

Interviews



Careers



What are the steps to success?

Having impressed a prospective employer with your CV, the interview stage is an essential element of the application process to show that not only do you have the skills required for the role but that you're motivated for the role. The interview is your chance to prove it! The company will want to find out more about your qualifications, skills, and personality to determine if you are the best candidate for the job amongst the few that have been selected for an interview.

Although you cannot predict everything you will be asked, you can prepare examples for some of the most common questions. Don't underestimate the value of preparation. If you do not understand what the employer does or cannot competently explain why you are interested in the opportunity and how your skills and experience relate to the job description, you are unlikely to impress them enough to secure the role. Stay ahead of the game with our guide to success.

Before the interview: Preparation. What are the key areas to focus on?

- **Re-read** your application form, CV and covering letter in preparation for the interview. Assume that the interviewer will focus some questions on what you have written.
- **Think about** the kind of questions you would ask the interviewer.
- **Research** the company so you know about the kind of work they do. You can usually find this information at the company's website (including news items and social media), LinkedIn, or Target Insights: <https://targetjobs.co.uk/employer-hubs>, Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk, and Glassdoor: www.glassdoor.com.

- **Plan** the route to work and transport links needed to determine if the commute is acceptable.
- **Think formal business** attire (no jeans) when planning what to wear. If unsure, ask about the expected company dress code. Be courteous to everyone you meet on the day of the interview from the receptionist who greets you on arrival to the interviewing panel. The assessment often starts as soon as you walk through the door.

During the interview

- **Talk about your strengths** and weaknesses and how they link to the role you are applying for. Prepare your best examples with evidence and examples drawn from past experience to illustrate your points.
- **Be enthusiastic** but not over the top. Ask for time or further clarification before responding if you need to think your answer through or don't know how to answer the question.
- **Concentrate on body language.** Aim for an open, positive posture, good eye contact (without staring) and not too many distracting mannerisms or gestures.

Disclosing a disability or specific learning difficulty?

You may want to prepare the employer in advance so that they aren't put on the spot. Anticipate the challenges you may face and explain in positive and clear terms how these can be overcome. Highlight any reasonable adjustments the employer can make to enable you to do the job, including any financial assistance available to cover any costs.

Interviews are your opportunity to sell yourself and to showcase all the examples and evidence you have which makes you an ideal candidate for the job.



Treat each interview as a business meeting. Thoroughly research the company and the job role and be ready to tell them what you have to offer!

Types of interviews

Informal: often used as the first part of a multi-stage recruitment process. Format tends to be a general chat about you and your interests. Preparation is still essential.

Competency-based: interviewers look for evidence of your skills and abilities that relate to the competencies or qualities required by the job.

Strengths based: Increasingly used by employers. The interviewer is looking for evidence of where you have performed at your best. The questions are shorter and designed to elicit positive responses.

Technical: used for jobs which require technical knowledge. Questions may focus on university projects or on real or hypothetical technical problems. Don't worry if you don't know the exact answer- interviewers are assessing your thought process and logic.

Portfolio-based: used for creative media or communications sectors. You will be asked questions about a portfolio of work that you bring to the interview that showcases your particular talents.

Case study: interviewers present a real or hypothetical business problem and evaluate how you analyse the problem, organise your thoughts, identify the key issues, and pursue a particular line of thinking to solve the problem.

Formats of interviews

Single interview: used by some recruiters while others use a sequence of interviews that may get progressively more difficult and involve a number of different interviewers or panels. Make sure you provide contact details of the email or phone numbers you will be checking throughout the recruitment period.

Telephone: often used at the early stage of selection, especially by international recruiters. Prepare the same way that you would for a face-to-face interview. Choose a suitable time and date and use a quiet location with no chance of being interrupted. Ensure your mobile is fully charged if you are using it and keep your CV plus any necessary documents at hand. Act as if the recruiter can see you.

Online video interviews or Skype: These types of interviews are becoming more common, the same rules apply to any other interview but remember you need to be comfortable with the technology and how you come across. Practice is essential. Check that there is nothing distracting in the background that will be visible to the interviewers. Check your positioning in the frame and how you look at the camera.

Face-to-face: Still the most common method. One or more interviewers will conduct the interview. If there is a panel, focus your response to the person that asked you the question.



The STAR technique

Situation: Describe the situation.

Task: Describe the task required.

Action: Describe the action taken, including challenges faced, decisions made, and process followed.

Result: Describe the result of the action.

Examples of typical interview questions

These questions will assess your skills and ability to do the job. You can prepare answers in advance by thinking of good examples from your past experience that satisfy the person specification points and by using the STAR technique mentioned here.

Q: Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team?

Q: Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team and had to resolve a conflict. What did you do?

Q: Give an example of how you provided service to a client beyond their expectations?

Q: Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a customer service issue?

Q: Describe a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision and what process you followed?

Be positive about your actions and don't make up examples or you will not come across as believable.



Questions for the interviewer

Usually you will be offered the opportunity to ask questions during or at the end of the interview.

Q: What types of training opportunities can you offer?

This question shows you are keen to advance your skills and add further value to a company.

Q: If I secure the role, is there anything I can do to prepare?

Demonstrates motivation and willingness to go the extra mile.

Q: What projects have previous graduates/ placement students been involved in?

Shows your desire to find out the nature of the work ahead and the willingness to prepare and rise to any challenges.

Questions not to ask in an interview?

Don't ask about holiday, pay or working hours (these can be discussed when you are offered the job).

More information on preparing for interviews can be found on the PDC website.

After the interview

- Thank them for their time and reiterate your interest in the role, both verbally when you leave and by a follow-up email the next day. This demonstrates a professional outlook and may count in your favour if they are struggling to decide between you and another applicant.
- Analyse your performance and make notes about questions you struggled to answer. Revise or further prepare answers to these questions for future interviews.

Receiving an offer

If you are 100% sure, accept the position and remove yourself from all other application processes. If not, thank them and ask for time to consider. Contact a Careers Consultant or Placement and Internship Adviser, an academic adviser, or your family for further advice.

What to do if you don't get the position

- Request feedback to assist you with making improvements for future interviews.
- Be positive and take action to improve your technique.
- Don't question the company's decision. This is unprofessional and won't stand you in good stead if subsequent roles come up within the company.



Book a mock interview at www.brunel.ac.uk/pdc-appointments with your Careers Consultant or Placement and Internship Adviser to go over some key questions and get feedback on your answers.

Attend a workshop on interview skills. Register at www.brunel.ac.uk/pdc/events

Advice for International students or students wishing to work overseas

If you need more advice about UK recruitment processes, visa restrictions, or sources for finding vacancies in the UK, please access the information at www.brunel.ac.uk/pdc.

If you are interested in working overseas, check out the information available for specific countries/regions on our website.

Further information

- Visit <http://iworkat.brunel.ac.uk> to see case studies of Brunel students who have secured roles at a variety of companies.
- Watch videos of advice from employers on the PDC website.



More about the PDC

The PDC is your one-stop shop for advice, guidance and support when looking for work, study and planning your career.

You can use our service from your first day at Brunel and for up to two years after you graduate.

Jobs: part-time, vacation, internships, placement and graduate opportunities.

Events: recruitment, employability skills, webinars and Careers Uncovered.

Advice and feedback: job search, CVs, applications, interviews and assessment centres.

Guidance: career options and postgraduate study.

Book an appointment to talk to a Careers Consultant or your Placement and Internship Adviser at

www.brunel.ac.uk/pdc-appointments

