



Australian Government



Succeeding at job interviews

Use this workbook to help you build your confidence to impress an employer at a job interview.

So, you've been offered an interview or want to practise your interview skills. It's never too early to start preparing as an interview could happen at any time.

Employers use job interviews to:

- check the claims you made in your résumé about your skills, experience, qualifications and knowledge
- test your workplace (also called 'employability' or 'people') skills such as how well you communicate and how you will fit in with other people
- understand why you want to do the job and how keen you are to take on the opportunity.

Exercise 1 – Know your strengths

Review your résumé and job application and choose the best examples of your relevant:

- skills - both technical and 'workplace' skills
- work experience (paid and unpaid)
- qualifications and knowledge and
- personal attributes.

If you don't have an interview lined up, think about a job you would like with a business you would like to work for. Do these exercises with that job and employer in mind.

Skills:

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Work experience:

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Qualifications/knowledge:

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Personal attributes:

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Exercise 2 – Research the employer

It's really important to research the employer before a job interview. If you know someone who already works at the business, ask them for their insights and tips. You can also review the job ad, look the business up online and on social media, and use your personal knowledge as a customer.

Using your knowledge of the business, answer these questions:

What does the business do?

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What do you see as the business's main priorities?

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Where is the business located? If in a number of locations, how many sites does the business have?

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Can you describe the business's working style? Do they have a formal workplace or do they seem more relaxed? Also think about things like whether staff wear a uniform, perform shift work or work with customers.

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What are the business's values? What do they pride themselves on?

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How does the business work with the community? This could include selling to the public but also sponsoring a community event or a major charity.

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How do you see yourself fitting into this workplace? What would you like about working there?

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Exercise 3 – Interview warm up

Think about how you might answer some common interview questions. The more you prepare, the more confident you will feel on interview day.

Try this warm up “Tell me about yourself?”

Many employers will ask this question at the start of the interview.

It can help to develop a short ‘script’ in advance that you can adapt for each interview. This will mean you know what to say in response to this question.

Your ‘script’ should include some personal information mixed with relevant work-related information. Make sure this information is relevant to the type of job you are being interviewed for.

For example, imagine you are applying for a job at a popular family restaurant. You could start by saying you were born into a large extended family (if you were). You could then talk about how you thrive in busy environments and love working with people. Or say that you like to stay fit and healthy so you have lots of energy. Relate your answer to what you like about the job.

From the job ad, identify the key qualities the employer is seeking. Now write out your script:

“Tell me about yourself?”

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Exercise 4 – Why should I hire you?

Develop another script for this common interview question. Your script should explain why your skills, experience, training and personal attributes make you a good fit for the role. Try to keep your script to four sentences.

“Why should I hire you?”

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Exercise 5 – Think up answers to other common interview questions

Using the same job ad, think about how you could answer the other common interview questions listed below. Write down a few points about the main things you would cover in answering each question.

“Why do you want to work here?” Use the research you did about the employer and the job tasks to build your response.

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“What are your strengths?” Choose skills, abilities and aptitudes that relate to the tasks in this job.

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“What are your greatest weaknesses?” Try using another word such as “my main challenge is...”. And then explain how you are trying to improve this skill or behaviour.

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“Why did you leave your last job?” Be as honest as you can without saying anything negative about your former employer. Was the role made redundant? Was the work site too far from where you live? Did you want a new challenge?

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“You haven’t worked in a while, what have you been doing?” Have you been caring for a family member? Studying? Doing work experience or volunteering? Working on your personal development such as better health and fitness?

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Exercise 6 – Time to rehearse out loud

Pick three questions from the exercises above. Working with a friend or family member, practise answering those questions in interview mode. Ask your partner for feedback about:

- whether your answers were relevant to the type of job you want
- your voice. Were you too soft, too loud or talking too fast?
- whether your answers were short and interesting to listen to, or did you talk for too long?
- your eye contact – did you look at your partner while speaking?
- your body language – are you using your hands or sitting stiffly? Did you look confident and relaxed?
- your facial expressions - did you smile or frown?

If your partner is also looking for a job, swap roles. You might learn some tips from what they say or the way they speak.

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Exercise 7 – Identify and remove barriers to success

Identify any potential barriers to succeeding at a job interview and what you could do to remove each barrier.

Examples include:

Barrier: You do not like planning things out before you do them. This means that you often get flustered at presentations or job interviews.

Action: Spend a few hours studying your own résumé and the employer’s website. Practise answers to common interview questions.

Barrier: You often forget to turn your mobile phone off.

Action: Set an alarm or alert to remind you to switch your phone to silent before you reach the job interview. Change your ring tone if it’s not workplace appropriate.

Barrier: Being late.

Action: Set an alarm, build in extra time, plan your journey ahead of time. This includes working out how long it will take you to get there.

What are your barriers and what will you do to remove them?

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Exercise 8 – Preparing for behavioural interview questions

Some employers will ask you to talk about how you have performed in past jobs to work out if you are a good fit for their job. To help you share stories of how you have handled tasks in the past, employers will ask ‘behavioural’ interview questions.

Questions might start like this:

- Tell me about how you mastered a skill you didn’t think possible?
- Share an experience where you completed a task to a high quality in a short space of time?
- Describe a situation where you had to handle a difficult task. What did you do to get the job done?

Think about the following when preparing your answer:

- Where were you?
- What were you doing or trying to achieve?
- How did you do it?
- What were the outcomes?

An example could be, “Tell me about a time when you worked in a team to solve an unexpected problem?”

The answer could be something like this: When working in a shop that was flooded when a pipe burst, you used clear communication to direct customers to safety. You then worked with co-workers to save stock, phone the relevant authorities and utilities plus the shop owner. You would describe your specific actions and the outcome, for example that no customer was hurt or any stock lost.

Now you try: Think about a time when you improved something in the workplace (or in a non-work environment if you haven’t worked before)?

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Exercise 9 – Review your job interview readiness

How prepared are you? Rank yourself on these key interview skills to understand the areas you would like to work on.

Job interview skill	Novice	Somewhat Confident	Strong
<p>Knowing myself</p> <p>I have a good understanding of my skills, experience, qualifications and personal attributes</p>			
<p>Job fit</p> <p>I understand how my skills, experience, qualifications and personal attributes relate to the role</p>			
<p>Well informed</p> <p>I can do background research on the employer and industry</p>			
<p>Personal presentation</p> <p>My clothes fit the job role and business, no stains or buttons missing, modest jewellery and perfume</p>			
<p>Well organised</p> <p>I can plan my journey to the interview location including estimated travel time and mode of transport. I always know the name of the interviewer and relevant contact details</p>			
<p>Punctual</p> <p>I usually arrive early (but no more than 10 minutes early)</p>			
<p>Courtesy</p> <p>I am polite and courteous to each person I meet no matter what their role. I remember to thank the interviewer for their time</p>			
<p>Eye contact</p> <p>I maintain good eye contact with the interviewer</p>			



Job interview skill	Novice	Somewhat Confident	Strong
<p>Speech</p> <p>I speak clearly and not too quickly, using a moderate volume</p>			
<p>Quality of answers</p> <p>I listen closely to the questions and provide concise and clear answers. I avoid yes/no answers</p>			
<p>Body Language</p> <p>I sit up straight, smile and lean slightly forward to show interest when others speak</p>			
<p>I show interest</p> <p>I always prepare two or three questions to ask the interviewer at the end of the interview</p>			

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