

INTERVIEW SKILLS

LET'S GET READY CAREER HACKS

Congratulations – you got an interview! This fact sheet will provide you with tips, advice, real-life interview questions and scenarios, and all the things you need to know to assist you to prepare for, and excel in any interview situation.



CONGRATULATIONS

You got an interview! What's next? Upon invitation to the interview, ask the company representative the following questions:

- Will the interview be by phone, Skype, video conference or in person (face-to-face, one-to-one, panel, or group)?
- Who will be interviewing you (i.e. as a panel, they may have someone from HR, a manager who oversees the position, an independent consultant, or another employee from a different business area)? Note down their names and titles to take with you to the interview.
- Ask if applicants will have access to interview questions 10 minutes prior to the interview, which is normal industry practice.
- Email the company representative to confirm your attendance at the interview.

TO CONSIDER

What is the purpose of job interviews? It allows companies to identify the suitability of applicants by rating and weighting responses against pre-determined criteria such as:

- Competence – technical and non-technical skills.
- Fit – cultural and motivational fit.
- Soft skills – team worker, good communicator, initiative, problem solver, resilient.
- Potential – ability to progress further within the organisation.

Where is the predetermined criteria?

- When the job vacancy is advertised, a Job Description Form (JDF) should also be available. The JDF contains information on the company, reporting hierarchy, role definition, responsibilities of the position, and essential capabilities required to work in the role. Make sure you save a copy of the JDF before the job advertisement closes.
- If you can't locate the JDF, call the company to query if the position has one available and request that it be emailed to you.
- If there isn't a JDF available, refer to the criteria within the job advertisement, together with information about the company from their website, LinkedIn, social media or industry publications to gather additional information.
- Once you identify information about the position and company, you can link this information to potential interview questions that may be asked, and prepare accordingly.

PRO TIPS

- Larger corporations and government organisations may use more traditional practices when interviewing and will tend to base interview questions on selection criteria.
- Think about what you will do if you need to give a presentation, or video introduction, as part of the interview process. Some companies use interviewing strategies based on gaming, contests, presentations, group challenges, case studies, job simulations, etc.
- Identifying your transferable skills, knowledge, values and attributes helps potential employers look beyond your specific job titles and highlights what you can do for them.

REMEMBER

- Recruiters may check your background online. Be aware of what you share online as you never know who is going to see it. Even better, purposefully cultivate a professional online presence using platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram to showcase your industry involvement – so when recruiters look at your online presence they see professional and on-point information.
- 7% of our communication is the words we use, 38% of our communication is the tone we use and 55% of our communication is in our body language.
- Answer the questions posed to the best of your ability with a conversational tone, rather than sounding rehearsed.

THE 4 PS OF A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

Prepare:

The more you prepare, the more confident you will be!

- Research the organisation and gather as much relevant information as possible, including the organisation's values, history, community involvement and future goals.
- Research information on the business trends and growth areas.
- Become very familiar with your job application submission.
- Consider why you have applied for this position and what you can bring to the role.
- Prepare three things you want to know about the job or organisation that don't relate to salary, annual leave or personal benefit.
- Create a career portfolio, documenting your education, community involvement, work examples and skills.
- Work on articulating how your skills and qualifications align with the position.

Practise:

- No matter how good an interviewee you think you are, it is vital that you practise.
- Make the time for a mock interview, ask a trusted person to be your interviewer.
- Prepare for your practice session by making a list of likely interview questions as well as questions to be asked. See next page for common interview questions.
- Share these with the mock interviewer in advance so that they can be incorporated in the mock session.
- Rehearse all your answers.
- Video record the session to review later, and observe how you answer questions, your tone and body language.
- Treat all practice interviews as real.

Plan:

Gather what you need to take to the interview:

- Your résumé and any supplementary information the business has requested.
- A notebook, pen, water and tissues.
- Questions to ask the interviewer.
- Most importantly, a positive and confident attitude.

Presentation:

- Check that your interview clothing is suitable and comfortable.
- Dress the way you expect the interviewer to dress.
- Assume that as soon as you walk through the door, that the interview has already started. Be courteous and friendly to everyone you come into contact with, from the receptionist to the interviewer.
- When you meet the interviewer, smile, introduce yourself and shake hands firmly.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact. At a panel interview, ensure eye contact with all panel members is shared as evenly as possible.
- Demonstrate a positive and professional attitude.
- Be aware of your body language, be mindful of the speed of your speech and make sure to listen to what your interviewers are saying or asking.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR COMPOSURE

What happens if I go blank?

- If you have prepared answers to common interview questions (for example communication, interpersonal or problem solving skills) you can bring an overview of this information (1-2 dot points covering each question) to the interview with you, on a single piece of paper in a notebook. A quick glance at the dot points will be sufficient to help jog your memory – this is where your preparation, practise and planning will help you.
- If needed, ask politely that the interviewer repeat the question.
- Take a moment to gather your thoughts, provide your answer and ask the interviewer if you have answered their key points at the end of your reply.

What happens if I do not understand a question?

- Try paraphrasing the question back to the interviewer to clarify what is being asked.
- Ask to have the question repeated, and take quick notes to help you keep track of a complex question, particularly if there are multiple elements within the question that need to be referred to.

What if I don't have a demonstrated example to answer a question?

- Provide a structured hypothetical example of what you would do in that situation.
- Find the alternative – provide information based on an experience or situation that is similar.

How do I handle my nerves?

Imagine the interview as a conversation between two people who are getting to know each other rather than an interview.

Before the interview:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise to release those feel-good endorphins, which will also help you to calm down.
- Practise, practise, practise.
- Get to the interview at least 15 minutes early so you can review your notes prior.
- Visualise success and think positively.

Apart from researching the position, company and preparing answers to possible interview questions to demonstrate your knowledge, skills and attributes to the position – you can also use the following techniques to help you get prepared and feel relaxed during the process:

- Focus on the present moment, either by concentrating on your breathing or on body sensations for a few moments. It will help calm you down.
- Adopt a non-defensive stance with your legs and arms uncrossed, to help you feel less nervous and come across as more comfortable and confident.

TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Question Categories	Description	Real Examples
<p>Open Ended:</p> <p>Often used as ice-breakers to get the candidate talking.</p>	<p>When answering, provide the interviewers with a brief outline starting with the most recent/pertinent information of your education and experience (paid and/or unpaid).</p> <p>Use your knowledge of the company and match your values and interests to those of the company.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about yourself? • Why are you interested in this position? • Tell me about something that's not on your resume?
<p>Behavioural:</p> <p>Designed to show the employer that you have previous experience in a similar situation.</p>	<p>Used to show your soft skills and attributes.</p> <p>How you have "behaved" in certain situations in the past will provide an indication of how you'll behave in those same situations in the future.</p>	<p>Teamwork:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about a time when your team did not perform to its full potential. How did you handle it? <p>Problem solving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a time when you have handled a situation with an agitated client? <p>Initiative/leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead. • Tell me about a time when you received feedback on your performance and you disagreed with the feedback. How did you handle the situation? <p>Interpersonal skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give me an example of a time when you motivated others. • Have you ever noticed that someone at work was having a bad day? How did you know? What did you do? <p>Challenge/stress/pressure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us about a difficult clinical experience you had and how you handled it? • Describe a stressful work situation you've had. How did you resolve that situation?

INTERVIEW SKILLS

Interview Question Categories	Description	Real Examples
Situational: To assess how you may respond to a hypothetical situation at work.	<p>More ambiguous prompts are used, i.e. "how would you handle, what would you do?".</p> <p>Designed to draw out your analytical and problem-solving skills. Provide examples from your experiences that connect directly with the new job.</p>	<p>Usually presented with a scenario and then asked how you would behave in that situation, i.e.</p> <p>"Our company provides front facing services to the general public, of diverse ages, nationalities and cultures. Should you encounter a customer who is angry or irate, how would you manage the situation?".</p>
Competency: Used to demonstrate technical skills and knowledge.	<p>Designed to determine whether you meet the key competencies of the job.</p> <p>Common themes are customer-facing skills, stakeholder relationships skills, commercial awareness, technical application/experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me about your experience in the development and delivery of programs.• Tell me about a time when you used your initiative to resolve a complex problem.• Tell me about a time when you had to communicate complex technical information to a client.• Talk me through a situation where you used your communication skills effectively, resulting in an improved level of customer care.

HOW TO RESPOND TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Provide an example per question to support your claims that you have the skills required for the position. The best way to this is by using the STAR framework.

The STAR acronym refers to:

Situation: Open with a brief description and set the context of your story.

Task: What did you have to achieve?

Action: What did you do and why did you do it? Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task.

Result: What was the outcome of your actions?

Example: Response to Interview Question

The following example is to be used as a guide only. It is important to make responses your own.

Question:

The ability to effectively communicate verbally in a team setting.

I currently volunteer as a football coach for Joondalup City and through this role I have successfully developed positive relationships with the team, my fellow volunteers and members of the community.

Whilst leading a recent training session, a heated situation erupted between two players that had the potential to become very serious.

Working with young adults requires a level of confidence required to quickly evaluate a situation and then act to ensure the safety of all involved.

In this instance, I approached the players in a calm manner. Keeping my tone professional, I asked that both players leave the playing field with me to discuss what had happened, leaving an assistant coach with the remaining players to continue the training session.

Each player was given the opportunity to speak and I listened very carefully so that I fully understood what had happened. I ensured that each player remained respectful of each by explaining the importance of our team charter's code of conduct. By allowing each player to talk in an environment that was safe, they could share their differences, allowing each player to understand and respect the others point of view.

This resulted in a stronger relationship between the players and in turn with the team. My ability to effectively communicate verbally, listen and remain calm stems from being patient, positive, remaining focused, and collecting the right information to work towards a positive solution.

STAR

Situation
(where did you do it)

Task
(what did you do)

Action
(how do you do it,
describe the method)

Result
(What were the results –
positive outcome)

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Prepare three to five questions to ask.

Tip: The more the better, just in case some of your questions are answered within the interview:

- What does a typical day in this role look like?
- How would you describe the working environment here? Is it more collaborative or independent?
- Will I be working with a team and if I am, can you tell me a little about each of them?
- Can you tell me what you love the most about working here?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Is there anything else I can provide you that would be helpful or other questions I can answer?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the interview taking place, reiterating your interest in the role, and a summary of your strengths and how they fit the position description and company.
- If unsuccessful seek feedback from recruiter to improve your future performance at interviews.

Useful Links

Visit ECU **CareerHub** at careerhub.ecu.edu.au for a list of useful website links to assist with the development of your résumé. You can book drop-in sessions and workshops to develop your employability skills. For additional information to become a career ready graduate, see the **Get Career Ready Online Module**.

HACK SERIES

Résumé

Interview Skills

Selection Criteria

Cover Letter

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