

A GUIDE TO...

THE FIRST FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

First Hurdle

Good news, you have secured your first face to face interview- now is not the time to let nerves get the better of you! First let's get the practical bits out the way;

Know Where you are Going

This is such an obvious one but it is important to check out where you need to be, including the parking situation if you are driving. It's sometimes worth doing a test run and this will make you feel less flustered on the day of the interview.

What to Wear

Appearances shouldn't count as much as they do but that first impression is vital! Make sure you look the part, and feel comfortable. A few pointers;

- Neat hair please and no chipped nail varnish.
- For gentlemen the best option is to wear a shirt and tie.
- Don't smoke before the interview as the smell is off putting for many.
- Wear plenty of deodorant especially if it's hot as you will perspire more in an interview.
- Take off any casual jackets or hoodies before going in.
- Retain your own style.

Prepping for your Interview

You should start by having a good understanding of the company and what they specialise in and value. You can never do enough research before an interview and company information updates all the time. Also research the role you have applied for. Think about why you are applying for it so that you can convey your passion and interest in it. If it's in a sector that is new to you try to think about how your skills transfer.

Know your CV

It's time to remind yourself of your CV and your achievements. What you have done and what you enjoy. The interviewer is likely to focus on your CV and will delve in to your experience and career development. You may be asked about problems you have encountered and how you have dealt with them. Remind yourself of any career gaps or why you left any previous roles. Think about why you are building towards this new challenge. You will need to be positive about previous employers as your future employer will want to know that you are a team player.

Timings

Aim to walk into reception no later than 5 minutes before the interview time. This is enough time to get checked into reception in case you have to sign in. Don't be late under any circumstances but also don't be too early. There is nothing worse than waiting for ages in reception and your interviewer will not be any more impressed.

The Greeting

Greet your interviewer with a warm smile and shake hands firmly. Make sure you make eye contact and above all stay relaxed.

Introductions

Interviewers are people just like you and I and they will want to put you at ease. Do listen carefully from the start as the format of interviews can be flexible. However your interviewer will normally start out by giving you an introduction to the company and the job role. You will sometimes be asked to describe yourself or be asked what you know about the vacancy or the company. It is good to prepare a top line summary of your skills and what you can offer so you come across as confident and self-assured.

Answering Questions

You will of course be asked lots of questions during the interview. Try to answer questions fully with examples without over talking. One line answers will not get you very far but equally some people talk too much when they are nervous and this can be just as distracting. Think of your answers to questions as short paragraphs rather than short sentences or essays. When using examples of past accomplishment make sure they are positive ones which demonstrate your clear thinking and the results you achieved for your employer.

A few areas to have a think about;

- What do you know about the company?
- What do you expect from them?
- What can you bring to the team?
- What do you know about the work culture?

Expect some tough questions in your one to one interview but it's nothing personal. The interviewer may well want to see how you think on your feet and you can't prepare for everything.

Have a Think

You will always be asked "do you have any questions?" at some point in the interview. Anything to do with salary and benefits is a no no at this stage. Do however ask questions when you are genuinely interested in the answer. Most people want to know about the role and environment that they will be working in as well as the team vibe and company culture. It is also wise to ask about the future direction of the organisation. You should have more than one question prepared in case any of your questions are covered during the interviewer.

Top Tips!

- If you are offered a drink, take it as this helps create a relaxed environment. If you are unsure of a question take a sip of your drink and think. There is nothing wrong with giving considered answers.
- Think about your posture during the interview and try not to slouch or swing your chair. Being reasonably relaxed also means not shuffling about too much.
- Keep reasonable eye contact. If there is a second person in the room, make sure to make eye contact with both people (not just the person asking the questions). This will also help you get a better impression of your potential employers.

- Be enthusiastic and show willingness and interest in the role.
- A positive attitude shows what a great person you'd be to have in the team.
- Find common ground with the person interviewing you. People like people who they think they can get on with so show your personality as well as your professionalism.
- Be yourself and don't try to be someone else as you'll either get caught out or end up in the wrong job.
- Never give up! Sometimes in an interview situation you feel you may not have given the best answer to the question. The interviewer might not even have picked up on this so stay on track and you can always be surprised by the outcome of an interview.
- Look good and feel good. If you don't feel smart you will not be firing on all cylinders.
- Prepare well and enjoy the experience. You should always be able to take the positives from an interview.

