

EyeSpy Recruitment: Interview Advice





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It's almost impossible to receive a job offer without first attending an interview. But then who'd want to take a job without first meeting their new boss? The secret to a successful interview lies in the preparation; it's worth spending a little time doing your homework.

Good employers understand the pitfalls of interviewing, but the process is slowly becoming more structured, sophisticated and fair. Many companies will use more unexpected interview questions to help assess personality. Some might also use a psychometric questionnaire to see how well your personality fits. Depending on the role, you might be asked to do an additional test or take part in a role play to assess your skills.

If you stick to a few guidelines though, you'll have no problem handling the interview questions you're faced with and breeze through your next job interview.

How do I prepare for an interview?

Fail to plan, plan to fail. You are certain to be asked specific questions about your potential employer, so make sure you've done your homework on things like their last year's profits and latest product launches. Nothing is as disappointing as when a candidate oozes enthusiasm and then doesn't even know the most basic facts and figures about a company.

Before the interview

Preparation is the key. Here are a few things you might like to think about:

- Research the organisation. Look at their website and read any news you can find about them.
- If you're going for a change of career, research the sector. Look at industry association websites and magazines to get a feel for the latest developments.
- Prepare answers to the standard interview questions (listed below) that form the basis of most interviews.
- Be ready with a few questions for the interviewer; this shows you're keen and on the ball.

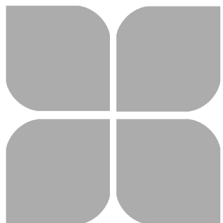
- Check the format of the interview and find out who'll be interviewing you. It could throw you off if you unexpectedly have to face an interview panel of six people!
- Make sure you dress appropriately.
- Re-read your CV and application letter and take additional copies with you to the interview.
- Plan your journey and check for any potential delays.

At the interview

Ideally, you want to make a good impression in the first few minutes of the interview.

Try to:

- Plan to get to your interview at least five minutes early. If you're going to be unavoidably delayed, make sure you let your interviewer know.
 - Always switch off your mobile phone before you enter the recruiter's building.
- Sometimes the interviewer might want to provoke a stronger reaction so expect to be thrown a few difficult



interview questions. Some common ones include:

- What are your weaknesses?
- What would your colleagues say are your weaknesses?
- Describe a situation when your work was criticised?

Success here depends more on not getting flustered and thinking on your feet than having the 'right' answer. Just be honest and give reasons for your answers. Owning up to past mistakes and explaining what you learned from them shows you're a real person and not a robot.

Interview styles can vary dramatically; whatever the situation, try to remember:

- Be friendly and courteous to everyone you meet, from the receptionist onwards. You never know who might have a say in your appointment.
- Use positive body language.
- When answering interview questions, relate parts of the job description to relevant experience on your CV.
- Make the most of your research and quote it where appropriate.
- If you face a panel interview, make sure you talk to everyone rather than directing your answers at one person.
- Find out as much as you can about the job. For example, who would you report to? Why is the job vacant? What are the promotion prospects?
- Never mention salary unless prompted to do so, and even then try not to agree on specific numbers without being given time to think.
- Always let the interviewer finish speaking before giving your response.
- When the interview is over, remember to ask when you can expect to hear back and what the next stage will entail.

After the interview

It's always good to take stock of your overall performance, learn from the experience and prepare for the next step.

- Try to remember the interview questions you were asked and how you answered them to see if you could improve in future.
- If you think it's appropriate, email the interviewer to say thank you but don't be too pushy for a response.
- Remember to use any criticism constructively.

Standard Interview Questions

As with decorating, the secret of success in interviews is all in the preparation. Here are some of the standard interview questions you're most likely to face:

“Why do you want this job?”

It's the natural next step for you and this is the right organisation in which to further your career. Show off your knowledge about the business. Make all that research worthwhile.

“Where does it fit in with your career plans?”

It's good to talk about steady progression and cementing your experience. But ambition can be good too, and there is no harm in aspiring to the boss's job in five years' time!

“What are your strengths?”

Ensure that these are relevant to the job. Try and relate your strengths back to the job spec and give examples of why you're strong in these areas.

“What are your weaknesses?”

These should be positive weaknesses. Perhaps you have a tendency to work too hard or are a perfectionist for example.

“What's been your most significant success at work?”

This is about your personal achievements and contribution. Interviewers aren't interested in the great team you work with. If you have limited work experience, you could talk about achievements outside work. But relate them to the job you are applying for.

“What is the biggest mistake you ever made?”

We all have one, but what's important is how you dealt with your biggest mistake and what you learnt from the experience.

“What is the greatest challenge you have ever faced?”

Keep it relevant to the job and be positive. Again, interviewers want to know how you met the challenge and what you might do differently, with the wisdom of hindsight, in a similar situation.

“How do you cope with difficult colleagues?”

It's all about trying to understand a situation from someone else's perspective -- that's team work.

“You've changed jobs three times in the past five years, why should I think you are more serious about this one?”

Great opportunities came your way and you would have been foolish to turn them down. Or, you took a job to achieve a particular goal and, having succeeded sooner than you expected, it was time to move on.

“What do you do outside of work?”

You want to appear active but not so busy that you could not get to work on time or stay late occasionally.

“What's your current salary?”

Include all your perks and bonuses, but tell the truth. The interviewer can always contact your current employer to check.