

# GET THAT JOB

## Interview Q&A top tips

This guide summarises the essential information you will need to know to ensure you successfully and appropriately answer any questions in an interview.

It's vital that your answers to the interviewer's questions demonstrate that you are right for the role. Prepare in advance so that you are ready for common questions and can make your answers relevant.

### Commonly asked questions

- **Tell me about yourself?** - This is an opportunity for you to sell yourself and an employer will be looking to see how well you do this. Give a quick potted history of yourself which demonstrates your skills and personality.
- **What can you offer us?** - In other words – how can you add value to our organisation? Pick examples from the job description and match them to your own skills. Make sure you provide evidence from your previous experience to back up your claims.
- **What are your strengths?** – An employer is looking for evidence of self-awareness. Match your strengths to the job you have applied for and provide evidence from previous work experience or studies/leisure interests.
- **What have you accomplished?** - Sometimes phrased as 'What is your greatest achievement?'. Employers want to find out what motivates you. Employers sometimes like to hear about things that are not work-related as these can also reveal a lot about a person's motivation.
- **What are your limitations?** - An employer is trying to find out how self-aware you are and if you are capable of personal/professional development. Try to show that you can use a weakness positively to develop yourself.
- **What attracts you to our organisation?** - An employer is trying to find out how motivated you are and if you have done your research. Do your research on the company. Talk about what you think you will gain from working there and what you have to offer.
- **If I spoke with one of your class lecturers what would they say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?** - This is about self-awareness and your capability for development. Turn weaknesses into positives by explaining what you have learnt and how you can use the experience to develop further.
- **What are your ambitions for the future?** – An employer is trying to find out how motivated you will be in the job and what your level of commitment is. Think about the job you are applying for and how it might develop over time – include the tasks and responsibilities you would hope to gain.
- **Why do you want to work for us?** - In other words – what is your motivation? Use your knowledge of the company. Say why you want the job, not why you are leaving your current position.

## Questions based on job descriptions and person specifications

Employers often ask questions based on the job description and person specifications. It's really important that you read through and understand the job description and person specification correctly.

If there is anything you are unclear of, make sure you look it up. If you think you can charm your way through, you are mistaken. You can guarantee that you will be asked questions on the topic you are unsure of and it will show if you haven't done your research. You can also use the job description to help form your own questions that you may wish to ask the employer.

## Giving relevant answers

- Listen carefully to each question. Identify the main point – there should only be one.
- Listen for important key words – these are a clue to what the question is about.
- Take a moment to clarify what you are being asked for before you answer.
- Address the main point of the question then finish. Don't ramble or go on to another subject.
- Answer questions with good examples of your skills and knowledge.
- Give evidence of things you have done to support what you say.
- Your answers should sell your positive qualities but don't say things you cannot back up with examples and evidence.
- Don't exaggerate or lie and don't state the obvious.

## Asking the interviewer questions

- Prepare questions in advance.
- Ask about anything that was not clarified in the course of the interview. Your questions should show a genuine interest in the company and indicate that you are thinking in the long term.
- Avoid asking questions about salary, holiday entitlement or anything that you could have found out yourself.
- Avoid asking questions about training and development. It gives the impression you are interested in what you can get out of the company, not what you can give.
- Examples of questions you could ask:
  - What would you see as the main priority for the post holder on commencing the job?
  - What are some of the challenges faced by the person performing this role?
  - How would you describe the culture of this organisation?
  - What are some of the objectives you would like to see achieved in this job?