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# Interview skills.



STUDENT  
ADVOCACY  
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## What is the purpose of an interview?

An interview is designed to give the employer/recruiter an opportunity to assess your working capacities, skills, knowledge and personality in person. The interview performance will be the deciding factor for selecting the most successful applicant.

## How do i get an interview?

Research the role you are applying for and submit a well written cover letter and resume. For tips on writing a great resume and cover letter see our other resources on our Employment page for more details.

## What are the different types of interviews?

### FORMAL INTERVIEWS

These can be either one-on-one or with a panel of recruiters, asking structured questions. These interviews are popular with larger businesses.

### INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

If you are applying for a position with a small business, then you are more likely to have an informal interview. These are sometimes on the spot with the manager, where you may have to answer questions or demonstrate a task e.g. make a coffee.

### PHONE INTERVIEWS

Some businesses conduct phone interviews, where you will be asked several questions over the phone. It is important to have current phone details listed on your resume. If you can, include a preferred contact time on your cover letter.

### ONLINE INTERVIEWS

This could be a video interview, where you record yourself answering questions. It could also be a Skype interview using your webcam.

## How do I prepare for an interview?

Know your resume, the position you are applying for, and how your skills and experience can be applied to the position. It is very obvious when an applicant does not know much about the position or business that they are applying for. Not being able to answer questions regarding information in your resume could cost you the job.

## What is the best way to answer questions?

Using the **STAR** interview technique is a great way of preparing for interviews and allows you to answer questions in a professional way. It encourages you to provide a structured response using work examples to back up all answers.

### S – SITUATION

Describe the situation; this may encompass the working environment, the time of day, how many staff are/were present & what the atmosphere was like.

### T – TASK

This is the physical duties you were performing while in the situation. This can include managing staff, performing tasks & communicating information to staff.

### A – ACTION

What you did to try and change the problem/issue which occurred, ie approaching the staff member, contacting a supervisor, cleaning up a spill etc.

### R – RESPONSE/RESULT

How were your actions received by the people involved & what did you learn? If it went bad, what did you do to get further help or assistance in the future?

## EXAMPLE QUESTION & RESPONSE

### INTERVIEWER

"Tell us about a time where you failed to communicate effectively with a peer on the job. What happened, what went wrong and what was the outcome?"

### APPLICANT

#### **Situation**

"I was working the Friday night shift at McDonalds. It was around 7:30pm and in the middle of services. There were about 20 staff on to get through the dinner service and everyone was feeling the pressure."

#### **Task**

"I was part of the drive through service with 2 other staff members. One of them left for the workspace to answer their phone."

#### **Action**

"I went over to this person and told them that they cannot just leave their work station and talk on the phone, which I yelled at them for. The team member proceeded to tell me to mind my own business and continued to talk on the phone."

#### **Result**

"At this point the shift supervisor saw what was happening and came over and spoke with the person directly. When I had finished my shift, the Shift Supervisor talked to me about the situation and offered me assistance in handling these situations in the workplace so I am better prepared and offered me further training. I completed the training and learnt how to be a better communicator in the workplace. This led me to being recognised for my work and I was offered the promotion of Shift Supervisor a few months later."

## How can I make an interview work to my advantage?

In your interview, you will be given the opportunity to ask your own questions about the workplace culture, further training and development.

Make sure that you prepare questions.



## Does practising for an interview help?

Yes. Practicing for an interview will build your confidence. It will also help you to prepare answers in advance. A mock interview is where you can practice answering questions based off the job description and selection criteria.

## Where can I get a mock interview?

SAS can hold a mock interview with you. You will need to make an appointment, stating that it is for a mock interview and email the position description, resume and cover letter to the SAS employment advocate at least 24 hours prior to the appointment.

The advocate will then prepare some basic questions for you to answer and give you feedback on your answers and performance.

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES FOR INDUSTRY SPECIFIC POSITIONS?

The UQ Careers and Graduate Employment team have workshops, resources and appointments available through their website.

**You can make a Mock interview appointment here with one of our advocates.**

We do recommend that you have been to a resume & job search help appointment first. This will give you the best opportunity to understand the entire job application process.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## **"Tell us about yourself?"**

This needs to go beyond what is on your resume.

## **"What do you know about our business?"**

Researching the company you are interviewing for demonstrates that you are interested and serious about getting the job.

## **"What relevant experience do you have?"**

You will need to mention all of the experience that you have which is related to the job you are applying for.

## **"How would you describe your communication skills?"**

This needs to include your ability to listen, communicate and work well in a team.

## **"Do you work well under pressure?"**

It is a good idea to include examples of when you have worked well under pressure.

## **"Describe a recent work or study-related problem. Tell me about the action you took to solve the problem. What was the outcome?"**

This gives the employer an idea about how you identify challenges and overcome them.

## **"What are your strengths?"**

Make sure you identify strengths that are related to the job you are applying for.

## **"What are your weaknesses?"**

Identify areas for improvement or where skills need to be further developed.

## **"Why did you leave your last job?"**

It is important to focus on the positives. Do not speak negatively about your previous workplace.

## **"Why should we hire you over the other applicants?"**

This shows how well you are able to present all your unique skills, experiences and attributes.

## **"What do you like to do outside of work?"**

This question allows the employer to gauge more about your personality and to see if you'll fit into the company's culture.