



Interview techniques and questions

Preparing for a job interview can be stressful particularly when you're sitting in front of a panel of recruiters. There are a range of techniques to help you prepare for your next interview.

Health sector interviews usually involve a formal structure with an interview panel of two or three members. The panel has been specifically trained in interview techniques and will assess your presentation, communication, verbal responses and non-verbal responses.

The interview is heavily focused on the position selection criteria, and each question can range from scenario-based questions where you will be asked to picture yourself in a situation and provide examples based on the selection criteria, to being asked to conduct a written presentation to support the interview process.

The best way to get ready for an interview is to take the time to review the most common interview questions you will most likely be asked, along with examples of the best answers. Knowing what you're going to say can eliminate a lot of interview stress.

Research the organisation. Before your interview, take the time to learn as much as possible about the job and your prospective employer. Find information about the organisation, its mission, vision and values, even their current focus so you can include this information in the interview. So that you understand the role specifically, the culture of the organisation and the specific tasks involved.

Make a match. Take the time before the interview to make matches between your qualifications and the requirements as stated in the job description selection criteria. This way, you will have examples at hand to demonstrate your suitability for the job. While you may have attended a few interviews, you will need to ensure that your examples, scenarios, and responses suit the department or organisation you are being interviewed for.

Practice your responses. Write out your answer in advance for each question and then read it aloud to ensure it sounds natural. Try to keep it short and cover the question.

Be prepared to show and tell. It can be helpful to remember the tip "show, don't tell." For example, rather than stating that you are an excellent problem solver, instead give an example that demonstrates this, ideally drawing on an anecdote from your professional experience.

Make a good impression. First impressions count and while you may be terribly nervous, take a deep breath and put yourself in the interviewer's shoes. Be friendly and positive and if you don't understand any questions be sure to ask for some explanation so you can respond to the best of your abilities. Your personal skills are paramount in the interview process to be focused on ensuring you make a good first impression.

Interview questions

1. Tell me about yourself?

What the employer really wants to know is your experience, your skills and, if you're new in the workforce, your education.

2. What interests you about this job?

This is your chance to shine. Try: "there is a greater scope for me to use my skills" – which you then outline.

3. Why do you want this job?

This question gives you an opportunity to show the interviewer what you know about the job and the company, so take time beforehand to thoroughly research the organisation, its vision, services, culture and mission. Be specific about what makes you a good fit for this role, and mention aspects of the company and position that appeal to you most.

4. Why are you leaving?

Focus on the opportunities available to you if you take the job, be direct and focus your answer on the future.

5. What do you know about our company?

This question uncovers candidates who haven't taken the time to find out about the organisation. If you've done your homework you should be able to talk about the products or services, opportunities or difficulties in the market, and some recent news.

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6. Why do you want to work for us?

Employers want someone who'll be committed, not someone who just needs a job. If you can link your skills to what the company or organisation does, you're on the right track.

7. What are your strengths?

Think of three or four good points and give examples of how they have benefited previous employers. Strengths could include the ability to learn quickly; composure under pressure; ability to multi-task; team focus or your ability to work autonomously. It's important to discuss the attributes that qualify you for that specific job, and that will set you apart from other candidates.

The interviewer wants to see that you have composure, problem-solving skills and can stay focused in difficult conditions. Give an example of a time when you were faced with a stressful situation (not caused by you) and how you handled it with poise.

8. What are your greatest weaknesses?

Only ever give one weak point – which you can explain. The interviewer is trying to gauge your self-awareness. We all have weaknesses, so it's best not to say you don't have any. Demonstrating a willingness to develop yourself and face challenges turns the answer into a positive. Do your best to frame your answers around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee, turning seeming "weaknesses" into strengths. You can also share examples of skills you have improved, providing specific instances of how you have recognised a weakness and taken steps to correct it.

9. How do you handle stress and pressure?

What do you do when things don't go smoothly at work? How do you deal with difficult situations? The employer wants to know how you handle workplace stress. Avoid claiming that you never, or rarely, experience stress. Rather, formulate your answer in a way that acknowledges workplace stress and explains how you've overcome it, or even used it to your advantage.

10. What have you learned from your mistakes?

If you're honest about one or two mistakes you'll come across as more believable and trustworthy than someone who denies all. Focus on the take outs from these mistakes.

11. Do you have any questions?

Don't forget that you're interviewing the company as well as being interviewed yourself. Use this opportunity to ask any questions that haven't been covered during the interview and will help you figure out if this is the right job and company for you. Questions could be about KPIs, training opportunities, employee development, or anything else that will help you determine the role's suitability.

Have questions prepared because some of them are likely to be answered during the interview. Ideally, you'll have two or three solid questions to ask before the interview concludes. Focus on asking open-ended questions, as these will give you a chance to further develop a rapport with the interviewer.

Whatever you do: practice, practice, practice when it comes to job interview questions. Have an answer to every common question ready that focuses on the positive.

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