Preparing for an interview

“Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.”
- Confucius

Congratulations! You’ve made it this far in the selection process, so you’ve done many things right so far. Now it’s time to develop your interviewing skills so you can truly shine.

Purpose of a job interview

The job interview is the perfect time for the employer to discover whether your skills, qualifications, motivations, attitude and ambitions are a good fit for the job, the organisation, and the organisation’s mission. It is also your opportunity to make sure that the organisation and role align with your expectations.

Common interview formats

- Phone
- One-on-one
- Panel
- Group

You should always enquire about the structure and process of the interview in advance.

Interview tips

- Be prepared – research the organisation beforehand.
- Arrive early; give yourself at least 10 to 15 minutes to arrive before the scheduled interview time.
- Turn your mobile phone off.
- Dress appropriately – usually this means clean, ironed, business attire. Do not chew gum or smoke.
- Find out who will be interviewing you, their name and title – check pronunciation of their name if in doubt.
- Greet the interviewer by name, making eye contact with a firm handshake.
- Smile! Be friendly, positive and enthusiastic.
- Sit upright in your chair and watch body language throughout the interview.
- Make sure you listen attentively.
- Do not waffle – answer concisely and to the point, only including relevant information.
- Feel comfortable with silence – it is perfectly okay to take a little time before answering a question so you are clear about what you want to say before talking.
- Don’t be afraid to ask them to repeat the question if you are unclear what they are asking.

Things to avoid

- Answering a question with just ‘yes’ or ‘no’ – always elaborate to highlight your suitability for the role.
- Interrupting the interviewer – always wait until they have finished speaking.
- Badmouthing or criticising a past employer or previous teacher or work colleague.
- Exaggerating your abilities or lying about your previous experience and skills.
### Types of questions

**Open:** ‘Tell us a little about yourself…’
Keep in mind the selection criteria and your strengths.

**Hypothetical/scenario based:** ‘What would you do if…’
These will assess your ability to think on your feet.

**Behavioural questions** – ‘Tell us about a time you…’ ‘Describe a situation where you had to…’
Come prepared with examples of how your experiences have helped you develop specific skills related to the job requirements.

Using the STAR model (that you may have also used when writing your answers to the Selection Criteria) can help you stay on track when answering interview questions:

- **S**ituation – describe the situation.
- **T**ask – what was required of you?
- **A**ction – what did you do in response?
- **R**esult – what happened as a result?

**Leading** – ‘The person in this role is required to have good communication skills – do you have good skills in this area?’
Do not just give a yes/no response. Give examples to support your response.

### Your questions

The opportunity to ask questions at the end of an interview is your chance to show how much you have researched this position and how well you fit with the organisation.

Think of questions you might have about:
- Projects you might work on
- Culture of the organisation
- Current challenges you would be required to tackle
- Opportunities for growth in the role
- Changes in the industry
- Induction and training programs
- The next stage/s of the selection process
- Do not ask about the pay and benefits of the role!

### Interview ‘prep sheet’

Help yourself by preparing a single page interview prep sheet. Write your answers to the following questions and take them with you to the interview:

- Important facts about the company
- My relevant career/job history
- My relevant achievements
- My competitive advantages (knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes – include examples)
- Questions to ask.

### Where to find more help

- SCU Career Development Program on MySCU – learn.scu.edu.au
- Visit careerhub.scu.edu.au for job vacancies, events and resources
- Email for a careers consultation: careers@scu.edu.au
- For further resources and fact sheets go to scu.edu.au/careers