

# Interviewing for a job

## Hints and tips for people with autism

**Job interviews are a nervous time for anyone. They can be especially hard if you have problems communicating and interacting with other people. However, with the right preparation, there are a number of things you can do to make your job interview a less nerve-racking – and hopefully successful – experience.**

### What to expect

A job interview is a meeting between you and at least one person from the company or organisation that you have applied to. Sometimes there may be more than one other person interviewing you (it is normal to be interviewed by two or three people). There are three main types of interview:

1. A **phone interview**: These are normally held before the organisation decides whether or not to give you a face-to-face interview. These are usually over the phone, but some organisations are also beginning to use services like Skype for their interviews.
2. A **group interview**: In this type of interview it will not just be you who is being interviewed. There will be a group of candidates, normally between 5 and 10.
3. **Face-to-face interviews**: These take place between you and a person or group of people from the place that you have applied to. Most organisations use these to make a final decision on who to employ.

Job interviews usually last between 15 minutes and an hour. How long the interview takes will depend on the role that you are applying for and the type of interview you are having. Interviews for more senior roles may last much longer than an hour.

### Be prepared

The best way to approach a job interview is to treat it like a driving test or an exam at school. By being prepared for any question or situation – and by practising over and over again – you will be more likely to succeed and will go into the interview confident and relaxed.

This means that preparation is very, very important. Although you will not know what questions you are going to be asked, and you are unlikely to know the people that are interviewing you, there are a number of ways that you can prepare before your interview:

- **Know the employer**: Research the background of the company that you are applying to: What do they do? What are the different departments? Where do they operate? Who do they work with or for? It is important to show that you are interested in the company and that you know what they do.
- **Know the job**: Research the specific job that you've applied for. Many careers websites will have summaries of what different jobs involve, the skills you need to do the job, and what a typical day is like. This will help you to talk about your skills and experience and explain how you fit the job requirements.
- **Know your strengths and what you can offer**: Make a list of your skills and experience, and focus on the ones that are relevant to the job that you are applying for. You can also include other skills such as IT skills, first aid, and driving.

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- **Ask questions:** During the interview, you may be asked if you have any questions. Prepare some positive questions as this will make you look interested. For example, you could ask about any additional training that the company provides or where the organisation sees itself in the future. You can write these questions down and bring them with you to the interview so you don't forget them. Try to limit yourself to 3-5 questions only. Avoid asking questions about pay, holidays, or sick leave as this may suggest to the interviewer that you are not committed to the job or to their company. You can ask these questions once you are employed, and the details should be in your contract.

### Preparing for the interviewer's questions

While you will not know exactly what questions you are going to be asked during the interview, there are certain types of questions that most companies and organisations will ask.

Some examples of questions include:

- Tell us about yourself.
- What made you want to apply for this role?
- Why do you want to work for this company in particular?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Interviewers will also usually ask you more in depth questions, such as ones beginning with "Tell us about a time when..." For this type of question, the interviewer wants to know about an example of a time when you used your skills in a real-life situation. For example, you might need to talk about a time when you used your customer service skills or your time-management skills.

You can prepare for these questions by thinking about what skills the interviewer might ask you about. You can find information about this on the organisation's website, where they will talk about their team and the general attitude of the organisation. You can also look at the job specification on the advert for the role. This will have a list of expectations for anyone taking on the job, and will give you an idea of what you will need to give examples of. Common requests are for times you have shown team work, communication, problem solving and leadership skills.

### Practice makes perfect

One of the best ways to prepare for your interview is to practice. Get a friend or family member to play the role of the interviewer, and they can ask you different questions based on the job requirements and the common interview questions listed above.

Doing practice interviews is a great way to rehearse how you are going to say your answers. It is also a useful way of practicing your body language and your tone of voice to make sure that you give a confident and friendly impression during your real interview. You can also practice things like handshakes and eye contact which are important parts of all interviews.

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### Dress to impress

It's always useful to make a good first impression and this is never more important than in a job interview. That's why you should make sure that you are dressed smartly and that you look neat, clean, and professional.

On the day of your interview, make sure that you are properly washed and smelling nice. Clean your face and brush your teeth. Men should also shave or trim their beard before their interview.

Men should always wear a suit, shirt and tie, unless specifically told to wear something different. Women should wear business dress which may be a suit but could also be formal trousers with a smart top, or a dress or skirt with a suit-style jacket or blazer. You should wear clean, smart shoes that suit your outfit. You should never wear trainers or overly fancy shoes, including ones with very high heels or lots of glitter or decorations. Plain leather shoes are usually a safe option. You should also keep make-up and jewellery simple and subtle. Some simple jewellery can act as a subtle fidget toy, which may help you to feel less stressed but try not to fidget too much as this might be off-putting to the interviewer.

Women should also be careful not to wear a skirt that is too short or a top that is too low cut as this can make an outfit look less smart, and more like you are going out for a night out. Remember, it is always better to be too smart than not smart enough but also make sure that you are reasonably comfortable so you do not get distracted by discomfort.

### Examples of what you should and shouldn't wear



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### Declaring your autism

You do not have to declare your autism to your employer, it is your choice. But it is important to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of declaring your autism:

- It is against the law for employers to treat employees or applicants differently because of their disability.
- The law also says that employers must make 'reasonable adjustments'. These are things that you might need to help you to work, including sitting tests or having an interview. If you do not declare your autism, the employers cannot be expected to make these adjustments for you.
- Most job applications will ask if you have any disabilities. You may also be asked to fill in and sign a medical form before you start your new job, which may ask if you have any disabilities. If you sign these documents without mentioning your disability, you may struggle to prove discrimination later on.
- Talking about your autism early on allows you to control how it is explained to an employer. You can focus on positive aspects and how it makes you suited to the job.
- Many employers have equal opportunities policies, which mean they have a commitment to employing without prejudice. The 'Two Ticks' symbol is a sign that employers encourage applications from disabled people.



### Top ten tips for interview success

1. Make a good first impression: when you enter the interview try to smile, shake hands, and thank the interviewers for seeing you.
2. Try to make eye contact as much as possible. If you can't make eye contact, try focusing on the interviewer's forehead or mouth so you still look interested in them.
3. Make sure you speak clearly - don't mumble, try to smile and sound positive.
4. Use open and relaxed body language - try to lean forward slightly and keep your arms uncrossed.
5. Think about your answers before you speak (interviewers will not be put off if you take a few seconds before answering their question).
6. Don't repeat yourself too much - try to use different examples of your skills and experience for each question.
7. Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat their question. If you get stuck, just ask the interviewer for a few minutes to consider or to move onto the next question and come back to the one you are stuck on later to give you time to think.
8. Never interrupt the interviewer, and don't be offended if they interrupt you. They are not being rude; they might just want to know more about what you have just said.
9. Remember to ask questions at the end of the interview that show you are interested in the job and the company.
10. Relax and stay calm - everybody gets nervous during job interviews, but being able to control your nerves shows that you are confident and well prepared.

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