

## JOB INTERVIEWS EXPLAINED

### PREPARATION

Preparing for an interview in advance can make the difference between an average interview experience or one in which you shine.

#### Basics

- Know your CV and cover letter inside and out.
- In order to be punctual, try out the journey beforehand.
- Know what clothes to wear and have them cleaned and ironed ready.
- Know who you are meeting and where you should go.

#### The Company

Commercial awareness is important. Do a bit of research and it could go a long way to impressing the interview panel.

- Be clear and knowledgeable on the role that you're applying for.
- Have an awareness of the company history.
- Understand the wider market in which the company operates.
- Understand your interviewer's role in the company.
- Check out the company's LinkedIn profile.

#### CareerHub+ Resources:

- Employer Database  
[essex.careercentre.me/u/yv29y514](https://essex.careercentre.me/u/yv29y514)

#### Practice makes perfect

- Using the person specification, try to come up with some potential questions.
- Ask a friend or family member to act as the interviewer.

#### CareerHub+ Resources:

- Interview360 for free instant interview feedback  
[essex.careercentre.me/Interview360](https://essex.careercentre.me/Interview360)

### PHYSICAL INTERVIEWS

#### Competency based interviews

This style of interview focuses on you proving that you have the skills and abilities that the employer is looking for. The questions that you'll be asked will probe deeper into the skills that you demonstrated in your application. Try to focus on giving a detailed answer.

Typical competency-based questions:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Give me an example of an occasion when you have...
- Talk me through a situation where you...
- Outline an example of...

#### Strengths based

Strengths based interviews are becoming increasingly popular with graduate employers. Rather than focusing on explaining your previous skills and abilities, they aim to focus on your interests, motivation and what you love doing. Demonstrating enthusiasm and passion is important here, but remember to come across as genuine.

Typical strengths-based questions:

- What are your greatest strengths?
- What does success mean to you?
- What are you most proud of and why?
- What things come naturally to you?

### VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

#### Telephone / Skype / video

These types of interviews are often used in the early stages of the selection process. Whilst often used as a screening tool rather than a formal interview process, it's nevertheless important to prepare and know what to expect.

- When taking part in a Skype interview, make sure to use an appropriate, professional sounding username.
- For video-based interviews make sure to dress as you would for a face-to-face interview.
- If you will be in front of a camera, it's a good idea to practice before hand. This should help to alleviate any feelings of self-consciousness.
- Consider the right environment for the interview. Choose somewhere with a neutral or professional looking backdrop.

## STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR technique is a great method of giving the interview panel detailed and meaningful answers for competency-based questions.

**Situation** – set the scene or context for the example that you're using.

**Task** – state what was required of you.

**Action** – here give a concrete example of what you did to solve the task

**Result** – what was the outcome of the situation and what did you learn from the experience?

For example, if an interview panel asked you to describe a time when you demonstrated great leadership skills you could use the **STAR** technique to give the following answer:

### STAR Example

*"In my previous role, I was part of a busy team that had to produce a batch of financial reports every month to very tight deadlines. The work was shared amongst the team.*

*A new person had recently joined the team and I noticed that he was struggling to cope with his work. There was a risk that the reports would not be completed in time. He needed some support.*

*I had an informal chat with him and asked how he was settling into the role. He said that he had difficulty using the IT system, so I offered to train him.*

*He accepted my offer and after a week of training he was completing the work to the same standard as the rest of the team. In fact, by his next performance appraisal, he was exceeding his targets. Ultimately, he wasn't the only one to benefit from the experience, as it was also incredibly valuable to me as I learned just how much I love training others and have been doing it ever since."*

In order to help you prepare to respond with the STAR technique

- Reflect on everything you've already done i.e. studies, paid work, volunteering, self-employment, sports, arts activities, societies, groups, languages, challenges, fundraising, activism, music, travel...
- Think about how much you've grown and developed as a person in the last few years – what have you learnt about yourself?
- Use family and friends to help you identify strengths, achievements, values and qualities – sometimes it's difficult to pinpoint these on your own.

## ANY QUESTIONS?

Whilst you will have spent time planning your responses to the interview panel questions, don't forget that you will have the chance to ask them questions. Don't underestimate this stage of the interview process. This is your chance to demonstrate that you have researched the role, company and that you are enthusiastic and curious about the role. It's advisable to come up with a number of questions just in case any are answered during the process of the interview.

Stay away from questions for which the answers can easily be found with a quick internet search. Examples of these questions are:

- When was the company founded?
- What is the salary for this position?
- How much holiday will I be permitted?

Examples of good questions:

- What are the three most important skills needed to excel in this position?
- How could I impress you in the first three months?
- What do you enjoy about your job?

## PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS

Psychometric testing is often used as part of the recruitment process by larger organisations. They can include tests that assess logic, numeracy, technical ability, literacy, verbal reasoning, inductive or deductive reasoning, spatial or diagrammatic reasoning, situational judgement, motivation or personality. Whilst some of these tests, such as personality or motivation require you to answer instinctively, others such as numeracy or verbal reasoning you can and should practice.

## ASSESSMENT CENTRES

An assessment centre scenario is a good way for an organisation to see how you might fit the role and the organisation. You will be faced with a range of tasks such as psychometric testing, group challenges, role play, presentations, in-tray/e-tray exercises and interviews.

### CareerHub+ Resources:

- Assessment Centre Tool  
[essex.careercentre.me/AssessmentCentreTool](https://essex.careercentre.me/AssessmentCentreTool)