

How to prepare for an interview in English

Feeling stressed? Who wouldn't be with the possibility of a new opportunity opening up in front of you. With a job interview you need to make a good impression in a short space of time and preparation is the key to getting it right.

Before you start

Get a clear picture of the perfect candidate; **draw up a Mind Map of the qualities required, both hard and soft skills**. Look for phrases from the job description that you can adapt. Now see how your work experience and skills match up.

Check out the interviewer on LinkedIn or the company website. Seeing a face and their experience can make you less anxious.

Zoom interviews: useful tips:

1. Ensure that you have a pleasant background. Blurring the background is bit of shame, rather create a pleasant background with a picture, a bookcase and a plant.... After all you have nothing to hide.
2. Make sure you have a good wi-fi connection.
3. Make sure the camera is at the right height to give you a good profile. If you don't have a computer stand, you can lift up your computer with books.
4. Make sure children and pets are out of the way.
5. Make sure you have good lighting.
6. If you're feeling unsure about a few key words set up a board behind the screen with notes to help you, but don't make it look as if you're reading!!!!

Now let's dive into some of the questions which often get asked during a job interview in English.

The classic opener.... So, tell me about yourself

They already have your CV, so you don't need to start right back at junior school, think how you might cover this question in an interesting and engaging way.

Make an impression from the start.

You could open with, "You have my CV with all the dates and my experience, but I'd just like to open by saying"

Come up with a short paragraph that describes your working history, **focusing on your successes**. You should include a few personal details but aim for a ratio of 70% career history to 30% biography.

Try to add some **adjectives** which aren't necessarily in your CV.

BBE language tip: be aware of these correct expressions

*I was born and **raised** in ...*

*I **attended** the University of ...*

*I **graduated** from the University of ...*

*I worked **for** seven years as a ... (past experience)*

***I've worked for** various companies including ... (current experience)*

*I have four years **of** experience as a ...*

I've worked in retail for six years and was promoted to manager in my second year. (present perfect and past tenses)

Why are you interested in this job? Or in other words, *what do you know about the job?*

Look for phrases from the job description that you can adapt to your situation. Use your preparation Mind Map to say how your experience suits the position.

BBE language tip:

About you: I've been responsible for.....

I want to take on more responsibility.

This position is in line with my qualifications ...

About the company: *I'm convinced that 'the company name' is becoming one of the market leaders.*

I'm impressed by the quality of your products.

Why should we hire you? Or in other words, *What's your added value for us?*

Bear in mind that they want to know what YOU can bring to the company, they're not really interested in the wonderful things it'll do for your career. You can talk about your strengths here but also put them in the context on the position and the company values.

BBE language tip:

From my understanding of the position and the company, I believe my experience in X will bring added value to your team.

I'm considered as a hardworking, creative and respectful team member, I can fit in with your company values.

I find your company policy of equal opportunities highly motivating.

Why do you want to leave your current job?

This is tricky question to answer. Remember, the golden rule of interviews is to seem like a great employee that they want to work with, so don't mention any personality clashes! Focus on positives and on what excites you about the new job.

BBE language tip:

I feel I have outgrown my job, and I am ready for a new challenge.

I'm looking to relocate and experience life in a different city.

My current role doesn't use all of my skills, and this one seems like it will be more fulfilling for me.

If you have a gap in your CV, be honest about it without showing yourself in a bad light. Some ideas include:

Unfortunately, my last company got into financial trouble / had a restructuring, and I was laid off, along with many people on my team.

My company changed significantly during my time there, and unfortunately, my position was eliminated.

I took extended maternity leave, I felt it was important for my family life.

Explain your strengths. That's an easy one but ALWAYS back it up with concrete examples.

Bear in mind the hard and soft skills and required for the position.

BBE language tip:

I've always been a team player, for example the time when....

I believe my strongest trait is my attention to detail.

I pay close attention to my customers' needs.

I'm an excellent communicator.

I'm a trouble shooter.

I'm good at problem solving.

I'm good at multitasking.

I'm self-motivated.

I have very good time management skills.

What are your weaknesses or in other words, what do you find difficult to do?

This question is always a tricky one.... "I'm a perfectionist" is no longer a tactical answer, it's a big "yawn"!

BBE language tip:

In the past I was uncomfortable about my English but now I'm working to overcome it.

Sometimes I have trouble delegating duties to others, but I'm working to overcome it.

"Tell me about a time when you..."

These days interviewers often ask more precise questions about behaviour. The key to appearing quick, relaxed and confident is preparation. So, prepare a short paragraph about:

Your biggest career success so far

Your biggest career failure so far (and lessons learnt)

A time when you made life easier for your team

A time when you made a positive impact

A time when you made a mistake but resolved it

A time when you kept a cool head under pressure

A time when you disagreed with your boss or a teammate and how you resolved the conflict

Where do you see yourself in five years' time? Or in other words, what are your career goals?

Paint a bright future for yourself within your sector. It will show that you are ambitious, and you are looking to stay in your industry long-term (with this company preferably...).

BBE language tip:

I'm aiming to improve my skills as a ...

I hope to be in a good job where my skills are used.

I hope to be working in a successful company and putting my skills to good use.

What do you know about our company?

Do your research, research, and more research! Most of the information will be on their website, but you should demonstrate something more. For example, find out who the main competitors are, mention the company's values and aims, the company's reputation in the industry, the company's products or services and the company's growth in recent years.

BBE language tip:

Your company *has proven to be* ...

The company has a *reputation for* ...

What salary do you expect to earn?

This is difficult to answer in any language but come prepared with a figure. Make sure you have researched a good (and reasonable) salary for this role within this sector.

BBE language tip:

I'll need information about the job responsibilities before we can discuss the salary.

My salary expectations are in line with my qualifications and education.

Could you explain your salary scale and prospects?

Is there anything else you'd like to discuss? Even if your answer is no, always prepare questions.

BBE language tip:

How soon do you expect to make a decision?

Do you have a training and development program?

Where do you think this company will be in five years?

How to wrap up the interview:

BBE language tip:

It was a pleasure meeting you, thank you for your time, I've enjoyed meeting you.

Thank you very much for your time. I'll be waiting for your call.

After the interview

If you realize you forgot to mention a crucial point, you can always mention it in a follow-up email.

Final language tip: If you don't understand the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it. It won't affect the result. But above all avoid saying "My English bad", "Repeat please". Remember you are engaging in a conversation between equals, it's not a school exam, so you can say, "I didn't quite catch that", or "Do you mean...", "Could you clarify what you mean".. Don't panic: If you don't have a good answer to a question immediately, **pause and take the time to think about it.**

A final point: **Make your mistakes before the real interview.**

I hope these notes are useful for you and that they have given you some ideas, but as we know practice makes perfect. So please don't hesitate to contact me for a Zoom or Face to Face session to iron out any doubts you may have. Usually 1 to 3 hours practice is enough to get you feeling confident and ready to make a lasting impression.