



## Preparing for Interviews

## Before the interview

First impressions are very important - they set the tone for the rest of the interview.

It is important that you feel confident and prepared as this will help you with your job search.

If you aren't confident that you can do the job then why should an employer take a chance on you?

There are several things which you can do to help you to feel, or at least look, more confident.

## Feeling nervous?

### **Breathing**

Breathe in for four seconds, then breathe out for four seconds — all through the nose.

This works anytime, anyplace — but it's especially good before going to bed. If you have lots of thoughts in your head, this can help to clear your mind for a moment.

Taking 6 to 10 deep, slow breaths per minute for 10 minutes each day can help you to reduce your heart rate and blood pressure.

### **“Going to your happy place”**

Think of a place that relaxes you so you can bring it to mind when you need it. Bedrooms and sunny beaches are a popular choice but obviously your happy place is your choice.

## **Visualisation**

Imagine that you are sitting waiting for an interview.

Think about meeting the person who is interviewing you, and think about the questions that they might ask you, and the answers you might give. Think about yourself looking calm and confident - what that looks like and how it feels.

**Exercise.** Doing exercise helps you to feel less stressed and you can also use it to relax. Taking a walk around your office building, doing some yoga stretches, or closing the door and dancing to some music can all help.

**Aromatherapy.** Many people find certain smells, such as lavender, to be relaxing. If you are one of these people, keep a small bottle in your bag to smell when you need it.

## How to look confident

Our body language and the way we hold ourselves can help us to feel more confident.

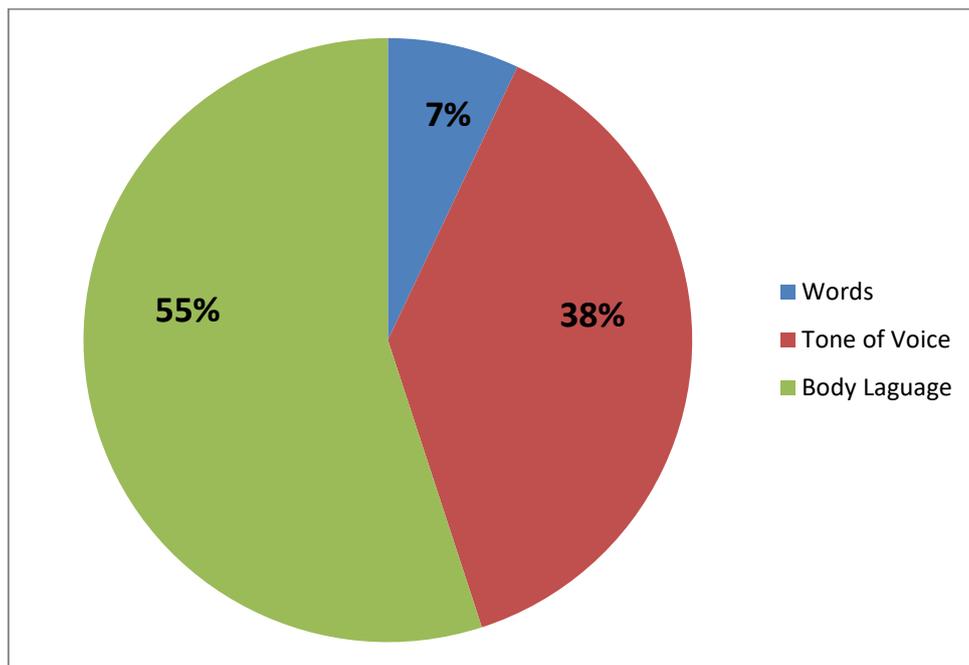
It also effects how other people think of us.

This picture shows how important our body language is.

**Blue** shows how important the words that you say are in an initial meeting with someone

**Red** shows how important the sound of your voice is

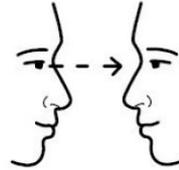
**Green** shows how important the way you hold your body is



Proceed to Activity 2:

## Top Tips

- **Eye Contact.** A great way to look confident is to keep eye contact. This shows others that you are interested and comfortable.



- **Leaning Forward.** Leaning forward shows that you are interested in what's being said. Leaning back in your chair can look arrogant or lazy.



- **Standing Straight.** Straighten your back, pull your shoulders away from your ears, and uncross your arms and legs.
- **Chin Up.** Walk with your head held high. It might feel unnatural at first, but eventually you will become used to this more confident pose.
- **Stop fidgeting.** Fidgeting is an obvious sign of being nervous. It will also distract others from what you are actually saying.



- **Firm Handshake.** How is your handshake? A weak handshake is sign that you are not feeling confident.



## Positive Thinking



Many people believe that thinking positively affects how well you do in life.

It is believed that if you think about success and think about having a positive outcome you are more likely to get one.

**The following story is an example of this:**

Allan applied for a new job, but he didn't believe he would get it. His **self-confidence** was low, and he believed he was a failure.

He had a negative attitude toward himself and believed that other people were better and had more skills and experience than him.

Allan was thinking negative thoughts in the weeks before the job interview. He thought that he would fail.

On the day of the interview, he got up late, and he discovered that the shirt he planned to wear was dirty, and the other one needed ironing. As it was already too late, he went out wearing a wrinkled shirt and without eating breakfast.

During the interview, he was nervous, negative, hungry and worried about his shirt. All of this, **distracted** him and made it difficult for him to think about the interview and the questions he was being asked. He made a bad **impression** and he did not get the job.

Jim applied for the same job, but he thought about things differently. He was sure that he was going to get the job. During the week before the interview, he thought about himself doing well in the interview and getting the job.

The night before the interview, he got his clothes ready, and went to sleep a little earlier. On day of the interview, he woke up earlier than usual, and had time to eat breakfast, and then to arrive to the interview in good time.

Jim made a good impression and got the job.

**What do we learn from these two stories?**

## Communication

- **Listening**

Listening is one of the most important elements of good communication. Good listening means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the speaker feels about what they are saying. Do they seem happy or sad?

Focus on the speaker, avoid interrupting, show your interest by saying 'yes' and nodding etc.

- **Ask Questions**

Asking questions and repeating the other person's last few words shows you're interested in what they say and helps you to understand points that you may have missed.

- **Remember to breathe**

Try using some of the breathing techniques we tried earlier before your interview to help focus your mind and calm your nerves.

Remember that, for the most part, you'll know more about what you are talking about than your interviewer, for example when talking about your skills and experience.

- **Small talk** on your way to the interview room is a good tip, as it can help to distract you from your nervousness.

- If you often have **shaky hands** you should avoid holding papers or notes, as it could exaggerate this. Instead you could try holding your hands on your lap or make gestures to help you illustrate the point you are making.

- At an interview you are often asked if you would like a glass of water, it is a good idea to take one as some people suffer from a dry mouth or loss of voice when they are nervous.

- Above all- remember to **smile**. Even if you feel overcome with nerves, a smile will make you appear confident and happy which will in turn begin to make you feel that way yourself.

# The interview

## Researching the organisation

The first thing you should do is spend some time researching the organisation.

- **Where are they based?**
- **What do they do?**
- **How long have they been doing it?**

An easy way to do this is to have a look at the company's website.

A quick "Google" of the company's name is also handy, as you can find out about recent press coverage or noteworthy achievements or awards.

Spending time doing this is a good way to impress your interviewers.

Give yourself enough time to really do this properly. Interviewers will expect you to have done your research and may ask you a question related to this so it helps to be prepared.

## Planning your journey

This one is simple- but do not be late.

This is your first and only time to make a good impression so make sure that you start on a good note. If you are late then they will assume that you have a problem with timekeeping and would do the same on a regular basis.

Make sure you know where you're going, how to get there and then leave plenty of time to make the trip. Aim to get there at least five minutes early so you have time to gather your thoughts. If you have time, take a trip there a few days before the interview so you feel familiar with the journey.

If you have a mobile phone, make sure it's charged so if there's any problems you can get in touch with the interviewer or look up directions on the go. You could also print off a map before you leave if you think it would be helpful.

## Questions you might be asked

Thinking about the kind of questions you might be asked is a great way to prepare for interviews.

All job interviews are different but there are some questions which you can expect will be asked.

You should think about these questions and prepare answers to some of the most common interview questions.

- What are your personal strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why are you the best person for the job?
- Why do you want to work here?

Think about backing up your answers with concrete examples of your experience.

Interviewers will have heard the same statements over and over again, such as *“I am a hard working individual.”*

Stand out from the crowd by adding specific examples to your answers.

*Example of communication skills:*

I have great customer service skills. My experience working as a shop assistant and helping customers to find their shopping has helped me to develop these skills. Working in the shop meant that I was communicating with customers of different age groups and from different backgrounds and I had to make sure that I was able to help each person and make sure that they were happy when leaving the shop.

*Example of team working skills:*

I developed great team working skills when I worked as a chef. We had to work fast to prepare food for customers in a busy restaurant and it was important that we worked as a team. We would have a team meeting to decide who would do what task. If one of my team mates needed help and I was finished I would help them with their task. Working together would mean that customers were happy and that we did a good job.

*Example of leadership skills:*

I have developed leadership skills when volunteering in my local church. I lead activities in the children's club and supervise other volunteers who help out too. I plan art and crafts activities and have to make sure that I am organised and have all materials that we need ready and that the other volunteers know what they are doing. This has helped me to become confident that I am a good leader.

A common question is about your weaknesses. Don't highlight lots of weaknesses; you only need to mention one. Choose something that isn't essential to the position and turn it into a positive. You can do this by talking about how you have overcome this weakness.

***Something that I have been working on over the last year is my confidence when speaking in front of large groups. When speaking with my manager about this she mentioned there were various training courses I could attend. I took a course in April and since then I have been looking out for opportunities to present and gain experience testing out what I have learnt. My manager is very happy with my progress.***

This is a good example as it also shows that you want to develop your skills.

Proceed to Exercise 3

## **DOs and DON'Ts**

**DO** think about questions to ask the interviewer- remember this is your chance to find out if this is the right job for you

**DO** spend time practicing before the interview. In the mirror or with a friend- whatever works for you! Think of a couple of questions that you might be asked and use them as example questions.

**DO** think carefully about what you will wear. It is important to appear professional and feel confident. They say that in the first few minutes only 7% of the interviewer's opinion of you is formed by what you say - the rest is judged on how you look, act and sound

**DO** sell yourself: this is your chance! Be positive about yourself and your experiences

**DO** spend time researching the company before your interview

**DO** greet the interviewers with a handshake

**DON'T** be late

**DON'T** bend the truth. The interviewer will seek references and you could be found out, it's not worth it!

**DON'T** let your nerves show too much. It is normal to be nervous but if being nervous affects your ability to answer questions you will not perform to your best standard. You can calm yourself down by using breathing techniques

**DON'T** be afraid to ask for more time answering a question if you are stuck. You can also ask employers to repeat the question or rephrase it if you do not understand it.

**DON'T** read from notes or your CV. You should know your own job history

**DON'T** forget to switch off your mobile phone or turn it onto silent when you are at your interview



## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Tell us about yourself

Why have you applied for this job?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Give an example of how you've worked in a team

Give an example of when you have been responsible for a task at work

Give an example of how you've dealt with a problem

Give an example of how you've worked under pressure

Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

What interests do you have?

Tell us about your last job

Do you have any questions for us?

## Mock interview Scenario

### Giving Feedback

Firstly let's think about how you think the interview went.

**How did you feel about your own performance in the interview?**

**Was there anything that you think you would change?**

Spend some time giving feedback to your partner.

- What do you think they did well?
- Were they making good eye contact with you?
- Were they smiling?
- Were they talking too fast?
- Was there anything negative about their interview performance?



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