

# You Don't Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression



# The Interview

In our previous session we looked at how to construct a CV and a covering letter.

And it obviously worked! You've been invited for an interview.

Setting aside the excitement, nerves etc. you need to prep for this.

In this presentation you will learn about how you need to ready yourself for the big day, how to conduct yourself during the interview and impress.





A close-up photograph of a young child with light brown hair and freckles, peeking out from behind a burlap sack. The child's eyes are wide open, looking directly at the camera, and their mouth is slightly open, showing their teeth. The burlap sack is made of a coarse, woven material and is positioned in front of the child's face, with the child's hands visible at the bottom, holding the sack open. The background is a textured, brown fabric.

# An Employer's Perspective

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Yes, it's part of the selection process and a hurdle to get over of sorts. But any employer worth their salt will use the process as a way of finding out about you and giving you enough confidence to explain why you're the missing link in their company.

You might not think it, but they are on your side and want you to succeed. You've got this far, which in itself is successful. You just need to make sure your succeed better than the other candidates...so deep breath...relax...



# Pre-Interview Prep

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Often an employer will ask you to confirm if you are available on that day and time so check if you need to reply.

Where is it? How are you going to get there? Google Maps can be your friend.

You can almost guarantee that you will be asked what you know about the company at the interview so if you haven't already (and to be honest, you should have done this before sending your CV etc.) find out loads on the company, its products, customers, ethos (beliefs and ideals) and your boss' favourite type of chocolate. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and social media can be your friend too.





# Under The Microscope

Below, are a couple of links highlighting good and bad practice during an interview.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 3Rii8wfHYY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6U7kLrWZU-c>

As you watch, have a pen and paper handy and I want you to write down your thoughts on appearance, body language, behaviour, responses to questions etc. In the 'dodgy' interview example, how would you have done things differently?

The second interview is much more successful. What type of behaviour is the candidate exhibiting and what type of an effect is it having?



# Poor Example

- Inappropriate dress (lack of preparation)
- Not on time (“got up late”) and not prepared for eventualities (car broke down)
- Uses his mobile phone. Check it’s on silent or even better off completely!
- Paints a poor image of himself by being too “honest” with his answers as to why he left the last job
- Eating during the interview. Never a good idea even if you are offered something (unlikely in reality)
- Making excuses for leaving his last job
- Doesn’t make a positive from a negative (could have worded differently his disagreement with his colleague)
- Drops himself in it by talking about two other jobs he stayed a short time at
- Gives a poor example to a question (should prepare in advance potential questions)
- Asks about when he will start!
- Are there any other things you can think of?



# Body Language

There are literally hundreds of articles and books devoted to non-verbal communication and how we do (and don't) interpret what someone is saying without speaking.

But cutting to the chase, there are a few acceptable social 'norms' we need to observe in an interview situation.

- If there's a door knock on it first
- If your interviewer offers their hand then shake it
- Eye contact at all times (unless you're walking down a flight of stairs)
- Smile! You're enjoying this!
- Sit up straight, don't slouch or be too casual
- Try and keep your hands on your lap as it stops you fidgeting
- Don't cross your arms! It might feel comfy but it can be interpreted as defensive/aggressive/disinterested







## A Question of Trust

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You can never really anticipate exactly what an employer is going to ask you at an interview but generally they are a predictable bunch so it's worth preparing answers to the top 5 likely questions.

These could be:

1. Tell Me About Yourself
2. What Are Your Weaknesses?
3. Why Did You Apply For The Job?
4. Where Do You See Yourself In 5 Years?
5. Do You Have Any Questions?





# Answers?

Time for you to do a bit of work now...

How would you answer those questions? I want you to spend at least 30 minutes thinking about how you would answer those questions. Jot them down. If someone is around you can ask for a bit of help or get in touch with a mate and ask them too.

On the next slide are some possible answers and how NOT to answer them so no peeking yet...





# Tell Me About Yourself

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- **Tell me about yourself...**
- A common opening question, partly because your interviewers want to know more about you and it's maybe a way to get you talking and to open up and relax
- They've given you complete control here, and you should take full advantage of it. They have not, however, asked for your life story.
- Keep your answer pertinent, and try not to go off topic too much. You're here to interview for a particular position, and you shouldn't lose sight of this. Remember: the interviewer is *not* just making small talk.
- **Right answer:** Should be about a two or three minutes long and briefly cover your education, your interest in the job, any work history and experience, relevant hobbies etc.
- **Wrong answer:** 'Well, where do I start? I was born in 2002. A precocious child...'



# What Are Your Weaknesses...?

- The first part of this question is realising that you actually have some (no, being a perfectionist doesn't count).
- *Everyone* has weaknesses or things that they can improve about themselves. And being honest with yourself here will save you a lot of time in the long run.
- The best answers to this question take one of your weaknesses, and then give practical examples of how you're trying to address it. A good example of this type of answer would be:
- *'I used to find it difficult to work on different things at once, preferring to finish on one task before starting another. But since studying my A Levels, I've learnt how to manage my studies, making it easier to multi-task when necessary'.*
- **Right answer:** Weakness + how you've tried/are trying to address it = (eventually) strength
- **Wrong answer:** 'Kryptonite'






A person wearing a black t-shirt and blue jeans is shown from the waist down. They are pulling out a wad of cash from their back pocket. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and list.

# Why Should You Get This Job?

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- Your interviewer is looking for you to sell yourself here
- As there will probably be a number of other candidates having interviews, this is your chance to demonstrate why you want the job, and why you would be a perfect fit for the company.
- Essentially, the company is hiring for a reason (a brief summary of which can usually be found in the job description). You need to position yourself as the person to do this.
- **Right answer:** 'From what we've discussed so far, you're looking for X. In the past I have demonstrated X, Y and Z (experience and your main strengths), which I could bring to the company.'
- **Wrong answer:** I just really need the money





## Why Did You Apply For The Job?

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This demands a very similar answer to why you want the job but you should focus more heavily on why the position and company interest you in the first place you, rather than why you should interest *them*.

Demonstrate what you know about the company (and use the job description to back up why you're the right person to do the job).



# Where Do You See Yourself in 5 Years?

Five years is a massive amount of time, it's a third/quarter of your life over again and it's a biggie.

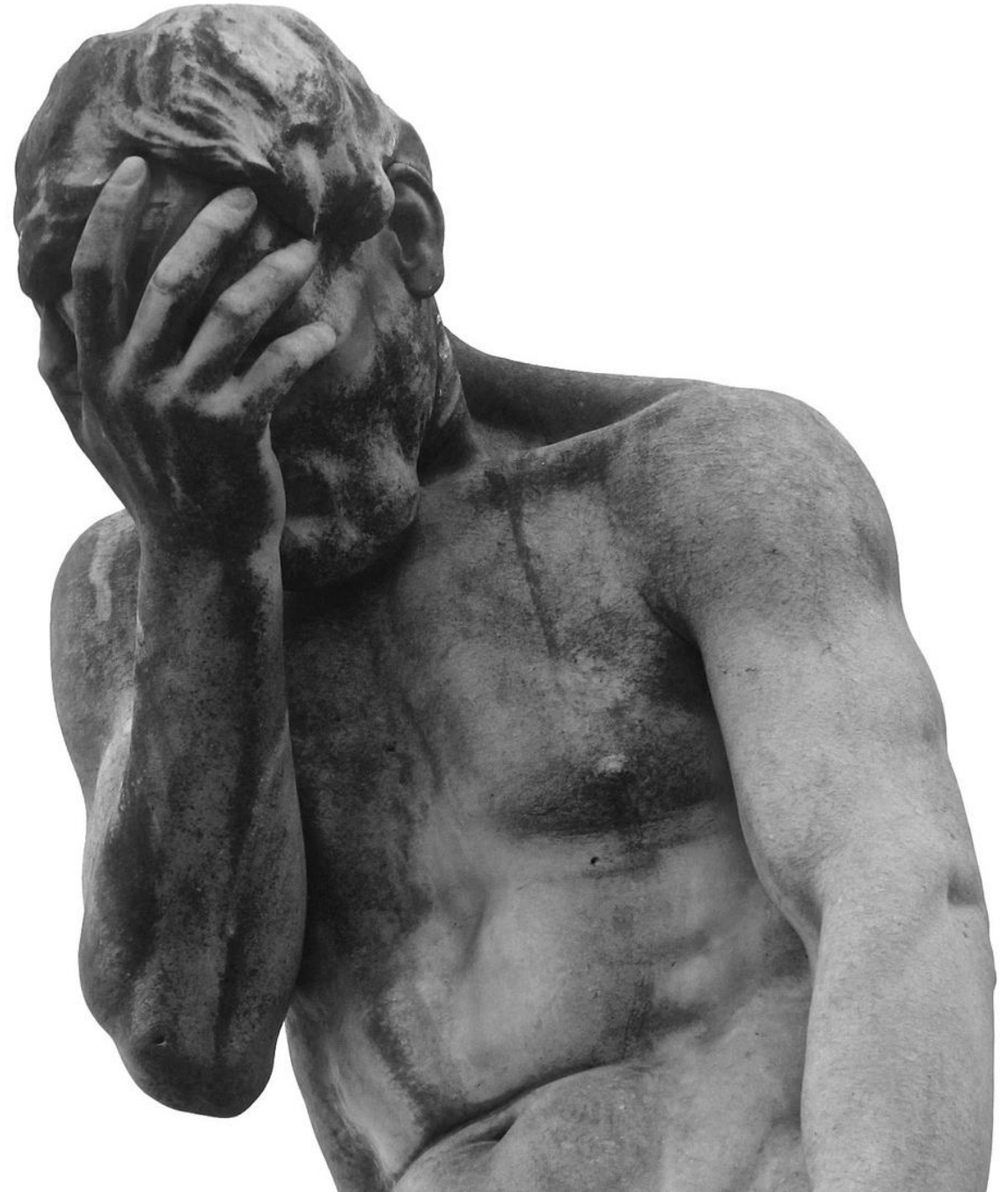
- What the interviewer really wants to know is that you've thought about your future, and gauge your ambition. They also want to verify that this isn't just a stop gap position.
- Although all of your answers should be tailored to the organisation and position you've applied for, this is especially the case with this question. It's likely you're going for an apprenticeship so explain how you'd like your career to progress (e.g. 'I'd like to progress to a Senior Software Engineer' or 'I see myself being a team leader...').
- **Right answer:** Be passionate about the industry (but don't overdo the passion!). Fit your career goals around the company's objectives, demonstrate ambition and exploit your strengths
- **Wrong answer:** 'On the other side of this desk'



# Do You Have Any Questions?

I can almost guarantee that you will be asked this question!

- **Right answer:** 'Yes'. No exceptions. To give you an idea of what questions you could ask see the next slide.
- **Wrong answer:** 'No'



# Are You Competent?

Another reason to carry out research before an interview might be that the employer (The National Health Service for example) may use competency based questions.

Basically, all the interviewees get asked the same question and the interviewer has a marking system depending on how well you answer.

They might use the **S.T.A.R.** grading scheme (see below) so it's worth finding out before you prepare answers to your questions.

Competency questions will ask you to provide specific examples of how you dealt with particular situations, and will usually start with: Tell me about a time when... Give me an example of a situation when... Describe a scenario when...

**Situation** – describe the situation that you were in at the time **Task** – explain what you had to achieve/or the problem you were solving **Action** – tell them what you did to overcome the problem or achieve the objective **Result** – tell them what the outcome was, and what your evaluation of this is.





# Two Way Street

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I mentioned it earlier, but whether you know it or not, the interview is a two way process and it's a great opportunity for you to find out more about the job and the company. You have a lot to offer and if the boss doesn't give you the right answer you can always turn *them* down.

- **Can you tell me more about the company?**

Nice answer. This question will help you to learn more about the company and what they do, as well as give you an opportunity to demonstrate how well you've researched it.

- **Can you tell me about the training on offer?**

It's likely they will have an apprenticeship programme set up. Do they offer training to Level 2 or 3? Does the training go beyond this to Level 4 or higher? You can demonstrate ambition but also check out how much they will invest in you.

- **What would my day-to-day responsibilities be?**

This is a positive way to work out whether the role is actually right for you. Find out what a typical day in the role would entail That way, there will be no surprises if you end up being offered the job...

