

# The interview process



It's about a job: The interview process



# The interview process

E hi aka ana te atakura. He tio, he huka, he hauhunga.  
A wish that challenges will be met and futures will be bright.  
Maori proverb

*So you've been invited to attend a job interview? Good on you! The employer has read through your application and thinks you look like someone who can do the job. Now you have an opportunity to convince the employer that you're the right person for the role. No doubt you feel a little bit nervous about the prospect of being interviewed. Most people do! If you prepare yourself well you really have no reason to stress.*

## Tips for preparing for interviews

- Be clear about the arrangements. When will the interview be held and where? How do you get to the interview venue? Who is going to interview you? What's the person's name and position? Ask for a copy of the job description if you haven't already got one.
- Gather as much information about the employer from as many sources as you can. Aim to find out whether working for this organisation offers the right job-fit for you. What are its main products or activities? What are its goals? Does it offer opportunities to learn new skills? Is it growing? Has the employer got any information/brochures that would be helpful, such as an annual report? Maybe they have a website you can visit. Or perhaps you know people who work for or have dealings with the organisation.
- Read over your skills lists. How do your skills and experience match what you now know about the job vacancy and the organisation?
- Try to predict some of the questions the interviewer will ask and practise what you would say in response. Ask someone in your support network to role-play a mock interview situation with you. Some of the example questions on the next page are sure to come up!
- Mentally prepare yourself for a range of interview settings. An interview may, for example, involve only one person, or it may be in a more formal setting with a number of people from the employer's company meeting and interviewing you. Ask some people in your support network to role-play a mock interview situation involving more than one interviewer with you. Practise interacting with several people at once – smiling at them is a great start!
- Make a trial run to the interview venue before the big day so that you know exactly how to get there and how long it takes to arrive in time for the interview, taking traffic flows into account.

“In an interview you need to be fairly confident that you can do the job. If you're not confident it comes across. Be positive.”  
Production worker

# Preparing for interviews

## Practise answering some typical interview questions

### ***Tell me about yourself?***

Give a one-minute summary of your background and experience. Create the impression that this job is the next logical step in your working career.

### ***Why do you want to work here?***

Explain how your skills, experience and personal qualities fit the job and the organisation. Tell the interviewer how proud you would be to contribute to the organisation. Show that you've done your homework and know lots about them.

### ***What are your strengths?***

Read over your skills lists and pick out your three biggest achievements. Relate your achievements back to the needs of the job and the organisation.

### ***What are your weaknesses?***

You're aware of the areas that you didn't score too well in during the skills lists exercises. Be ready to explain how you try to overcome or compensate for your weaknesses.

### ***Is there anything that would prevent you from doing this job safely and competently?***

If you understand the job description, have listened to the interviewer and you can't foresee any difficulties, answer "no, not as I understand the role". Ask your Workwise employment consultant for more information on if, when and how to disclose details about your mental health.

### ***Why should we hire you instead of someone else with the same qualifications and/or experience?***

Talk about actual situations where you carried out similar tasks to those in the job description. Be sure to also mention situations where you showed you were a good team player (someone who works well with others) in the workplace or in the community. Remind the employer that you would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the organisation's goals.

“Being interviewed can feel scary. Employers understand that you're going to be nervous meeting them for the first time. What's important is that you show enthusiasm, show that you want to work and that you're a good listener.” Employer

# Preparing for interviews continued...

## On the day of the interview

- Think about your personal presentation. Make sure you've showered, washed your hair and brushed your teeth. Don't overdo any perfume or aftershave.
- Dress smartly. Before leaving home check that your shoes and clothes are clean and neat. Is your hair tidy? Do you look your best?
- Bring copies of all the materials you sent to the employer, such as your CV, covering letter and application form.
- If the names and contact details of your referees are not on your CV, bring them to the interview on a separate piece of paper.
- Do you need to take anything else? Collect whatever you need.
- You may want to read your answers to the interview questions you practised.

## At the interview

- Arrive five or ten minutes early. If a family member or friend accompanies you, leave them waiting outside the building.
- Smile at everyone you meet in the building. Be friendly. Act as if you're confident – even if you are shaking on the inside!
- When you meet the person(s) interviewing you, shake their hand and make eye contact with them. If you haven't already been introduced to the interviewers, introduce yourself: "Hello, I'm [your name]. It's good to meet you."
- Stand until you are invited to sit. When you do sit down, don't slouch.
- Project a positive attitude. Because you've already rehearsed answers to some of the questions you can expect, you've plenty of upbeat things to say!
- Emphasise your strengths.
- If you're asked a question that you feel is inappropriate (meaning unnecessary or intrusive) or discriminatory, don't get upset. Instead, politely ask how the question relates to the requirements of the job. If you're not satisfied with the interviewer's answer, politely change the subject. Try asking questions about the job itself, for example.
- Don't be surprised if an employer asks you to come back for a second interview. Most organisations interview the successful job applicant at least twice.

### Things to avoid

- Don't fidget or play with your hair or any objects.
- Don't wear sunglasses.
- Don't apologise for lack of skills or experience.
- Don't tell the interviewer how many jobs you've applied for.
- Don't say how much you need a job.
- Don't bad-mouth your previous employers.
- Don't lie.
- Don't argue with the interviewer.

# Preparing for interviews continued...

## After the interview

Immediately after the interview find somewhere comfortable to sit down and review how it went.

Make a note of any new information you learned or need to learn that may help you if you're asked to go back for a second interview.

Think about which aspects of the interview went well and which ones didn't pan out as planned. Be honest with yourself. What did you learn from the experience?

Send the interviewer a short thank you note within a day or two of the interview. Thank them for their time and stress your interest in the job. See the sample thank you note on this page as an example.

If the employer said they plan to make a decision by a certain date and you don't hear from them by then, call to enquire if they have reached a decision yet.

In the meantime, keep job hunting!

## Coping with knock-backs

Rejection isn't easy for any of us to take. In fact, it can be one of the hardest things to deal with in life. If you miss out on a job you wanted badly, you'll feel let down. It's only natural.

What's important, though, is that you don't allow your disappointment to affect your health. Nor should it put you off looking for another job.

Keep positive. Stay focused on things you can control. Don't worry about things you can't control. There's nothing you can do to change the employer's decision now.

What can you learn from being rejected? If the employer tells you over the phone that you haven't got the job, ask for some feedback on your application. Otherwise, call the employer yourself to find out why you were unsuccessful. Then make a list of all the things you could do better next time.

If you're feeling very discouraged, talk to people in your support network.

### SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE

Dear *[name]*

*(Or alternatively)*

Kia ora *[name]*

Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss the *[position]*. I am sure that my skills would make a strong contribution to *[the name of the organisation]*. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future regarding the position. Thank you once again for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

*[your name]*

“ I missed out on four jobs before I got the job I'm in now. They were the worst interviews I'd ever had. And it was frustrating because I knew I could have done each job with my eyes closed. But when I got my thinking right, I got the next job I went for. And I'm thankful that I missed out on the other ones. ”

James (35), building inspector