

## Job Interviews

So you've impressed them on paper with your CV. Now's your chance to impress them in person, in the interview. Use the following info as a primer on interview etiquette and on the questions you're likely to face.

- **Do your homework**  
Employers really are impressed if they know you've done some digging. Best places to look? Their website, for one; news sites for another. If you're able to drop into the conversation a little piece of info to show you know more about them than the job description they sent you, you'll definitely win points.
- **come with questions to ask them**  
At least three questions would be a good safety net. Good questions to ask are about the company's vision/direction ('I'd be interested to learn more about the company's plans for the next x years'); about what it's like to work there ('could you tell me a bit about the company culture?') and, of course, about the role itself ('how will success in this job be measured?' or 'what's the most important priority for this job?').
- **dress to match the role**  
A suit may be standard for a City job, but may be totally out of place in a new media environment but, when in doubt, dress 'up'. In other words, go more, not less formal. Ladies, avoid those overly short skirts and overly made-up faces if you want to be taken seriously; gentlemen, best leave the Bart Simpson tie behind. Dark suits, pastel / neutral shirts are most likely to 'fit in' in most places.
- **be aware of your body language**  
FIRM handshake on meeting (shows/fakes confidence), lean forward when they're asking a question (shows interest), look'em in the eye when you're talking (shows confidence), and try not to touch your face when talking (suggests you're nervous or may have something to hide...).
- **remember your manners**  
...such as showing up on time (late to interview could mean late with work), and thanking them at the end of the interview for inviting you along and considering your application.

### DON'T:

- **forget to switch off that mobile**  
If your phone goes off, it'll turn them right off. It's that simple. If you do forget, and it rings right in the middle of your interview, apologise, and mute it straight away. Answering it is not an option – even if it's accompanied by 'excuse me, I'm terribly sorry', regardless of whether it's a personal or professional call.

### ...if you B and Q it

News that B&Q is asking interviewees to dance, yes, dance to a Jackson 5 track before their interviews has received a bit of a mixed response! The DIY retailer says it's not part of a formal interview, but really an ice-breaker that has been welcomed by most applicants. The unions are threatening to make a song and dance about it.

- **badmouth a former boss**  
...or colleagues. What most people who do this don't realise is that it's not what it says about your ex-boss that's so interesting. It's what it says about you and your poor judgment, your emotional behaviour, your negativity, and your unwillingness to share responsibility for bad working relationships, your backbiting and...need we go on?
- **read from your CV**  
It destroys any sense of confidence they may be building in you. You should know everything you have written in your CV. Otherwise, they'll start to question if you really wrote it and, worse, if it's really true...
- **be afraid of silence**  
Don't think you have to jump straight in to answer every question they ask. That's fine if you know the answer and the conversation is flowing. But they may, in fact, prefer it if you take a bit of time, as it could just show them that you're someone who thinks things through. Take your time, and even ask them to qualify or explain what they mean by their question before answering if that's what you need. As long as you just don't take all day...
- **bring up salary before they do**  
It's very presumptuous of you

### FAQs

Interview questions they're likely to ask, and how (not to) answer...

- **Why do you want to work for us?**  
This is your chance to show off your research, e.g. to talk about what the company is known for, or how it differs from its competitors etc. Equally, you could talk about the role and how you're ready to step up. Under no circumstances should you say it's for the money!
- **What would you say is your greatest strength/weakness?**  
General interviews will probably cover this one in some way. Rule of thumb to answer this one is to make sure that your

strengths are accompanied by at least one example. If you say you are a very persuasive person, then tell them about a time when you managed to win over a difficult customer, for example. Rule of thumb with a weakness is either to talk about it in the past, and how you've overcome it or, better still, to talk about a weakness that could also be a strength, e.g. 'I'm ambitious'.

- **Can you tell me about yourself?**

This is not a cue to start giving them your life story from the age of three. They're asking you this precisely to see what aspects of yourself you draw attention to. So in answering stick to professional expertise, or talk about character traits that you have that are suitable for the job, and always, always, back them up with positive examples.

- **How do you keep up with current developments in your field?**

This one separates those who've crammed for the interview from those who really know their stuff. They're after the magazines, websites, professional associations, and networking you're part of to see how dedicated and interested you really are.

- **Why is a manhole cover round?**

This is an example of a 'brainteaser' type question that employers often like to throw in to the interview, especially when the interview is for a technical or project management role. 'Because manholes are round' is an incorrect or at least overly simplistic answer. But what the interviewer is looking for from you is not so much a right answer (there is usually no one specific, precisely right answer to this type of question, but possibilities) as the logic and approach you used to working it out.