

Attending an interview

Preparation

Preparation for an interview is very important. There are different things you need to think about before attending an interview, such as updating your documents, planning what to wear and thinking about how you should behave.

In a job interview you need to be prepared to answer different kinds of questions. Generally a skilful interviewer avoids asking questions demanding only Yes/No answers, and in order to find out whether or not you fit the job well, the interviewer would like you to speak more so that he or she has more time to listen to and evaluate what you say.

If you are able to handle the interviewer's questions well, you will leave a good impression. It is therefore important for you to think about all possible questions before you attend an interview.

Of course you want to impress the interviewer and demonstrate that you have the qualities needed for the post. To achieve this, you need to plan ahead for opportunities to sell yourself. Think carefully about what strengths you can capitalise on and the best timing to do it.

Be specific and confident. After you mentioned a strength, you should back up what you have said with examples and past experience. This will give the interviewer an impression that you are presenting yourself with facts and evidence instead of boasting or pretending you know something.

The Interview

Normally there are two or three people on the interview panel. One person acts as Chair and will give a brief outline of the format for the interview. All panel members usually ask a few questions each, they may ask you to give further details on your answer if they feel it is necessary.

You may also be asked to give a short presentation or undertake a test. In most cases, the details of a presentation are given to you beforehand to give you time to prepare.

Before any attempt to answer a question, make sure you really understand it. If you are not sure you do, you may clarify the question by rephrasing it. Sometimes it is difficult to think of an answer straight away. You need to give yourself a few moments to think but you should not just sit and look at the interviewer in silence.

Do not lose your spirits even if you cannot answer a question or you feel you have done it badly. It could be a tough question for any candidate. It is more important to get your concentration back and focus on the next question.

Sometimes you may be asked why you want to join the Council. Make sure you do your homework to find out about the people you hope to work for so that you can easily use the information to your advantage during the interview.

For people who have work experience, you might be asked why you left your last job. The interviewer is trying to find out if you had any problems on your last job. Do not say anything negative about yourself or your previous employer.

Common reasons for leaving are budgetary cutbacks, the job was temporary, the company went out of business, there was no room for advancement or you wanted a job that would allow you to better use your skills.

If it involved personal reasons, such as difficulty in getting along with your previous colleagues, child care, health problem, etc., try to explain without being negative and show that you learned something from the situation and that the problem will not affect your work anymore.

The interviewer may also ask about your future plans to find out if you set goals for yourself and what kind of expectations you have of the Council. You can mention your study plans or professional interests, which are not likely to affect your abilities to fulfil the job requirements. Your answer may show that you know where the job might lead.

Towards the end of an interview, you are usually asked whether you have any questions. Take the opportunity to ask questions you have prepared beforehand to show that you are interested in the company and the position you are seeking.