

Preparing for an Interview – video training

Welcome to this online training presented by Swinburne Skills and Jobs centre. My name is Fiona Fowler. This training is suitable if you are preparing for your first interview or for anyone looking at improving their interview preparation technique.

If you've got an interview coming up, the preparation that you do in advance will make all the difference between getting and not getting the job. This video tutorial will focus on the important stage before an interview, the preparation

Objectives

In this session you will learn about the purpose of an interview, why preparation is important and how to prepare using the job description. How to research the company.

We will also discuss how to prepare what you will say, plan what to wear and tips on how to practice your responses.

So that by the end of this session, you will know how to prepare for all future interviews and be confident in your responses to the interview questions. To help you do this, you may also like to stop the training at any time and complete the interview preparation resources as we go. At the end of the session we will also let you know where you can go for further support and to help answer any of your questions.

What you will need during this session

To get the most from this session make sure you've got the following resources open or printed:

The document called interview preparation resources which is eight pages long

If you've applied for a job recently, make sure that you also have the resume and the cover letter that you submitted and the job description

You might also like to have a pen and paper to make notes as we go along.

There are opportunities within the video for you to stop and complete your own details, take notes, or you can watch right through and do your preparation afterwards.

Interview Purpose(s)

Let's have a look at the purpose of an interview. Remember it's your opportunity to provide the employer with more information about you and demonstrate how you can provide value to the role and to the employer. So, it's very important that you prepare carefully for each interview as each job has different requirements

So, an interview can be said to have two purposes. Firstly, it allows a potential employer to assess whether you have the necessary skills, experience, and abilities to do the job. Also, that your personality and character will be a good fit with the existing team.

The other purpose of the interview is to give you the opportunity to describe how your skills, experience and abilities match the job requirements

How your personality and character will fit the needs of the organisation

The interview also gives you the chance to see if this is the right job for you.

Preparation is the key to success

This is Nathan

To help get a better understanding of how to prepare for an interview, let's look at a sample job seeker, whose name is Nathan

He is currently a casual worker at Auto parts warehouse but wants a more permanent job

Nathan worked at McDonald's for three years while at school

Education

He has completed a Certificate II in Plumbing but decided he didn't want to do an apprenticeship

Other information

Nathan plays basketball in his free time and was captain of the U19s

Another interesting fact about Nathan is that he walked the Kokoda track in 2018

Nathan has just received a phone call inviting him to an interview in two days, time for a warehouse operations role

After writing down where and when the interview is taking place, Nathan needs to start preparing. So, let's look at how he will do this using the upcoming interview for the Warehousing operations role.

The job description

So, Nathan will need to familiarise himself with the cover letter and resume he submitted for the job

Next, Nathan re-reads the job ad reminding himself of what the job is about and what the employer is looking for.

In this example, let's look at a broad overview of the position, its location, who Nathan will be reporting to and the hours of work.

- The role is based in Bayswater.
- Nathan would report to the Operations Manager,
- The job involves all aspects of warehouse operations **and** counter sales
- and is full time Monday to Friday.

Reviewing the job ad or position description to highlight key words

Now that Nathan has reminded himself on the broad overview of the job, he now needs to get a better understanding of what he will actually be doing in the job. So, he looks at the Job Ad and position description which shows the duties (these can also sometimes be called, responsibilities).

The words used in the position description are really important as they become the key words that you will include in your answers in the job interview.

In this role the duties are shown in both the Warehouse and Counter sales

We have underlined the main duties in yellow.

The Warehouse duties:

- Receive, check unpack deliveries
- Pick and pack orders
- Assemble stock items complete stocktakes
- Stock management generate dispatch documents
- Purchasing liaise with transport companies

And the Counter Sales duties:

- Serve customers
- Collaborate with management implement marketing and new sales initiatives
- Maximise sales opportunities generate new leads
- Stock management and merchandising

Highlight key words: skills and requirements

The next part is to highlight key words relating to the skills and requirements that the employer is looking for. By identifying these, you will then be prepared to provide examples in an interview of how you can demonstrate these

Let's start by highlighting the important key words in Nathan's warehouse operations job

Firstly they are looking for someone with plumbing product knowledge - you will notice they mention the word beneficial which means that if you have plumbing knowledge that would be a bonus but it's not absolutely essential for the role. As Nathan has done a Cert II in Plumbing, he can demonstrate knowledge in this area.

Warehouse experience is essential, and Nathan probably wouldn't have got to an interview without it.

They are also looking for customer service experience – and Nathan could describe his time working at McDonalds.

The next is a can-do attitude—which means that you're someone who takes the initiative to do or try things without being told first. Many roles look for this quality so you can start thinking about what have you done in the past that would best demonstrate a can-do attitude?

They also want someone who has a willingness to learn and willing to be trained in the role.

Next is proven leadership qualities – Nathan would use his sporting leadership role. Start to think about what examples do you have of where you developed leadership skills – whether in school, sports, or employment.

They are also looking for someone who is well presented and personable

Great communication skills – Many jobs require communication skills and it can be beneficial to continue to develop or improve these.

Nathan starts completing Interview Preparation Resource

We have often done more in our life than we can remember so to help with interview preparation, it's a good idea to make a list of all the requirements and then make a note of when and where you can demonstrate these.

In Nathan's example, he uses the Interview Preparation Resource which is a document that has been made available to you.

You will see that there are two columns. On the far left, Nathan can list the main job skills, experience etc required. Then in the right column, Nathan starts to write his own examples. For example, one of the first requirements was for someone with warehouse experience. So, Nathan provides details in the right column of this experience.

Another requirement was for Leadership and again Nathan provides examples where he has displayed this ability.

Using this Preparation Resource is helping to prompt Nathan of all the experiences

He will eventually select those which he thinks are more relevant to include in potential answers.

And finally, Competent using computers –most jobs today requiring technology skills, and if you feel that you need to brush up on these skills, you could think about doing a computer course

Time for you to complete

We're now going to pause while you start to review a job ad or job description. Highlight the key words, just as Nathan has done. Then using the interview preparation resource, list the key tasks, qualities, experiences in the left column of Page 1 of the resource.

Once you have identified the job requirements, now is the time to think about how you can demonstrate where you developed any of these skills or experience. Write examples in the right column of the interview preparation resource.

If you are interviewing for a role where you don't have the specific skill or experience talk about your ability to quickly learn new skills or situations where you can show that your skills are transferrable.

Remember using key words from the position description makes you sound knowledgeable and confident in your responses and that's going to help you in your interview.

Common Interview Question

Welcome back and we're now going to look at some common interview questions.

A commonly asked question is what you know about the organisation or why you want to work there.

To demonstrate enthusiasm, ensure that you have done research on the company. Certainly check out the company's website but don't just stop there.

If you can speak to someone who works, there or use any insights that you've gained as a customer this might be useful.

Also google the business to find out more about them such as whether they support community organisations or sponsor the local footy team for example.

Not doing your homework on the organisation can really hurt your chances of getting the job.

Investing the time to find out more about the company shows that you are serious about working for this organisation.

Time for you to complete

We're now going to pause while you start to research the organisation. This could be related to a job for which you are interested in applying

Use the Interview Preparation resource to guide your research. Refer to Page three – "Research the company" and review the questions.

Using the techniques and tips discussed, research the company by looking at the company website, talk to someone who works there if possible, use any insights that you've gained as a customer, look at social media etc

You can even start answering some of the questions and this will provide a good foundation in preparing for an upcoming interview.

See you soon.

Prepare what you will say

Welcome back. Let's now look at preparing what you'll say.

This is probably one of the most important steps in helping you to be prepared for the interview

Most Interview questions tend to be very similar across all industries

Prepare answers to the most commonly asked questions and in the next slide we run through these

The key to helping you to be prepared is to predict which questions are going to be asked. This is where you can use key words from the job ad or job description to help identify the likely topics

In Nathan's example, as he is applying for a warehousing and customer service position there is a high likelihood Nathan will be asked questions about the technology he has previously used in a warehouse. Or how he manages working to deadlines or how he has managed difficult customers.

The best way to answer questions is to use examples from previous experience to build a response that will help you get the job.

Prepare what you will say

The majority of interviews begin with the question - tell us about yourself.

This question is what they call an ice breaker or introduction question but is also used to assesses your communication skills straight away. It is not an open invitation to tell them your life story. Rather its your opportunity to highlight your experience, qualifications, skills, and strengths.

So have a response prepared but don't learn it off by heart.

- One formula if you are currently working is called present, past, and future
- **So, you start in the Present:** by talking a little bit about what your current role is, drawing attention to similarities if any with the job you are applying for, and perhaps any recent accomplishment or achievements

- **Then you move to the Past:** mentioning previous jobs or qualifications that are relevant to the job and company you are applying for.
- **Finally look to the Future:** This is where you explain your future goals which includes this job and its match with your strengths, Your abilities and why you're a great fit.

If you are not working you can use the same formula just begin past, present, future

Other common questions include why you want to work here and what do you know about the job.

Having done your research on the company you should now find this question easier to answer.

Behavioural question like this one "describe a situation where you had to manage a difficult customer.... Are becoming more common.

Your answer should include a situation that you have actually experienced. A typical response uses the STARL method.

Situation- For example you need to start your answer with where you were and what your role was,

Task- what the problem or situation was

Action - how you managed or dealt with the situation

Result - and what the outcome was of what you did and

Learning - what you learned

Be specific, so in your preparation think about any situations or problems in a workplace or at school, TAFE, or Uni if you haven't worked, that best demonstrate your ability to get things done.

Let's look at an actual of a STARL response example

Example: Using STARL for Nathan

Let's look at preparing a sample answer to the question "Tell us about a time you've worked with a difficult customer". In preparing the STARL response, Nathan starts with describing the Situation - in order to give background to the example he is demonstrating. He worked at a very busy McDonalds dealing with multiple customers queries and complaints

Task – Nathan then describes the what. What his task was –to listen to customer queries and find a solution promptly and courteously.

Let's look next at what Action Nathan took to manage these customer queries

Example: Using STARL for Nathan

Using the last two elements of the STAR model and relating to Nathan's example

Action – describes the action that you took, what did you do. In Nathan's example, he says

An example with a man who was angry that his fries were soggy. Using a calm and courteous approach, I listened to his concerns, identified the issue, and found a solution. In this instance, it was providing free replacement fries and in a gesture of good will the replacement fries were the next size up.

Result – what was the outcome of the action that you took. In Nathan's example he describes

The customer was very satisfied with the outcome and became a regular customer at the store.

Learning - As Nathan was using this this example within a job interview, he can also identify his learnings as: he states that he's learned a really effective way to interact with customers.

So, Nathan has been able to describe a clear situation where he was able to negotiate with a difficult customer

Time for you to complete

We're now going to pause while you refer the questions on pages four to six of the Interview Preparation Resource

As you prepare think about times in previous jobs or in previous situations when you have been able to demonstrate your ability to take control of the situation or think on your feet.

For example, what did you do when you ran out of stock at work?

Or when the eftpos machine stopped working

Or When a team project that you were working on experienced communication problems.

Tricky situations occur all the time it's about how you handle the situation that's important.

On page four make notes on how you will answer the most commonly asked questions

Page 5 includes examples of other questions.

Page 5 and 6 gives you the opportunity to answer a couple of common behavioural questions

Think about other situations that you could mention in an interview to highlight your attributes and skills. For every answer, expand with an example will help the employer build a picture of your abilities and fit within their organisation.

In the space on page 6 you can also think about some questions you could ask the employer at the end.

See you soon.

Plan what you are going to wear

In this section, we discuss how to present yourself at the interview and we'll look at Nathan as an example

Nathan's position description mentioned the candidate needed to be well presented and personable

It may be that if Nathan gets the job, he'll be wearing hi vis gear all day, but in an interview, you dress to impress.

So, dress up rather than down. If you have visible tattoos or piercings cover them up for the interview. You can also check how other employees are dressed to get a sense of how formal or relaxed is the workplace.

Make sure that you check your clothes in advance - There's nothing worse than putting on your favourite shirt then finding out just before your interview that a button is missing, or you can't fit into the trousers. Remember to iron your shirt and clean your shoes.

First impressions matter in an interview, so make sure your hair is well groomed, off your face and your beard, if you have one, is neatly trimmed. As we mentioned earlier interviews can be very stressful so remember to put on that deodorant but avoid heavy or overwhelming perfumes.

Personable also means being friendly, well-spoken, and engaging so don't forget to practise your smile and be friendly and polite to everyone you meet – you'll never know who else's opinion matters when it comes to selecting the right candidate.

And sit and stand up straight. This will indicate that you are confident to both yourself and the employer.

Time for you to complete

We are now going to pause while you refer to the checklist on page six of the Interview Preparation Resource. This will help you to Plan what you are going to wear and how you will present yourself.

We'll see you soon.

Quick Tip: Body Language

Welcome back. What you don't say in an interview is as important as what you do. What this means is you'll be judged on things like how you are dressed, your posture, eye contact, your facial expressions, and your tone. Tone is how you demonstrate meaning with your voice such as sounding bored, enthusiastic, or motivated.

These things really matter with some employers making up their mind in the first few seconds that they don't want to employ you based on the fact that you were late, you slouched, you sounded bored or you didn't provide eye contact. Look out for our second interview tutorial that will provide you with more key tips for on the day of the interview.

One last thing .Employers may look you up online so make sure your social media profile sends the right message, in other words don't put anything on Facebook or any other social media that you wouldn't want a future employer to see.

Practise your responses

Practising your responses is very important to help you to feel prepared and confident. You can practise your responses initially with yourself, but it is a good idea to practise with someone asking sample questions. Choosing someone who is going to give you constructive feedback is really important.

They should provide you with feedback on:

Relevance of the responses – make sure that you actually answer the questions

Use key words and skills from the job advertisement so that you sound knowledgeable

Your pace is Appropriate – not too fast or slow

Your tone is engaged– this means that you sound enthusiastic, friendly, and motivated

Your responses are an appropriate length – and that you use examples build the response. Too short an answer may make you sound unqualified or unprepared whereas Answers that waffle or don't get to the point can indicate poor communication skills.

Eye contact – make eye contact throughout – poor eye contact can indicate that you are not telling the truth or you're hiding something

Facial expression – open, relaxed friendly and engaged.

Gestures – keep to a minimum. Try to keep your hands on you lap and avoid waving them about

Body language – good posture, open and friendly so don't cross your arms or sit or stand too casually.

Time for you to complete

We are now going to pause while you refer to pages seven to eight of the Interview Preparation Resource. This resource contains a feedback form so that the person you practice with can suggest ways to improve.

We'll see you soon.

Quick tip – practice makes it better

One final word on interviews.

Like everything we do in life with practice we get better. It's the same for interviews. It's not a great feeling when you don't get a job you want. However even with the best preparation at the end of the day we just don't know what an employer is looking for.

Remember to ask for any feedback if you interviewed for a job and didn't get it. This will help understand why so that maybe there is something you can do better next time.

So, by all means reflect on what you can improve on for next time but don't dwell on the negatives for too long.

It does get easier the more interviews you do and with preparation you stand a really great chance of getting a job you want.

Summary

We have now completed the steps for preparing for an interview. You'll need to run through these for each interview in order to stand a great chance of getting the job.

Preparation is the key if you want it to be successful.

Let's go through the steps again:

- Find out as much information about the interview as possible
- Analyse the job advertisement in more detail and then review your skills, experience & attributes that match what the employer is looking for.
- Do your research on the company
- Prepare what you will say using key words from the job advertisement or job description in your answers
- Plan your personal presentation
- Practice your responses and go back through your notes

- Before your interview read over and over what you've written to help you with what you are going to say. This helps it get into your long-term memory. Reading your responses just before bed the night before the interview can be a helpful way to helping the information get into your memory.
- To further help you we also have the next video in the series called "How to have a successful interview".

Where to next?

It's been lovely sharing this journey with you today and I want to let you know that there is further support that we can offer you at the Swinburne Skills and Jobs Centre.

We offer a free careers service to anyone in the community and can help you practice your interview skills or provide assistance with your resume, cover letter, or help if you are looking for a course, apprenticeship or career planning so please get in touch with us using any of these contact details.

Please also look out for our other video training sessions such as writing or updating your resume.

Or check our website or contact us for further details

All the very best.

