

Practising your interview technique

Think about the types of questions you could be asked in an interview and practise how you might answer them.

Classic Interview Questions

These form the basis of many of the questions you may be asked during your interview. You'll need to make sure you talk about your skills, experience, and personality and show how you match-up with what the organisation is looking for. Some example questions could include:

1. How would you describe yourself?

This is your opportunity to introduce yourself to the interview panel. You want to present yourself in the best possible way and show them how your qualities and characteristics align with the skills needed to deliver the role.

Firstly, tell them about your current situation, for example what role are you currently in, what are you studying or what is your most recent achievement. For example, for a health care support worker:

"After completing my A-Levels last year, which included Health and Social Care, I'm currently working in a local care home as a personal care assistant. I'm really enjoying being able to offer support and interact with the residents and this has made me want to pursue a career as a Healthcare Support Worker within the NHS.

I'm highly motivated and always go out of my way to help others, for example, one of the residents within the home was feeling particularly lonely one day and so I stayed after my shift to watch some TV with her to try and boost her mood.

Working on group projects in school and alongside staff in the care home, I pride myself in holding excellent team working skills, whilst being able to work effectively on my own.

Gaining an understanding of the NHS through my studies and carrying out similar duties as part of my current role. I am keen to develop my skills further and would love the opportunity to undertake the position."

2. What do you know about the organisation?

Always be prepared for this question. You'll want to show that you've done your research as we mentioned earlier. Think about what the organisation does and what values they hold - it's good to create a connection to yourself. For example, for a project officer:

“From my research, I understand that the organisation is a special health authority, playing a leading role in the education, training, development and shaping of the healthcare workforce, to ensure NHS Wales can deliver world-class healthcare both now and in the future.

I’d like to work in an organisation which connects with my values and I feel that HEIW really offers that with respect for all, working together and welcoming ideas that improve.

The ability to be part of an organisation which looks to achieve the vision of achieving a healthier Wales really excites me, and I’d love the opportunity to make a contribution in achieving this.”

Even if you don’t get asked this question, you can use the knowledge you’ve now gained to mould your other answers for example, using the values.

3. What are your strengths?

When answering this question think about what the organisation is looking for. Think about what you are good at. What would your previous employer/teachers say about you? What do your friends/family say you’re good at? Try and limit to two/three examples. For example, for a hospital porter:

“I am a good communicator, able to take instructions, and have conversations with customers. For example, during my work experience at the local post office, I needed to handle customer enquiries which included calmly talking to a customer who was waiting to complain, take deliveries and stock the shop, and meet the postman who would collect mail.

I have good fitness and I’m part of my local rugby team, where I also support the junior team through weekly coaching.

I’m also flexible and can calmly handle situations, for example, staying with my grandfather following him having a stroke while we waited for an ambulance.”

4. What are your weaknesses?

Everyone has weaknesses and so it’s important to be honest. The key when answering this question is to concentrate on 1 weakness and most importantly, think about your development, how you are/can work to improve them – turn those negatives into positive learning opportunities. For example for a medical student:

“I am naturally shy and have found it difficult speaking in large groups. I’ve recently joined a Student Health Forum which is helping push me out

of my comfort zone. The opportunity to develop my presentation skills and speak to others is helping me to feel better within groups and I hope to become more confident in the future.”

5. What relevant experience have you got?

This question gives you the opportunity to give a summary to the interview panel on your experiences, which doesn't just mean any work experience you may have it also covers any education/training, and extra-curricular activities which could be relevant to the role. For example, for a student interested in IT:

“I'm passionate about keeping up-to-date with the latest technological advances, from teaching myself HTML coding to completing modules in software fundamentals and cyber security as part of my Information Technology Level two course in college. In my spare time, I've used my knowledge to help a family friend to build a website and database, which has helped give me practical experience”.

Other questions might include:

6. What motivates you?
7. What interested you in this job?
8. Why should we employ you?
9. How would your teachers/peers describe you?

Competency Based Interview Questions:

These questions focus on your ability to do the job. Showing your competencies can be demonstrated within any area of your life and doesn't just need to be from previous work experience, it can be from your studies or achievements, being part of a football club to helping care for a relative. It's about showing how you can practically use your skills and life experiences to deliver the role.

To give yourself the best chance use the **STAR** method to help you structure your answers:

Situation: set the scene and describe the situation you had to deal with.
Task: what was the task you were given to do?
Approach: what action did you take/how did you resolve the situation?
Result: what was the outcome and what did you learn from the experience?

An example on how you would use this method in responding to questions:

- 1. Give me an example of when you worked well under pressure to complete a task.**

Situation: "I was working part-time in a local supermarket as a temporary sales assistant, whilst studying for my AS Levels.

Task: My Business Studies Teacher gave me a piece of coursework to produce a business plan to complete by the 1st January, which would count towards my final mark. I was already working extra hours due to the Christmas period and so my time was limited for me to be able to complete my schoolwork.

Approach: I decided to clearly map out all of my working hours to allow me to see when I would have free time to be able to focus on my coursework. There were various sections within my coursework for example, undertaking research, and creating a profit and loss account, which all required different amounts of time and resources to complete. I used this information and created a list, prioritising tasks and setting myself deadlines to ensure I could complete my work. Having this plan helped to motivate me to make sure I achieved each task, which I recorded my progress throughout.

Result: Carefully managing my time meant that I was able to complete my coursework on time, alongside working which has helped to not only develop my time management skills but to also become more flexible and feel confident in managing my workload."

2. Describe a time when you dealt with a difficult person.

Situation: "I was on a work placement within the Rheumatology Department within my local hospital covering reception.

Task: I was required to answer the telephone and greet patients who were attending their appointments. Due to many patients turning up for their appointments within a certain period, I was required to attend to booking them in and unable to answer the phone. When I was able to answer telephone calls, I had a deal with a very frustrated person who was angry after having to wait for over an hour in order to get through to the reception desk.

Approach: Through my polite manner, I apologised for the wait and went out of my way to assist them with their enquiry, carefully listening and making notes so I could support their request. The gentleman was experiencing issues with his medication and so I empathetically talked him through how I would speak to the Rheumatology Team regarding his situation and would get in touch following this.

Result: After speaking with the Rheumatology Team, I was able to arrange for one of the team to give the gentleman a call to discuss his issues. I was aware this would not be until later in the afternoon and so I gave the gentleman a call to advise him of what was happening, of which

he was really grateful for. I later followed up with the team to check the gentleman received the call.”

Note: when answering this question make sure to not be too critical about the person you are referring too for example, saying you had an awful teacher. Approach the question sensitively to make sure that you don't put yourself in a bad light.

3. Describe a situation where you worked effectively as part of a team to achieve a common goal.

Situation: “I love sport and was a proud member of the local football team whilst in years seven-eleven.

Task: When in my fourth year in the team, our changing rooms were flooded, which was a big blow to us and made it difficult for us when training and playing matches, particularly as we were in Winter. Our coach John told us as a team that the changing rooms would cost £20,000 and so we decided that we were going to fundraise towards it.

Approach: We decided to have a team meeting and came up with lots of ideas. We did everything from car washes to food packing in our local supermarkets, sponsored runs to disco's.

Result: After four months of events we raised £5,500 which along with a grant from the local council meant that we were able to have the changing rooms repaired. This was an amazing achievement and really boosted our team spirit with all the activities, which I think played a big part in us winning the local cup!

4. Explain how you have worked to and achieved a deadline.

Situation: I was set a 2000-word assignment on World War two by my teacher as part of my Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, which needed to be submitted in two weeks. I had a younger sister who I looked after one evening a week so my mum could attend night school. I also had other homework to complete as well as revise for my upcoming maths exam alongside playing for my local netball team twice a week.

Task: It was important to me that I was able to submit my assignment on time as well as be responsible and carry out my other commitments. The assignment required me to carry out research and interview someone about their experience of the war. My findings needed to be summarised and presented in essay format.

Approach: I sat down and wrote a timetable of my commitments over the following two weeks. By doing this I was able to identify where I would have the opportunity to work on this project. I identified that I

would be able to carry out my research when looking after my younger sister as she went to bed at seven pm. My grandfather was alive during World War two and so I was able to interview him when I visited on the weekend.

I set out to complete all my preparatory work within the first week. This allowed me to use the second week to write my essay. I was again able to use the time looking after my sister to make a start and stayed late at school to use the library to allow me time to concentrate and focus.

Result: My developing a plan and utilising my time effectively, I was able to submit my assignment by the deadline and achieve an A as well as manage by other commitments.”

Other questions might include:

1. Describe a time where you gave excellent customer service.
2. What has been your biggest achievement to date?
3. Give an example of a situation where you solved a problem in a creative way.

Asking questions

You'll have an opportunity to ask some questions at the end of your interview. This helps to show your interest in the role, but it's also an opportunity to make sure the job is right for you. It's equally important that you want to work for the organisation as it is that they want you to work for them!

It's good to prepare some questions which you could ask in advance. Sometimes the questions you may have prepared will have been covered during your interview and so don't ask these again. Try and ask 1-2 questions, though if you don't have any, or they have already been answered then there's no problem in saying this.

Some questions you could ask include:

- Will there be training and development opportunities available?
- How many people will I be working with?
- Could you tell me more about the team I would be working in?
- What is a typical day like in the role?
- What do you enjoy most about working for this organisation?
- What are the working hours?
- Can I work from home?
- When can I expect to hear your decision?
- What will my priorities be in the first eight-twelve weeks?
- Are there resources available for employee health and wellbeing?