

**Job interviews are the main way in which employers assess a candidate's suitability for a role. So, making a great impression in-person or online is an essential part of you obtaining a role.**

Presenting well at a job interview is about being prepared. There are three areas you want to prepare for:

1

Knowing yourself

2

Knowing you are the best candidate for the role

3

Knowing the employer

## 1 Knowing yourself

Knowing yourself includes knowing your strengths, weaknesses, and what you're looking for.

Prepare for common interview questions like:

- The classic opener — “Tell me about yourself”. The employer is asking for your elevator pitch here. An elevator pitch is a brief (1 minute) way of introducing yourself, getting across a couple of key things that make you unique, and help to form a connection with your interviewer.
- “Tell me about your strengths” and “Tell me about your weaknesses and how you have dealt with them.”
- “What has been your biggest achievement and why?” — this answer will show the employer what you value.
- “Where do you see yourself in five years time?” — this question is about your future career ambitions; but if you don't have a five-year plan, it's okay to explain why. It matters more how you answer this question than what your answer is.

Knowing what you are looking for in an employer is helpful for you to assess whether this employer is the right employer. Generally, in an interview, the candidate would feel like they are the ones that need to do all the impressing. When you know what you are looking for, in terms of company culture, support and career development, it rebalances the power and you will be in a position to ask the employer good questions too. This is a good way to help settle your nerves and distinguish yourself from other candidates who have not thought about what they are looking for.

## 2 Knowing you are the best candidate for the role

It's essential to study the job advertisement and position description closely and learning your CV off by heart. Prepare a bank of **STAR examples** so that you can call upon them easily in an interview.

Practise believing in yourself as you say the STAR examples out loud. Get a friend to help you practise.

Questions in this area are all skill-based and the employer wants to hear that you have got the skills:

- “Tell me about a time that you have demonstrated X skill”
- “Tell me about a time that you had to deal with a conflict/challenge/difficult customer or feedback”
- “What have you learnt from this experience? How will you apply the learning to this new role?”

### 3 Knowing the employer

On top of reading the job advertisement and position description closely, you want to read the careers and about us, vision, mission and culture sections of the employer's website. You also want to read about the big projects that the employer is currently doing, and any recent news.

Researching the employer well shows you are very interested in the job and the company, and have the motivation to do well in the company.

Common questions that are asked in this area are:

- "What do you know about us?"
- "Why do you want to work for us?"
- "Have you got any questions for us?" — have one or two questions prepared to ask the employer at the end of the interview. For example, "I am interested to hear more about how my role aligns with the strategic direction the company is heading into." Or "I want to know what success looks like for someone in this role."

#### Other tips for interviewing well:

- Ask a friend to conduct a mock interview with you so you can get feedback about how you present yourself and what areas could be improved.
- Ask about the dress code for the interview because you want to match it, e.g. tech companies are usually more smart-casual than full business attire.
- Ask for your interviewers' names before the interview and do some research about them. This will help with your small talk.
- On the day, arrive 10-15 minutes early so you are organised and not flustered.
- Remember, the interview starts as soon as you leave the house because you don't know who you will meet on the way, at reception and after.
- Maintain eye contact, smile, and shake hands confidently.

You may be nervous going into a job interview, which is normal. However, remember that an interview is a two-way street. The employer is assessing you as much as you are considering them, and if it is not the right fit, it's probably best for both parties that it's a 'no'.