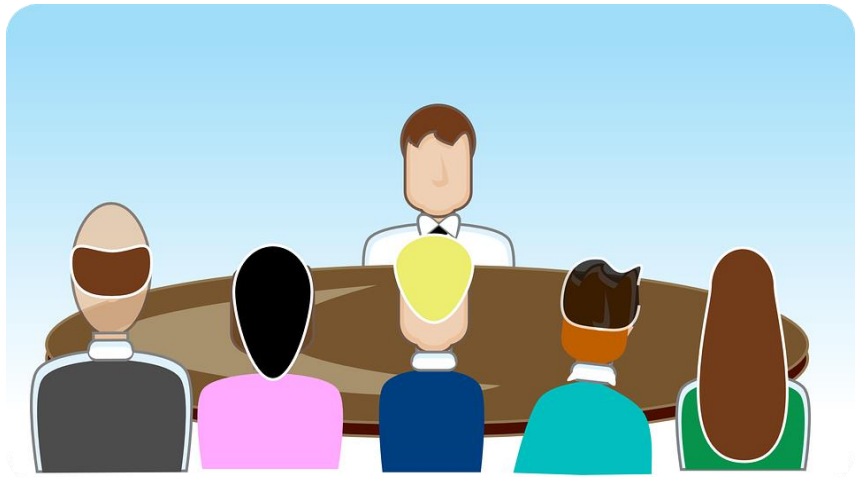


# INTERVIEWS – THE BASICS

Experienced interviewers will quickly spot a candidate who is poorly prepared, who lacks interest or has little motivation. In these situations the interviewers ask themselves "*Why did the candidate bother turning up, why waste their time and ours?*", and often within the first few minutes of the interview have decided not to give the candidate the job.

So what can YOU do to prevent this?



Contact the Petroc Careers Adviser for a **mock interview** which is a great way to practise your interview technique, get used to being questioned and observe your own body language before the real thing. But in the meantime follow the advice below:

- **Do your homework**

Research both the role and the company, you should have done some of this when you were applying. Find out more about the company's products, services and structure. Look at their website, trade magazines, marketing literature and annual reports. Look at internet articles for stories about the company, also try Wikipedia and The Student Room. Do you know anyone working in this type of company? Think broadly about your connections and don't be afraid to ask people for help.

- **Know the job**

Ensure that you are as informed about the job as you can be. Make sure you read any information they have sent you about the job, and try to remember as many details as you can. This way, when responding to questions, you can talk about the job more authoritatively, e.g. you can say for which of the duties your transferable skills will be useful, or you can say if you have undertaken similar duties in previous jobs.

- **Keep a copy of your application**

You have obtained this interview on the basis of what you wrote on the application form or CV. Go through the application at least once before the interview and ask yourself some questions about your motivation for the job, your skills and abilities. Get people to go through questions with you e.g. People in business, friends who will not flatter or Petroc's careers adviser. You can anticipate some of the obvious questions: *Why are you applying for this role? What are your strengths/weaknesses? Why should we employ you? What is your greatest achievement? Give me an example of your team skills?*

- **Dress appropriately**

First impressions count. Every company has its own clothing culture – if in doubt, contact them and ask about the company dress code. If the dress code is casual – be smart casual for your interview. (Remember, people who already work for the company are not likely to be judged on what they wear). On the day, bring a comb or hairbrush, an umbrella and a handkerchief/clean tissues. Keep make-up and jewellery to a minimum. Don't overpower with perfume or after-shave and smelling of cigarettes and/or alcohol definitely gives the wrong impression.

- **Continued over page.....**

- **“My bus was late...”**

Unacceptable! Plan your journey. Find out where you are supposed to be and do everything to ensure you are going to be at least 15 minutes early (chance to ‘freshen up’ before the event). Take your interview letter with you, plus mobile phone just in case the delay is totally unavoidable – at least you can telephone the company to let them know what is happening.

- **Body language**

Don’t slouch or avoid eye-contact (especially important when being interviewed by a panel). Smile when you introduce yourself. Try not to fiddle with hair, clothing or earrings because you are nervous. Practise the art of the handshake with someone you know – in the UK a ‘firm’ handshake is preferred.

- **Handling those nerves**

Perfectly natural, but get them under control. You need to come across as interested and enthusiastic. For some people, deep breathing just before the interview can help and remember your successes – don’t set yourself up to fail by focussing on what you don’t know or can’t do.

- **The difficult questions**

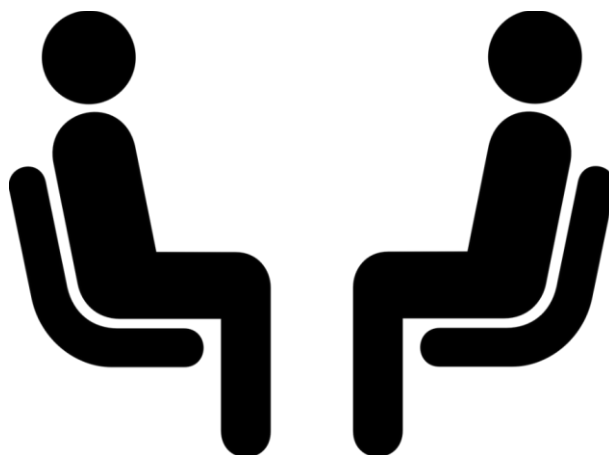
Oh yes, you will get them, no matter how well you have prepared. Questions are often based on the criteria given in the job advert, website or person specification. Focus on these areas to anticipate the questions. For the more difficult and unexpected questions, give yourself a few seconds to think – interviewers will expect this. If you don’t understand a question – ask them to repeat it. Better than answering a question that was not asked. Challenging questions come in all shapes and forms. From “*Sell me this paperclip*” to “*Describe yourself in one word*”. They are designed to see how you react to pressure and if you can think on your feet. **For more help see the Top Tips on “Interviews – The Questions” and “Interviews - Tips and Techniques”.**

- **“Is there anything you would like to ask me”?**

Be ready with a few interesting questions to ask at the end of the interview – but not something that has just been answered or is in the job advert or job description! The interview is a two-way process so make sure you have prepared a list of questions you would like the answers to. It is OK to respond with “I was going to ask about ....., but that has been covered by the company presentation/ answered by one of your graduate trainees”. However, have at least one other question in reserve.

- **Finally**

Be professional, enthusiastic and confident in your abilities – the company has already seen your potential through your application form or CV and is looking for reasons to take you on, not to reject you. Remember that you are qualified to do the job... you meet the essential criteria and probably most of the desirables. Be positive. Don’t forget to thank the interviewer(s) before you leave. However if the result is **not** a job offer, ask the company for feedback and then use it to improve your interview technique. **You will improve.**



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