditions such as study costs or working hours or exchange one condition for another.
  - f. Make sure the atmosphere remains pleasant, but also show that you know what you want and are well-prepared.
  - g. See the Career Service website for more tips on how to prepare for an employment conditions interview.

### **6. Page 6: The result**

- a. You got the job! Congratulations! Make sure you ask about the next step and what you need to do now. Do not share the good news on social media straight away. Wait until you have signed the contract and informed your current employer.
- b. You did not get the job? That is a pity, but do not get discouraged. Use this rejection as an opportunity to find out more about how others see and assess you. Always ask why you were

rejected; you can learn a lot from it! Also ask for advice on how to do better next time. The interviewers will know; they are experts. You can use this information to improve your odds next time.

If you have any other questions, see the [Career Service website](#) for a list of interview tips or to register for a job interview workshop.