



# INTERVIEW SKILLS



**In your interview, you have the chance to sell yourself to an employer, and find out if the company and role is right for you.**

If you are well prepared for an interview, you maximise your chances of being offered the job.

## TOP TIPS

Research the company by looking at their website and asking yourself the following questions:

- ▶ What do they do?
- ▶ What's their main business?
- ▶ What are their values?
- ▶ How long have they been established?

If they ask you what you know about the company or organisation, it would be very impressive if you have taken time to find out about them.

## KEEP A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION

Before the interview, read through your application or CV and use this to prepare answers to questions you could be asked.

**Some of the most popular interview include:**

- ▶ Why do you want the job?
- ▶ What are your skills and abilities?
- ▶ What experiences have you had that could be relevant for this position?

## APPROPRIATE DRESS

First impressions count - by dressing smartly and ensuring you are clean and presentable, you show that you are mature and ready for the responsibility of the role. You shouldn't wear jeans, trainers or excessive makeup and jewellery. Be sure to avoid strong scents such as body odour, smoke and overpowering perfume or aftershave.

## PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is important. If you aim to arrive at least 10 minutes early, you give yourself the best chance to keep your nerves in check and your potential employer can see that you are reliable.

**Be ready for the worst case scenario by:**

- ▶ Knowing where the interview will take place
- ▶ Planning your journey beforehand
- ▶ Doing a practise run of the journey
- ▶ Taking the interview letter (and a phone on silent) in case you are delayed and you need to phone the company

## BODY LANGUAGE

During the interview, it's important to sit up straight (being careful not to slouch or fold your arms), smile and maintain eye contact with your interviewer(s).

Make sure to shake the interviewer's hand confidently at the start of the interview and again when you leave, thanking them for taking the time to see you and consider you for the role.

## HANDLING NERVES

While nerves are perfectly natural and to be expected, it's key to get them under control. You could be judged from the minute you enter the building, so be polite and professional to all staff you encounter.

Some people find that taking some deep breaths before the interview, or having a glass of water can help.

## INTERVIEWERS WANT TO KNOW THE FOLLOWING:

**1. Can you do the job?**

**2. Do you want the job?**

**3. Will you fit in?**

Be professional, enthusiastic and confident in your abilities – the company has already seen your potential through your application form or CV and is looking for reasons to hire you! Be positive and friendly throughout the interview.

If you don't understand a question, you can ask the interviewer to clarify or repeat it – that way you can answer it to the best of your ability.

Difficult questions are often designed to see how you react to pressure and if you can think on your feet, so it would be impressive to prove that you are calm in stressful or unknown situations.

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

**General questions**

- ▶ Why did you apply for this job?
- ▶ What interests you about this role?
- ▶ What do you know about this company?
- ▶ What do you think you have to offer this company?

**Career questions**

- ▶ What would your previous/current employer say about you?
- ▶ Tell me about your career aspirations.
- ▶ Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
- ▶ What are you looking for from your career?

**Questions which assess your skills**

- ▶ Why should we hire you?
- ▶ What are your strengths/weaknesses? (think of weaknesses as areas to develop)
- ▶ Do you like working as part of a team/working alone?
- ▶ Name a time where you have successfully been part of a team.
- ▶ What do you consider to be your best achievement to date?

## QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- ▶ Are there any opportunities to gain extra qualifications/experience?
- ▶ Where do you see me/the company in the future?
- ▶ Is there anything you would like me to explain further?
- ▶ Do you have any doubts about whether I'm suited to this role? (This gives you one last chance to impress by addressing any issues they might have.)

## QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD NOT ASK THE INTERVIEWER

Whilst it is important to ask the interviewer questions such as those above, there are also questions you shouldn't ask:

- ▶ What will my salary be?
- ▶ What holiday will I get?
- ▶ How long will I have for a lunch break?
- ▶ I have to get two buses to get here, would it be ok to start at 9.30am?

These questions aim to find out what you can get out the company, when you should instead be focussing your attention on impressing your possible employer.

Even if you want or need to know the answers to these questions, this can be discussed if the job is offered to you and not in the interview stage.



## TIPS FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

- ▶ Listen carefully to the questions asked
- ▶ Give clear and concise answers, trying not to ramble
- ▶ Use examples to support what you say
- ▶ Be confident and sell yourself
- ▶ Don't lie – be as honest as you can, but focus on positive points
- ▶ Don't criticise former employers
- ▶ Take a moment to pause and think if needed
- ▶ Ask to come back to the question if you're struggling
- ▶ If asked about something you can't do yet, prove that it's a skill you're prepared to learn

At the end of the interview, you could ask when you can expect to hear from them, or perhaps make a note of any relevant names and contact information if you wish to make a follow up call or send an email.

Try not to feel downhearted if this particular role isn't offered to you. If you can, get some feedback from the company and use this as learning experience. You would be very lucky to gain the role on your first try so don't panic if it takes a few interviews before being successful!

**For help and support email  
the Futures team:  
[futures@northamptoncollege.ac.uk](mailto:futures@northamptoncollege.ac.uk)**

**Alternatively, you can visit the Futures Team based in The Lookout at Booth Lane, or pop in to Student Services at Lower Mounts or Daventry to make an appointment with an advisor.**