

Guidelines for a strong interview

The following guidelines are for the interview itself. Some important points to remember during the interview...

Don't assume anything

You'll be evaluated on your answers, not your CV. Your interviewers may not even have a copy in front of them. Ensure you incorporate the relevant information from your CV into your answers, using it to back up what you're saying with practical examples.

Remember to breathe

Pause for a couple of seconds before you respond to each question, even if you know exactly what you want to say. Take this time to quickly plan your answer. This helps to avoid misunderstandings and produces much more concise and coherent answers.

And let's face it, no-one will understand you if you speak a mile a minute.

Don't be afraid to ask

When people are nervous they tend either to draw a blank or to babble. It's better to think for a few moments and make sure your answer is doing you justice and that there's a point to what you're saying.

If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification. Trust us, no-one will judge you for it. Some recruiters may even deliberately ask difficult or ambiguous questions to see how well you react under pressure.

Remember: it's much better to ask for help than to get an answer wrong.

Be confident

The interview is an opportunity for you to sell yourself. Don't be afraid to 'blow your own trumpet'. As long as you can support what you're saying with examples, you're not bragging. Just be careful not to take it too far, or to embellish. If you lie, you'll just be making it more difficult for yourself in the long run.

And always expand. Never answer a question with a simple "yes" or "no". The more interesting your answers are, and the better you back them up, the more memorable they will be.

Be positive

Whatever happens, and however the interview's going, always try and be as positive as you can. Don't complain about anything - from your former employer to the weather - and don't apologise for experience that you don't have. Just sell what you do have and let the employer decide if you have what they're looking for.

Also, avoid negative words. For example: rather than "I have a little experience...", say "I have experience..."

Finally, when it comes to mannerisms and body language, try to ensure the following:

- Be confident, positive and look directly at the interviewer when you talk and listen
- Speak clearly, be enthusiastic and express a keen interest in the position
- Keep to the point, be concise and always be honest
- Smile

Keep to these tips and with any luck you'll ace the interview.