

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview is an opportunity to share information, so be prepared to ask questions as well as answer them. It is your only chance to make a good first impression, so make sure you present well. However – remember, it is only a meeting, so no matter how much you want the job, try to relax!

DO:

- **Wear appropriate attire** - if you're not sure what to wear, ring and ask. If your situation doesn't allow you to look your best, ring up and advise the interviewer beforehand. As a general rule, take extra care with your appearance. For trade and technician roles, a crisp, clean shirt/collared top with either trousers or pants (or skirt for female candidates) and closed toe shoes is appropriate. Avoid visual distractions such as loud ties, sheer fabrics, heavy jewellery and unwashed hair or hair that flops in your eyes or needs to be constantly pushed back. Women should avoid too much cleavage or leg – you want people listening to what you are saying! Also, both women and men should go light on the fragrance and aftershave. And don't have a cigarette just before going to an interview or *that will be your fragrance!* Lastly, wear clothes that are comfortable so you are concentrating on what is being asked of you.
- **Take a copy of your resume** with you. The interviewer should have one, but it is better to be prepared and provide you with extra confidence in being able to refer to the detail.
- **Take an original and copy of your relevant qualifications.** Most employers will want to cite the originals and then to keep a copy.
- It will help your cause if you **research the organisation** and have a reasonable understanding of who they are and what they do.
- **Act positively and appear interested**, no matter how good your credentials. A nonchalant approach may be your way of exuding confidence, but it can come across like disinterest or worse still, arrogance.
- **Make eye contact** with the interviewer - it suggests confidence and honesty.
- **Smile!** Engaging comfortably with your interviewers will build rapport. Most interviewers will work hard to help you relax – as they realise that it is the best way of learning about you and bringing the best out in you.
- Have a reason for your interest in the position. Even if you are unemployed and it's obvious you need a job, you need to articulate **what attracts you to this job**.
- Prepare well - you will need to **offer specific examples**. You will need a Situation or Task, the Action you took and the Result or outcome (often referred to as the STAR principle). See below on specific instruction and tips on this.
- Understand **what gives you job satisfaction** and what doesn't. And don't simply say "I've always been happy in all my jobs" - think of something (eg "conditions were extremely harsh" or "the boss was very supportive").
- **Anticipate a question on weaknesses.** Nobody is perfect, so understand your areas for development. Talk about something you have found difficult but are taking steps to overcome - awareness and willingness to change are a good combination.
- Know the **dates of your qualifications**. Many people falsify their qualifications, and not knowing doesn't sound very convincing.
- **Know your salary expectations.** You will be asked for this information and you need to know your own worth. Outline your current package and your future expectations. It is often unusual for

employers to 'give away' the salary package, which means it can be difficult for you to then know where to pitch your expectations. The Guide on 'blue collar' job types and salaries will assist you here.

- **Come prepared with referee names and contact details** – also ensure that you have briefed your referees ahead of time and that they are prepared. Be very clear about what your referee will say about you.
- **Ask questions** – most interviewers will ask if you have any questions. This is the time to clarify process, benefits, timeframes, terms and conditions on offer etc. However, **DO NOT** ask "what is it that the Company can do for me?" Instead, you can more positively seek information by providing context, eg "I'm really interested in developing my skills further. I'm interested to know what kind of training and development programs the company offers".

DON'T:

- **Be late.** Punctuality is important and being late, regardless of the excuse, will not help. Be clear about where you need to be and if necessary, do a practice run the day before to check how long it can take.
- Try to **hide a redundancy.** It doesn't carry a stigma these days, but try to put it into perspective, eg "I was retrenched as part of a major restructure within the business".
- Just say **"I'm seeking a new challenge"** when asked what you want in your next role. Be specific - is it managing people, an operations focus, travel, autonomy?
- **Give generic answers** when asked for an example. Rather than saying, "Oh, that happens all the time and what I usually do is...", try "Last week, my supervisor wanted me to ...".
- **Waffle!** If you stick to the STAR principle and prepare your answers ahead of time, you will know when to stop. There is nothing more irritating to an interviewer than when a candidate does not know when to stop or cannot be succinct in their answers.

Interview Questions:

You may or may not be familiar with the term 'behavioural interviewing'. It essentially means that interview questions will require you to provide specific examples. Interviewers are seeking real and recent examples of where and how you have demonstrated a particular skill or competency. Behavioural interviews are based on the theory that the best predictor of your future performance is your past performance. Questions will typically be structured to seek information relating to:

- The Situation at the time, or Task you were given;
- The specific Action you took in that situation or for that task; and
- The Result or outcome of your actions.

This is often referred to as 'STAR' questions and answers.

As a guide, you can expect questions relating to:

- Safety
- Team orientation
- Your technical skills and knowledge
- Initiative

Think about recent experiences you have had that may demonstrate your capability in each of these areas. Make notes on each as follows (an example):

Safety What was the **Situation** or **Task** (ie where were you, what was happening or what were you tasked to do?)

I was walking through the Plant on my way to a breakdown when I passed a new team member about to commence working on a piece of equipment and he was not wearing the correct Personal Protective Equipment for the job he was about to start.

What specific **A**ctions did you take?

I approached him to point out that he needed to wear the correct PPE and explained what this was. I then went with him to obtain the relevant gear from the workshop. I also radioed my supervisor to tell him I was going to be delayed on getting to the breakdown.

What was the **R**esult?

I followed him back to the job to ensure he had everything he then needed. I was delayed for my own breakdown, but we have a requirement for safety first so my supervisor completely understood and was supportive.

Note that the above example can also demonstrate your initiative and team orientation. It is strongly recommended that you identify the top four or five specific criteria that the employer is seeking and to draft examples for each of these. This then means that no matter how the question is phrased, you will have a simple menu of five or so examples to draw from. Think back over your career and select examples that are as recent as possible but also have impact.

Most interviewers will also ask for an overview of your career. This allows them to better understand how and why your career has taken the path that it has and to identify any roles that you particularly enjoyed or did not enjoy.

Next, practice, practice, practice! It may sound strange, but actually practicing your responses in front of the mirror or to someone else is a great way of ensuring that you gain confidence and can then be aware of any particular habit you have when nervous, eg tapping your leg, avoiding eye contact. You need to practice answers that are succinct and articulate – where you still provide enough detail but without waffling. Providing an overview of your career is one area where people can take too long. You need to provide a brief overview of each role, the types of projects or responsibilities you had and why you moved on to the next role. This is the time to highlight some key achievements – particularly any that align with the requirements of the role you have applied to. As a guide, your career overview should take no more than 5-6 minutes.

If you stick with the STAR method, you will provide concrete examples, rather than generalisations that won't demonstrate your skills. It also ensures that you won't waffle – there is nothing worse than a candidate who does not know when to end the answer.

If you identify five or six specific examples under each area (eg safety, initiative, team work etc), it then almost does not matter what the question is that is asked – your answer will suit! This means you'll then feel more relaxed during the interview and less nervous about thinking of an answer on the spot. Obviously, your answers need to be true because they will likely be checked with your referees.

Further questions to help you practice:

Most often interviews will open with a question/request like:

- Give us a broad overview of your career to date, including qualifications, or
- Outline key achievements over the course of your career, or

- Based on what you know about the role, tell us how your skills and experience align with our requirements.

Questions relating to Safety

- How do you ensure your own personal safety at work? When was the last time these methods worked well for you? Why?
- How have you familiarised yourself with the safety policies and procedures relevant to your position?
- Tell us about a dangerous task you had to perform. (How did you make sure you or someone else wasn't injured?)
- Tell us about a time when you observed someone not following correct safety procedure. What did you do?

Technical/Job Related

- What was the most difficult task you had to learn on your job at _____? How did you learn it?
- Tell us about a complex aspect of your current job. How long did it take you to learn it?
- Tell us about a typical day. What do you work on and who do you interact with?
- In what areas do you consider yourself to be quite the expert or at least very skilled or knowledgeable in?

Team

- What is it that you contribute to a team over and above your technical skills?
- Tell us about your role in the most successful team you have been associated with. What made it a successful team?
- Tell us about a time you worked with someone who wasn't as cooperative as you needed him or her to be. What did you do?
- If we were to ask others from your current workplace what words they would use to describe you, what do you think they would say?
- Tell us about a time when you went out of your way to help a team member.

Initiative

- Describe some of the ways you changed or improved the way your department operates or the way you do your job. What prompted you to make these changes?
- Are there any projects or improvements you have initiated? Give us an example. What prompted you to begin that project or improvement?
- Have you suggested any new ideas to your manager/supervisor/team leader recently? Give us an example. What happened to the idea?
- Have you taken any steps to make your job easier/more efficient/more productive? Give us an example.

Performance Under Pressure

- Tell us about a time when you were unable to meet a very demanding deadline. What happened?
- We all have times when the pressure at work is extremely high. Describe a time like this in your past work experience. (How did you react?)
- Have you ever been in a new or unfamiliar work situation for which there was little time to prepare? (Give us an example. How did you react?)
- Describe a time when you were experiencing conflicting work demands. (What were those conflicting demands? How did you respond?)
- Has there been a time when a colleague or manager requested something of you and you had to say no. Why? How did you approach this?