



# JobTestPrep's Interview Preparation Guide



# Introduction

Welcome to JobTestPrep's interview preparation guide. In this guide, we will explore four areas of interviews, using a psychologists perspective, aimed at helping you understand what is going on, and improve your confidence going in to the interview.

Every applicant for every job will face at least one interview. The interview is the recruiting organisation's opportunity to meet their candidates face-to-face and individually, and as a result select the right candidate for the job. For a candidate who has gotten as far as the interview, it is an opportunity to present themselves in the best possible way to the person they hope will be their future employer.

But interviews are not easy. They are nerve-wracking. They require you to be able to think of responses quickly and to answer in a way that sounds positive and as though anything is possible. None of which is easy when you are nervous. This guide aims to show you how to channel those nerves in order to increase your confidence, allowing the interview to go more smoothly.

There are four sections to this guide.

In **Part 1 - The Interviewer**, we explore the topic of who is the person sitting on the other side of the desk to us, and how we should approach the interviewer both ahead of the interview and at the interview itself.

In **Part 2 - The Interviewee**, we look at the impact we can make on our interview, and the internal, often negative factors that can prevent us from making the most of our opportunity.

In **Part 3 - The Interview**, we discuss the interview itself, and your behaviour and demeanour in the interview room.

In **Part 4 - Questions & Answers**, we set out some common questions you may well be asked in an interview, and discuss ways to answer them.



JobTestPrep's interview preparation offer extends beyond this guide. For interactive preparation tips, we offer an [online interview preparation](#) pack. We can help you out with that all important mock interview through our [Skype based interviews](#) package. And finally, you can watch and learn how to behave (or not) in an interview with our light hearted [interview questions and answers video](#).

We hope you find this guide useful and wish you luck in your upcoming interview.

**The team at JobTestPrep**

We are always happy to hear your comments, so please do not hesitate to drop us a line.  
Website: [www.jobtestprep.co.uk](http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/JobTestPrep](http://www.facebook.com/JobTestPrep)  
Email: [info@jobtestprep.co.uk](mailto:info@jobtestprep.co.uk)

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## Part 1 – The Interviewer

### The interviewer - a source of apprehension

One of the main factors causing apprehension in the job selection process is our fear of the interviewer's relative power in comparison to ours in an interview situation. Many job applicants see the interviewer as a powerful figure who has the ability to influence their future. The knowledge that the interviewer influences our chances of obtaining a sought after position, transforms them into a powerful and at times threatening figure. In addition, if the interviewer is also a trained psychologist our feelings of stress and concern increase even more. As a psychologist, we feel as though the interviewer has the ability to spot our weaknesses and 'read our mind and soul' like an x-ray machine. This assumption often causes stress and creates a negative emotional reaction that limits our ability to handle the situation in a practical manner.

Some job seekers when faced with an interview situation can be introverted, defensive, avoid eye contact, and speak softly. They are quite often overly modest as if trying to prevent the interviewer from 'revealing' their weaknesses. Deep down they hope that the interviewer will appreciate their modesty, subtlety, gentleness and human side, viewing these traits as positives. This model of behaviour is commonly practiced by job applicants who assume the interviewer will avoid recommending applicants that are too dominant (or perhaps even have the potential of threatening their own status were they to be colleagues).

On the other side of the spectrum there are job applicants who adopt an opposing stance. To overcome their stress, anticipation, and the knowledge that the interviewer can influence their future career, they are often disrespectful and try to undermine the interviewer.

They often think along the lines of:

*"Who do they think they are anyway?"*

*"How can they possibly know how suitable I am for this position?"*

Some job applicants even go as far as adopting an aggressive approach. They tend to repeat the interviewers' questions, are sarcastic and are defiant as if the interviewer's questions are illegitimate. They are sceptical of the interviewer's ability to assess their suitability for the position. Such job applicants presume that if they fail to obtain the required position it is due to the interviewer's inability to assess their skills rather than genuine lack of skills on their part. They often do not comprehend that their emotional reactions are a direct result of the power they attribute to the interviewer over themselves and their future.

The patterns of behaviour on both sides of this spectrum, introvert vs. dominant and controlling, are typical of job applicants who feel a lack of confidence and are insecure in an interview situation. You can learn more about how to balance this behaviour and improve the impression you give over with JobTestPrep's range of [interview preparation services](#).

For example, a 43 year old man with an MBA and currently working as Sales & Marketing executive at a big firm, is applying for a new post. He is invited for an interview at a recruitment agency acting on behalf of the recruiting organisation.

Upon arrival he is informed that he will be interviewed by a 24 year old woman. His gut reaction (which he kept to himself!) was "what does she know?! I find it odd that such a young woman can interview such an experienced person like myself".

This initial reaction resulted in critical, sarcastic and disrespectful behaviour demonstrated on his part. The interviewer felt his hostile attitude and concluded that the job applicant is aggressive. She may also conclude that his reaction is a direct result of his inability to accept her authority as an interviewer. In conclusion, his behaviour reduces his chances of succeeding at the interview. His demeaning attitude is interpreted by the interviewer as inadequate and is recognised as a consequence of his lack of self-confidence.

One of the main purposes of preparing for an interview is to learn how to deal with the power the interviewer exerts – to let yourself, the interviewee, feel confident and secure when facing the interviewer. A mock interview can help you gain this confidence. Take a mock interview with [JobTestPrep's Skype based interviews](#).



## Who is the interviewer?

In an attempt to overcome the anxiety and anticipation accompanying the interviewing process, the interviewee often tries to discover who the interviewer is. By accessing information on the interviewer prior to the interview, the applicant may think that they can adapt their behaviour and responses to suit the expectations of the interviewer thereby increasing their chances of success.

The sort of questions that may pre-occupy the interviewee are:

- Who is the interviewer?
- How does he/ she think?
- What interests them?
- What will impress them?

In fact, some consultants advocate this sort of preparation. At JobTestPrep we hold the exact opposite to be true. Not only does finding out information on the interviewer not assist but rather it increases the potential anxiety prior to the interview.

When you are pre-occupied with the interviewer's character and their potential preferences you actually magnify the interviewer's power in your own mind and turn their image into a powerful and threatening one. When the interviewer's power is perceived as such your ability to answer questions concisely and effectively is compromised. This issue is often a major cause of concern for many applicants.

We recommend you focus your energy and thoughts instead on answering the questions presented to you in an interview accurately and comprehensively. Voice your skills and add value as a potential employee rather than pre-occupy yourself with irrelevant information regarding the interviewer's character and their personal preferences and expectations.

On that note, we must add that gaining knowledge and information about the organisation (rather than the interviewer) and its culture is important simply because you may find out that certain types of organisations do not appeal to you. In addition, the interview offers you an excellent opportunity to ask and find out more about the organisation you are applying for. To be able to ask questions it is most helpful if you have some prior knowledge on the organisation.

## What is the interviewer's impression of me?

The authoritative image you attribute to the interviewer results in increased apprehension on your part and may divert your attention thus compromising your ability to concentrate on what is being asked in the interview. The intimidating aura the interviewer has in your mind increases your concerns regarding the quality of the answers you give. Instead of responding concisely to the questions asked you attempt to please the interviewer by responding in a way that you think the interviewer expects.

The example below demonstrates the issue:

A self-confident, direct and dominant applicant is invited to an interview. During the interview the applicant is pre-occupied with the possibility that his dominant traits may compromise his chances to succeed in the interview. As a result the candidate tries to project submissive behaviour which in fact damages his image as a professional candidate.

This preoccupation with the interviewer, their expectations and their thoughts compromises your ability to provide targeted answers in the interview. It is impossible to envisage what the interviewer is thinking during an interview and it is even counter-productive. Just as you have no idea as to what the interviewer is thinking, the interviewer cannot read your thoughts. Focus on the questions asked, the matter at heart, and don't make any assumptions and presumptions – they are not useful in any way.

You can also prepare in advance the impression that you want to give over in the interview. Rehearsing your answers including your delivery tone, or thinking about what clothes you will wear the day or more in advance will help you create the image you present. JobTestPrep's [interview preparation services](#) can give you these and more tips.

## Dominating the interview

Concern about your interviewer, worrying about their thoughts and their impression of you and the urge to avoid and confront some of the questions in the interview – all these may result in domineering behaviour on the part of the interviewee. Such behaviour may be manifested by objecting and attempting to minimise the importance of some of the questions asked by the interviewer thereby hoping to influence the course of the interview (to their advantage). The interviewee may even try to show latent aggression and in that manner send a message to the interviewer that their questions are irrelevant. This manipulation is caused by the interviewee in the hope that it will assist them to stand the pressure of the interview with greater ease.

Contrarily, such behaviour may put pressure on the interviewer, raise doubts regarding their ability to co-work in the future and consequently conclude that such manipulative behaviour in the interview may predict similar behaviour in the working environment. Domineering behaviour may cause the interviewer to recoil and fail the interviewee.

Domineering behaviour in an interview is characterised in the following manner:

- **Lengthy answers** – when an applicant chooses to answer in a lengthy manner they are in effect controlling the interview. For example, if an interviewer asks an applicant to introduce themselves and the applicant takes up 20 minutes of the interview time do so, intentionally or due to lack of confidence, there may be very little time left for other questions. Therefore, in effect the applicant has controlled the interview. However, this 'technique' may raise objections on the part of the interviewer.
- **Short answers** – replying in a very short and brief manner may also cause the same effect. When asked questions an applicant may answer in a very brief manner forcing the interviewer to ask a lot of questions to elicit the information they require. This behaviour may irritate the interviewer and consequently lead to a decision to disqualify the applicant.
- **'Blocking' the interviewer** – some applicants try to control the interview by asking too many questions and talking about issues that are not directly related. By doing so they hope that they will be able to avoid some of the questions the interviewer could still ask. However, what happens in effect is that if the interviewer cannot obtain the information they wish they may disqualify the job applicant.

**Important! The interviewer sets the agenda for the interview and asks the questions. The interviewee contemplates the way to answer. As a job applicant you must avoid trying to manipulate the questions asked but rather answer them concisely, thoroughly and in a respectful manner.**

## The hostile interviewer

We generally expect the interviewer to be friendly and well mannered. However, there are occasions in which the interviewer turns out to be hostile, impatient, inconsiderate and even aggressive. This may be due to their lack of experience, unprofessional behaviour or simply because they have an unpleasant personal nature. An interview conducted by such a person may induce apprehension or even anger on the applicant's part. In addition it may even compromise their self-confidence. The higher the sense of insecurity and sensitivity is on the applicant's part, the greater the negative effect it will have. This may manifest itself in unwillingness to cooperate with the interviewer and subsequently disqualify the applicant.

The job applicant may also think:

*"If the interviewer is so hostile this may be indicative of the atmosphere at work and I have no wish to work with such colleagues or in such atmosphere"*

This attitude is counter-productive. First and foremost it may inhibit the applicant's ability to effectively cope with the interview; and second, the conclusion drawn may be wrong altogether. Perhaps the interviewer's behaviour is not indicative of anything – just of their own inappropriate behaviour and you may lose out on a wonderful opportunity. Moreover, perhaps the interviewer has deliberately acted in such a way to assess your ability to handle unpleasant situations.



### **Remember!**

Regardless of who the interviewer is you must always be well mannered and respond in a concise and professional manner. Your goal is to prove that even when you face an unpleasant interviewer you can face up to the challenge and be professional. If you have faith in yourself, avoid trying to please the interviewer. Believe in your abilities and you will be able to cope with any interviewer.

**Important! You must act in a professional manner even when facing a hostile interviewer. If you are concise and well-mannered despite the interviewer's aggression you will be respected. The interviewer will know that you are a person that is easy to get along with, a person that can withstand pressure and deal with unpleasant situations.**

## The friendly interviewer

In some cases you will meet a friendly, calm and welcoming interviewer. This may come as a relief to some and lead them to act enthusiastically and at times in a careless and perhaps unmeasured manner. Some interviewees could be voluntarily open to a degree in which they disclose information that is not necessarily required. The job applicant may think: "Since the interviewer is so friendly I have nothing to be concerned about, I presume they really like me and I can tell them anything".

Disclosing unnecessary information may be damaging and may even lead to disqualification.

For example: An applicant for a financial and administrative position is interviewed by an informal and friendly interviewer. She asks the applicant if in his current position in a financial and administrative position the bulk of the work is financial or administrative. Since the applicant feels comfortable he shares with the interviewer the fact that most of the work he does is in effect administrative by nature (even though there is a financial aspect to it). This kind of response has in effect compromised his chances of succeeding in the interview since the impression made is that he does not have the kind of experience they are looking for.

In fact, the applicant may have all the skills and experience required but since he decided to disclose information in an uncalculated manner he has made an unbalanced impression.

In most cases, a friendly and informal interviewer is an experienced one that 'seduces' the job applicant to act freely. Some applicants may feel overly comfortable in such situations and disclose their weaknesses to an extent that could lead to their disqualification.

### **Remember!**

An interview is an opportunity for you to exhibit your qualifications and skills rather than an opportunity to engage in friendly conversation and gain sympathy. Just as there is no reason for you to be offended or defensive when meeting a hostile interviewer, you must not celebrate and 'let your guard down' when meeting a friendly and informal interviewer. In both cases you must be concise, well-mannered and answer adequately to the questions asked – nothing more or less.



**Important! We recommend you focus on giving a concise presentation of your professional abilities. There is no need to disclose unnecessary private information and/or weaknesses to reciprocate the interviewer for his good natured behaviour.**

## **Treat the interviewer in a professional manner**

A change in attitude towards the interviewer is significant when preparing for an interview. Instead of fearing the interviewer and subsequently undermining and diminishing your professional accomplishments, or behaving in a disrespectful or aggressive manner in the interview we recommend you learn how to be professional and practical.

Being able to act in a professional manner in an interview is important. It is easier to choose to be offended and, insulted, and as a result be confrontational or disrespectful in an interview than to treat the occasion as a professional one regardless of the interviewer's behaviour.



For example, you have been told by your manager or a colleague that a certain piece of work you have done for a project was unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. You may choose to take it personally and feel offended and as a result harbour hostile feelings to the point at which you act in a contemptuous manner towards the person who criticised your work. On the other hand, you may opt to pay close attention to your colleagues' comments and try to understand thoroughly what the requirements are for you to amend any mistakes. This attitude is professional and assists in creating good communication channels that contribute to a positive and effective working environment.

Most of us find it challenging to accept criticism, even if it is just. Moreover, we find it difficult to avoid feeling resentment towards those that dispersed it in the first place. In this manner we inhibit and limit our ability to solve problems in a professional manner.

Heightened vulnerability and sensitivity may cause you to fail a work interview. A lot of people view the often personal nature of the questions as intrusive and as a result take offense or behave in a cynical, aggressive or introverted way towards the interviewer. By doing so, you expose your weaknesses and may cause yourself to fail the interview. Treating the interviewer in a professional and practical manner is the way to communicate well and deal positively with the interviewer's authority in an interview.

Prior to an interview it is important to change your attitude towards the interviewer and remember a number of facts:

- The interviewer is not trying to fail you but rather is trying to assess your skills and abilities. If you truly believe in yourself you will have no difficulty facing the interviewer. This fact seems straight forward but research shows that over 90% of job applicants are concerned that the interviewer is trying to set traps for them. These concerns impede your ability to feel confident in an interview. Try to internalise this fact – the interviewer is not trying to set traps or fail you. They are only trying to assess your compatibility. The more you comprehend this fact the more your attitude will become professional.
- In most cases the interviewer is a professional with the ability to assess if a candidate is compatible for a certain or position or not. Therefore, it is important and appropriate you treat them with respect. Some job applicants arrive at an interview already in a defensive and critical state of mind. These applicants may think that no interviewer has the ability to assess in the space of 20-30 minutes if a candidate is truly worthy. They may also think that the interviewer is not capable of spotting their true abilities and therefore if they are disqualified it is due to the interviewer's lack of ability. This thought is a misconception. Mostly, the interviewer has probably interviewed tens if not hundreds of job applicants and has all the required skills to make a sound judgment regarding their abilities.

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## Part 2 – The Interviewee

### You have power and influence

As mentioned above, some of us think that in an interview situation the interviewer has the authority and the power and the interviewee is the weaker one. Yet, the truth of the matter is that the situation is quite different. The interviewer controls the length of the interview, the questions asked and their own behaviour. However, the interviewer has no control over the outcome of the interview. The interviewer does not have in-depth prior knowledge about the job applicant, past performance, salient characteristics, and whether he/ she is a team player, etc.

Within the space of a few minutes the interviewer is required to assess a candidate and this is a complicated task to accomplish. Hence, the notion that the interviewer has all the information, is aware of everything, and controls the interview is misleading and untrue. The interviewer has control only over:

- The questions asked.
- The length of the interview.
- Their own behaviour (including their attitude towards the interviewee).

**Important! It is the interviewee, rather than the interviewer, who determines the outcome of an interview by choosing to behave in a certain manner and by the nature and content of their responses.**



As an interviewee you can determine and set:

- The content of your responses, what you choose to emphasise and what you don't.
- The tone of your voice and the pace at which you talk.
- Your influence on the interview– will you be optimistic, pessimistic or lack confidence?
- Your appearance.
- Your attitude towards the interviewer.
- The extent to which you are assertive.
- Your ability to focus on your positive and effective skills at work.

#### **Remember!**

You have the power to influence the outcome of the interview. Your behaviour and your responses to the questions asked determine if you get that job or not. Take advantage of the opportunity you are given and present yourself in a concise and professional manner. Avoid confrontation with the interviewer over issues that are beyond your control such as the type of questions asked, the interviewer's attitude towards you and whether the interviewer is nice or not. These elements are in the interviewer's hands and it is wrong for you to try and influence them.

## Self-esteem

Despite the fact that the interviewee has the ability to influence the outcome of the interview, often they have difficulty making use of that ability. This is an outcome of being too self-critical and perhaps having low self-esteem. Some of the applicants fail to consider their own professional experience and their own personality with due respect. Instead of noticing their strengths they focus on their weaknesses.

When applicants respect themselves and consider their contribution at work valuable they usually find it easier to describe their professional achievements in an interview. However, if an applicant is too self-critical and therefore does not value their own achievements and effort, they will have a hard time convincing the interviewer. Metaphorically, it is similar to a person that has a missing front tooth and during a conversation he tries to hide the fact by covering his mouth with his hand. This action draws attention to the fact that he is trying to conceal something and in effect highlights the fact that the tooth is missing rather than the opposite. In the same manner, a self-critical applicant will focus on trying to hide what they consider as their lack of achievement and will thus compromise their chances of creating a positive impression rather than enhance them.

For example: a job applicant resigned from his last position due to a low salary. During the interview he is pre-occupied by what sort of impression his reason for quitting would make on the interviewer. Due to low self-esteem and being too self-critical he thinks that the interviewer may interpret this reason in a negative manner, when in fact this is a good enough reason as any. As soon as the interview began and prior to being asked, he hastily mentioned the issue due to the stress he felt and the concern of what sort of impression that would make on the interviewer. Instead of talking about what he actually did and achieved in his last position he talked about the reasons for his resignation. The interviewer got the impression that the applicant was trying to make excuses and justify his actions. The impression made was one of insecurity and it pushed the interview in a different direction. The interviewer felt that the applicant felt uncomfortable with the reason for his resignation and decided to pursue the issue further despite the fact that the cause of resignation did not concern the interviewer to such a degree initially. In his own words, the applicant managed to turn the cause of his resignation, which was reasonable to begin with, to a main issue in the interview and the interview turned sour. Rather than emphasising his strengths, skills and achievements he exposed his weaknesses.

Criticism and low self-esteem affect the interview outcome in a negative manner.

People that do not view and treat themselves with respect and dignity have a hard time making a positive impression in an interview. Learn to respect yourself and what you have achieved – this will emerge in any situation including an interview.



## Treat yourself with respect – you deserve it

Increasing your self-esteem and transforming the manner in which you view yourself begins in your mind. In order to change your opinion of yourself you must focus on your qualities (not your 'traits', which can be positive or negative, but 'qualities' – since it is exactly what they are – of high quality!). To succeed you must, erase the negative. 'Lock' your mind on the positive and persevere. It is important you know yourself and the skills you possess - not generally but specifically. List your skills; if you know which skills you own you will find it much easier to present yourself and demonstrate to the interviewer why you are the perfect match for the job opening. Practice, practice and more practice. Before an assessment centre or any interview we suggest you do a short exercise that helps you surface the positive aspect of your personality in your own eyes.

From the list below, mark those qualities that characterise you:

- accuracy
- companionship
- creativeness
- entrepreneurship
- good heartedness
- leadership
- moderation
- organisation skills
- persistence
- commitment
- conscientiousness
- decisiveness
- flexibility
- integrity
- loyalty
- orderliness
- perseverance
- wisdom

Once you have marked your qualities from the list above – rehearse and memorise them – ingrain them. Train your mind through repetition.

For example:

*"I am a loyal employee."*

*"I have strong leadership skills."*

*"I am a responsible and conscientious worker."*

*"I am an intelligent and creative person."*

Phrase each statement in the most positive manner and repeat it at least 100 times. After repeating each statement enough times, the essence and meaning of the statement will begin to root itself in your mind and soul. If you have a mirror, try standing in front of the mirror and doing this exercise. This may all seem mechanical, artificial and even quite ridiculous (especially when standing in front of a mirror) at first. If negative or self-critical thoughts surface while you practice, ignore them and continue. Keep at it long and hard enough, and the results will surprise you.

This exercise is highly effective and we suggest you do it as often as possible – even daily. It can affect many aspects of your life, not just the professional (e.g. optimism, contentment, self-esteem). Your outlook on life may transform.

The strengths of these statements lie in repeating them over and over. The more you persevere, the greater the effectiveness and the deeper they will sink in to your conscious. If you focus your mind on your qualities on the way to an interview, you are on your way to success.

## Your attitude to the workplace makes a difference

Imagine a common situation in which you are having a chat with some friends and the topic of conversation is your satisfaction with your workplace. How would you describe your work? Is it something you enjoy or is it something that bores you? In the answer to this question lies your attitude towards your workplace. This attitude also influences the respect you have for yourself and how you perceive yourself. This attitude influences your ability to succeed in a job interview.

This works the other way round as well – interviewees that respect themselves, mostly view their professional achievements as well as their workplace in a positive light. Yet, interviewees who are not content with themselves have difficulty expressing their professional experiences in a positive and convincing manner and hence may fail to pass a job interview.

Quite a lot of people may feel dissatisfied with their work for various reasons:

- They are unhappy with how they are treated by their managers.
- They feel that the work is unchallenging and boring.
- They feel frustration and an inability to fulfil their potential.
- Some even admit they would quit their jobs if they could afford it.

If you approach an interview feeling discontent, disappointed, angry or frustrated with your current job, it is very hard to prevent these feelings from surfacing.

When harbouring hostile and negative feelings toward your workplace, eventually these feelings cause you to feel insecure and will affect the course of your interview when applying for a new position. While it is perfectly legitimate to want to change your job, try understanding the cause of your negative feelings.

There are a number of reasons why people feel discontent at work but in a lot of cases these feelings originate from the employee's inability to be engaged and influential at work. The ability to be influential is usually the result of perseverance and the ability to cope with the challenges at work. This ability requires stamina and some people lose it as soon as the first challenges arise.

It is perfectly normal to want to progress or simply change jobs during the course of your career. However, even if you are not content with your current position, try to observe the cause objectively. Try to eliminate and uproot those negative feelings that you are harbouring. They will only compromise your chances of success in the next interview. If you feel frustrated or angry at work for any reason, try to detach the emotional elements and analyse the cause of frustration in a rational manner. This will defuse some of the negative feelings you have, and may enable you to conduct an interview in a calm and professional manner.



Employees that manage to cope with hardships at work, that persevere in frustrating situations, and that are not offended too easily, will stand a better chance at viewing their workplace in a professional manner and will even be able to treat these hardships as challenges rather than obstacles. This mature attitude is bound to surface and help you succeed in your next job interview.

## Changing your attitude to the workplace

We argued that harbouring negative feelings and having a negative attitude towards your current or past workplace may compromise your chances of success in your next interview. Prior to an interview you must learn to treat your past jobs with respect and view them in a positive light. Don't come to an interview feeling disappointed and discontent – this will only increase feelings of insecurity during the interview. Negative feelings by nature affect your behaviour. For example, if you feel anger when driving, you are bound to have a negative attitude toward other drivers.

Attitude towards the workplace changes from one person to another. Some people find the positive aspects in any job while others will find reasons to be angry and disappointed. Attitude towards the workplace is very much a consequence of a conscious decision.

Even if you experienced a lack of success at work, even if your work bored you, even if you felt your manager ignored you, and even if you were treated disrespectfully – before the next job interview change your attitude towards the past. Learn to forgive, view these experiences as learning opportunities. Even if you had a routine job, learn to respect it, to respect your contribution and the effort you put into it. The ability to appreciate what you have and accept any job as a challenge characterises successful people – people that every employer wants to hire.

The change in attitude begins in your mind. To succeed you must concentrate on the positive and practice overcoming those negative feelings that are so familiar and that keep surfacing. Initially the negative feelings are bound to surface – old habits die hard. Do not let them overwhelm you. Learn to concentrate on those positive aspects at work (even if they were very little), forgive those that didn't treat you well, drop the anger and the disappointment. Focus on the positive and the good.

Repeat and focus your mind on:

- The things that you have contributed to.
- The things that make you feel worthy and content.
- The people you liked and respected.
- Those aspects that were positive in your manager's progression.

When the critical voices fade away, the anger and disappointment will cease to reign and you will manage to see the positive aspect of your work. When you will learn to respect your superiors, despite their behaviour; when you learn to respect your achievements – then you can feel confident that you are on your way to achieving a successful interview on the road to a new job.

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## Part 3 – The Interview

### The interview - a table tennis game

The effective way to behave in an interview is to answer the questions you are asked in a concise manner without manipulation and without trying to avoid the questions asked. Similar to a table tennis game, the objective of each of the players is to pass the ball to the opponent's court. When an interviewer asks a question – answer precisely to what is being asked; return the ball to the interviewer's court. It may seem as if there is nothing simpler, however a lot of interviewees are concerned they may answer incorrectly and tend to respond without offering a definitive answer, or by offering irrelevant information.

**Example A:**

Interviewer: *“What were you doing between 2000 and 2003?”*

Applicant: *“The truth is there is nothing important to say about these years. Yet, in 2004-2005 I was involved in projects that were much bigger and prestigious that may be of interest to you.”*

In this case the job applicant does not answer the question they were asked and creates a bad impression. The interviewer may think that the applicant is trying to avoid or hide an issue. The more your responses are concise and focused (not necessarily too short or brief) the better the impression you make. This may require some effort on your part but it is definitely worth your while.

**Example B:**

Interviewer: *“Please describe your last position”*

Applicant: *“In my last position I managed a team of 8 computer programmers. I was managing a R&D project that developed a new instrument that discovers faults in airplane engines”*

In this case, the applicant responds in a concise manner and answers the question they were asked.

## Questions – is the interviewer the only one asking?

Most of us perceive a job interview as a situation in which the roles are clear cut; the interviewer asks questions to assess our potential suitability for the job opening and we answer them. By and large this is true. Yet, an interview is also an excellent opportunity for you to genuinely find out information about the offered position, the company or any other relevant issue. As an interviewee it is your obligation to confirm that the job opening is also suitable for you – it must suit both parties.

A certain dynamic develops during the course of an interview between the interviewer and interviewee. It is true that your role in an interview is mainly to answer questions and a certain balance must be maintained, yet it is legitimate for you to ask questions; it is required to a degree.

Sometimes it may be wise to end a response to a question with a related question of your own. It shows you are active in the interview and not only responsive. It also indicates a level of confidence that you have and most importantly it is a genuine opportunity for you to find out any information you want.

It is common that at the end of the interview the interviewer leaves a few minutes for any questions you may have. If the interviewer specifically asks you to save any questions you may have to the end of the interview then respect their wish. However, in most cases it is acceptable to ask questions you may have during the interview.

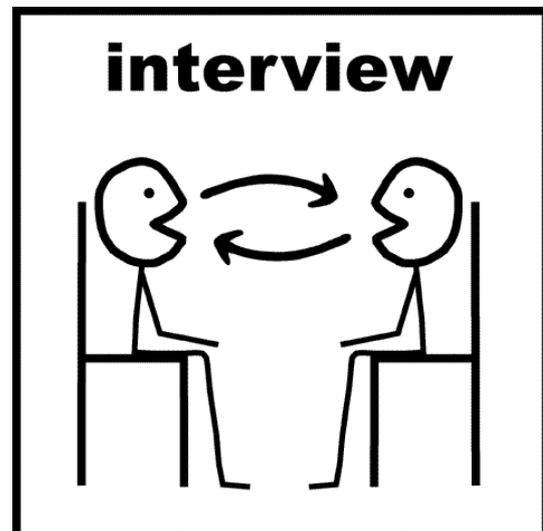
If you are not sure when the right moment to ask a question is, or how to pose it, then keep in mind that many questions asked by the interviewer can be a basis for a question you can ask. You may end a response to a question by posing a related question of your own.

For example, if you are asked to describe a successful professional experience and you are not sure if this sort of experience is useful in the new organisation you can simply ask at the end of your response, 'Is this kind of experience useful in your organisation?'

If the job opening is in a team and you are asked to demonstrate how you worked in a team then you may be interested in knowing, 'How does team work operate in this organisation?'

If you are asked to demonstrate your skills you can end your response by asking what the skills they are seeking are.

Almost any question posed by the interviewer can serve as a basis for a question of yours.



**Remember!**

Do not pose questions just for the sake of asking. The interview is an excellent opportunity for you to find out any information you may seek about the organisation or the job opening so you can make your own judgement as to the suitability of the position to your skills and needs.

## Body language

Many body language experts advise maintaining eye contact, sitting up straight, smiling and generating optimism, and avoiding showing any signs of anxiety and stress during the interview. Objectively, this is good advice but there is a fundamental difficulty in following it during an interview. If you are preoccupied with the advice given - how to smile sympathetically, how to maintain eye contact, how to avoid fidgeting and so on - your thoughts are not focused on the questions being asked, but rather on your body language. When the bulk of your attention is focused on your body language, your ability to answer the interviewer's questions concisely and in a proper manner is being inhibited.



Body language is the reflection of one's emotions at a given point in time. When the job applicant is preoccupied with the interviewer's powerful image and thoughts they are likely to answer the questions in a soft tone and will have trouble projecting optimism. When the job applicant is concerned about the interviewer's power they will have a problem maintaining eye contact. When the interviewee undervalues their own abilities the body language signs will reflect this.

We recommend that you avoid being preoccupied with your body language and any 'external' signs but rather focus on the interviewer's questions, on the situation at hand and on your high self-esteem – appreciate yourself. If you value yourself the external body signs will reflect this. Your innate feelings influence your external behaviour.

When you address the interview situation as an opportunity rather than an obstacle, your body language will reflect this as will your attitude towards the interviewer. If you adopt a positive stance towards the interviewer, your body language will be relaxed and calm. If you remain focused on the questions asked (rather than on your body language, the quality of your answers, the impression you make or any other distracter) and are confident in your abilities – your body language will show it.

Practise your body language in a mock interview with [JobTestPrep](http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk). An interviewer can tell you what you are doing right and what you are doing wrong.

## Your tone of voice

An interview is similar in a way to a tune. The lyrics are the content of the interviewee's responses and the music is the tone of voice used. Certain songs may have an optimistic empowering effect or contrarily may be melancholy and blue. An interviewee that responds in a confident manner is likely to induce confidence in the interviewer. Conversely, an interviewee who is shy and hesitant, is similar to a sad tune, and is likely to raise doubt and concern in the interviewer. The interviewer may wonder, 'this person seems unconfident, will they be suitable for the position?' The doubt emerging in the interviewer's mind may disqualify the job applicant (interviewee).

Many job applicants assume that if the content of their answers is good and worthy, their path to success in the interview is almost certain. True, the content of the responses is extremely important but the tone of voice is just as important; perhaps even more so! Your tone of voice sets the atmosphere during an interview. It projects your inner confidence, your authority and the ability to cope. The degree of inner confidence projected through your tone of voice sets the tone and atmosphere of the interview to a large extent and induces a sense of confidence in the interviewer in relation to the applicant. An applicant can have perfect answers in an interview but if the music of the words spoken is hesitant and shy the interview may turn sour.

For your tone of voice to sound confident it must come from within. You must believe in yourself; in your abilities; in your talent and in your skills. In the previous sections ('**treat yourself with respect – you deserve it**' and '**your attitude to the workplace makes a difference**' ) we discussed and reiterated the importance of having faith in yourself and in ways of increasing your self-esteem and reducing self-criticism. The more you appreciate your past positions and achievements, the more confident you will be; the more confident you will be, the more it will show in your tone of voice.

A mock interview via Skype will give you the opportunity to try out your interview voice, and rehearse how to use it to best effect. Learn more about [JobTestPrep's Skype based interview package](#).

## The interview – entering the room

The first few seconds, before a single word has been spoken are critical. The time from which you enter the room and take your seat is of utmost importance. During those first few seconds, you make your first impression on the interviewer. It is crucial that the initial impression made is a positive one, that has a presence and that bestows confidence. If you project concern and hesitance you may start off on the wrong foot.

Enter the room with confidence, ready for the challenge believing that you are the most worthy candidate. Maintain eye contact, smile and stand up straight. Leave your worries and concerns outside the door.



**Remember!**

You are a professional, you are capable and have the ability to succeed in the position offered. You are happy to take up the opportunity to present your talents and skills. View the interview as an opportunity rather than an obligation.

For interview behaviour tips such as this one, see [JobTestPrep's online interview preparation package](#).

## Do not apologise

We all have our disadvantages. Yet, sometimes we consider some of our weaknesses as critical. For example:

- lack of education
- inadequate work experience
- old age
- a certain physical limitation
- too many work places in the resume
- low language levels

In an interview, the applicant is apprehensive and is concerned about possible questions that may be asked that are related to their perceived weakness(es). When indeed a related question is raised, the applicant is anxious and responds with an apology. For example, an interviewer asks an applicant that has worked in a large number of companies why this is. The applicant, apprehensive to begin with, blushes and admits that the same question is asked of him in other interviews. This response in the form of a latent apology magnifies the issue and may actually turn to be an obstacle in the interview; a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the perceived weakness preoccupies the applicant it becomes a salient point in the interview and may compromise it. However, if the applicant manages to decrease the importance of the perceived weakness in their own mind, its effect on the interview may be minimal.

Some people perform extremely well despite their limitations and may even turn their perceived limitation into an advantage; others are completely held back by them. Our attitude towards our limitations and weaknesses is of more importance than the actual limitation. An applicant that apologises for having a weakness is making a critical mistake.

Most of us think that the way in which the interviewer perceives our weaknesses determines the outcome of the interview when in effect; the outcome of the interview is determined by our own perception of ourselves.

Apologising in an interview is a mistake which stems from insecurity. As a candidate you must show that despite your limitations you are a worthy one. Do not use an apologetic tone during the course of your interview.

- If you lack sufficient education, prove that despite this limitation you make up for it in work experience.
- If you lack work experience show how you make up for it in talent, skill and motivation.
- If you are older, you must have a lot of valuable experience and ambition. (Note: asking an interviewee explicitly of their age is illegal in some countries).
- If you are limited physically in some way, show how the limitation does not compromise the work you are expected to do.
- If you have changed jobs many times , emphasise your versatile work experience or elaborate on only some of the roles you had, those that are most relevant.
- If you do not have full command of the language, show that you have all the skills necessary to fulfil the role regardless.

In any case, emphasise your strengths. Do not apologise for your weaknesses. Prove that despite your weakness you are a worthy candidate.

### **Remember!**

The purpose of a job interview is to assess your suitability for the job offered. An apology may be interpreted as lack of faith in your own ability to do the job. You must believe you are the best candidate for the job.



## **Telling the truth...**

One of the most concerning questions before an interview is how to tell your story – should it be the truth and nothing but that, or is there an element of bending the facts allowed?

Examples:

- If you did not get along with your manager at your previous position and you are asked about this relationship – do you tell the plain truth or do you avoid it?
- If you were very bored at your last position and you felt that the job was worthless what will you answer when you are asked to 'please describe your last position' – will you tell the interviewer the truth?
- If you were made redundant because you did not fit in – will you tell the interviewer the real reason for your redundancy?

These dilemmas exist in our lives every day and not just in an interview situation. There are certain occasions when we do not have any choice but to 'bend' the truth, there are other

situations where we present certain parts of the truth and there are situations in which we are 100% honest.

Prisoners of war are expected to lie in captivity to mislead the enemy. If they were to tell the truth they would be considered traitors in their homeland. This is an extreme situation in which the 'correct' thing to do is to lie.

An advertising company marketing a product will usually present 'parts' of the truth and facts about the product they are promoting. The advertising agency must emphasise the product's advantages and hide all other aspects. For example, an advertising company producing a commercial for a fizzy drink will highlight its great taste but will not mention the fact that it is unhealthy and fattening.

However, there are situations when we are expected to say the whole truth and nothing but the truth. For instance, when a person is seeking therapy and counselling they are expected to be honest and truthful since otherwise the counsellor's ability to assist the patient is limited. Amongst friends we are generally truthful since friendships are based on trustworthiness and common faith. Yet even in certain relationships with friends we may choose not to disclose everything or perhaps even tell a partial untruth because we are aware that certain people, in spite of being friends, have a hard time keeping a secret. As mature adults we learn who to tell the whole truth to and who to only tell parts of it. This is similar to the situation in a job interview.

When in a job interview it is recommended that you focus on those elements that emphasise your abilities and advantages. A job interview is not the place to be completely 'open' as you would with your therapist or friends. Disclosing everything may actually compromise your chances of success.

Let's illustrate this to you:

*Interviewer: "Why did you resign from your last position?"*

*Job Applicant: "The real reason was my manager's lack of appreciation of me and my work and her offensive behaviour towards me."*

The job applicant answered the question in a manner that may inhibit his chances at making a good impression. The job applicant opted to tell the whole truth as he would when conversing with a close friend or a psychologist. But by doing so he exposed some of his weaknesses. In this example, the interviewer may conclude that if the former manager did not appreciate the job applicant, there may be a genuine reason for it.



This attitude may impinge on the job applicant's chances of successfully completing the interview. We advise that you answer the question in a manner that will not reduce your chances of success but rather increase them. The job applicant could have answered; "my reason for resigning was my ambition to move forward in my career, to a company that uses more advanced technology". In this manner the interviewee levers his resignation as an advantage rather than a disadvantage which assists him in the interview situation and will increase his chances of progressing to the next stage of the selection process.

An interview situation is similar to a marketing campaign. You must emphasise your good qualities, rather than being totally honest as you would with a close friend or therapist. Were you to disclose all your weaknesses, genuine as they may be, you may affect the outcome of the interview and you may project an image of a person that has trouble facing stressful situations (like an interview). It is expected that you 'market' your good qualities – avoiding doing so may be interpreted as a weakness.

In some cases you may even be advised to conceal some of the facts. For example, if you were made redundant due to a bad relationship with your manager it would be best if you could avoid saying so. This is similar to an advertising company admitting that the product that it is promoting can sometimes be harmful.

*Example: A candidate for a financial management position in an organisation is asked – "what are the reasons for leaving your last employer?"*

*In this particular instance the candidate was working as a finance manager for a subsidiary of a larger company. Her decision to resign was a result of a dispute that she had with the mother company's CFO on the annual budget for the subsidiary. She replied "the CFO decided that I am not suitable for the position". This answer puts her in a very negative light when the facts in this case were much more complex.*

*She could have answered "the mother company controlled the entire budget of the subsidiary I worked for and therefore my ability to thoroughly do my job was limited. I decided to resign and search for a position in which I would have more authority".*

Some job applicants present themselves in a certain manner that is an outcome of their emotional state caused by their experience at work. In such cases, the job applicant has been offended to such an extent that they have the urge to obtain the interviewer's sympathy and therefore they disclose all the facts. This attitude is inappropriate in this situation. The interviewer's objective is not to be sympathetic to the job applicant's past experiences.

Some candidates are certain that telling the whole truth will gain the interviewers respect, show they're trustworthy and therefore the interviewer will prefer them. In reality the interviewer will usually prefer a candidate that presents themselves positively over a candidate that has behavioural problems but is totally honest.

The interview is a situation where an applicant should present themselves rather than expose themselves. Experience shows that telling the whole truth and being perfectly honest is a mistake in such situations that usually stems from weakness, increased sensitivity, an inability to cope with an interview situation and from an innate desire to please the interviewer.

### **Remember!**

The interviewer is not your therapist – you were not invited to an interview to share your weaknesses and troubles.

## **Dress code and presentation**

A single, generic dress code suitable for any job interview does not exist. The dress code for an interview must be fitting for the position you are applying for. If you are applying for a position in a bank or office based job you are advised to be 'suited and booted', wearing a suit and tie. If you are applying for an outdoor maintenance job, you are likely to dress more casually. In any event, you must dress up in a neat and tidy manner and tone down the colours of your clothes. Shades of white, black, grey, brown, blue and green are all recommended colours.

Make sure that your choice of clothes for the job interview is slightly 'fancier' than what the actual job requires. Your appearance must be fitting and appropriate for the occasion.

For interview behaviour tips, see [JobTestPrep's online interview preparation package](#).



## **Telephone interview**

Telephone interviews are increasingly used in selection processes. Most often they do not replace the face-to-face interview, rather they are an initial stage in the sifting process after the CV screening but prior to administering tests or conducting face-to-face interviews. In cases of great geographical distances a telephone interview may also replace the traditional interview.

Clearly, whether it replaces the traditional interview or it is in addition to it, the telephone interview is an additional stage in the sifting process that you must pass successfully.

Intuitively, you may think that since it is administered long-distance, in the comfort of your own home and you cannot be seen, it is easier. Don't be fooled. In fact in many ways a telephone interview is more challenging than a face-to-face one since you must rely only on the content of your words and the sound of your voice to make an impression. You may recall times when you have written an e-mail or letter to someone and you have been misunderstood. The written word provides a single dimension of communication – it requires the use of your imagination to add tone and sound to those words. Similarly, in a phone call

you hear a person's voice yet you use your imagination to match a face and appearance to the sound you hear over the receiver. Sounds may be deceiving. Therefore, a telephone interview requires special effort.

The telephone interview requires:

- **Appropriate clothing** – true, the interview takes place in the comfort of your own home but that does not lessen the importance of the occasion. Dressing appropriately, rather than staying in your pyjamas, will change your attitude. Dressing properly affects your demeanour, making it more apt and serious.
- **Preparation** – a telephone interview enables you to prepare thoroughly in advance. You can write down important points and possible answers to difficult questions that may be posed. The better prepared you are the lesser the chance of being lost for words in the actual interview.
- **Documents** – as opposed to a face- to- face interview, in a telephone interview you can actually have the notes you used for preparation in front of you. Take advantage of this opportunity – write down all the important points and have them in front of you.
- **Minimal distractions** – find a quiet room at home, shut the door and make sure you are not distracted. Keep yourself focused and concentrated – it is important you do so!
- **Moderate speech** – speak in a lucid voice and at a moderate pace so that you are well understood and come across clearly. In addition, speaking at in a moderate pace will set the pace of the conversation. A slower conversation provides more time to think prior to responding and sets a more comfortable and calm atmosphere overall.
- **Adequate tone of voice** – most importantly you must make sure your tone of voice is enthusiastic, confident, clear and concise.
- **Attention** – be attentive to the interviewer.  
Listen carefully to the questions asked and take time to think about them before answering.



### Remember!

Speech – your voice, intonation and content – is the only instrument you have during a telephone interview. Use this instrument skilfully; make the most of it and you are bound to pass this stage in the sifting process.

A mock interview can help you get the preparation you need for a telephone interview, to learn what need to do. [JobTestPrep's Skype based interviews](#) can offer you interview preparation inside your home, thus imitating a telephone interview.

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## Part 4 – Questions & Answers

The questions covered in this section are some of the most common interview questions, but they also continually cause problems. Rehearsing your answers in advance with a [JobTestPrep Skype interview](#) will help you put the necessary polish on for the real interview.

### What can you tell me about yourself?

This question is quite vague and general and usually creates confusion or a dilemma for the interviewee. The interviewee may think; *'what does this mean?'*, *'what am I expected to answer?'*, *'are they referring to my personal or professional life?'*

If the interviewee is unconfident, hesitant or apprehensive they will have a hard time responding to such a question.

Some interviewees may ask:

- "What do you mean exactly?"
- "Could you be more specific?"
- "This is a question I often have difficulty in answering."

The rationale behind the responses above lies in the preoccupation some applicants have trying to figure out the interviewer's intentions. Instead of focusing their mind and energy on what they would like to say, they waste time and energy on trying to decipher the interviewer's agenda. Such responses present the interviewee in an insecure manner and may affect the development of the interview. The first question in an interview is of the utmost importance as it sets the initial impression, which impinges, more often than not, on the interview result. A hesitant and anxious opening to an interview may be detrimental. Often it is very hard to 'get back on track' after a bad opening.

#### Remember!

You came to an interview to succeed! If the interviewer provides you with an opportunity to present yourself – seize the moment! Keep focused, be concise, don't hesitate and don't be concerned; open the interview with a sense of power and enthusiasm. Put emphasis on your professional skills; concentrate on the aspects that present your abilities and accomplishments at work.

For example: in a job interview for a project manager position in a software company, the interviewer poses the applicants a question; *'what can you tell me about yourself?'*

Interviewee A: *'My name is John Haines, I am an industrial engineer. In the last 4 years I managed a software project for a telecommunications firm. Prior to that, I was working as a programmer in the R&D team in the same firm. I am 33 years old and am currently living in SW London.'*

In this case John chose to answer concisely, in a manner that exemplifies his capabilities which are relevant to the position he was interviewed for.



Interviewee B: *'My name is Robin O'Brian, I was born to a warm and loving family in the village of Blighton; I am 36 and married to Jeanine. We have two wonderful daughters who I adore. I think that fatherhood in general and the relations we have with our loved ones are extremely important and would like to think that I value and maintain relationships more than most people. I put a great emphasis on relations with others.'*

Robin would like to turn the interview into an informal and personal conversation. He wishes to induce sympathetic feelings in the interviewer and turn the occasion into a warm and friendly one. This attitude does not coincide with the professional manner discussed earlier. Robin responded in an unprofessional manner. He presented himself as sensitive and emotional; the message he portrayed was one of emotion rather than professionalism. One may even conclude that as a manager Robin may be overly sensitive and may have a hard time pursuing a professional agenda.

John, on the other hand, has already created an advantage for himself through his initial response to the question.

### **In response to the question, what can you tell me about yourself?**

Do not contemplate and procrastinate over the interviewer's hidden meaning. The interviewer does not have a hidden agenda; he just wants to get to know you better and your abilities as a candidate. The first question in an interview is an opportunity for you to set the tone of the interview. It is vital that your response remains to the point and focused; 40 seconds that describe your professional experience in a nut shell. We recommend avoiding lengthy and cumbersome responses. Long answers are tiresome and may create a feeling that you are trying to control the progression of the interview. The interviewer has no interest in your personal experiences; they are interested in your abilities as a professional. Concentrate on your professional accomplishments and advantages and refrain from personal stories. Respond enthusiastically and cooperate with the interviewer. They are not your enemy; they are trying to figure out if you are a worthy candidate – prove it to them. Cope with the situation and the question asked, do not indulge in self-pity. You are a worthy candidate – you better believe it!

The response: begin with a description of your last position, the main responsibilities you had (3-5 sentences); continue with the description of your position prior to that (1-2 sentences) and so on with any other positions you had which are relevant to the position you are applying for. If your education is relevant, – present it briefly; if it isn't, – leave it out. Conclude with a few words on the traits you have that are important for the position.

### **Please describe your last position.**

When posing this question the interviewer would like to understand what you did in your last position and how your experience is relevant for the current position. Hence, the response must focus on the main elements of your last position, specifically on those that are relevant for the position you are applying for. The challenge in the response to this question stems from the need to differentiate between the aspects you should present and those that are irrelevant for the occasion.

For example: a mechanical engineer is asked to describe his last position. He replies, *'in conclusion I enjoyed my last position, most of the time I met clients and developed good working relationships. What troubled me is that my hands were tied, so to speak, and I couldn't express my talents.'*

The applicant should have concentrated on his skills and responsibilities, his involvement and contribution to the projects he was involved in. Instead, he presents the obstacles and frustrations he had with his job. Bringing up the hardships, may actually lead the interviewer to discuss them in depth rather than the initial intention of focusing on the interviewer's professional abilities. By choosing to respond in such a manner, the interviewee steered the direction of the interview, albeit being it a wrong one.

Any position can be described in various ways. In an interview concentrate on the aspects that exemplify contribution, responsibility, involvement, effort and care. The interviewer must sense that the potential candidate is one who is involved, responsible and contributes.

### **Remember!**

The interviewer does not wish to learn about your problems; they want to know how you can contribute to and benefit the organisation.

A person applying for a sales position – a position that entails handling customers, interpersonal skills, sales and negotiation skills, strong motivation and managerial ability is better off emphasising those aspects of their last position that demonstrate those skills.



These aspects may be the important ones for the sought after position. Contrarily, an applicant for an accountant position in a financial services firm would be wise to emphasise their numerical skills and demonstrate business areas they were responsible for as well as their involvement in financial and economic processes in the company.

When describing your last position it is imperative that you present it as an important and worthy one; an accomplished professional role which contributed significantly to the organisation. An appropriate presentation will increase the interviewer's appreciation of you as a valuable candidate.

Candidates with a critical attitude who do not perceive their own contribution to their last position considerable will have a difficult time depicting their role in a positive manner.

#### **Example A**

*Interviewer: "Please describe your last position."*

*Interviewee: "Well I must say, I did not enjoy being an air host. I didn't like the uniform, the discipline was too strong, the staff I worked with were unfriendly. I just wanted to do the necessary minimum which was required of me."*

The interviewee responded in such a manner since he had a hard time coping with the demands of the role. He blames the organisation, the role itself and the staff rather than his own ability to cope with the role requirements. Rather than employing a positive attitude and demonstrating the challenging aspects of the role as well as the responsibilities he had, the

interviewee opted to use a critical tone. This creates a negative impression. Even if the job itself had its problematic aspects and even if it was a job the interviewee had to do before applying for a better job, he would have been much better off presenting it as a positive learning experience.

#### Example B

Interviewer: *"Please describe your last position."*

Interviewee: *"Working as an air host was a learning experience for me. I learned how the organisation operates, and the responsibilities I had. I felt I was contributing to my team. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience that is very likely to benefit me in my future roles in the organisation."*

The interviewee's attitude was positive. The interviewer got the impression that the candidate treated his last position with gravity. This proves that he is ambitious and can cope well within the constraints of an organisation even if the role may not be very challenging by definition.

### **In response to the question, please describe your last position.**

Respect yourself and your work. Learn to respect the organisation you worked for (even if you are somewhat critical of certain things in it) and your contribution to it. Concentrate on the areas which you contributed to and that exemplify your abilities. Emphasise the aspects of the roles you had that are most applicable to the new position you're after. For example, if you applied for a managerial role then highlight the aspects of your last position that demonstrate responsibility, interpersonal skills, management of people, motivation, decision making and rule acceptance.

## **What did you like/ enjoy in your last position?**

Once an interviewer has understood what the applicant did in his last position and what the responsibilities were, very often they would try to assess the candidate's attitude toward the position. Which elements of the role did they enjoy? Did they enjoy the role at all? What was the applicant most involved in? The responses to these questions will assist the interviewer to gauge if the position offered suits the applicant.

Some interviewees will find it difficult to answer this question since they did not find their last position enjoying or fulfilling at all. They feel they may have to lie about their experience and that may put them in a spot. Further, a positive response is not by default a good one.

For example: Emma is interviewed for an engineering position in an Information Technology company. The interviewer asks Emma, *"Which elements of your last position did you enjoy the most?"*

Emma: *"I enjoyed the versatility of the job, the team was great and the atmosphere was very pleasant – it almost felt like home."*

This is definitely a positive response and the interviewer has an impression that Emma enjoyed her work. But, Emma's response revolves around emotional aspects; what did the interviewer learn about the professional aspects? The interviewer did not elicit any information on how Emma contributed to her work or what were the tasks she enjoyed working in most.

A more adequate answer could have been, "I enjoyed the managerial aspects of the job, the ability to motivate people and my influence on decisions taken in the organisation."

### **In response to the question what did you like/enjoy in your last position?**

Focus on your accomplishments and achievements. If you enjoyed working in a team or managing, then emphasise the fact that you liked having the ability to influence others; emphasise the fact that you enjoyed meeting your goals and deadlines; emphasise your satisfaction when successfully facing challenges.

Try to avoid or at least minimise the emotional elements, such as 'I enjoyed the atmosphere and the people'. This is important yet it does not contribute a lot to the interviewer's understanding of the professional side of your job. This may present you as someone who is more concerned with their own comfort than with the actual job at hand.

## **Please describe your line manager/ supervisor/ superior?**

The significance of this question lies in the interviewer's will to assess the interviewee's ability to work within a framework; their ability to accept rules, be professional and be part of an organisation. Rule acceptance is vital for most positions. People who are able to follow the rules and accept authority usually have an easier time acclimatising to a new work environment and will generally fit in better than individuals who are routine averse and have a need for 'space' and 'freedom'. Some candidates who were at conflict with their superiors during their career may actually perceive this question as an opportunity to 'get even' or set the score straight. They may choose to present their manager as incompetent and discredit them or even insinuate that any achievement or accomplishment made can only be credited to themselves. More often than not, this presents the interviewee as a person who has problems accepting authority and who is disrespectful of superiors. Such a person may even find the interview situation as problematic and may try to resist the interviewer's authority.

Using superlatives and extreme affection when describing your manager is not necessarily good either. A person who shows feelings of admiration towards their superior may be too emotional. It may present the applicant in a needy and childish light. Such applicants may often expect the interviewer to be a wonderful and inspiring person. This attitude is childish and imbalanced and may leave a bad impression altogether.



Management Score Card	
ENERGY .....	E
DRIVE .....	U
VISION .....	D
TEAM PLAYER.....	E
ROLE MODEL .....	D

Overall, it is better to keep your descriptions of your manager professional. You may describe them as responsible, hardworking, motivated, a good manager, or in any other professional manner you see fit. A professional and balanced description of your manager reflects yourself as a professional, respectful and mature candidate. You do not have to portray an exaggerated or misrepresented picture of your superior, but try to highlight the positive aspects which you valued. An interview is not the setting to get even with your manager; it will only impede your chances of success in the interview.

### **In response to the question please describe your line manager/ supervisor/ superior?**

Describe your superior in a positive and professional light. Emphasise those aspects that you found positive and worthy. Avoid being too critical, disrespectful or contrarily worshipping your superior. Learn to respect your supervisor (even if they weren't perfect!). A candidate that has respect for their work environment, colleagues and superiors, regardless of how critical they may be of them, is usually a more mature, rule accepting, professional and ultimately a better one.

## **Which aspects of the job did you not enjoy in your last position?**

When asking this question the interviewer wishes to learn which aspects of the job were of less interest to the interviewee. This is a challenging and tricky question because the applicant is asked to specify the negative sides of their job.

We recommend:

- Answer with confidence; avoid being hesitant or sarcastic.
- Refer to elements that are of less relevance to the position you are applying for. For example, a marketing manager may state that they did not enjoy the paper work. This element is bound to be a part of the future position but it is not a fundamental one, as opposed to holding negotiations and dealing with potential customers.
- Conclude your response with the positive and enjoyable aspects of your job that you consider important and which demonstrate skills and abilities which are relevant to the position you are applying for.



Example A: In an interview for a Research and Development department position in a Hi-Tech company, Matt is asked, *'which aspects of the job did you not enjoy in your last position?'*

Matt: *"It's only natural that I didn't like everything about the job, isn't it? I think the company situation in general was poor. I think the company was mismanaged. I didn't enjoy working with my colleagues too much and the relationships with upper management wasn't very good – they weren't attentive to developments in our department."*

Matt's attitude is too critical. He is disrespectful of his colleagues and management. This may portray Matt as someone who has difficulties accepting authority and/or working with others. The issues Matt presented were fundamental rather than minor or superfluous. Matt disclosed his inability to accept upper management decisions and difficulty to communicate with them. In the worst case scenario, this could disqualify Matt or at best lead the interviewer to discuss Matt's issues further.

Example B: Rebecca applied for a leading accountant position in a large firm and is asked by the interviewer, *'which aspects of the job did you not enjoy in your last position?'*

Rebecca: *"I didn't like the last few months at work. I felt as if there was a glass ceiling over my head, preventing me from progressing. Everything bored me, I could not foresee a future and I could not find a suitable position to aspire for."*

Instead of concentrating on a specific instance which was somewhat difficult, Rebecca discloses that she had significant issues at work. She says she had problems handling routine. The interviewer can interpret it as an inability to cope with frustration, routine and unpleasant situations. This can fail Rebecca. Rebecca is describing a situation in which she was bored at work yet the company management could not find her a more suitable role. The interviewer may conclude that she was not promoted due to poor performance.

Example C: During an interview for a sales manager position, Jane is asked, *'which aspects of the job did you not enjoy in your last position?'*

Jane: *"I did not like those occasions in which we did not meet our targets. Also, I don't care for paperwork too much. I really enjoyed meeting my targets."*

Jane, portrays a balanced picture. She tells of difficulties that are reasonable to have in any position. These difficulties do not impinge on Jane's abilities as a sales manager. Jane discloses information on areas of work which she did not enjoy as much, but these areas do not expose any significant weaknesses.

### **In response to the question, which aspects of the job did you not enjoy in your last position?**

Cope with the question; do not try to avoid it or portray an unrealistic and idyllic picture. Present issues that you did not like or enjoy, but be selective. Present issues where their influence on your general performance is minimal. Questions which ask the interviewee to

disclose negative aspects in general are challenging. We recommend you practice answering these questions with a friend.

## Why did you leave your last position/ job?

There is no hidden agenda behind this question. The purpose is straight forward; to understand the reasons behind your resignations (or redundancies) in your past. The reason(s) for leaving a job is important.

For example, if a person resigned due to a disagreement with their manager, this may imply that they have problems accepting authority or working within a bound framework.

In a lot of cases the reasons for leaving are quite simple – such as a promotion or salary increase. Applicants that resigned because of a promotion leave a positive impression. Leaving a job because of a salary increase also has a positive aspect to it since it implies the person is valued. If these are the reasons for leaving your job – then be confident and sincere in your response.

However, there are instances when people have resigned due to disagreement with their superiors or the organisation, or perhaps were even made redundant due to incompatibility or low performance at work. When the reasons for leaving your last position are complex and sensitive you may feel anxious or apprehensive, knowing that the answer to this question may be problematic and even detrimental.



In these cases it is important that you try and minimise the negative aspects of your resignation. Try to be vague if possible. You can always state that you wanted to move up in the career ladder or that you wanted to challenge yourself by working in a new environment. Such a response portrays a confident person who is willing to face challenges.

Some applicants choose to lie outright about their circumstances for resignation, especially when the resignation or redundancy was not a pleasant one; this is your choice and occasionally this may be your only chance at passing the interview. As in real life situations, it is not always wise or feasible to be one hundred percent honest. However, you must take into account that if your lie is revealed you will fail. Keep in mind that most organisations require references from past employers. At times, these may be references from anyone you choose, whilst at other times these may be references from your last workplace. If this is the case and you lied about your reasons for resignation it may be at the cost of this opportunity (yet pending the situation, if you left your last work place on really 'bad terms', this may be a risk worth taking as otherwise you may not stand a chance to begin with).

If the termination of work relations in your last workplace was problematic, if at all possible, try to find acceptable reasons which you could suggest for your resignation such as,

willingness to advance in your career, a better salary, a more challenging work environment, change of profession, change of residence, engaging in higher/vocational education, taking a year off to travel, etc.

#### Example A

Interviewer: *"Why did you leave your last position/job?"*

Interviewee: *"My salary was insufficient. They didn't live up to their promises. My manager was an incompetent person that consistently failed to deliver."*

The interviewee could have settled for saying that they wanted an opportunity to improve their salary. Instead, they decided to disclose additional information regarding their relationship with their superior which is irrelevant to the question asked and only compromises their chances of passing the interview.

#### Example B

Interviewer: *"Why did you leave your last position/job?"*

Interviewee: *"I stopped enjoying the work I did. I lost motivation and decided it was time to move on."*

The interviewee portrays himself as someone who did a job that was not interesting. The interviewer is more likely to search for a candidate that regards their work with respect (even if they indeed wanted a new challenge or a change of atmosphere).

#### Example C

Interviewer: *"Why did you leave your last position/job?"*

Interviewee: *"I had an opportunity to advance to a senior role in a company with a larger portfolio."*

This attitude is positive. The interviewee is portrayed as a person that is confident and is valued; someone who is fit for a challenge.

### **In response to the question why did you leave your last position/ job?**

Refrain from blaming others; do not blame the organisation or your superiors. If you feel anger and frustration due to your resignation/ redundancy avoid displaying it in the interview. The interview room is not the place to release anger. If you expose anger or resentment you are 'inviting' embarrassing questions that are likely to lead to a 'dead end'.

Present concrete reasons for leaving your last workplace, such as:

- Applying for a more challenging position.
- Having a chance to work in a larger and more robust organisation.
- Opportunity to work in a more technologically advanced environment.
- Salary increase.
- Applying for a more senior position.
- Termination of contract (date).
- Change of profession or area of expertise.
- Further education.
- Travel.

## What are your strong/ best/ good qualities?

This question poses a challenge to most interviewees. For obvious reasons some may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable praising themselves. They may respond by saying something along the lines of, 'I prefer others to present my strong qualities'. Some may try an opposing tactic by boasting and glorifying their achievements. This does not necessarily mean that such behaviour implies the interviewee has high self-esteem – the opposite is more likely. In any case, both responses leave a bad impression or a partial one at best.

If you are confident, you are likely to feel good about your accomplishments and are probably quite aware of your good qualities. This question actually offers you a platform and an opportunity to present your achievements, skills and qualities. If this presentation can be done in a humble but confident manner; it makes it all the more authentic. There is no need to boast.

In a job interview you must be selective about the qualities you choose to present. They must be relevant to the job description you are applying for.

For example, for a **managerial position** you may want to select three to four qualities from the following that are relevant for a manager and that suit the post:

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Social energy</b>	<b>Ambition</b>
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>Dynamism</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
<b>Negotiating skills</b>	<b>Decisiveness</b>	<b>Representative</b>
<b>Orderliness</b>	<b>Authoritative</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>
<b>Ability to motivate</b>	<b>Drive</b>	<b>Planner</b>

There are other qualities that are positive and are good qualities to possess, but they are passive by nature and therefore are of less importance for a managerial position which is usually active by nature. Such qualities are:

<b>Integrity</b>	<b>Ability to listen</b>	<b>Insight</b>
<b>Honesty</b>	<b>Empathy</b>	<b>Consideration</b>
<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Pleasantness</b>	

For a **marketing position** you may wish to add that you are also:

<b>Creative</b>	<b>Good at interpersonal relationships</b>
<b>Presentation skills</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial</b>

For a **sales position** you may choose to add:

<b>Creativity</b>	<b>Negotiation skills</b>	<b>Being energetic</b>
<b>Stamina</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>

Qualities which are important for a **financial position**:

<b>Organisational skills</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Orderliness</b>
<b>Precision</b>		



Qualities which are important for an **HR position**:

**Training skills**  
**Insight into people**

**Interpersonal skills**

**Organisational skills**

Qualities which are important for an **engineering position**:

**Planning skills**  
**Being critical**

**Technical abilities**

**Analytic skills**

Qualities that are important for a **software engineering position** (in addition to the engineering qualities above):

**Methodological**  
**Creativity**

**Orderliness**

**Tolerance**

### **In response to the question what are your strong/ best/ good qualities?**

Do not be shy; respect yourself and believe in your skills, talents and achievements. Present those qualities that are relevant for the position you are applying for in a direct and confident manner.

Talking about yourself in this way is difficult. Rehearse your answer with an interviewer in a mock interview, and ask for their feedback on your response. [JobTestPrep's Skype based interviews](#) can give you just the audience you need to answer this question.

## **What are your weaknesses?**

This is one of the most challenging questions for many interviewees. Some will reply by saying, 'I am not sure'; others will say, 'I am not sure I have any' and others may yet choose to say 'I work too many hours and it affects my family life'. These responses present the interviewee as one who has difficulty coping with the situation at hand.

It is advisable to answer in a confident, direct and non-hesitant manner. It is important to show that you can cope with difficult questions. The interviewer may wonder - if you have trouble coping with a question in an interview, how will you face difficulties and challenges at work? Therefore, your progression, the tone of your voice and what you project is often of more importance than the actual content.

For example, you may be too sensitive. If you present this weakness in a direct and confident manner it may hardly affect the interview outcome however if you present the same weakness with reluctance or hesitance you are likely to make a bad impression and magnify the importance of the weakness.

Demonstrate that you can face such a question 'head on', don't be reluctant and don't be concerned too much with the implications of the actual answer. 'I sometimes stick too much to my principles, but I am aware of this problem' – is not a good answer. You are trying to avoid the question and the impression you make is not a good one. Be sincere, present real

weaknesses. Needless to say, do not exaggerate and be selective about the weaknesses you choose to disclose. Do not present ones that may directly affect your performance on the job you are applying for.

Example: In an interview for a financial manager position the interviewer asks Joe, *'what are your weaknesses?'*

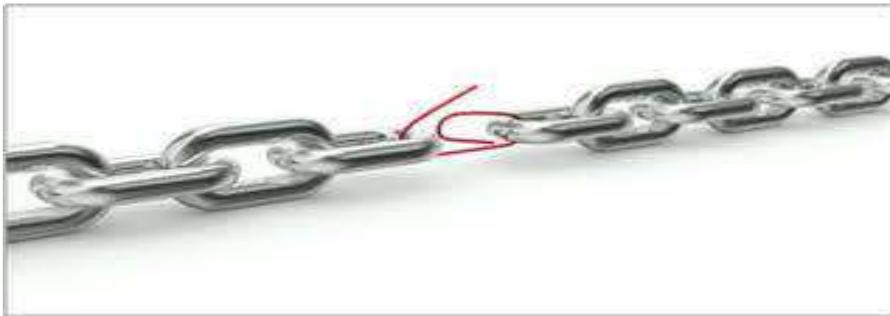
Joe knows that he is impulsive, sometimes even aggressive and stubborn. He is too self-critical and critical of others, a tough and demanding manager. In response to the question, Joe chooses to disclose only some of these weaknesses – those that do not affect his likelihood of success in the job.

Joe: *'I am too self-critical and may be quite stubborn at times.'*

Joe's response is sincere and direct, yet the qualities he chose to present do not affect his ability to perform and therefore they are unlikely to affect his chances of passing the interview – on the contrary.

We recommend, making a list of the weaknesses you think you possess and select those weaknesses that are less likely to affect your successful performance on the job and that are of less relevance to the specific position you are applying for.

It is important you remember that a weakness is a virtue in disguise. Someone who is 'talkative' may be 'good at negotiation'; someone who is 'unfriendly' may have a 'long concentration span'. The flip side of 'impatience' is being 'concise' and 'to the point'. Someone who has a 'lack of eye for details' may have the ability to 'strategically manage multiple projects- see the bigger picture'; someone who is 'routine averse' may be 'creative'. So you see, it is all a matter of presentation. After you have chosen a weakness (a real one!) that has little relevance to your position, you can always present the flip side - the virtue attached.



### **In response to the question what are your weaknesses?**

Do not avoid the question, be direct and confident. Don't hesitate and don't be reluctant to expose a weakness; it is only human. Who doesn't have a weakness? Cope with the question and face the challenge. Expose real weaknesses you have but be selective and choose those that are less likely to affect your ability to succeed on the job. You may also wish to demonstrate how you are striving to improve those qualities. Remember, each weakness is a strength in disguise - you can demonstrate this.

Typical weaknesses that you may wish to disclose at a job interview:

- Suspicion
- Stubbornness
- Criticism
- Perfectionism
- Being too demanding
- Controlling
- Lack of humour
- Being too sensitive
- Lack of assertiveness (for IT professionals such as programmers)

## What are your aspirations for the future? OR Where do you see yourself five years from now?

The goal of this question is to learn about the interviewee's aspirations and to see whether they fit in with the requirements of the position.

Some applicants reply in a hesitant and unsure manner: *"it depends, I may continue to work in marketing or I may decide to turn to a new field altogether."* Others may try to avoid the question by answering in the following manner, *"who knows, 5 years is a long time and a lot of things can happen"* or *"what exactly do you mean?"* and yet others may choose to divert the conversation to a whole new direction, *"in the coming years I intend to have children."*

All of these responses may insinuate that the interviewee is:

- Hesitant and indecisive. The interviewee is not sure in which direction their career may head.
- Concerned and worried about making the wrong impression and therefore they pose a question to the interviewer for clarification purposes.
- Intending to focus their energy on other areas (e.g. family) rather than career.

### **Remember!**

You came to the interview to get a job in a professional field which you obviously see your foreseeable future in; otherwise there is no point in coming to the interview in the first place.

We recommend you respond in a concise manner that emphasises your aspirations in the field for which the interview is being held.

### **In response to the question, what are your aspirations for the future? OR Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

Answer in a concise manner, and present aspirations in the professional field to which the position you are being interviewed to belongs. There is no point contemplating or presenting to the interviewer other areas of interest that you may have – it is irrelevant in this context. It is important you present relevant and realistic goals. For example, if you are applying for a managerial position then present aspirations in management. There has to be a correlation between the position you are applying for and your future professional aspirations. In

addition, talk about your professional goals in general such as growth or a challenging career as well as the issues you view as important in your career.

Learn some tips about answering a tricky question like this with [JobTestPrep's interview preparation services](#).

## What are your salary expectations?

This is probably one of the most challenging and important questions in an interview. It is an important factor when considering a job (for some it may be the vital one). Most interviewees face a dilemma; what salary should I ask for, that is not too high, not too low and yet acceptable for all sides? Some would try to avoid this question by stating that the salary is not the important issue in the job, 'it's the job itself that is important' they would argue. In most cases, this is simply not true, even if the salary is in fact not the most important factor in your job application it is probably a consideration – and indeed it should be. Therefore, trying to create an impression that the salary does not concern you is actually counter-productive. It indicates that you have trouble coping with the question and may even insinuate that you under value yourself or have low self-esteem. Some interviewees will quote a figure that is low, concerned that if they quote a high figure it may compromise their chances of success. This tactic achieves the same result; it suggests that you under value yourself.

Conversely, some interviewees may quote a very high figure thinking that if they do so it shows that they value themselves and perhaps may impress the interviewer. This too, will achieve a negative result. If you aim too high the interviewer may conclude that the disparity between what the employer can offer and your expectation is excessive and in fact there is no point making an offer. Moreover, the interviewer may conclude that your expectations are unrealistic for the job description.

If you are unsure try to deflect the question by inquiring the interviewer what they are offering.

Alternatively, rather than quoting a figure present a range. This range should take five factors into account:

1. The salary you earned in your last position.
2. The salary standards in the industry.
3. The current market situation – it's all a question of supply and demand. If demand is currently high in your profession, you can suggest a higher salary and offer a tougher bargain. If the opposite is true you may have to compromise.
4. Your work experience and qualifications / credentials– the more experience and / or qualifications you have the more your services are 'worth' to the employer (in some professions the work experience is more important than the credentials; in other professions it's the other way around and yet in others it may be a combination of both).
5. Finally, the salary you aim for.



If you take the above factors into account prior to presenting a salary range, you are bound to make a realistic and respectable 'demand' that most decent employers would seriously consider.

Salary negotiations are always a complex and delicate matter; consequently it is wise to postpone it to the crucial meeting or point in the interview after most other issues have been dealt with. If you have more than one interview, then use the first interview as an initial platform to make the right impression. After you have made a positive impression your start-off point for negotiation will be favourable; a potential employer is more likely to view your salary request positively at that stage. Do not assume that employers will always prefer an applicant that has lower salary expectations. On the contrary, if you managed to impress the employer, they are likely to seriously consider hiring you despite the fact that your salary expectation may be higher than a fellow candidate. Hence, making a good impression in the interview subsequently elevates your salary negotiation point.

### **In response to the question, what are your salary expectations?**

Salary negotiations are a sensitive and complex issue. If possible try to avoid discussing the salary in the first interview, however if the issue is raised by the interviewer then respond accordingly.

The most important point to bear in mind is to request a reasonable and fair salary. A salary that encompasses the five factors: your last salary, the industry salary standards, the current employment market situation, your work experience and qualifications and finally the salary you aim for. Ask for what you deserve; if you consider these five factors you are bound to come up with a reasonable salary range.

### **Please describe a problem/ crisis you faced on the job and how you solved it.**

This question is one of the important questions that may be asked in an interview; the answer provides the interviewer with an abundance of information about the job applicant. The challenging situation the interviewee chooses to demonstrate illustrates to the interviewer what sort of issues the applicant perceives as problems and on which magnitude they are – it is all relative. For example, one could perceive a trivial argument with a colleague as a problem while another may view a problem as the failure of a whole project. The type of crisis you choose to present and how you dealt with it discloses a lot of information on your coping abilities, creativity, management style, ability to stay tranquil and your perception in general.

This is a question which would be foolish not to be prepared for in advance. It is a question that is bound to be asked and it provides you with a great opportunity. This is your chance to demonstrate your skills – your creativity, your critical and analytical skills, your interpersonal skills, management skills and how you face challenges. This is your golden chance to demonstrate to the interviewer what you are capable of!



When selecting a challenge – make sure it is a challenge well managed. There is no point talking about a challenge you faced unsuccessfully. Moreover, select a situation that has similarities to the work environment and the position you are applying for; one that the interviewer can easily infer from your situation to his own organisation and the job opening.

**In response to the question, please describe a problem/ crisis you faced on the job and how you solved it.**

This question is one of the most important ones in an interview situation. While this provides a great deal of information to the interviewer about you as a potential candidate, more importantly it is your opportunity to demonstrate your skills to the interviewer. This is your chance to show the range of skills you have that assisted you in coping with a challenging situation. Prepare your story in advance; select an example from your past that is as related as possible to the position and the new work environment you hope to be part of. Remember, this is one of the rare occasions during the interview where the stage is yours and you have the opportunity to show what you are made of!

## What was your role in your department's most recent success?

This question, similar to the question before, offers the interviewee a rare opportunity to demonstrate their achievements and skills. Come prepared for this question. Think of a meaningful instance, project or occasion where you had a substantial contribution to the success of your company. Describe the success in detail. Keep in mind the definition of success most commonly used in a profit based organisation: time and money. For example, demonstrate how you saved time or money (or made money) for the organisation.

Try and pick a success story that is related, even if only remotely so and craft your answer to the type of position you are applying for. If you are going to work in a team then demonstrate how your work motivated a group of people or perhaps how you successfully managed a team or contributed to its success.

**In response to the question, what was your role in your department's most recent success?**

This is a golden opportunity to demonstrate your skills and achievements. The answer to this question should clarify to the interviewer why you are the obvious and natural choice to fill in the position. Pick an instance that is somehow related to the position or hiring organisation; by doing so you are assisting the interviewer to make a reference from your achievement in the past to a likely success that you may contribute to in the new organisation. Remember to be business oriented; your success must illustrate clearly how it contributed to the organisation's success.

## Why do you want to work for us OR why did you apply for this position?

Often the recruiter wishes to know why the applicant chose to apply for an opening with the organisation. The answer to this question may shed some light on the rationale behind the applicant's decision. For some, the job opening is just one of many for which they applied to, yet for others there may be a genuine motivation behind their choice. This question offers you the opportunity to demonstrate that you take this application seriously and have done some preliminary research about the organisation. If indeed you have done, it shows that you have given some thought to this job opening. When conducting your research try to identify the company values and competencies, mission statement or anything that strikes you as important in the organisational culture or the job description. We recommend doing so not just for the sake of responding to this question but for your own sake. The more information about the organisation you have prior to the interview, the better your judgment will be as to the suitability of the position to your needs.

### **In response to the question, why do you want to work for us OR why did you apply for this position?**

Recruiters naturally search for candidates who take their work seriously. A candidate that has taken some time to conduct preliminary research on the company prior to an interview is usually an indicative sign of a serious candidate. Seize this opportunity and show the interviewer that you know the 'material' and have a good reason(s) for applying to this job opening. Remember – the more you'll know about the organisation, aside from making the right impression, the more you'll be able to assess your suitability to the job.

## Why are you suitable for this job opening?

Job applicants with low self-esteem are often threatened by this question. They may even feel it is provocative; as if the interviewer doubts their ability to suit the job. The more insecure an interviewee is the harder they will find it to answer the question.

### **Remember!**

The interviewer has a right and an obligation to pose this question. It is their duty to assess your suitability for the position. You must answer in a convincing manner, proving your suitability and overcoming the interviewer's doubt.

Example: In an interview for a marketing manager position the interviewer asks Robyn, 'why do you think you are suitable for the position?'

Robyn responds, 'During 2000-2006 I managed the marketing strategy of 'Orwell', the company I worked for. During this time the company had an annual growth in sales of over 40%. I managed a team of 15 and took part in the management board. I feel that this experience shows that I am capable at doing the job at hand.'

Robyn was not threatened by the question rather, she took the opportunity to demonstrate her skills and how she would be well suited for the position. This is the correct attitude.

## In response to the question, why are you suitable for this job?

Focus on your past experience and the areas which you excelled in. Present your achievements and any relevant information that demonstrates your suitability for the job opening.

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## In Summary

This article has presented you with a psychologist's perspective on interview preparation; from advice on how to approach the interviewer himself, to how to behave in the interview, and advice on how (not) to answer questions. The interview is your opportunity to meet with the organisation you wish to work with, and you are the one with the power to develop the shape of the interview.

As with any other stage of the application process, preparation is key, and here we have told you some of the key areas to prepare for, and given you some ideas to start you on your way. See [JobTestPrep's interview preparation services](#) to take this further.

We hope you have found this useful and that it is something you will come back to again and again as you sit interviews. Good luck!

The JobTestPrep team - January 2014

## Further Resources

If you found this article useful, check out our other products including:

- Skype Interviews - [http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/skype\\_interview](http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/skype_interview)
- Online Interview Preparation - <http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/interviewproduct.aspx>
- Interview Preparation Video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFTNOF77bMs>
- Situational Judgement Tests - <http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/sjt.aspx>
- The JobTestPrep guide to law firm interviews
- Verbal Reasoning Tests - <http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/verbalreasoning.aspx>
- Numerical Reasoning Tests - <http://www.jobtestprep.co.uk/numerical-reasoning-test>