



**INFORMATION ADVICE  
GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**  
SUPPORTED BY WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

# JOB INTERVIEWS

## **PREPARATION FOR JOB INTERVIEW**

### **Once the interview has been arranged, you should know:**

- The date and time and where the interview will take place, how you will get there and check times of trains and buses, also the cost.
- Name of person you will be seeing at the interview.
- Research the company website and look into what the company does and what they look for in their employees.

### **How to shine at interview**

- Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake, sit up straight and don't fidget
- Read your CV beforehand so you can refer to it
- Appearance is important, dress smartly do not wear jeans or trainers. Cover up any tattoos on show.
- Look bright and attentive and speak clearly and confidently, be positive about yourself and your experiences.
- Take your time to think before answering questions.
- Turn your mobile phone off during the interview.

### **What Not To Do**

- Don't be late
- Don't swear or use slang words
- Don't smoke just before the interview
- Don't lie: the interviewer may see through you. Even if you get the job, your employer can dismiss you if they find out that you have not been honest
- Don't criticise former employers or colleagues. Interviewers may mark you down as a troublemaker and a gossip.

### **Personal Safety**

- Make sure the interview is being held at the company premises or another public place such as a cafe.
- Tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to be back.
- Do not let your interviewer drive you home.

## **TOP 10 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Typical questions an interviewer might ask you:**

### **You're Skills - What are your strengths and weaknesses?**

- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What would your colleagues and friends consider as your best qualities?
- Why should we employ you?

**What the interviewer really wants to know:** can you do the job?

Know your strengths and mention ones that are related to the job you are being interviewed for. It is important to give examples of when you use the skills. Typical strengths employers look for are:

- Communication – the ability to get on with a wide range of people
- Team working – the ability to be an effective team leader or member
- IT skills – most jobs these days need some IT skills
- Good attitude – hard worker, honest, polite, co-operative
- Problem solving – using your initiative to identify solutions
- Enthusiasm – employers like someone positive
- Quick learner – so you can take on new tasks
- Determination – shows you are focused on achieving goals
- Flexibility – doing a variety of tasks to achieve a common goal

If you are asked about weaknesses, don't list too many – only mention one! Choose a flaw that isn't essential to the job. Turn it into a positive, such as how you've worked on your weakness. Or you could present it as an opportunity for development.

**Good answers:**

- **Strengths:** I am a good organiser and I plan everything in detail. I showed this when I was given a new project and I had to get it up and running from scratch
- **Weaknesses:** Sometimes I am too enthusiastic when working on a new project, but I have learned to adjust to everyone else's pace and not go charging ahead.

## **The Employer - Typical questions:**

- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you know about the company?
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot?

**What the interviewer really wants to know:** Do you know what we do? Why have you chosen to apply to this company?

Show your knowledge of the company by having facts and figures at the ready, such as:

- The size of the organisation, what product or service is given
- Latest developments in the field
- The history, goals, image and philosophy of the employer

### **Good answer:**

- Smiths are a respected firm with a reputation for high quality and I'd like to be part of that success. The quality of my work is important to me so I feel I'd be in the right place. I've also heard you invest in your staff by training and developing them.

## **About the job – typical questions:**

- What will the main tasks and responsibilities be in this job?
- What do you think the main challenges will be?
- What would you do in the first day/week/month/year

The interviewer wants to know if you fully understand what the job will involve. They want to know why you think you'd be good at it and how you'd approach it if they offer you the job. To answer this question well make sure you read the job description thoroughly and research how the organisation operates.

### **Good answer:**

- The main task is to supervise a team of sales staff to ensure they exceed sales targets. It's my responsibility to motivate them and pass on my sales experience to enable them to achieve more.

## **Your ambitions – typical questions**

- What are your goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?

**What the interviewer wants to know:** How ambitious are you?

This is your chance to show how enthusiastic you are to get on, avoid sounding over ambitious. To avoid this, talk in terms of goals. A short term goal could be to get that job for the time being. Then you can start talking about moving on higher.

**Good answer:**

- My immediate aim is to get a trainee chef position, then to work through NVQs level 2 and 3 to become a qualified chef.

## **Your work history – typical questions:**

- Why did you leave your last job?
- Tell me about a typical day in your current/previous job
- What experience have you got from previous jobs?

**What the interviewer really wants to know:** What have you done in your previous jobs?

Focus on the positives, focus on the skills and experience that are relevant to the job you are being interviewed for. If you haven't been doing much since you last job/college/school consider carefully what you have been doing with your time during the day. Getting involved with volunteering would show a potential employer that you have initiative and you have made an effort to gain new skills and experience.

**Good answer:**

- In my current job I have developed my knowledge of computer software packages. But now I'm ready for a new challenge and want to use these skills in a more customer focused role.

## **Your motivation – typical questions:**

- What motivates you?
- Which tasks do you get the most satisfaction from?

**What the interviewer wants to know:** What makes you tick?

By finding out what motivates you, the interviewer can find out which environment you'll perform well in. Try to think of examples of when a work task went well.

**Good answer:**

- I like problem solving – that point you reach in a project where you come up against something unexpected and you have to think creatively to come up with a solution.

## **Team working – typical questions:**

- What makes a good team?
- What makes a good team member?
- What makes a good team leader?

**What the interviewer really wants to know:** Can you operate effectively in a team?

Employers value team working very highly. They want to know you can work effectively in a team, whatever your role within it is. You can use experiences from your social life such as through memberships of a team or organisation.

**Good answer:**

A good team needs to have clear objectives. Each person needs to be clear what their role is and what is expected of them.

## **Your personality and interests – typical questions:**

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your friends describe you?

**What the interviewer really wants to know:** Are you a well-rounded individual?

These questions give the employer a chance to get a wider general impression about you. Saying you like socializing or watching TV does not say anything particularly interesting or different about you: saying you like kick boxing, sailing, photography for example would create a very different impression about you. You may be asked to give more detail about your hobbies and interests so be prepared to answer questions about them. If you don't have any hobbies, perhaps now is a good time to start one.

## **Unusual questions**

**Sometimes** the interviewer will ask you an unusual question like "If you were an animal what type of animal would you be?"

What the interviewer really wants to know is if you can think on your feet and come up with a sensible answer. Take your time in answering, there is no good answer but just be prepared for questions like this.