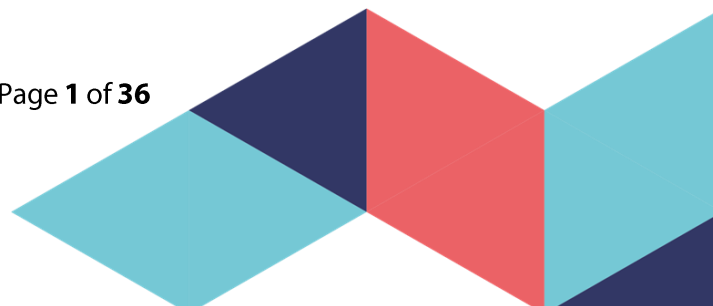


University Centre  
**Peterborough**

# Interviews & assessment centres



## Contents

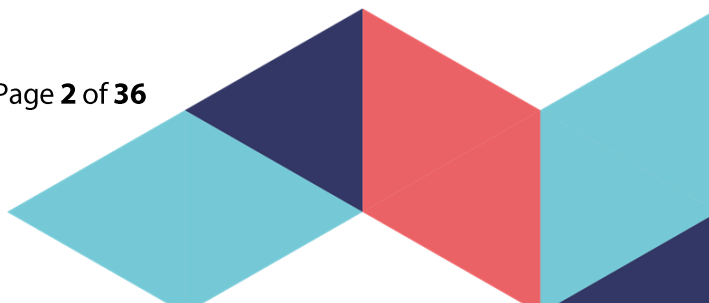
Objectives .....	2
Interview Types .....	3
Disclosing a disability before being offered a role .....	4
Notifying before a job offer .....	5
Pre-interview preparation – Commercial awareness .....	6
Pre-interview preparation - Tests.....	7
Pre-interview preparation – Questions .....	9
Pre-interview preparation - other considerations .....	11
48 hours before!.....	13
Interviews - Creating the right impression .....	13
Top Tips for Body Language.....	15
Interviews types - 121 interviews .....	17
Interview types - Panel interview tips.....	18
Interview types - Group interview tips.....	19
Interview types - Telephone interview tips .....	21
Interview types - Video Interview tips.....	23
Interview types - Assessment centre overview .....	25
Group exercises.....	27
Other activities - Role play, in-tray exercises, psychometric and aptitude tests .....	28
Other activities – Presentations .....	30
Preparing for presentations.....	31
Overcoming interview nerves.....	32
Follow up .....	33
The second interview .....	35
Objectives .....	36

## **Objectives**

This course aims to provide you with the opportunity to develop your understanding of the different types of interviews and how best to prepare for them.

### **Understand how to**

- Prepare for the type of interview you have been invited to
- Behave throughout the interview
- Manage your nerves • Follow-up on your interview



# Interview Types



Image: <https://www.boyden.com/media/types-of-interviews-1794111/index.html>

There are many different types of interview. Here are a few examples:

- **Competency-Based Interview** - Looking back into your past experience.
- **Biographical Interviews** - Going through your CV Chronologically.
- **Business Line Interview** - Similar to Biographical but more based on your business experience. They will ask you what situations you were faced with and what you did.
- **Technical Interview** - Related to specific knowledge related to the role

These interviews can follow a variety of structures such as:

- 121 - usually one representative of the company and you
- Panel - panel of interviewers (from 2 to 15)
- Group - you are interviewed with other candidates at the same time
- Assessment centre - you will complete a number of activities with other candidates
- Telephonic/video - phone/video interview
- Structured/guided/patterned - present questions asked to all candidates
- Unstructured - a free flowing discussion
- Mixed - combination of structure & unstructured
- Behaviour/case - concerned with a problem or hypothetical situation & how you would solve it
- Stress - harsh, rapid questions to see how you respond to pressure
- Strength-based - what you are passionate and skilled at

## **Disclosing a disability before being offered a role**

**Do you have to tell the employers that you have a disability? No**



"Disclosing a disability is an individual decision, and there is no obligation on anybody to do so. However, there are many reasons why disclosing a disability to a current or potential employer is a positive action that will empower, protect and assist you in the workplace.

Legislation is in place under the Equality Act 2010 to assist and protect a person with a disability in employment or seeking work, but in many cases the protection and assistance that legislation offers is dependent on the individual disclosing their disability."

Disclosing a disability (UCU) [www.ucu.org.uk/media/5445/Disclosing-adisability-UCU-guidance/pdf/Disclosing\\_a\\_disability.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5445/Disclosing-adisability-UCU-guidance/pdf/Disclosing_a_disability.pdf)

### **Reasonable adjustments**

A 'reasonable adjustment' is a change to remove or reduce the effect of: an employee's disability so they can do their job.

The reasonable adjustment could be to:

- the workplace
- the ways things are done
- get someone to help the employee or job applicant

If an employee with a disability would like their employer to make reasonable adjustments for them, then they may well have to disclose their condition.

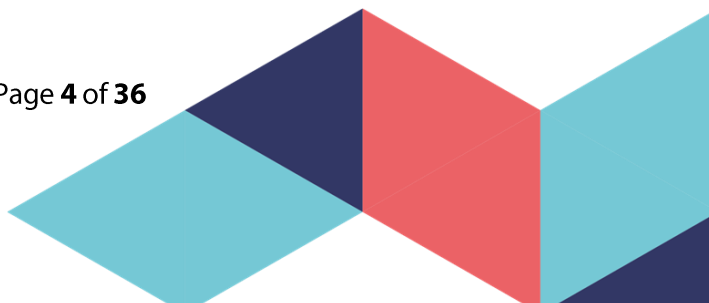
[www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers](http://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers)

### **Confidentiality**

Once a disability has been disclosed, it should be kept confidential by the employer unless the candidate has made it clear they are happy for the information to be shared.

- [www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you%E2%80%99re-disabledclear-and-easy-guide-students](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-you%E2%80%99re-disabledclear-and-easy-guide-students)
- [/www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment](http://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment)

**There are no rules about disclosing your disability - it is up to you if and when you inform an employer.**



## **Notifying before a job offer**

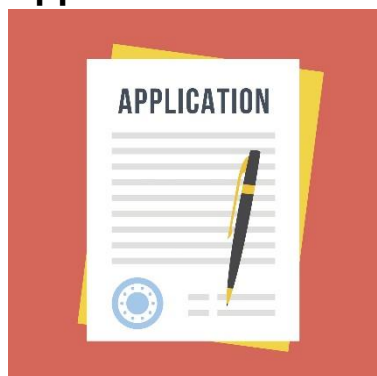
There are a few things you may want to consider such as any reasonable adjustments you would like them to make in order for you to perform to your best within any interviews or assessment days.

First and foremost, consider your needs and don't let a fear of what might happen to stop you from doing what you want to do. Choose the approach that you are most comfortable with, there are companies out there looking for your exact skill set and experience.

### **Cover letters**

You can inform a potential employer in a cover letter to explain and gaps in your employment or education history due to your disability. Remember to emphasize the positives: your additional strengths and skills because of your disability, your unique selling point, your resilience etc.

### **Application Form**



At the beginning of the process, you may also be asked to fill in an application form that may ask questions about any serious health conditions or disabilities. These usually refer to any adjustments you may need during the selection process and beyond.

It's important that you consider the impact of not making them aware of your situation; do you perhaps have a disability that impacts your communication skills and that could make it harder for you to perform well in an assessment center or interview? If the employer is aware of this they can then make the appropriate adjustments to help create a level playing field, allowing you to perform to the best of your abilities.

### **Interview/assessment centre**



You can choose to disclose your disability at interview. Emphasize your skills and strengths, what you can bring to the company, your unique selling point. Be prepared to help the employer understand how they can best accommodate your needs, possibly providing supporting information that they can refer to after.

### **Additional support**

University Centre Peterborough has a diverse student population contributing to our rich learning environment. The Employer Hub is here to support all students and recent graduates. If you are a student with disabilities, refer to the Students with disabilities career support PDF for additional information about support, funding and employment.

## Pre-interview preparation – Commercial awareness

Research, Research, Research.

I am sure since starting your degree you have become aware that research is imperative to doing well.

Preparing thoroughly for a job interview is imperative. Every industry and employer is different; you need commercial awareness.

**Commercial awareness** is being conscious of developments in the business world. It is an understanding of how industries and businesses work. It's about knowing what's going on in the world and analysing the way it might impact on your chosen sector and company. It is not a skill but a way of thinking.



Image: <https://www.thayerlightinginc.com/lighting-industry-changes-and-what-they-mean-for-you/>

### **Being commercially aware**

1. Understand the employer's business - activities, products, services, how it is managed, how the role you are interested in fits into the organisation
2. Understand the market place - know the employer's competitors, know how the employer differentiates itself from the competitors, know how political and economic trends/events are affecting the employer
3. Major players - know who the big companies are in the sector, who has won major contracts or bids recently
4. Speculation - be up to date with general news, politics, economics and how these could affect the developments and the strategies for the employer
5. Know the past - be aware of cyclical patterns in the sector/economy, consider the impact of the financial year on the employer
6. Know the effect of your role - understand how your actions can affect a employer's bottom line

## Developing commercial awareness

Follow industry news, read industry magazines, follow professional bodies on LinkedIn, network, join professional groups and organisations, attend conferences.

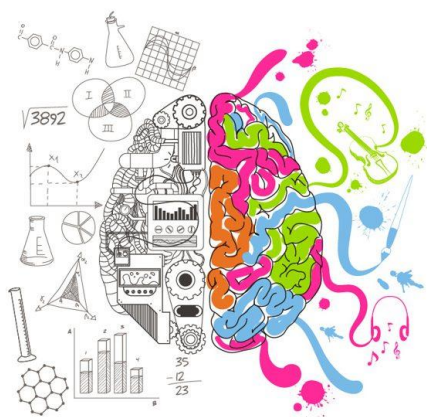
### More information:

- [www.skillsyouneed.com/general/commercial-awareness.html](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/commercial-awareness.html)
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/skills-and-competencies/300944-commercialawareness-its-how-the-industry-fits-together>

### Guide

Answer questions for each employer you are invited to interview with the Commercial awareness - Researching a company.pdf

## Pre-interview preparation - Tests



You may be asked to complete aptitude or psychometric tests to identify your skills, knowledge and/or personality. These may occur during the preliminary stages of the screening process or be part of the interview/assessment centre.

Generally, they are completed on line and are timed.

Image: <https://xobin.com/blog/demystifying-use-psychometric-tests/>

### Personality tests

These look at your interests, values, beliefs, motivators, character by exploring your emotions & behaviours in certain circumstances. They allow the company to see how you would fit into their culture.

### Aptitude tests

These assess your reasoning or cognitive ability, assessing to see if you have the right skills for the role. Common tests include

- error checking - how quickly & accurately you can identify errors
- numerical reasoning - how you interpret charts, graphs, statistics & your ability to work with numbers
- spatial reasoning
- diagrammatic reasoning
- verbal reasoning - how you interpret written information, evaluate concepts and arguments. , grammar & spelling accuracy
- abstract reasoning - how quickly you can identify rules/patterns and apply them
- situation judgement - how you react to a work related situation

## Practice

### Aptitude tests

You need to practice taking these tests. In addition, you may wish to practice with and without the need for paper/note book, pens and a calculator. Most companies will allow these tools, although not a phone, so be prepared.

Read the instructions, double check information, check your answers and be mindful of the time.

- [www.practiceaptitudetests.com/free-aptitude-tests/](http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/free-aptitude-tests/)
- <https://psychometric-success.com/>
- <https://www.assessmentday.co.uk/>

Additional help: [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interviewtips/psychometric-tests](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interviewtips/psychometric-tests)

Want to go back to basics for maths & English? Try <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zjd8jty> and [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zmqj2nb](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zmqj2nb)

### Psychometric tests

You need to be aware of your own strengths and motivators. The 'Who am I?' module can guide you through this. It includes, under the Personality page, the Myers-Briggs, Big Five and DISC indicators for you to explore.



## **Pre-interview preparation – Questions**

Planning your answers to the most common job interview questions can help you feel more relaxed and confident - even if you can't predict exactly what you'll be asked.

Consider the content of your answer, how you answer is (concise, enthusiastic, confident).

### **Common interview questions**

Questions tend to focus upon strengths

([www.prospects.ac.uk/careersadvice/interview-tips/strength-based-interviews](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careersadvice/interview-tips/strength-based-interviews)) or competencies ([www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/competency-basedinterviews](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/competency-basedinterviews))

These are the most commonly asked interview questions which are a mix of both.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. Why did you choose your degree subject?
3. Why did you apply for this role?
4. How you have demonstrated leadership qualities at university?
5. What are your strengths & weaknesses?
6. Where do you want to be in 5 years?
7. What is your greatest achievement?
8. Why should we hire you?
8. How do you handle stress?
9. Describe yourself in 3 words
10. What motivates you at work?
11. Do you have excellent team work skills?
12. What makes you unique?
13. What questions do you have for us?

### **Sector specific interview questions**

You may also be asked sector specific questions. This link may help to identify what they could be: [www.grb.uk.com/careers-advice/graduate-interview-questions](http://www.grb.uk.com/careers-advice/graduate-interview-questions)

### **Answering interview questions**

You need to match your skills, competencies and experiences to those that the employer is looking for. The easiest way to do this is to identify the essential and desirable criteria in the job description. As you may not know if the interview is competency based, we suggest that you use the STARS technique to prepare your answers (where appropriate).



Image: [www.rightattitudes.com/2008/07/15/star-technique-answer-interview-questions/](http://www.rightattitudes.com/2008/07/15/star-technique-answer-interview-questions/)

Stars stands for:

- Situation: Describe the background or context
- Task: Describe the task or challenge you were faced with
- Action: Explain the action you took, how and why
- Result: Describe what it accomplished/achieved (quantify where possible e.g. increased sales by 15%)
- Skills: summarise the skills this evidences so that you will know which 'story' to use when asked to evidence a particular skill whilst still sounding natural

You are looking for an answer that lasts no longer than 5 mins., is specific, concise, honest and shows how effective you are.

[www.themuse.com/advice/star-interview-method](http://www.themuse.com/advice/star-interview-method)

If you practice this method now, it will be easier in the interview when you have to think on your feet.

## Hints on how to answer questions

Employers are looking to see if you meet their needs and if you will fit into their culture. These pages will help you draft your interview answers.

- [www.pagepersonnel.com.au/advice/job-search/job-interviewtips/graduate-interview-qa-nine-common-interview-questions](http://www.pagepersonnel.com.au/advice/job-search/job-interviewtips/graduate-interview-qa-nine-common-interview-questions)
- [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/interview-questions](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/interview-questions)
- [www.giveagradago.com/graduates/interview-questions](http://www.giveagradago.com/graduates/interview-questions)
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-questions/325225-the-top-ninetricky-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them>
- [www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/how-to-handle-competency-based-interviewquestions/](http://www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/how-to-handle-competency-based-interviewquestions/) • <https://www.wikijob.co.uk/>

## Questions for the interviewer/employer

You need to tailor your questions for each employer and to you, but they can follow a similar format in each. Here are some suggestions:

- [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/7-good-questions-to-ask-at-an-interview](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/7-good-questions-to-ask-at-an-interview)
- [www.glassdoor.co.uk/blog/questions-ask-an-interviewer/](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk/blog/questions-ask-an-interviewer/)
- [www.businessinsider.com/smart-questions-to-ask-job-interview-2017-3?r=US&IR=T#1-have-i-answered-all-your-questions-1](http://www.businessinsider.com/smart-questions-to-ask-job-interview-2017-3?r=US&IR=T#1-have-i-answered-all-your-questions-1)
- [www.wikijob.co.uk/](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/)

## Pre-interview preparation - other considerations

There are a few other considerations you need to make before attending your interview.



Image:

<https://www.smithhanley.com/2018/04/19/interview-prep-sheet-recruiter-lindsey-bartlett/>

### **Do you need extra support?**

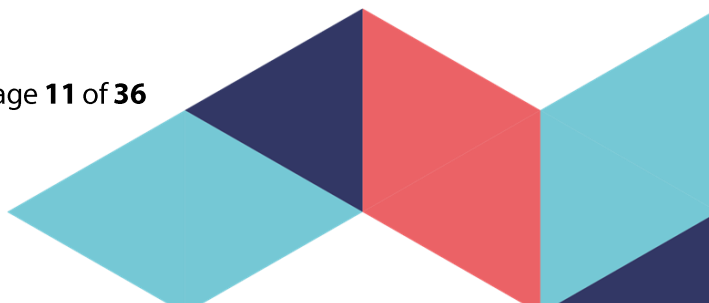
If you need special access or additional materials to be arranged for your interview, make sure you get in touch with the organisation and let them know.

For example:

- Arranging for written materials to be amended into Braille, enlarged font, colour contrast or audio
- Adding signs to the interview room
- Adjusting chairs
- Arranging for a sign language interpreter
- Confirming alternative access such as ramps or rails

### **Plan the route**

Plan where you are going, how you will get there, how long it takes. Allow for extra time, just in case!



## Clothing, equipment & evidence

Do you have appropriate clothing? Smart, business dress for interviews and assessment days is required unless otherwise stated.

Do you have a neat brief case or folder to carry:

- CV & certificates
- Portfolio of own work (if appropriate)
- Spare pens
- Calculator
- Questions
- Note book/spare paper
- Name & address of references
- ID documents (passport, driving license or bill in your name)

## Case work

Might they ask you to deliver a presentation, create and deliver a lesson/session, sell a product? You may wish to consider how you could action this with minimal preparation time.

## Who & what?

Familiarise yourself with the company and staff using LinkedIn and the company website.

Contact the company and ask for more details about the role, the structure of the interview day, any specifics they are looking for, the name of the interviewers (if not provided).

You can explore the culture of the company on Glassdoor, if the company is listed [www.glassdoor.co.uk/](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk/)

## 48 hours before!



There are a few things to help with the final preparation.

Image: <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/48+hrs>

1. Contact the company and confirm your attendance at stated date, time and location, confirm name of person you are to meet
2. Re-read the job description to ensure you can tailor your answers
3. Practice your answers out loud
4. Check your outfit
5. Check travel arrangements
6. Ensure your resources are collated
7. Re-read your research
8. Have the employer's contact details available in case of an emergency
9. Get a good night's sleep
10. Plan to arrive between 15-20 minutes before your scheduled interview time

## Interviews - Creating the right impression



Interpersonal skills are more colloquially known as 'people skills'.

Be mindful that the employer will start looking at these from the moment you enter their premises, not just during the interview.

This can include how you speak and interact with the staff member on the entry gate, parking attendants, reception staff and fellow interviewees.

Image: <https://thedailyfloss.com/2015/07/19/first-impressions-one-chance-only/>

You will want to show that you are polite, courteous and friendly. You also want to show that you are an active listener; letting the others speak and ensuring you have fully understood any information or questions.



## Active listening

Do you actively listen to people? Try this quiz <https://bit.ly/3bWCMnM>

Active listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully.

This highly valued interpersonal communication skill ensures you're able to engage and later recall specific details without needing information repeated.

Active listeners use verbal and non-verbal techniques to show and keep their attention on the speaker.

This not only supports your ability to focus but also helps ensure the speaker can see that you are focused and engaged. Instead of thinking about and mentally rehearsing what you might say when the speaker is done, an active listener carefully considers the speaker's words and commits the information to memory.

## Body language

Working on your body language for any stressful public event can have considerable benefits. Just acting more relaxed and confident can trick your mind into following suit. A first impression is based on 7% spoken words, 38% tone of voice and 55% body language then your body language is going to be a key factor.

Your body language is important not only during the meet and greet, but throughout the interview.

The next page will provide some hints and tips for you.

## Follow up

You should follow each interview with a short email, reiterating your interest and thanking them for their time. This will be covered at the end of the module.

# Top Tips for Body Language



Image:  
<https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/body-language-habits-ditch-job-interview/>

## 1. Plan your entrance

30 seconds is reportedly how long it takes for some hiring managers to make up their mind, so how you greet your interviewer is crucial. A strong handshake goes without saying. Don't make the handshake too hard as this can imply arrogance; a limp handshake can suggest weakness.

**Smile** as this shows confidence, friendliness and openness. However don't grin maniacally all the way through the interview.

Maintain good **eye contact**, as this is essential when trying to convey trust and confidence. Practice your entrance in the mirror (preferably when no one is watching...).

## 2. Develop your 'eye contact'

If you don't make eye contact people don't trust you, but for many of us it's a struggle, particularly when we're nervous. Also if you are deliberately trying to hold eye contact with anybody it can make you feel incredibly self conscious and more likely to start looking at the ceiling.

So practice when you're out with friends by choosing a point on the centre of their face to look at, round about the bridge of their nose. It'll help you to relax and become less self conscious, they will never know and you'll find yourself making eye contact effortlessly. If there is more than one person interviewing you, look at the person asking the question when you reply, but glance at the other interviewers from time to time.

## 3. How to sit

A good posture can reflect energy and enthusiasm. Sit up straight as slouching may suggest you are not interested in the role. Sitting on the edge of your chair might give the impression that you are not comfortable.

Choose what to do with your hands - having them rest in your lap is better than folding your arms (defensive), sitting on them (nervous, immature) or fidgeting e.g. playing with a pen (nervous, not engaged, can be distracting).



#### **4. Aim for a relaxed approach**

Along with your eye contact , use some relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing just before the interview to help keep your nerves in check, and remember to sit up, keep your posture open and smile. It will make you feel more 'in the zone' and happier.

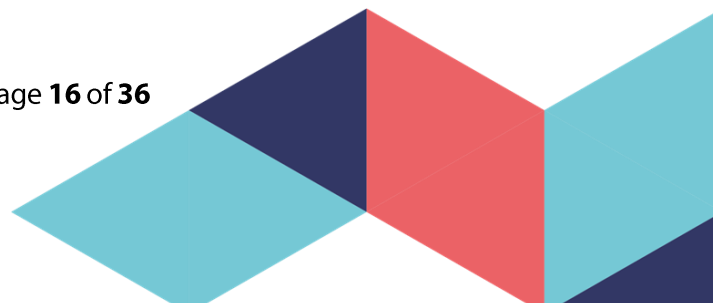
#### **5. Mirror the Interviewer**

This can help build a more relaxed atmosphere. People generally like people who appear to be similar to them. By observing the interviewer's body language and reflecting this back at them, they are likely to be friendlier towards you. For example, if they lean forward, you lean forward or if they smile, you smile too. (But don't go overboard and imitate them like a crazy person – use your instinct and be aware of the effect you are having on the interviewer.)

#### **6. Stay focused**

Feeling nervous or self-conscious can lead to involuntary movements -- shaking your foot, rubbing your neck or rocking back in your chair -- which can undermine the composed image you are trying to portray. Becoming aware of your body language in group situations should give you an idea of the kind of things to watch out for. Find an alternative action, such as taking a deep breath and adjusting your posture when you catch yourself making one of these unwanted movements. Nod when the interviewer is talking as this shows that you are engaged and listening.

Do not use aggressive body language such as pointing your index finger at the interviewer or gesticulating wildly.





## Interviews types - 121 interviews



Interviews allow the employer to explore your competencies. The 121 means that you will be interviewed by one person, or at least one person at a time.

Image: [www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indeed.com%2Fhire%2F%2Finfo%2Fhow-to-conduct-a-job-interview&psig=AOvVaw3fNdQYUoPKewYP29VVlvvC&ust=1594912245136000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFw\\_oTCKCZnbHFz-oCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.indeed.com%2Fhire%2F%2Finfo%2Fhow-to-conduct-a-job-interview&psig=AOvVaw3fNdQYUoPKewYP29VVlvvC&ust=1594912245136000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFw_oTCKCZnbHFz-oCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD)

### **Your behaviour**

Entry - No matter what time of day your interview is, ensure you appear friendly and with energy; make eye contact, smile, shake hands (unless restrictions are in place), greet the interviewer e.g. "It's a pleasure to meet you." "How do you do?"

### **Interview**

1. You can start off with a positive comment about the company – something like, "I've really been looking forward to this meeting [not "interview"]. I think [the company] is doing great work in [a particular field or project], and I'm really excited by the prospect of being able to contribute.
2. Displaying confidence through your body language and tone of voice can help employers see that you are capable and prepared. Remember to sit up straight, make eye contact and avoid fidgeting or moving around in your chair. Ensure the interviewer can hear you clearly.
3. Use active listening skills
4. Be respectful
5. Let the interviewer speak - do not cut them off mid-sentence; be patient, listen actively and jot down questions as they arise. Ask if you may ask questions through the interview or if they would prefer to wait until the end.

### **End of interview**

Do not assume an interview is over, the interviewer will make it clear. You can ask when the interviewer is planning to contact candidates. You can emphasize how interested in the role you are before you walk out of the interview room by saying something like: "I'm really excited about this opportunity. I look forward to hearing from you."

Leave a good impression - Thank them by name, offer a handshake and leave the room.



Experis provides some additional great points regarding opening and closing the interview. [www.experisjobs.us/exp\\_us/en/career-advice/20-tips-jobinterviews.htm](http://www.experisjobs.us/exp_us/en/career-advice/20-tips-jobinterviews.htm)

## Using STARS

The employer is looking for the following information:

- Your communication skills
- The relevance of your past
- Your ability to think on your feet
- Your cultural fit into the organisation
- Your knowledge of the sector/employer and motivation
- Your understanding of specific skills
- Your self awareness - the 'Who am I?' module will help

Ensure that each answer embeds the skills they are looking for, you can provide examples of how you have demonstrated these skills and the impact of your actions. Using the STARS method during the interview will enable you to be concise and cover the areas they are looking for (See 'Preinterview preparation - Questions' earlier in this module for guidance).

## Interview types - Panel interview tips

A panel interview means that you will be interviewed by more than one person at the same time.

Image: [www.wallstreetenglish.com/blog/10-tips-to-succeed-in-a-job-interview-in-english/](http://www.wallstreetenglish.com/blog/10-tips-to-succeed-in-a-job-interview-in-english/)



### **1. Background check each member of the panel - before the interview!**

Ask the employer/recruiter who is expected to be on the panel. It is important to understand everyone's specific priorities and values. An HR professional, for example, is likely to be looking for certain qualities and may lead to different points to someone working in the finance department.

### **2. Prepare**

While much of your preparation will be similar to that for a traditional, one-on-one interview, there are modifications to be made. You need to try and recreate that 'firing squad' experience; instead of having one person role-play the

interview with you, ask friends to act as your panel and put you through your paces.

### 3. Link the conversation

Avoid giving compartmentalised answers to questions. Instead, look to link your responses to previous points raised by the panel. For example:

“Linked to my response to John, I’ve always been able to adapt to new situations, and that includes acclimatising quickly to a new team’s working style.”

By creating these connections you are building your rapport with the wider team while also adding consistency to your answers.

### 4. Don’t play favourites

Though there may be hierarchies within the group, deferring to some individuals over others is a way to put people’s noses out of joint. Make sure you introduce yourself properly to each panel member when entering the room, taking a mental note of whom everybody is so that you can address them by name. (If you tend to struggle with names, take a notepad in and scribble the names at the top of the page in the order in which they are sitting).

Maintain regular eye contact with each interviewer (regardless of who’s leading the questioning), and make sure to follow up with each person individually after the interview.

### 5. Don’t get caught in the crossfire

There’s a risk that you find yourself getting over-run during the conversation as various panellists wade in on different points. You need to control the pace of the discussion. If someone cuts you off in mid-flow, politely request to finish your answer before addressing their question.

While facing a panel can be daunting, it’s important to remember that the conditions you’re facing are the same for every candidate.

## **Interview types - Group interview tips**

Group interviews are where a number of candidates are interviewed at the same time.

They are preferred as they are less expensive and faster to manage; it tests your communication, leadership and team skills.



Image: <https://recruiter.fish4.co.uk/news/conduct-group-interview/>

You generally each have an opportunity to answer the same question and you need to stand out against your competitors. However, sometimes there is not enough time for each person so you will need to find the balance between answering as many questions as you can in a concise manner that does not monopolise the interview.

### **1. Be prepared**

Be ready to share specific examples of past successes, such as a time when you overcame a difficult challenge or met a goal using the STARS method to highlight your actions, impact and skills (See 'Preinterview preparation - Questions' earlier in this module for guidance).

### **2. Be confident.**

Introduce yourself to the interviewer and other candidates. If you think you will not remember names, make a note of their names & seating to help. Displaying confidence through your body language and tone of voice can help employers see that you are capable and prepared. Remember to sit up straight, make eye contact and avoid fidgeting or moving around in your chair. Project your voice when you speak so everyone in the room can hear you clearly. Answer first every now and again.

### **3. Listen carefully.**

Use active listening skills when others are speaking, even if they're not addressing you. If you're in a group interview with other candidates, listen to their talking points. If possible, refer back to someone else's remark to show you're listening e.g. "Similar to John I...".

### **4. Be respectful.**

Always treat everyone in the room with respect. If you're interviewing with other candidates, be sure not to dominate the discussion and give others a chance to speak. If there is downtime before the interview begins, don't be afraid to engage in conversation with other candidates or interviewers in the room. This shows interpersonal communication and networking skills.

### **Additional information**

- <https://business.tutsplus.com/tutorials/what-is-a-group-interview--cms-31324>
- [www.themuse.com/advice/standing-out-from-the-crowd-how-to-nail-a-group-interview](http://www.themuse.com/advice/standing-out-from-the-crowd-how-to-nail-a-group-interview)
- [www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-succeed-at-a-group-interview](http://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-succeed-at-a-group-interview)

## Interview types - Telephone interview tips

Telephone interviews are frequently used as a way of identifying potential candidates for interview.

You need to prepare just as you would for any other interview including your research, preparing potential answers to questions, developing questions for the employer, knowing your CV and their job description.

Image: <https://jobstrackr.com/career-guidance/telephone-interviewtips/>



### 1. Practice

Talking on the phone is not as easy as it sounds, so practice. Record yourself to hear how you sound and practice until you become more confident. Test your voice out by calling friends or family and asking them how you sound. Do you sound enthusiastic, positive and confident?

Decide how you will open the conversation (See 'Interview types - 121 interviews' for guidance) such as, "Thank you for calling me. I've really been looking forward to this phone call. I think [the company] is doing great work in [a particular field or project], and I'm really excited by the prospect of being able to contribute."

### 2. Find the right location:

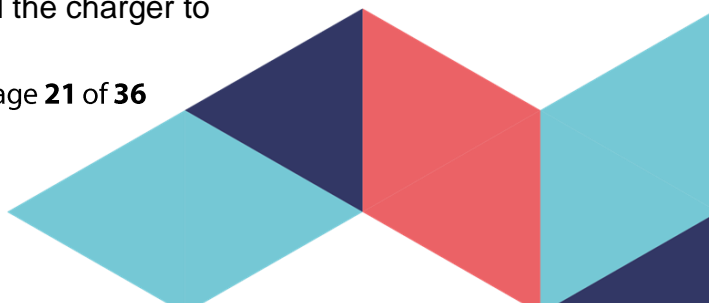
You should look for a quiet, space where you won't be disturbed. It should have a good signal so practise a few telephone calls before you decide on the location. If at university, you may be able to borrow one of the classrooms - book it in at reception ([hello@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:hello@ucp.ac.uk)).

Turn the TV/radio off and put all other phones on silent. Do not stand near a mirror or somewhere where you can see your reflection.

### 3. Be Prepared!

Although you may not know exactly what questions will come up, you do know it will be related to your experience. Therefore you should have a copy of your CV and a copy of their job description. To ensure you are really prepared, it would be good to make links between your experience and the role as much as you can prior to the interview. Use the STARS approach (See 'Pre-interview preparation - Questions' for guidance).

Note pad and a pen are a necessity, and have a glass of water to hand. Also remember to have your phone fully charged, and the charger to hand.



#### **4. Get into the right frame of mind**

It would be a good idea to ensure that you are comfortable. Wear something that makes you feel professional, this may help you answer the questions to a higher standard. Stand rather than sit, smile as you talk to the interviewer.

Answer the phone yourself.

#### **5. Clear and concise answers**

You should speak clearly and concisely, many phone interviews have a set time frame. Stop talking when you have made your point. It is a good idea to listen out for tells such as 'Thank you.' 'That is interesting', these normally mean that you should stop talking.

Make sure your answers are not long-winded; use the STARS approach (See 'Preinterview preparation - Questions' for guidance).

#### **6. Employers can only HEAR you!**

The interviewer cannot see you so your tone of voice is important. You need to sound enthusiastic, positive and confident. This will be helped by you speaking clearly and avoid mumbling. Another good way to ensure you sound positive is by smiling as you answer questions.

Take notes and ask for clarification if needed.

#### **7. Don'ts!**

Just like in a face to face interview your sole focus should be the questions you are getting asked. Therefore do not smoke, eat or chew gum during the call. Although this may seem obvious, it is very easy to get carried away at home and slip into 'normal' speech/actions that we would do if we are on the phone to friends.

Extra information

- [www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-ace-a-phone-interview-2058579](http://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-ace-a-phone-interview-2058579)
- [www.jobsite.co.uk/worklife/top-10-tips-succeed-telephone-interviews10080/](http://www.jobsite.co.uk/worklife/top-10-tips-succeed-telephone-interviews10080/)
- [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/telephone-interviews](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/telephone-interviews)

## Interview types - Video Interview tips

There are essentially two forms of video interviews:

- **the live versions** - a virtual interview with one or more interviewers in real time, usually over Skype, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams or Zoom
- **the taped format** - requires you to record your answers in your own time and send them back to the employer to review at their leisure. Apply the same principles as you would for a 121 and group interview; fully preparing, wearing appropriate business dress, having the right resources to hand etc.



Image:

<https://www.ratemyplacement.co.uk/blog/video-interview-tips-graduate-recruiters-internships/>

### 1. Practise

You may not be used to talking in front of a camera, so take the time to practise a mock interview using different software. Pay attention to your body language, voice and background noise and ask feedback from your friend on how you come across.

Make sure you familiarise yourself with the video tool you're using; they all work slightly differently and getting to grips with them will help you feel more confident going into the interview, while also reducing the risk of any accidental technical glitches.

### 2. Find the right location

You should look for a quiet, bright, uncluttered space with a neutral background where you won't be disturbed. University may be able to help you- ask reception if you could book out a classroom - book it in at reception ([hello@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:hello@ucp.ac.uk)).

Make sure your face is fully visible, position the camera so it is looking down at you from a slight angle. Simple lighting technique- place two lights in front of you either side of the screen.

### 3. Test your equipment

While technical glitches can happen they may still reflect badly on you so it's important to test the equipment beforehand.

- Make sure you have good power supply and that your battery is fully charged just in case you have to move location.
- If you're interviewing live check that your internet is running at a good speed. Make sure you're not doing anything that could affect the video quality like downloading.

### 4. Don't forget those last-minute safety checks

Those final minutes before the interview are crucial. If you're interviewing live it's a good idea to log in early to give yourself time to get ready and deal with any issues.

However, make sure you don't accidentally start transmitting before you're ready – put the microphone on mute and pop a post-it note on the camera just in case. Then give the camera lens a wipe to remove any smudges.

The trick to a successful video interview is to approach it as you would the traditional, face-to-face version, while not underestimating the differences. Some will be more confident using technology than others, but time taken to properly prepare will truly make all the difference.

### 5. Just in case/if things go wrong!

Before the interview, ask for a contact phone number to call in case of technical difficulties.

- If the video stops working, call them immediately and ask if you can continue by phone or reschedule
- If noise interrupts you e.g. a siren, apologise and ask for a few minutes until it has stopped
- If someone enters your room unexpectedly; apologise and ask for a few minutes, mute your mic and turn off the camera, deal with the interruption quickly and return.

### Extra information

- [www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/video-interview-guide](http://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/video-interview-guide)
- [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/video-interview-tips](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips/video-interview-tips)
- [www.roberthalf.com/blog/job-interview-tips/screen-time-how-to-nail-your-next-video-interview](http://www.roberthalf.com/blog/job-interview-tips/screen-time-how-to-nail-your-next-video-interview)



## Interview types - Assessment centre overview

Assessment centres are used by employers as a mechanism to assess your competencies as an individual and team player, to see if you will fit into their culture and watch how you interact with others. They are frequently used when a company wishes to employ more than one individual.

Generally, an assessment centre consists of a number of activities/challenges that allow the employer to assess those skills more difficult to explore in an interview. You will be observed and scored against known competencies with particular emphasis upon team work and communication.

You should be aware that assessment will start from the point you enter the employer's chosen premises (car park, reception, hotel lobby etc.), across breaks and lunches and as you leave. You will be watched by a panel of assessors from a range of areas within the business.



**Different forms of Assessment centers**

Image: <https://medium.com/@huzafah.saleem98/reflection-from-assessment-center-e9abf157bdf>

Assessment centre activity often includes:

- Working with information to create
  - a presentation, a report, a synopsis, a prioritisation task
- Aptitude and psychometric tests
  - Verbal & numerical reasoning tests, a group exercise, an interview

This web page with video will further explain assessment centres:

[www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/assessmentcentres/assessment-centre-tips-and-preparation-advice](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/assessmentcentres/assessment-centre-tips-and-preparation-advice)

## Behaviour outside of activities

Use your 'breakout-time' to demonstrate your interpersonal skills and find out a little more about your prospective colleagues, the business and your fellow candidates.

- Introducing yourself to others - Do not sit/stand on your own
  - With handshake & confidence: Can I join you/would you like to join us?
  - Make small talk: Have you travelled far? How was your Christmas?
- Having questions ready to ask the recruiters/employees
  - What project are you working on currently? What is your role here?
- Manners
  - Polite to the receptionist/parking attendant/person serving drinks?
  - Where did you leave your cup? Did you hold doors open for others?  
Pleases & thank yous?
  - Do you show genuine warmth? Do you look interested?

## Icebreakers

The aim of an icebreaker is to relax you in to the day and provide an opportunity to meet fellow candidates.

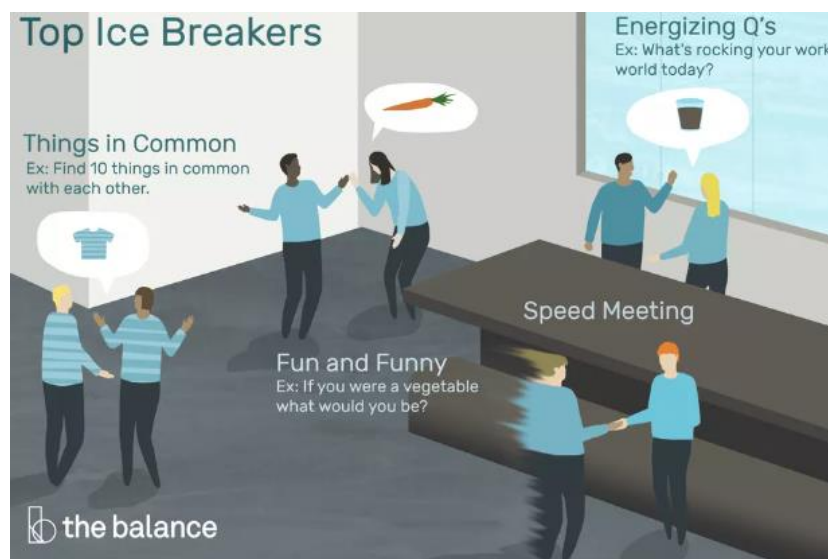


Image: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-ice-breakers-1918426>

You may be asked to talk about yourself, say something interesting about yourself, introduce a person you are sitting next to, complete a fun activity. Assume employers are scoring you during this activity, show the other candidates that you are friendly and approachable.

You are being asked to demonstrate if you can think on your feet and communicate clearly whilst finding out a little more about your prospective colleagues and your fellow candidates.

- Speak clearly and confidently
- Show genuine warmth (smile)
- Listen in case this information is required later
- Look interested

## Group exercises

You will be asked to complete a variety of activities to complete, but remember that the employer is watching how you interact with others and your approach to the task, not just the outcome.



Image: <https://www.assessmentcentrehq.com/how-to-prepare-for-an-interview/>

## Group Exercises

- Tests your approach to team work and group based situations
- You will have a number of assessors, one will be assigned to watch you
- They are looking at your approach to: team work, delegation, communication, listening, goal achievement, creativity, assertiveness
- Are your team sure of the task? Ask for clarification if not.
- The problem will generally be a business scenario such as a disaster site, sales slump
- You will be scored individually. Even if the task is not achieved, you can still score very well
- Although you cannot prepare for the task, you can be aware of how to behave

## How to behave during group activities

- Introduce yourself to everyone with genuine warmth if you haven't already (handshake etc.)
- If possible, show initiative and take responsibility/take the lead
  - offer to be the timekeeper during the exercise, ask if people have any initial suggestions/ideas
- Make sure you take part and make suggestions
  - be forceful if needs be, but smile and be polite and positive at the same time
  - give people roles/make people accountable for individual activity
- Be calm & assertive, not aggressive

- Include others
  - Teamwork, co-operation and the ability to listen to others are important. “What do you think Tom?” “Great point Emma”
  - Include members of the group who have previously been quiet is always a winner with the assessors.
- Make the effort to remember/use people’s names
  - Shows manners, attention to detail
- Negativity is verboten
  - Do NOT criticise anyone during the exercise; it suggests you might be a moaner.
  - You should be “Funtime-Positivity” during this exercise!

## **Other activities - Role play, in-tray exercises, psychometric and aptitude tests**

The employer may ask you to complete a role play, psychometric/aptitude tests or an in-tray exercise.

### **Role play**

These activities are generally designed to see how you deal with a challenging situation such as an angry customer, unmotivated colleague, late supplier.

You will usually be given some background information before the exercise starts. You will be pushed to see how you react as the individual becomes more angry/stand-offish.

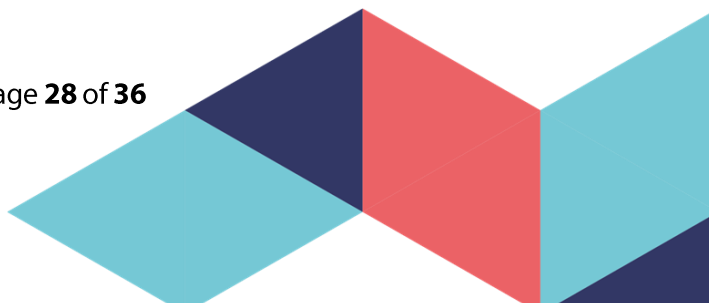


Image: Thinkstock/monkeybusinessimages

The employer is looking for: interpersonal skills, assertiveness, listening, business focus, negotiation, ability to work under pressure. Visit the 'Workplace Skills' module for support with these skills.

Make sure you:

- understand the objectives/wanted outcome by the other person o ask questions to gather information
- consider how you should manage a person who is angry and frustrated
- be sympathetic to their feelings, clear, friendly, positive, approachable and calm
- be diplomatic and not confrontational
- finish by summarising what you have agreed on, issues to be addressed/actions to be taken



**Additional information:** [www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interviewtypes/role-play](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interviewtypes/role-play) and <https://youtu.be/KbkizNV81qo>

## In-tray exercises

In-tray exercises are activities that reflect the workplace, and are generally tasks you would be completing regularly. Generally, you will complete this as an individual task; requiring you to speed read a number of documents to identify key information (e.g. dates, times, actions already complete).

They are looking to see if you can work under pressure, prioritise, manage your time, assimilate information, analyse and summarise. They will often add an additional piece of information part the way through to see how you deal with change: can you identify if the information is relevant or not, what action you now take.

### Examples:

- [www.assessmentday.co.uk/in-tray-exercise.htm](http://www.assessmentday.co.uk/in-tray-exercise.htm)
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/assessment-centres/275463-what-are-intray-exercises>

### Additional information:

[www.wikijob.co.uk/content/aptitude-tests/testtypes/tray-exercise#what-skills-are-being-tested-with-an-in-tray-exercise](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/aptitude-tests/testtypes/tray-exercise#what-skills-are-being-tested-with-an-in-tray-exercise)

## Psychometric and aptitude tests

You can politely ask an employer if these are to be included in your interview and, if so, which type.

You need to work quickly and accurately, leaving those questions you cannot answer immediately until you have answered the others, then returning to complete.

The key here is to practice in order to become more confident: the 'Who am I?' module provides numerous types of tests for you to explore.

### Practice

- Find the right strategy for you such as running your finger over the screen as you read
- Go back through the questions and compare to the answers, identify knowledge areas that you need to develop
- Many tests issue penalties for blank answers so getting your timing right is essential. Work out how long you have for each question
- Find a way to manage your nerves such as deep breathing/relaxation techniques

## Other activities – Presentations

Interview presentations may be to can allow several key managers to assess the candidate without having to spend time interviewing them formally. Interview presentations allow employers to see how much the candidate knows about a subject, how they work under pressure and how good they are at presenting ideas.

Good preparation can dissipate up to 75% of your fear, good breathing and remaining calm another 15% and the remaining 10% is due to your mental state – so by preparing and staying positive, you can minimise your fears.



Image: [www.businessinsider.com/best-strategy-explain-complicated-topic-toaudience-tedx-speaker-2019-12?r=US&IR=T](http://www.businessinsider.com/best-strategy-explain-complicated-topic-toaudience-tedx-speaker-2019-12?r=US&IR=T)

### **Pre-planned presentation**

The company may ask you to present on a topic of their choice such as:

- If you were successful in this role, what would you bring to the organisation in the first three months?
- Explain the plan to bring imaginary product x to market
- How would you address x issue

Or you will be allowed to select a subject of your choice, although you may be given some direction e.g. present about a hobby or interest.

### **Blind presentation**

You may be asked to present on a subject provided on the day. The expectations are the same but you will only have time on the day to prepare.

# Preparing for presentations

## 1. Prepare

Ensure you understand exactly what they are asking of you, contact them for clarity if needed

- Know how long you have to present & to who
- Ask what technology/resources will be available, is internet available?
- Do thorough research regarding your subject
- Refer to the 'Presentations' module for guidance on creating and delivering presentations
- Have your presentation saved in two locations e.g. cloud & USB (cloud can be easier as it is irrelevant what software the company has)
- Consider supporting handouts (enough for each interviewer) - possible not possible in a blind presentation

## 2. Practice - content & times

Practice everything! Creating a presentation for both blind and pre-planned presentations follows the same creating and presenting strategies.

Be mindful of your time allowance and allow for interruptions. You may get interrupted, asked questions midway through by employers, so ensure you are not too rigid and you are able to let it flow.

## 3. Practice - body language

**Visualisation** - Imagine yourself full of confidence, being calm and self assured.

**Calming techniques** - breathing, relaxation. Don't apologise if you're nervous – they almost certainly haven't noticed

**Focus** - on the presentation, not you.

### **Control**

- Smiling brightens your voice and tone, it will make you and your audience more relaxed.
- Eye contact is important. With a variety of people in the room, for a few seconds. Don't stare one person out for the whole presentation as they'll feel uncomfortable and the other people will feel ignored
- Stay still. Fiddling with a pen or constantly rubbing your hands together can be very off-putting for those watching.

## 4. Practice - managing questions

If you are asked a question make sure you listen to it – repeat it out loud so everyone can hear, thank the person who asked it and give your answer. At the end, ask if that answered the question satisfactorily, which gives an opening for another question.

### Extra information

- Refer to the 'Presentations' module for guidance on creating and delivering presentations
- [www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/assessmentcentres/presentation](http://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/application-advice/assessmentcentres/presentation)
- [www.robertwaltersgroup.com/news/expert-insight/careers-blog/7-tips-for-a-stand-out-interview-presentation.html](http://www.robertwaltersgroup.com/news/expert-insight/careers-blog/7-tips-for-a-stand-out-interview-presentation.html)

## Overcoming interview nerves

### The science

Nerves are based upon the fight or flight response to a situation. In this case, we are entering an unfamiliar situation rather than a dangerous situation.

Image: [www.interviewgold.com/advice/interview-nerves-and-how-to-overcome-them/](http://www.interviewgold.com/advice/interview-nerves-and-how-to-overcome-them/)



### Tips to calm nerves

This feeling is common, even the interviewers also get nervous. Nerves often mean you perform better on the day, they show that this is important to you

### Before the interview

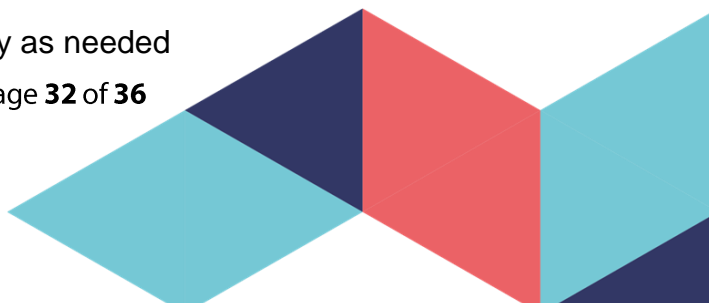
- Become familiar with interviews - by being prepared and practicing often, you reduce nerves
- Anticipate the question and prepare your answers
- Complete the 'Pre-interview preparation' actions in this module

### On the day

- Clear your head - take a walk, listen to music, breath
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine
- Repeat positive mantras such as "I am fully ready for this"
- Arrive early

### In the interview

- Sit upright and look engaged
- If your hands are shaking, clench your thigh muscles so that you can make 'speak' with your hands still
- Focus on the questions, take notes and clarify as needed





- Breathe
- Remember the employer wants to find the right candidate - they are on your side!

### Extra information:

[www.interviewgold.com/advice/interview-nerve-and-howto-overcome-them/](http://www.interviewgold.com/advice/interview-nerve-and-howto-overcome-them/)

## Follow up



Image: [www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-follow-up-after-a-job-interview-2061333](http://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-follow-up-after-a-job-interview-2061333)

Take initiative and follow up with your interviewer; you can grasp the employer's attention, whilst adding any information that did not come up during the interview or any additional information they requested.

Following up after an interview is just another important step in the interviewing process, and taking the time to do so can only work in your favour. Even if you end up not getting the job, your interviewer might well remember your dedication and enthusiasm when a position comes up in the future.

**Unless you have been asked to not contact them, the following guidance will help.**

### The thank you note

Within a few days (allow time for the interviews to be completed) after the interview, send a thank you email to highlight your professionalism, dedication, and enthusiasm for the role to the interviewer.

[employerhub@ucp.ac.uk](mailto:employerhub@ucp.ac.uk)

**Subject line** - your name, the date and time of the interview e.g. John Smith - Re: Interview on [date] at [time] am/pm

**Address:** to Ms/Mr/Doctor [name],

**Body text:** Keep it simple. Be polite but direct: Thank them for their time in the interview.

- Explain that you're following up on your interview - remember to be specific about the job, mentioning the job title and interview date.
- Restate your interest in the position and say you're keen to hear about next steps.
- Ask for a progress update, explaining that any information they can provide would be greatly appreciated.

**Signing off:** invite your interviewer to ask any additional questions. Close with a simple "looking forward to hearing from you", "Yours sincerely", and your name. Remember to add your contact details to the bottom of your email.

**Final checks:** Check before sending! Ensure it's well spaced, correctly punctuated and free of typos. Running it through a spellchecker should help.

## Alternatives to sending a follow-up email

Email may not be the best medium for following up, particularly if you haven't communicated with the interviewer via email before. Depending on the job you're applying for, some, or all of these alternatives may be more appropriate:

- An instant messaging platform (e.g. Google Hangouts, Skype, LinkedIn Messenger)
- LinkedIn
- Phone call
- WhatsApp

## Don't harass the interviewer

If things drag out, periodically (e.g. monthly) send them something they may find useful or tell them about something valuable you picked up from the interview. The idea is to stay in the interviewer's mind, but avoid overwhelming them with superfluous notes.

## Examples

[www.indeed.co.uk/careeradvice/interviewing/follow-up-email-examples-after-interview](http://www.indeed.co.uk/careeradvice/interviewing/follow-up-email-examples-after-interview)

## Extra information

- [www.michaelpage.co.uk/advice/career-advice/job-interview-tips/how-sendengaging-follow-email-after-your-interview](http://www.michaelpage.co.uk/advice/career-advice/job-interview-tips/how-sendengaging-follow-email-after-your-interview)
- [www.indeed.co.uk/career-advice/interviewing/follow-up-email-examplesafter-interview](http://www.indeed.co.uk/career-advice/interviewing/follow-up-email-examplesafter-interview)
- <https://www.livecareer.com/resources/interviews/prep/job-interview-follow-up>

## The second interview

If you are invited to for a second interview, congratulations! You and a select few other candidates have been short listed for the final stages of the hiring process.



Image: [www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-acing-a-second-interview-2061308](http://www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-acing-a-second-interview-2061308)

A second interview can mean different things depending on where you're interviewing. Ask what to expect:

- whether you'll be expected to do any tests or exercises
- whether it will be a competency or strength-based interview
- who will be interviewing you, as second interviews are often conducted by more senior staff
- any indications of the topics that to be covered.

## Preparation

1. Ask the employer what the content will be
2. Research, research, research - about the company and the topics they wish to explore
3. Know about your interviewers
4. Reflect on the first interview. What didn't you say?
5. Prepare for more in-depth questions.
6. Go in with a strategy for answering questions (STARS)
7. Prepare more questions to ask at the interview. ...
8. Practise your final pitch
9. Be prepared to 'meet the family'

## Extra information

- [www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-acing-a-second-interview-2061308](http://www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-acing-a-second-interview-2061308)
- [/www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-succeed-at-your-second-interview](http://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-succeed-at-your-second-interview)

## Objectives

This course aimed to provide you with the opportunity to develop your understanding of the different types of interviews and how best to prepare for them.

### Understand how to

- Prepare for the type of interview you have been invited to
- Behave throughout the interview
- Manage your nerves
- Follow-up on your interview