# Looking for work – Interview Skills

## About this factsheet

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets on employment issues. This factsheet is a guide for anyone who is thinking about starting a job search or for anyone who is currently in the process of looking for a job. At the end you will find the full list, and details of where to find them.

## For further information

RNIB Helpline can refer you to an employment specialist for further advice and guidance relating to your employment situation. RNIB Helpline can also help you by providing information and advice on a range of topics, such as eye health, the latest products, leisure opportunities, benefits advice and emotional support.

Call the Helpline team on **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

## 1. Interview skills

### 1.1 Getting to this stage

If you are getting to the interview stage it means that your CV is working for you and that you are completing application forms effectively. An ability to identify suitable vacancies, and good CV and application form technique should mean that you get offered an interview for the majority of vacancies you apply for.

### 1.2 What are employers looking for at an interview?

If you have got to the interview stage then it means that you have beaten off competition from a number of other applicants and that the employer already has a fairly good idea that you can do the job. The purpose of the interview is to assess the short listed candidates against what skills are needed for the job.

### 1.3 Dealing with interview stress

The most important interview skill you can learn is the ability to retain the power to be yourself even when you are under stress and feel nervous.

There are two main techniques that can help you achieve this:

* **Familiarise yourself with the situation** - which means that it is important to practice applying for jobs so that you get used to filling out application forms.
* **Have confidence in your ability to perform** - which means that it is important to prepare yourself in every possible way you can for an interview (examples of how to do this are given in the next section).

### 1.4 Before the interview

Well prepared is well performed. Effective preparation means that you will come across as confident, articulate and knowledgeable. More importantly, good preparation helps you manage your nerves and shows to the employer that you really want the job.

**Reread your application**

Interviewers will have copies of your application and so it is important that you know exactly what you have told them. They may ask you specific questions about activities and achievements that you have mentioned and will expect you to be able to talk confidently about them. Going back through your application again also helps remind you about the key skills and competencies that you want to highlight in your interview.

**Find out who will be interviewing you**

This can be vital to preparing for the rest of the interview. Are you going to be interviewed by the line manager for the role? If so, you can expect a detailed interview on your specific abilities to do the job. If a HR Manager or an agency is interviewing you then the interview will be more general and competency based.

**Arrange any adjustments**

If you require any adjustments at the interview or for any test, make sure you let the employer know in plenty of time. You should also check the day before the interview that everything is in place.

**Research the organisation and the context of the job**

This is a key phase of your preparation for an interview. An employer will expect you to want the job you are applying for and one way of showing this is by demonstrating that you have fully researched the work area. Have there been any major developments in the organisation recently? How might any changes in the external environment affect their work?

**Think about what questions you might be asked**

* It is easy to predict some questions that you will be asked. For example, it is likely that there will be a question on equal opportunities.
* Preparing answers is one of the best ways to boost your confidence in an interview. There are examples of questions and suggestions on how you can answer them later on in this section.
* You may be asked to tell the panel a little about yourself and why you think you are the person for the job. Think of how you would answer this in a few sentences. Emphasise positive traits.
* Understand that the employer will want to know how your skills and abilities can be used on the job, but be aware that the interviewer may not understand how you do things, as a blind or low vision worker, differently than the average sighted person doing the same task or job duty. You may feel at this point that you wish to explain how you carry out particular tasks and what equipment you use. It is entirely up to you whether you explain this; the opportunity may not come up at interview. However you may feel at the end of the interview that you would like to answer the employer’s questions that he or she cannot or will not ask; in other words, address the employer’s likely concerns about hiring a person with a disability: safety, access to print and visual information, transportation, and productivity.
* Be prepared to address any problem areas in your work history such as long periods of unemployment, too many short-term jobs, evidence of job-hopping (jobs you have had are unrelated to one another), evidence of criminal behaviour or substance abuse issues, inadequate education or experience, language difficulties or cultural challenges, and so forth.

**Plan some questions to ask at the end of the interview**

Having already completed some research about the organisation you should have some idea of the projects and developments that they are involved with. It might be useful to plan some questions around this. Asking questions can also give you the opportunity to show the employer where your priorities lie which may be an asset, for example asking about training provided as part of a role shows you are interested in developing within the job role. You could also consider some more general questions, such as asking the interviewers what they like about working for the organisation.

**The night before and the morning**

Get a good night's sleep in advance and eat breakfast. Make sure that you have washed and your outfit is clean and you have taken all other steps to ensure good personal hygiene.

### 1.5 Making a good impression

**Dress appropriately**

It is important that you put a lot of effort in to how you dress for an interview. A potential employer will begin to form an impression of you from the first moment they see you. Inappropriate clothing will mean that they are thinking negatively about you and this could jeopardise all the important preparation that you have done for the interview.

**Plan your journey**

If you are late for an interview you are very unlikely to get the job. You need to arrive 10-15 minutes before the start of your interview. Plan the journey in advance, know what transport you need to catch in order to make it in time and then get the bus or train before it. If you are unable to check the location out beforehand make sure you leave enough time in case you cannot find the right building straight away.

**What to bring**

* Copies of any required paperwork (application, CV, certificates)
* Any portable tools or devices you routinely use (cane, eyeglasses, magnifier, telescope, for example) or pictures of devices that are too heavy to carry. If possible, bring evidence of your work.
* Proof of ID and address such as passport, utility bill, etc.

### 1.6 At the interview

**Arriving at reception**

As soon as you arrive you should behave as though the interview has started. Sit up as straight and as attentively in the reception area as you would in the interview room.

**In the interview room**

Be polite, courteous and respectful. Thank the interviewers for seeing you. Sit up and appear interested, alert and enthusiastic. Be positive; you have been successful in achieving an interview when others were not. Acknowledge the interviewer by name, and follow the interviewer's lead in terms of where to go and sit (ask for polite assistance only if you truly need help with orientation). Smile and shake hands with the interviewer, making eye contact or staying oriented toward the interviewer, paying attention, speaking clearly.

If you need or want to take notes using a digital recorder, be sure to ask the interviewer's permission before you start recording and have a back up plan in the event that you are refused permission. Listen carefully to the questions and think before answering. Ask if you don't understand and re-start an answer if you make a mistake. If you are using any equipment, it might be a good idea to explain to the employer how it assists you as it is a good demonstration of how you could use this to aid you in the work place.

It is also important to end the interview confidently. This will be the last thing that an employer remembers about you so you should try to be positive. For example you could say “I have been really impressed by what you have told me about your organisation. I really feel that it would be the type of environment that I could succeed in”.

### 1.7 Dealing with specific questions

The following is a list of questions that you might be asked at an interview. Underneath each one there are some suggestions that you may like to use to prepare your own answer.

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

* It will give you a chance to do the work that interests you
* Good reputation of the company
* Good training opportunities

**What would you like to be doing in five years time?**

* Explain that you would still like to be working for the company, but have developed within it

**What are your weaknesses?**

* Describe aspects of your last job that you found hard and how you overcame these difficulties

**What makes a good team member?**

* Good communication
* Flexibility and adaptability
* Co-operation
* How you demonstrated the above in previous work or activities

**How long have you been out of work?**

* If you have been out of work for some time, try and be positive. Describe any job search, voluntary work, training or leisure activities that you have been involved in

**How do you manage your deadlines?**

* Prioritising and planning
* Communicate any difficulties
* How you demonstrated the above in previous work or activities

**What is your experience of providing information to others?**

* Have you produced leaflets, written content for a website, organised an event?
* Sign posting others or giving advice
* Use examples from a work, social or educational setting

You may also be asked some scenario based questions. You need to relate your answer to specific events from previous work, education or leisure. Some examples of these might be:

* Tell us about a time when you have gone above and beyond your duties
* Give us an example of when you have had to resolve a customer complaint
* Tell us about a time you had to work in a team to solve a problem

You can use the STAR approach to describe these. Here is a reminder of the STAR approach:

* **Situation** - how, when, where, with whom?
* **Task** - what situation or task were you faced with?
* **Action** - what action(s) did you take?
* **Result** - what results did you achieve/conclusions did you reach?

### 1.8 Stay positive

Confidence comes from practice and preparation. Even if you do not get the job this time, hopefully you will have learned some things for your next interview.

### 1.9 After the interview

After the interview, reflect on what went well and what you could do better next time. Consider what you learned from the experience. You should always ask for feedback on your interview and application, as this helps you highlight things you did well and things you need to prepare more effectively next time.

## Other factsheets in this series

We also produce the following factsheets, which you may find of use:

* Access to Work
* Staying in work
* Job seeking resources
* Self-employment
* Your rights in employment
* Looking for Work – Starting your Job Search
* Looking for Work - CVs and Application Forms
* Looking for Work – Tests
* Looking for Work – Disclosing a Disability

All these factsheets can be found in electronic form at **rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living/work-and-employment**

For print, braille, large print or audio, please contact our Helpline team on **0303 123 9999** or email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

Factsheet updated: June 2020