



## Interview preparation

In many ways an interview is like a stage performance – there is a ‘live audience’, you want to do your best, and ideally you leave the ‘audience’ feeling positive. To maximise the opportunity an interview presents, adequate preparation is essential. As you prepare, remember:

- That you’ve been offered an interview because the employer believes you can do the job
- That an interview is a two-way conversation. Both the interviewer and you are trying to find out whether there is a good ‘fit’ between you and the organisation
- That interview processes can differ considerably between organisations, which makes preparation even more important.

### PREPARATION

- Read and understand the job description thoroughly beforehand. If a job description isn’t available easily, we recommend contacting the organisation and asking for one. It’s one more contact that may make it easier for them to remember you, and demonstrates your keenness
- Research the organisation – please refer to the separate handout on this topic
- Brainstorm the types of questions you may be asked and have answers prepared to give. Please refer to the separate handout on interview questions for a list of possible questions.
- Use the job details to identify the skills and characteristics likely to be assessed.
- Identify several life experiences that you can refer to in the interview that provide examples of your suitability for the role. For more information on this, refer to the separate handout on behavioural or competency-based interviews.
- Practice being interviewed. Have a friend or family member interview you and ask some typical questions. The list of interview questions may be useful for this. They can also help you identify your body language, facial expressions and nervous habits
- Think of 4 – 5 skills and facts about yourself that you would like the interviewer to know about by the end of the interview. This may help to give you some focus in the answers you provide
- Find out what to expect e.g. length, type of interview, names and positions of interviewers.
- Take with you a few genuine questions to ask the interviewer. Towards the end of the interview you are likely to be asked if you have any questions. These can also be questions that clarify any information you’ve been given during the interview.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

- In the first 15-30 seconds, anyone you meet will form a first impression – what will they think?
- Look your best. If in doubt, dress more formally rather than being too casual
- Check all your buttons, zips, clothing, and make-up
- Pay attention to personal hygiene and cleanliness – nervousness may create perspiration!
- Give a firm handshake and make regular eye contact with all the interviewers
- Monitor your body language and try to eliminate any distracting habits
- Use the person’s name when speaking to them
- Express yourself clearly. Say what you mean.



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Organisations can use a variety of methods to shortlist and select, with a face-to-face interview being the most common approach to selection. Other process may include psychometric testing and assessment – please refer to the separate handout on this topic:

Behavioural or competency-based interviewing – please refer to the separate handout on this topic.

### TELEPHONE OR SKYPE INTERVIEWING

These are often used to conduct a long distance first interview and need to be treated like face-to-face interviews. You need to be confident, enthusiastic and focussed. Your aim is to make the interviewer want to meet with you in person. You still need to be particularly well prepared and personable. For phone interviews the challenge is to listen carefully and communicate without the advantage of body language, using clear diction. One advantage of telephone interviews is that you can have prompting notes to hand. For Skype interviews ensure you have a consistent and strong internet connection.

### PANEL INTERVIEWING

This means there will be more than one person conducting the interview. Questions may be asked by all interviewers, so for each question, try and focus on the questioner, involving the whole group by establishing eye contact. In some cases there will be one person acting as an observer or note taker.

### WHAT THE INTERVIEWER WANTS TO KNOW

- Do you live up to what your CV claims about you, including your experience and qualifications?
- What is your desire and motivation for wanting this particular role?
- Will you make a contribution to their organisation that meets or exceeds expectations?
- Do you have the transferable skills that are relevant to the job?
- Will you 'fit' within their team and add value to the organisation?

### AT THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive on time, smile, look people in the eye and try to be relaxed and friendly.
- Aim to build rapport with the interviewers. This will take several minutes, and occurs when you begin to feel more relaxed with them. This is primarily your responsibility not theirs.
- Watch your body language. Sit upright with shoulders relaxed and with an attentive pose.
- Nerves are a reality of interviews – they can make you talk too much or not say enough, so if necessary ask for the question to be repeated or for aspects to be clarified. Pace your answers, and check if the interviewer has been given sufficient information, or not enough.
- Try to avoid Yes/No answers. If you make a bad start answering a particular question, simply stop and start the answer again.
- Listen carefully and answer the actual question. Take a moment to think. Remember, the interviewer wants to know what you have done, and how you perform, so avoid generalising.
- One of your aims for the interview is to ensure you have a clear picture of the job requirements and the 'flavour' of the organisation. You are likely to have the opportunity to ask questions either throughout the interview, or at the end. This may depend on the interviewers approach.
- Leave on a positive note, smile, shake hands if appropriate, and leave promptly.



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### AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Useful follow-up to the interview could include a thank-you message to the interviewer
- If you don't receive an offer but would like to be considered should a similar or relevant vacancy occur find out how you can stay 'in the loop'.
- If you have been unsuccessful get some feedback. Many organisations are pleased to help out with constructive advice, but don't be annoyed if this is refused. If an employer says they had difficulty in making a decision, and you were not selected, believe them and move on.
- Always review your own performance and seek assistance if you're not receiving job offers
- Remain positive and focused - any hint of desperation will not improve interview performance.

For further information on behavioural interviewing and other interview techniques, please refer to the Career and Employment Service: <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>

