

Attending a Successful Interview

It's harder than ever to secure a job, but your son or daughter has jumped the first hurdle, been invited for interview. But how do they make sure they're successful?

Before the Interview – prepare well

- Read up on the employer: their activities, aims, mission and values
- Check the invitation letter: who is on the interview panel and what are their roles?
- They should re-read their CV and covering letter/application form
- Read up on the job (job description and person specification): what is required, and how might they fit that role
- **Identify likely interview questions, such as:**
 - Why have you applied for this post?
 - In what ways do you fit the position?
 - Tell us about yourself (focus on interests and achievements, not personal opinions or relationships)
 - Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
 - What makes you the most suitable candidate?
 - Prepare and practice answering such questions: with friends or family, or on their own, out loud in the mirror. This will help them assess their experience and give them confidence on the day
 - Think what qualities they could bring to the role, relating these to their skills and experience (e.g. playing sport might demonstrate team work)
 - Identify questions to ask at the end, ask two, but prepare three or four in case some have been raised already. Don't ask about pay or benefits unless the employer mentions them first

Practicalities

- Prepare clothes and any documentation the night before
- Plan all travel arrangements beforehand. Leave plenty of time for the journey and plan to arrive there slightly early
- Get a good night's sleep: don't be preparing into the night, and eat a sensible breakfast

The Interview

- When meeting the interviewer/s, smile, make eye contact and shake his/her hand. First impressions do count and so does body language. Sit up straight, look attentive, focused and relaxed

- Listen and respond, be enthusiastic and share relevant experience. The employer wants to get to know your son/daughter so they can assess their suitability
- Act confident but not arrogant: remember, it's natural to be nervous
- Answer questions asked as well as possible: be engaged. Decide to learn from the experience whatever the outcome
- If asked about a skill/experience they don't have, they can say how they might approach the situation, or demonstrate a willingness to learn. They can talk about similar experience to that asked for or how they rose to the challenge of extra responsibilities

Top Tips

- Mobile phones should be turned off beforehand
- Before the interview, they may meet employees or be shown round the building. Use this time to talk naturally, it will help them stay calm, but remember this can be a part of the interview process. Be friendly and relaxed but focused
- Each job has its own requirements, but employers often want good people skills: can your son or daughter work well in a team?
- IT skills (MS Office, email and internet) are often required, as are being able to work under pressure and to deadlines, and knowing when to take the initiative
- Your son or daughter should prepare examples of their experience of the above, **in advance**. Examples can be from school, leisure, temporary or voluntary work as well as traditional permanent jobs
- **Increasingly, employers want candidates to demonstrate experience with real examples**, eg: Tell me when you:
 - completed a successful project
 - dealt with a difficult customer and handled the situation successfully
 - met a crucial deadline
 - worked as part of a successful team, focusing on your contribution?
- Prepare examples of strengths and areas for improvement, **in advance**. A weakness can be presented positively, eg, as an area they have worked on, or as a development opportunity
- Be positive: the employer is looking for a keen, enthusiastic person with a can-do attitude. Don't be negative about previous experience
- Take a few seconds to consider the answer to a question if needed, respond appropriately, and don't waffle
- Your child won't be able to anticipate everything but it's important to appear relaxed and in control. It's better to admit they don't know than to answer inappropriately

- If the salary hasn't already been specified, research typical salaries in advance, but don't mention this, unless the employer does

At the end of the interview smile and thank the interviewer/s, don't just rush out

After the Interview

After the interview, it's natural to breathe a sigh of relief. But your son/daughter should also think about what went well or could be improved. Even when they are successful, there are always things to be learned for the future.

More Information

National Careers Service: [Interviews Advice](#)

National Careers Service: [Top 10 interview questions](#)

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