

[How to Sell Yourself:
The journey to a successful interview](#)

Congratulations...You've got yourself an interview.

For many people the prospect of having to face an interview can be a daunting experience. So, the most important thing to remember is that securing an interview in the first place is in itself a major achievement.

The objective of an interview is simply to determine the strongest candidate for the job. As all candidates invited for interview will be of a similar level of ability, it is the one who performs most effectively on the day who is most likely to be successful.

Use the interview as an opportunity to demonstrate your presence as an individual, to support and enhance the information contained in your CV and covering letter. The interview is where you can show the interviewer that you are the best person for the job.

There are three main stages to interview success; before the interview, during the interview and after the interview. Let's discuss each in turn.

Stage 1 - Before the interview

"Above all else, the secret to success in any interview is preparation...it will make a difference." (Whose quote is this?!)

Being prepared will make you feel more confident about the interview. This in turn will help you put in a confident performance which is more likely to lead to a successful outcome.

The basic rules

Understand what it is you are applying for

- What are the requirements of the job?
- What is it that you have to offer?

Familiarise yourself with the company or organisation

- What products or services does it provide?

Ensure you have examples of your own success stories and experience

- Make them as recent and relevant as possible
- Practice saying them out loud so that they sound as natural as possible

Concentrate on how you look. Your physical appearance can have a significant effect on your chances of getting the job

- Clothes:
 - Dress in smart, neat and well-ironed clothes, appropriate for the job
 - The best rule is to go 'one up' from the style of dress you would like to adopt for the post
 - Wear clothes that compliment you natural skin, hair and eye colouring
 - Be reasonably conservative – any thing too flamboyant may count against you.
- Hair:
 - Neat, tidy and nicely styled. Hair and fringes that cover the eyes are a definite 'no-no'
- Shoes:
 - Clean and well cared for
 - Many people say that the first thing they look at to assess a person is their shoes
- Hands:
 - Neat and tidy
 - Dirty finger nails are another definite 'no-no'

Endeavour to arrive on time

- Leave home early giving yourself plenty of time for unexpected delays
 - If you become unavoidably delayed, contact the organisation/ interviewer at the earliest possible opportunity and explain the situation

Avoid unnecessary paperwork

- It is not necessary to arrive with a brief case stuffed full of the latest company reports and accounts. It can look like 'last minute' panicking
- Your CV and relevant supporting requested documentation is sufficient

Be Positive about the interview and your ability to do well

- Having a positive attitude will come through during the interview
- Don't be so positive that you appear arrogant

During the interview

As soon as you arrive for the interview you are on show. This makes many people nervous. However nerves don't show as much as you might think. You may well be feeling very nervous on the inside but from the outside you look calm and in full control. So, be confident, behave naturally, and be yourself.

Interview behaviour

- First impressions count! A well-dressed, smiley, confident person entering the interview room will have a positive impact when compared to the adequately dressed, nervous person who shuffles into the room
- A positive handshake given with a smile, shows you are confident and in control. This will help the interviewer(s) who may also be nervous.
- Body language is the non-verbal messages we give out and are powerful indications of our personality and our character. Sitting with your arms folded across your chest suggests defensiveness. Avoiding eye contact suggests a high level of nervousness and uncertainty
- Sit in a comfortable and attentative position. Your body should be leaning forward slightly, hands resting on your lap or on the arm of the chair. Legs should be in front of you or crossed at the ankles, putting one leg on top of the other shows as with arms around the chest a defensive position rather than an open position
- Gestures with your hands and arms are a natural thing to do for most people. These are fine but don't over exaggerate them

Answering questions

- Speak naturally and confidently, letting your enthusiasm shine through. Although the use of 'ums' and 'ahs' is a natural thing to do and are an indication of you being relaxed and in control, too many can suggest that you are over anxious
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s) when answering questions. Avoid mumbling and looking down to the floor
- Focus on your skills and achievements, using the opportunity to point out how they match with those required for the job. Use examples as evidence to back up what you are saying
- Expand your answers to more than simply answering the question. Show how you differ from the other candidates – but don't over do it
- Give positive, not negative answers tell the interviewer(s) what they want to hear!

Concluding the interview

- Ask the 2 or 3 questions you will have prepared before the interview
- First impressions count, and so do last impressions. Leave on a positive note. Thank the interviewer(s) and shake their hands positively

- Without over doing it, restate your interest in the job. Be brief but confident.
- Leave the interview room, as you came in; confident with head held high – the interview is more likely to remember you

After the Interview

It is unlikely that you will be told the outcome of the interview immediately it is finished, although some organisations will advise you later the same day. The more likely scenario is that you will be advised a few days after the interview, either by phone, email or letter whether you have been successful or not.

Success may be that you are being offered the post you applied for, or, in some cases, that you are invited back for a second interview. If you are offered the post then great, well done! However, before accepting the post it is worth:

- Being certain it is the job you really want
 - Was there anything that came to light in the interview that raised any doubts in your mind?
 - If there are any nagging doubts then go over the reasons why you applied for the job in the first place and satisfy yourself that they are valid

If you are positive the job is for you then celebrate your success!

If you are invited back for a second interview then this too is good news.

The reason for a second interview is usually because;

- The interviewer wasn't able to distinguish between you and another candidate and is seeking a second opinion.
- It is the Organisations normal process to have a follow up interview with the Manager of the department or with representatives from the department you will be working in.

In both cases the second interview is less likely to be about any technical issues relating to the job but to be confirming that you fit in with the rest of the Organisation from a personality perspective.

The second interview should not be treated lightly so remember to follow the 3 steps to success as described above

If you are advised that you have not been successful on this occasion then;

- Reflect on how the interview went and clarify in your mind the areas you need to improve on next time
- Contact the organisation and ask for feedback on why you weren't successful and what areas you should concentrate on for next time
- Don't be disheartened as the job may not have been the right one for you in the end
- Remain positive that the right job will come along
- Repeat the 3-step process when you embark on your next journey to success.

Give yourself an advantage over the other candidates – visit Words Worth Reading Ltd to get more great tips on [interview success](#).