

Hi,

My name is Dave Doyle and I want to thank you for downloading my guide.

I firmly believe that the information within this guide, when applied can put you ahead of every other candidate and help you have a successful interview.

I hope you enjoy my guide and that it helps you be successful at your interview(s).

I welcome all comments and would love to know your thoughts. You can email me at dave@interviewquestionsandanswers.net . I may not get back to you individually but I do read every email I receive and I value your input.

Let's get started!

How to Have a Successful Interview

First Impressions – they really do count

Body language

I've been in many interviews for a variety of jobs throughout my life. I've also spoken to industry experts on what they look for in a prospect when conducting an interview. Top of their list was first impressions.

Your interviewer is going to form a very large part of their opinion on you in a short very short space of time.

Your first few moments with your interviewer will tell them a great deal about you.

You may or may not like that but it's true. The best course of action for you is to make the best impression you can. You need to make sure you're sending out the right messages and signals to your interviewer.

The saying goes - 'You never get a second chance to make a first impression'.

When you enter a room, what is the first impression someone gets of you, before you utter a word?

Answer – Body language!

Body language

Your body language speaks volumes. Never underestimate it.

Body language doesn't necessarily start when you attend your first interview. It can happen on the phone if you're talking to your next employer before hand.

So what's a good example of body language on a phone? It's important to stand tall when you speak. Don't lean on your hands. If you're leaning on your hands then you're likely to slur or mumble some words. That's not good.

When you go for your interview stand tall and look confident. I used to practice this all the time at home. Practice either with a friend or in the mirror. I would practice sitting/waiting and then standing to greet my interviewer.

I always give a firm handshake. Have you ever been introduced to someone who shook your hand with little conviction? They shake but your hand it's basically limp.

It's like they're not interested in shaking your hand or meeting you. Truth be told they're probably not. So make sure you have a firm handshake when meeting your interviewer.

I always make eye contact. Don't stare them down but make eye contact for several seconds while greeting them and shaking their hand. This shows that you're interested and paying attention.

When been interviewed it's important to sit straight and do not put your hands in your pockets. Don't fidget either. This can be hard for some people. If you're like me when I started doing interviews, then you're probably nervous when you go for an interview. Practice sitting still without fidgeting.

Tip: Also, don't keep too much loose change in your pocket. It will make noise and you're more likely to play with it if you're nervous.

Body language is not really your first impression!

An interviewer will notice your body language (both consciously and sub-consciously) when you enter a room. However it's not really your first impression.

Your first impression will start with your Curriculum Vitae (CV). It needs to be well-presented and professional.

You can go a step further and produce a well written cover letter to accompany your CV.

If you've already applied for a position but didn't include a cover letter, don't worry. They were obviously impressed enough with your CV to offer you an interview. You can still make a great first impression when you meet your interviewer. Just keep it in mind for next time.

Grooming

Dress smartly. This comes back to making a good first impression. You don't have to have an Armani suit. Just make sure you have a clean ironed shirt, tie and trousers.

You want to be comfortable and relaxed and concentrating on the interview. So don't wear a watch that is too tight or shoes that are uncomfortable. Choose clothes you know you are comfortable in.

Remember to polish your shoes. This is particularly important if you have a female interviewer.

Women look at your shoes more than men do. And if yours are dirty, then she will make a mental note of it. You don't want any negative impressions and it's easy to give your shoes a polish and shine. It only takes 5 minutes.

A not so clean shoe shouldn't really matter. But it does. It will form a negative impression in the interviewers mind.

If you're not convinced about women looking straight at your shoes then ask any of your female friends.

Even better, watch their eyes whenever you enter a room or meet some new women.

They will check out your shoes at some point. You may not always see them do it but they will ;)

Tip: it's always better to over dress than to under dress. Take pride in your appearance.

Try to dress a little better than the people who will be interviewing you. If they are already in formal dress, then you only need to match them.

You need to be groomed well too. I'm a guy so I make sure my hair looks good and I'm clean shaven. Also check your finger nails are short and clean.

Women should try to wear a dark suit (black, navy, grey). If you wear a skirt then make sure that it is comfortable to sit in.

Go easy on the jewellery. If you do wear jewellery, make sure it is not cheap. I don't mean your jewellery has to be expensive. It just shouldn't look tacky. Ask someone whose opinion you trust.

Wear light makeup and perfume. Have a professional hairstyle and carry a Portfolio or briefcase.

Tip: if you're a woman then bring a spare pair of tights. If you're a man, bring a spare shirt and tie. Just in case you spill food or drink on them

Punctuality

Not a lot to be said on punctuality and it should be self explanatory. Be on time! In fact, be early if you can. 15 or 20 minutes will set a good impression.

Last impressions

What's true for first impressions is true for last impressions also. You want to leave on a positive note. You don't want your last moments with your interviewer to be negative. So a firm handshake and eye contact with each interviewer is a must. Remember to thank them for their time.

Summary

- Create a well-presented and professional CV.
- Practice giving good eye contact with people.
- Practice giving a good and firm handshake.
- Dress smartly. Check what the dress code is for they type of business and dress smarter than what they usually wear (except when it's already formal)
- Be on time.
- Make a good last-impression.

Coping with Nerves

Did you know most interviewers don't consider nerves a problem? In fact, most interviewers expect a certain level of nerves. The trick is to not let your nerves get the better of you.

It's actually up to the interviewer to try and relax the candidate.

It's perfectly natural and normal to feel nervous before an interview. However some people are more nervous than others. If you suffer from bad nerves, then what can you do about it?

You'll be glad to know that nerves can be greatly reduced if you prepare thoroughly for your interview.

So how can you prepare thoroughly for an interview?

The answer is a simple and effective one. You can prepare by rehearsing your interview before it happens. Prepare your answers to common as well as difficult questions.

Rehearsing in front of a mirror is a great idea. You can practice your answers by doing a mock interview with a friend.

Tip: If anything does go wrong, maybe you spill a drink or knock over a pile of papers. Have the capacity to laugh at yourself. Tell them 'that's nerves for you. This job is very important to me so I'm more nervous than normal today'. It's not the end of the world. So carry on in a positive manner.

Unless you are applying for a job that involves presenting or carrying a tray of drinks, the interviewer won't hold it against you.

How to ease the symptoms of nerves

Eat a light meal before the interview. Nerves will always be worse on an empty stomach. If you think you'll have trouble holding it down, then eat an hour or two before the interview and don't binge.

Remember to breathe. It's so simple but so many people don't breathe correctly.

Watch this breathe exercise video -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEJbDDWzrUs>

Knowledge is power – But only if you know how to acquire it

Research your future employer

Combined with body language, researching my future employers has helped me beat every other applicant at every interview I ever attend. I guarantee it will help you too.

So how often do you research your future employer before attending an interview? And I mean really research. I don't mean you do just a quick scan of their website (if they have a website, not all business' do).

I've had the opportunity to interview people many times. It never ceases to amaze me how little people research the company and business before going to the interview.

It's ALWAYS a big negative when I have to decide on what candidates make the cut. Researching your potential employers company and business shows a lot of genuine interest on your behalf. Employers will recognize this genuine effort.

I do the following to research my future employer and it works very well.

I research the company's competition. Learn about their market. This applies to everyone, whether you're new to the industry or not. Do your due diligence. It will pay off.

If you can show an active interest in what the company does, it will really help you. It will give you more to talk about in the interview. It will also help build rapport.

Researching and knowing a company in depth (as much as you can without working for them) will allow you to be more engaging in the interview. Your interviewers will want to talk to you more (remember you're building rapport). They will take note that you researched their business as well as their competition. They will acknowledge that you have valid opinions etc.

The more engaging your interview is, the more remarkable you will be. It will separate you from the other interviewees.

You don't need to go overboard when discussing what you found out about the company. The fact that you've done thorough research will come across in the interview.

Doing thorough research will also make you more confident. Your interviewers will pick up on your confidence. This is another positive for you.

What else should you do? – This is another secret weapon in my interview tactics arsenal. It's not really a secret but very few people do this.

I contact the company directly and speak to people in the area I'm applying for.

This is not always possible. The people you try to contact will be busy etc. But if you can speak to someone within the company then you will have an inside track on what's going on.

Tip: Respect peoples time. If you try to speak with someone and they're not available or busy, then ask if there would be a more convenient time. Then leave it at that. You want to attempt to speak with someone but you don't want to annoy them before you even meet them.

Most people will be really helpful, especially if no one else is doing this. Pick up the phone and try it. What's the worst that could happen, seriously?

Be interested in what you do.

Do you think your interviewers will notice that you took this extra step. That you showed more interest than other candidates?

You bet they will!

Do this and you will be head and shoulders above your competition. And you will be remarkable. If you're remarkable then you stand out. And you will be remembered because of that.

Can you see the trend here? These two steps combined with the next will dramatically increase your chances of having a successful interview and getting the job.

Interview questions and answers

Preparing for the interview questions

I'm now going to touch on interview questions and answers themselves.

Some question asked in an interview will be 'open ended' and others will be 'closed type' questions.

Let me start with an example of an 'open ended' question – E.g. **Tell me about yourself?**

This is actually one of the toughest questions an interviewer can ask. The reason it's so tough is because people rarely prepare for it properly and it catches them off guard.

This question can quite often swing the interview for you and if answered well, it will put you ahead of the other candidates.

It can be tough to know where to start with this question. Usually the interviewer wants to know about your recent work experience. Keep your answer focused and relevant to the question and position you are interviewing for.

You shouldn't start by asking 'what would you like to know?' Start off telling a little about yourself and then ask if they could be more specific.

To help you narrow the field for your answer. You could ask 'What part of my work experience would you like me to talk about?' This will give you focus and somewhere to begin with your answer.

You can always talk about semi-related topics if they ask you. However, you should always try to relate your answer back to the current job.

Like every other question, once you prepare your answers then it becomes relatively easy.

Another 'open ended' question might be – **What are some things that bother you?**

This is a common question. Remember to keep it related to the job i.e. what bothers you about the job or the people you work with?

A clever answer for this question is to say 'it bothers me when other people I work with don't meet their deadlines or deliver on what they promise'.

An example of a 'closed question' would be – Do you work well in a team?

Closed questions tend to be yes or no answers.

The obvious short answer to this is 'yes'. A good interviewer will tend not to ask many closed questions because they can get much more information from you with 'open ended' questions.

If you find your interviewer asks a lot of closed questions then you should try to expand on the answer yourself. When you answer, try to gauge how interested the interviewer is in the answer. If you keep your answers relevant then you will impress them more than other candidates that just answer 'yes' or 'no'.

Here's a quick recap. The 3 pieces of advice that have helped me succeed with 98% of my interview is –

- 1 – Body language
- 2 – Thorough research
- 3 – Preparing and practicing my interview questions and answers

Complete these 3 and you will be ahead of almost everyone else going for the same job.

I always do those 3 things when preparing for an interview. It makes me more confident and positive when I go for my interview. I don't feel the stress and pressure I used to feel from being ill prepared. This advice will help you too.

You owe it to yourself to give it your best shot.

You won't always be perfect but you will be ahead of your competition. Sometimes that's all it takes.

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

What would you want if you were the one doing the interviewing?

That is the question you need to ask yourself. If you can 'put yourself in their shoes' then you can give the interviewer exactly what they are looking for.

If you're thinking 'I have no idea what they want!', then you need to start doing some research. I'm not saying you have to be able to read minds. However, you do need to make the best attempt possible to understand what the interviewer is looking for in a candidate.

You need to remember that you are selling yourself to the interviewer(s). The best way to sell anything is to give the customer what they want. In this case you need to give the interviewer(s) what they are looking for.

Make an Impact

You need to stand out from every other candidate applying for this job. You need to make such a good impression that out of all the candidates, they will remember YOU the most.

So, how do you make an impact?

You need to speak with knowledge and intelligence. You can do this when you have done your research on what exactly the job entails, what the company does etc. Not only do you need to know about the job, the company etc. but you need to expand on your knowledge. Being able to expand on you learned will demonstrate intelligence.

Be an interesting person. When you leave the interview, you want the interviewer to be thinking you are an interesting person. This can be achieved with interesting stories/experiences relating to the work you are applying for. You could tell a story of how you came up with a unique or innovative way to solve a problem you had at work. Something that was very effective and that no one else thought of at the time.

Add value to the company. Every employer wants to know how you can add value to their company. If you can show them how you will be an asset and how they can't do without you, then you will be in with a greater chance of being successful.

What are Your Values?

Not everyone thinks about their own values, at least not directly. The company you are applying to have values and so should you.

Loyalty - Employers no longer expect you to stay with them for your entire working life but they do expect loyalty. Tell them that you believe in mutual respect. If your employer is loyal to you then you will do the same. E.g. you could say that your previous boss always fought your corner when times were tough and the company was letting people go. He did his best to keep you in your job. You then worked even harder because of that loyalty

Trust – Employers value employees they can trust. They want to know that they can give you a job/task to complete and be confident that you will do it without them having to double-check everything you do.

Integrity – Integrity shows that you are again trustworthy, honest and have a good character. You will always do what you think is right. Everyone wants someone with integrity working with them.

Responsibility – Responsible people are dependable and hold themselves accountable for their actions. They take ownership of an issue and make sure it gets resolved.

What's Your Vision?

Having a vision for your-self is very important.

- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?**
- **What are your targets/goals?**
- **How do you want to improve yourself?**

These are all questions than can lend towards answering the question of ‘what is your vision?’

Having a vision will help you achieve your goals and take your career in the direction you want.

If you are applying for a job then it must be somewhat connected with your vision of where you want to be. Make sure you can relate your vision to the job you are applying for.

You could use the following to help you with your answer.

E.g. one of your goals is to constantly improve yourself and you always let your employers know this. You strive to be the best you can in the area you are working in and don't stop until you have mastered that area. When you feel you have done all

you can in one area, you try progress to the next area. This could be the reason you are applying for this particular job.

Interviewer(s) Marking System

If an interviewer is interviewing many people for the same position then they will have a marking system. There are no set rules to this. It will be to suit their needs and wants in candidates.

It will give the interviewer an idea to your overall fit for the company.

E.g. They may mark you on –

- Technical ability
- How you handle stress/pressure
- Are you a team player?
- Listening
- Persuasion

The list could go on but I think you get the point.

They need this system because it would be very difficult to remember how every candidate did in each area. They could be interviewing 10, 20 or even more people.

This is also another reason to try and stand out and make a good impression. If you are more interesting than other candidates then you will be remembered more.

Let's say you apply for a job that requires 1 years experience in a technical area and you only have 3 months experience.

Should you still have applied for the position? The answer is a resounding YES!

Let's keep it simple for now and say there are two people interviewing for a job. You have several years experience in whatever industry it is you work in but you lack specific technical knowledge in a certain area. Then there is John who has 3 years experience in the technical area required for the job.

John is great in the technical area but he's a very poor team player and has difficulty working to schedules. He doesn't have great listening skills either as he keeps talking over the person interviewing him.

You however are a great team player and take direction from your line manager very well. Schedules motivate you and you like nothing better than a new challenge. Sure you don't have the same experience in the technical area as John but you have references that say you are a fast learner and proficient in anything you set your mind to.

So now, put yourself in the place of your interviewer. Who would you want to hire?

When the interviewer is reviewing their marking cards they will see you do much better overall than John, even though he has more experience in the specific technical area.

The Power of Having the Right Mindset

Do You Have the Right Personality for the Job?

You need to have more than just the right qualifications to have a successful interview and get the job. Your interviewer will want to know your personality type and whether your personality is suitable for the job.

Also, there's a good chance the person interviewing you will be your boss, so they will want to know if they will be able to work with you. They will already know the type of person they are looking for.

As a result, personality tests can be a big deciding factor on whether you get the job or not.

Some employers will use a psychometric test to help them assess your personality type. These tests are designed to see what type of personality you have and there is no right or wrong answer. There's also no point in lying or trying to cheat these tests. If your personality doesn't suit the job you're applying for and you lie on the test, then you will more than likely be unhappy in your work (assuming you were to get the job).

Not all employers will give a psychometric test. They will be able to tell if they can work with you just from talking to you.

They won't come straight out and ask if you're a good person or a pain to work with etc. They will ask questions that will help them figure this out on their own.

They will read your body language and see how confidently you answer your questions.

If you are very quiet and they find it difficult to get a comprehensive answer from you then they may not want to work with you. If you are loud and overpowering then they may not want to work with you either. Alternatively that may be a good trait, as it may be what is needed for the job.

The employer will need to think of their other employees also. If you are angry or aggressive then they will most likely not hire you. They won't want to subject their employees/colleagues to that type of behaviour.

If you are applying for a job that you enjoy and look forward to, then there's a good chance that you already have the right personality to suit the job.

You can get ahead of the competition, i.e. other interview candidates, by taking your own personality test. There are several to choose from. I would recommend <http://www.typefocus.com>. It's free.

Taking a personality test will help a lot in the interview and especially with certain questions e.g. – **Tell me about yourself?**

If you know your personality type then you have a lot more relevant information to base your answers on.

It will demonstrate initiative on your part that you took the time to learn and find out more about yourself. Employers will notice this and look positively on it.

You want to find a career that suits your personality type. This will ensure you get to work with your strengths and not against them.

Thank You Letter

A thank-you letter is a crucial part of the job application process. Probably every interview guide recommends you do it, yet only a small fraction of people bother to write one.

Never underestimate the power of a good thank you letter. You always want to be putting yourself ahead of the competition and writing a thank-you letter will certainly do that.

It will set you apart from everyone else and you will be noticed. Getting noticed is vital, especially if an employer has a stack of applicants to consider.

If an employer is trying to decide between two candidates and they receive a 'thank you' letter from one candidate, they will most likely hire the person who sent the letter.

Also, if you don't get the job but for some reason the position becomes available a short time later. Maybe the person left or another position became available. The employer will remember your thank you letter and most likely consider you for the position before anyone else. This is especially true if you were close to getting the job previously.

Sending a genuine thank-you letter can be the difference between getting the job and not getting it. It's that important.

I was going to include some thank-you letter examples but I happened to find a great resource online that does the job nicely.

You can find sample thank-you letters at <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/samplethankyou.htm>

Self Awareness

Take a psychometric test e.g. Birkman method. The test is expensive, so don't worry about it if it's a little out of your reach for now. Just keep it in mind for the future.

Remember you can use <http://www.typefocus.com/> which was mentioned above and is free.

It's important that you know your faults. If you can identify your faults then you address them. Doing a psychometric test is another way to make you stand out from the crowd. Not many of the people will have done a test like this.

Being self aware is similar to knowing your personality type, as mentioned earlier.

Answering a Vague Question

Interviewers often ask vague questions and they tend to be asked at the beginning of an interview. A couple of examples are 'Tell me about yourself?' and 'What are your strengths and weaknesses?'

When asked a vague question, do your best to give specific answers. Give positive answers and use examples to back up those answers.

Vague questions are a great opportunity for you to explain how you can contribute in a meaningful way to their business. A picture paints a thousand words so remember to use examples in your answers.

Using examples will give you a lot more credibility during an interview.

Use the information you learned about yourself from the personality test at <http://www.typefocus.com/> to backup your answers.

By knowing and understanding your personality you can demonstrate how your strengths can contribute to their business.

Using relevant examples can also show how you are constantly working on turning your weaknesses into strengths. This shows that you are proactive in improving yourself. After all, you can't fix your weaknesses if you can't identify them.

Q -You have a lot of qualifications and experience. Do you think you're over qualified for this job?

A - No I don't. I believe my qualifications and experience will allow me to do this job effectively from the beginning. I can become a useful member of the team/department immediately. I've been looking for work in a company like this. You get a qualified

competent employee and I get to work where I want. I think it's a 'win win' for both of us.

Q – What salary are you expecting us to pay you?

A – I currently earn *** and I would expect to earn more than that amount. This job is a step up for me and has more demands and responsibility. I would expect my salary to reflect these demands and responsibilities.

If you are going to work for an organisation with a salary pay scale then do some research? Try to find out what the pay scale levels are and what you are entitled to. Many large corporations will have pay scales in place.

Q - Do you think you are paid enough?

A – I know what I make is similar or better to what others are making at my level. I believe in putting in extra time and extra effort in my job. I also believe that I should be rewarded for that extra effort.

You should consider what you will least accept and what you believe you are worth (financially). Have clear figures in your mind so you can be concise when discussing the matter of money.

The worst that can happen is they will say no. If they want to hire you, they will make you an offer even if it doesn't match what you are looking for.

Q - Why are you leaving your current job?

For this question is important to focus on positives. In most cases you don't want to be leaving on a negative reason. State why you like your current job and state why moving job is good for you.

A – I love the work I do and I know my referral will back that up. I also want to progress and take on more responsibility. There are presently no opportunities with my current employer. I don't want to stay in a job that I will start to resent because of lack of options to progress. I want to leave on a positive note and enter a new position with that same positive attitude, eager to do the best job I can.

Q - What is your biggest fault/weakness?

A lot of people find this question difficult. I mean why would anyone want to talk about their faults? You need to try to turn your fault/weakness into a positive.

A – I tend to take on too much of other peoples responsibilities. Being a team leader in my field means I have a lot of experience. As such people come to me looking for help and advice with their problems. I used to solve their problems for them or deal with their customers instead of guiding them letting them learn for themselves. I always want to help but I needed to realise they would not learn if I keep doing their jobs for them.

Since I became aware of what I was doing, I've made a conscious effort to stop doing other peoples jobs. As a result, my teams are more productive than ever. I keep on top of it and it's not really an issue anymore.

Q – Can you say ‘no’ to people?

A – Yes. However I don't say it often and when I do say 'no'. If something is outside my scope of responsibility and I have other work to complete then I would need to prioritise my own work first.

I think it's better to say 'no' if you know you can't complete a request. There's no point in saying 'yes' and not being able to complete the request when the person needs it.

I always give a good reason and people know that of me. I'm willing to listen and discuss their request. I would try to give the person an alternative or direct them to someone who could better help them. Not only that but the person asking me completely understands and is happy with the alternative I have given them.

Tip: People judge you on what you do after you do what you are paid to do.

Q - Why are you the best person for this job?

This is your chance to show how you and your skills will help **contribute to improving the company**. It could be a variety of things e.g. from setting up teams, streamlining work processes, improving output.

All these examples and more will help a company's bottom line. If you can improve a company's bottom line then you will be a much more attractive candidate.

Some people find it difficult to show how they can improve a company's bottom line, especially if you're not in a sales position/department. It's easy to show an increase in sales but how do you justify your position when you work in an area like Information Technology?

You need to leverage your skills, personality traits and past experience to help you with this question.

Keep your answer relevant to the job description and make sure what you say matches what is on your CV.

A – I have the qualifications and experience you are looking for in this job. I'm very driven and motivated to meet all my goals and exceed them when possible. If there is any aspect of the job I'm not 100% familiar with, you can be sure I will learn those skills quickly and on my own time. I'm ambitious and want to be the best at what ever I do.

Tip: The more research you do on a company, the more prepared you will be for this type of question. Do not say “I don’t know” or “I don’t know exactly what you’re looking for”.

Q – Give us an example of how you well your previous team worked together.

If you have ever successfully completed projects, big or small, then now is the time to talk about them.

It could be anything from setting up a new email system if you are in IT to organising tours for people visiting your area if you are in Tourism.

The point is these are important tasks and you want to show how well your team worked together to complete their tasks in the allotted time.

A – We recently set up a new email system for over 500 employees. We were moving away from in-house servers and hosting our email on Microsoft’s BPOS system. This was a big undertaking but we managed to get it implemented in under 6 weeks.

The project was a complete success but only because our team worked well together.

Q – Tell me how you help an employee who isn’t performing well.

This question is a great opportunity to demonstrate your social skills. This is a sensitive area because you’re essentially pointing an error that your employee is doing. You need to explain how you carefully handled it so as not to hurt their feelings.

Keep in mind that the answer you give should **not** demonstrate you blaming your employee and you should never be threatening.

You don’t want to wrap your employees in cotton wool either but you want them to be aware of any mistakes they’re making.

You want to explain how you brought the problem to their attention. After all, they may not even know that they were performing poorly (why should they if no one says it to them?) Then explain how you both worked together to find a better solution or method of working.

You need to make it a ‘win win’ for both you and the employee. You get a better performing employee and they feel satisfied that they are performing better.

A – I brought the problem to their attention in a manner that was relaxed but addressed the problem directly. The person knew they weren’t doing too well in certain areas but felt a little isolated as they hadn’t quite integrated into my team yet.

I worked with them directly to get the problems resolved. I also encouraged them to spend time with others on the team to see how they worked. This helped prevent future problems and it bonded the team at the same time.

I think they were concerned that I was going to report them or not give them a good review. So, I explained that others had the same problems when they were doing this kind of work and that everything here is a learning process. That put them at ease and it encouraged the person to bring any questions/problems to me in the future instead of letting them linger.

Tip: Try to demonstrate empathy in your answer. It helps put people at ease and develops rapport if you have something in common.

Q – Can you work evening and weekends?

Do not underestimate the importance of this question. The employer is looking to see if you place your personal interests above your job. You may have religious or family obligations that prevent you from doing so. That's a personal decision for you.

If you're working a salary job e.g. a managerial position. Then you may be expected to work more than 40 hours per week.

However, not all employers are monsters :). They can be flexible too. The following would be a great answer to give.

A – I have commitments on the weekend but I can be flexible if I know about an issue in advance.

That simple sentence demonstrates that you are able to work weekends once you have enough notice. Any employer will take that as a good and honest answer.

If you're young and single then you might have a different answer e.g.

A – I love my work, it's my whole life. I'd sleep in my office if I could! Seriously, I love my job. As far as I'm concerned, the more time I spend at work the better. Of course I know I need a break from time to time but I just wanted to emphasise my point.

The above answer shows that you can work weekends or whatever hours they throw at you. It also adds a little humour, which shows them that you really do like your work.

Q – How do you cope with disappointment?

A – I'm human so of course I don't like it. But I learned long ago that disappointment isn't always a bad thing. For each door that closes, another one opens. I was disappointed when due to illness I missed some school and I had to repeat my final year. Because I repeated, I had extra time on certain subjects which helped me come top of my class. I certainly wasn't disappointed when I got my first choice in university due to my good grades.

Tip: Try to give an answer that turns a negative (disappointment) into a positive.

What to do if there is a silence in the interview?

'Silence is golden' is not a phrase that applies to interviews. There will be times when you can't answer a question.

If you don't know the answer to a question then you need to be honest and let them know.

People usually become stuck on a question when it is technical or factual.

If this happens to you then some of these replies may help you.

A – I'm sorry but I'm not familiar with this area of the job so I can't give you specific details.

A – I'm not sure I understand the question. Can you clarify or rephrase it for me?

A – I don't have direct experience with the problem you mentioned but if I had to deal with that situation then this is how I would do it. (Proceed to explain your answer).

A – I'm not sure how to answer the question as this isn't something I got to cover in my degree but it's an area that interests me. I plan to learn a lot more about it and I'd love to do it here with people who have experience in the area.

Tip: If you don't know the answer to a question then be honest and say so. It's important to make a good impression and you will be found out if you try to lie or bluff your way through an answer. The ability to admit that you don't know something but are willing to learn is a good quality to demonstrate to your interviewer.

Q – How do you keep your current job interesting?

A – This is easy for me as I get to work with different departments which add a lot of variety every day. No two days are ever the same. Many of my tasks involve streamlining processes. This means I get to work with many people in different areas of the business. It also gives me a better understanding of the business as a whole.

Q – Are you good with speaking and presenting to large groups of people?

A – Fortunately for me, I've been presenting since my college days. It was always part of our learning process. Since then I've had to give many presentations to both clients and internal management.

I find that I always give a great presentation when I'm prepared, understand my product and understand what my target audience wants.

Only knowing my products isn't enough. I have to know how it can help my target audience and convince them that it's what's best for them.

Giving presentations to large groups can be very challenging and that's one of the reasons I love it so much.

Q – It says on your CV that you are a ‘people person’. What do you mean by this?

A – I mean I enjoy being in an environment with plenty of people. It allows me to integrate and discuss ideas with them. I have a way of getting them to share ideas that help the team as a whole. I take great pleasure in being able to motivate and get the most out of my team or anybody I work with.

Q – What would you say are your greatest strengths?

A – Some of my strengths are able to see through a tough problem. I pride myself on being able to think ‘outside the box’.

If I’m struggling with some problem then I have the ability to motivate other people to come up with the best solution. I can get the best out of people.

I’m very streamlining processes. I like the solutions I provide to be both efficient and effective. I.e. they get the job done (effective) with the least possible red tape (efficient).

Q - What do you enjoy most about your current job?

This is a tricky question for a lot of people, especially if you don’t like your current job. People actually tend to answer this question with negatives about their current job. After all, if you like everything about your current job then why would you leave it?

A – I love the people I work with and the new challenges I get with each project I’m given. However, there’s currently no possibility of furthering my career at my current company. I would like to assume a role with more responsibility. That’s why I applied for this position.

Tips on answering questions.

If you have ever been in an exam situation then you know how important it is to answer the question that is on the paper. You may be a mine of information on a topic but if you don’t answer the question that was asked then you won’t get any marks.

The same applies for interview questions.

Stay relevant. Don’t go off on a tangent. Be concise with your answer and give only relevant information. If the interviewer wants more information then they will ask you to expand on your answer.

Answer the question you were asked. Don’t dodge a question. If you don’t know the answer to a question then it’s best to just say so and move on. Your interviewer will know if you’re avoiding/dodging a question and they won’t like it.

What interviewers want to hear?

Interviewers want to know –

That you are interested in their organisation. They want to know what you can contribute to the company. Not just what the organisation can do for you.

That you have ambition. Ask questions about promotion possibilities.

You are enthusiastic about your work. Tell them that you love taking on new challenges.

You have researched the industry. Knowledge is power. The organisation wants to know that you have researched their company. To demonstrate that you researched their competition would really impress them.

Stress Interviews

Have you ever had an interview where the interviewer seemed uninterested or try to make you feel uncomfortable?

I recently listened to a top radio presenter who placed a plant on the table in front of the candidate. He understood that some people were nervous when attending interviews. He wanted to see who had the nerve to move the plant or at least ask if it could be moved.

Candidates that didn't move the plant were unsuccessful. Those who did move the plant were called back for a second interview.

The position he was hiring for needed someone to be assertive. They couldn't sit back and accept the environment they were, especially if it made them feel uncomfortable. He had to know that they could speak up for themselves.

In a stress interview you are being tested on your ability to handle pressure, unusual situations or bad behaviour. They are used to see if you can still think logically and rationally in a stressful circumstance.

Some examples of creating a stress interview are –

Showing contempt: “Is that the best answer you can give? OK let's move on.” The interviewer may be rude or sarcastic.

Hostile body language: The interviewer may roll their eyes or not make eye contact at all. They may even answer their phone in an interview.

A large interview panel: There could be anywhere from 6 to a dozen people constantly asking questions.

A series of interviewers: Interviewers constantly come into the room, asking you a wide range of questions. They don't give you time to rest.

How to handle a stress interview?

The most important thing to remember is that it is not personal. Your interviewers are playing a game or a role to try to unsettle you. Understanding that it isn't personal will help you relax.

Take a deep breath (don't sigh) and speak calmly and softly.

It's not the question that's important but how you answer and the quality of your answer.

Dominate the room and take control of the situation. If there is a flip chart in the room, then use it to illustrate your points. You will be standing and that will make you more powerful, because everyone else is sitting down. If they tell you to sit down, then tell them that you like to stand while you work and say it calmly and assertively.

Structured Interviews

A structured interview is also known as a standardised interview. They are designed so that each interview is presented in the same manner i.e. the exact same questions are asked of each candidate and in the same order.

Some employers use a structured interview because it makes life a little easier for them. If they are not experienced or comfortable with conducting interviews then having a scripted structured interview makes it easier for them.

It creates uniformity for all candidates. If they are all asked the same questions then no one can say they were treated unfairly, as each candidate is treated the same.

Unstructured Interviews

An unstructured interview has no specific format. The interviewer will choose the questions based on the interviewee and the situation. An interviewer will always have some set questions that they will ask but an unstructured interview will seem less formal sometimes. Questions will arise based on the flow of conversation.

What competencies does an employer look for?

Interpersonal skills: Some people are very quiet/shy, while others are loud and overbearing. Having good interpersonal skills allows you to work and communicate effectively with all type of people.

Business awareness: You must know and understand your business/market. Thoroughly research the company and know what specific issues are facing the business.

Client focus: Client experience is at the heart of everything. Everything you do must be with the client in mind. If your interviewer thinks you don't care about their clients then you won't be getting that job.

Relationship builder: Relationships with your colleagues and your clients are extremely important. Good relationships build trust and people will work and buy from people they trust.

Leadership qualities: Do you have the ability to influence others? It is said that a good leader has the ability to take people to places they would not go alone. To be a leader you must have commitment, dedication and perseverance. You must have a vision, a set of goals you want to achieve and you will be proactive and take risks to achieve your vision and goals.

Problem solver: Someone who can always find a solution is highly valued. How do you approach problems and how do you ensure that each problem gets resolved? You must be able to see the big picture. This means that you don't get hung up on small details and never get the problem fixed. Details are important but the phrase 'you can't see the forest for the trees' applies here. You provide a working solution that your client/boss or whoever can use.

Career motivation: This shows drive and ambition. Someone who is career motivated will work hard to advance themselves. What employer doesn't want a hard working and motivated employee?

Task management: Employers want to know you can break larger tasks up into smaller tasks. You need to be able to manage all aspects of the task and prioritise.

Communication skills-making the right impact: How good are your communication skills? A good communicator can get their message across in a clear and concise manner. Being a good communicator allows you to convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. It can determine your ability to work well with others and will be an important part to having a successful interview.

Judgement – thinking process: Can you weigh the pros and cons of a decision and make a good judgement? How do you analyze a situation and make the best decision for the business?

Listening skills: There is a difference between hearing and listening. Being able to listen is a skill. It allows you to understand what people are saying. People who are good listeners are more productive because they know what is expected of them. If you are a good listener then you will have more positive working relationships with your colleagues and boss.

Independence: Employers need to know you can stand on your own two feet. They don't want to have to hold your hand when ever you're doing tasks. They want to know you can do it on your own.

Assertiveness: Stand up for our rights and beliefs and never be afraid to defend your work. Do not be a 'yes' person all the time. If people are taking advantage of you then you need to learn to say 'no' now and again.

Optimism self: Positive thinking is very important and very powerful. Never underestimate it. If you expect success then you will get more effort from your workers. If you expect failure then they obviously won't work as hard. Optimistic employees are always more productive.

Empathy: You need to be able to demonstrate empathy. This will help you to relate to your colleagues and build stronger relationships. It also helps to build trust.

Team player: - Employers want to know you can work with other people. You need to be able to integrate yourself into a team. Don't just become part of the team, make it better.

Ability to absorb complex matters analyse and simplify: - Analytical skills are important to employers. You need to be able to see the 'big picture' and break it down into simpler terms.

Innovate: - You need to be able to come up with your own ideas and methods. Be creative and stand out from everyone else. Be proactive and create new more effective systems. Leaders innovate.

An interviewer will want to know did you do a good job at your previous employers. This will especially come across in your references. You can demonstrate how well you did by showing your achievements, goals met, targets broken etc.

An interviewer will also want to know did you make a difference. How did you help your last employer? How did you add value to their business? If you can demonstrate that you can add value to a business then you will be seen as an asset to what ever company is interviewing you.

Sell Sell Sell and then sell some more.

An interview is pretty much the same as a sales transaction. You're essentially selling yourself to the interviewer. Always keep this in mind and

Isolate and focus on your core strengths. Demonstrate how they relate to the job requirements.

Be confident and believe in yourself.

You're there because the interviewer thinks you might be capable of doing the job. It's your task to prove them right.

Honesty Is the Best Policy

The answers in this guide are guidelines on how answer certain interview questions. Do not give these answers word for word if they are not true. The answers given are to demonstrate how to answer a question and help you come up with your own ideas/answers that relate to your experiences.

An experienced interviewer will be able to tell if you are lying. They have been through this process many more times than you and they know the signs.

Make sure your CV is accurate and do not contradict it.

Do not lie about your references. Employers do check them and inconsistencies or inaccurate information will stop them from hiring you.

With all that said, if you prepare for your interview, use the information in this guide and answer questions intelligently then you will do well at your interview.