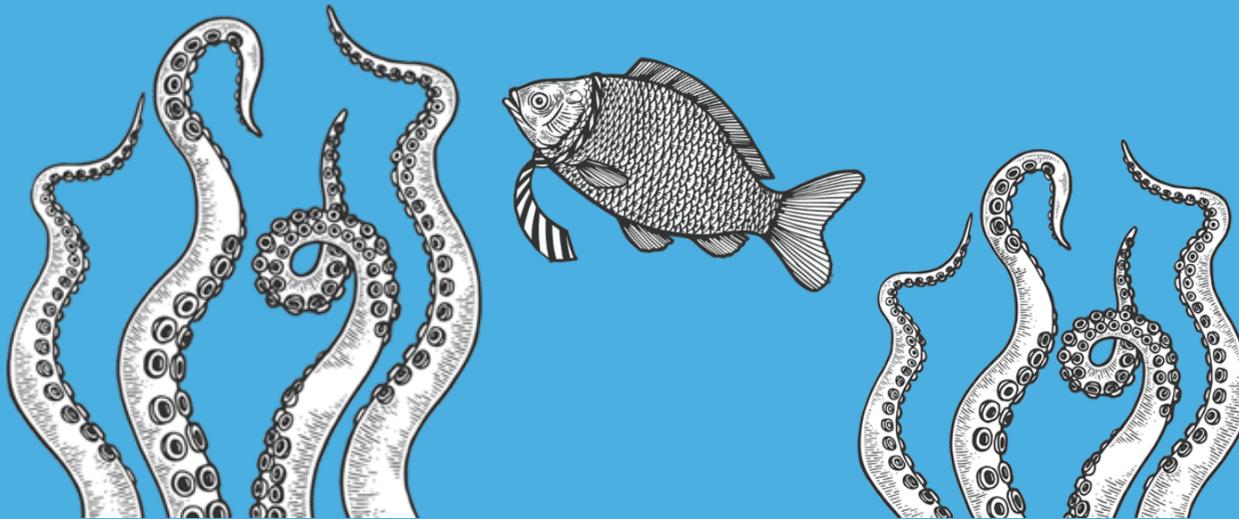


# How to: Prepare for Interview success

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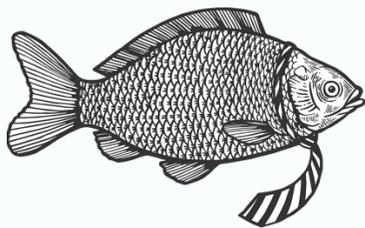
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Getting ready for an interview can be an exciting but nerve-wracking experience. However, an interview was exactly what you wished for when you sent off your CV, wasn't it?. Now you've achieved that wish, it's time to start thinking about how you can best prepare to impress. In this guide, we have set out a few handy hints and tips that help you prepare for interview success.

## **#1 - Do you know your own CV**



If you're anything like me, you may have the memory of a Goldfish. The first essential thing to consider before any interview is just how well do you know your own CV?. There is nothing worse to a hiring manager than someone not knowing their career history/achievements. A lack of understanding of historical information will always be perceived as unprofessional and leave the hirer with a negative impression.

Whilst it's not advisable to cram your CV full of infinite detail, you should offer enough detail to give the headline and be prepared to be able to elaborate on any key points, projects or achievements at the interview. It's a good idea to take a step back and review your CV from the eyes of the hiring manager. If you were in their shoes, what aspects would you be highlighting?, What would you want to question further?. Be aware of career gaps, over-lapping dates of employment, short periods of time spent with a particular employer. Preparing for such questions can help you avoid any awkward moments during the interview. Stay one step ahead and anticipate their thoughts.

## **#2 - A quick note on Socials**

Most hiring managers will check you out on Social Media prior to any interview. It offers them an insight into your activities and personality before you walk through their door. It's worth taking a few moments to check over your socials to ensure there's nothing that would leave a negative feeling. Worst case make your profile private for a short while. We live in a very Social Media conscious world...but does your profile portray you as a little too social?

### #3 - Behavioural (Competency) based questions



To prepare for behavioural questions you should consider how your answers are going to benefit the future success of the company you are interviewing with. The idea behind them is that they encourage you to relate past experiences (kind of like mini-case studies) to demonstrate your ability to excel in the role. The interviewer will use them to identify your skills, attributes and behaviours to identify how you react in certain situations. Many clients will include in their Job specification the types of behaviours they tend to look for, typically these tend to include:

- Teamwork
- Decision making
- Problem-solving
- Communication skills
- Leadership
- Organisation
- Goal Orientation
- Self-motivation
- Prioritisation

Most organisations will have similar behaviours such as "Teamwork" and "Communication skills", typical examples of questions you may be asked include:-

***"Tell me about a time when you experienced a sensation of real accomplishment in your job"***

***"Tell me about a time you had to work as a team, what was the challenge and what was the overall outcome?"***

***"Have you ever had a stakeholder who wouldn't talk, how did you communicate with them?"***

In all of these questions, interviewers are looking for solid examples to help demonstrate how you would perform in each of these situations. The best practice is to answer these types of questions succinctly and always keep focussed on the skills that the particular job requires. It's worth noting that it is OK to relate to activities outside of the workplace to help demonstrate these behaviours too.

#### **#4 - Do you use the S.T.A.R Method?**

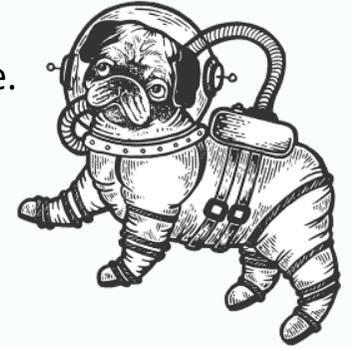
There is a strong probability that most behavioural questions will start with the sentence "Tell me about a time.....". The STAR method will help you prepare for such questions. STAR is an acronym for:

**S**ituation - Describe the situation that you were in, provide some context around but keep it concise.

**T**ask - Explain the task that this challenge presented to you

**A**ction - Describe the action that took place to complete the task

**R**esult - Share the outcome of what you achieved



#### **#5 - Be prepared for the odd abstract question**

Interviewers have the habit of throwing in the odd abstract question into conversation. Often these are aimed identifying just how honest you are. Most interviewers will tend to ask a handful of the same questions, these often include:

***"What 3 words would your Mum use to describe you?"***

***"If you could invite any 3 people to a dinner party, who would you invite and why?"***

***"If I was talking to your best friend, what is the one thing they would say you need to work on?"***

The real trick to answering these types of questions is just to be entirely honest and show your personality. It's not about answering what you think will get you the job, the interviewer is simply trying to establish what type of person you are and to get to know you a little more.

## #6 - The "Weaknesses" question!

It's the one question that everyone dreads at an interview, "What is your biggest weakness?". No-one likes to admit to any weaknesses but the reality is, no-one is perfect...if you think you are, then that's an in-perfection in itself. The important thing to remember here is that the interviewer is **not** looking for a reason not to hire you. This question is actually a great opportunity to demonstrate important qualities like Self-awareness, accountability and the desire for continuous improvement. Understanding your own weaknesses and how you are working towards improving on them will help you paint an honest and open picture of yourself.

## #7 - Take the driving seat



It's important to remember that not everyone interviews well, this sometimes includes the interviewer too!. In some cases you may be required to take the driving seat and push the interview along. I appreciate this can be intimidating, but there are some key things you can ask.

Let's say for example, you are at the end of the interview and you have decided that its a role that still interests you, but the interviewer hasn't initiated next steps. This is a great time to take charge, by simply saying, "I'm extremely interested in this job and I'd like to know what the next steps are?". Actions like this will help you to establish a little control.

I know these are **bold** words and could be perceived as being a little forceful but I also know plenty of Line Managers for whom this would be an appealing characteristic. It does take a certain amount of confidence though and I appreciate not an approach for everyone. Taking control at this stage can also help to establish if the hiring manager has any doubts about your experience/character. Tackling these doubts before you leave the meeting will ensure that you get the opportunity to counter with any factual evidence and give yourself the best possible chance of a positive outcome. It's always a good idea to re-emphasise your key strengths at the end of the interview too, leaving the hiring manager with the best possible impression before you leave.

## **#8 - Tackling Telephone/interviews** (*Further Tips can be viewed [here](#)*)

It's not that long ago that the norm would be for you to go through a two-stage face to face interview process. Nowadays, phone and video interviews have taken over as the preferred method of first point of contact between hiring managers and candidates. Some of the key things to remember for these types of interviews are :-

- **Prepare as if it is a regular interview** - Ensure you conduct all the same preparation as you would if you were meeting the interviewer in person.
- **Dress to Impress** - It's tempting to keep those comfy PJ's on (Who is going to tell eh!), but you should always dress smartly as it.
- **Think about your surroundings** - Have you moved that big pile of washing from behind you?...enough said.

## **#9 - A few final words of caution**

**Don't bad mouth previous employers** - No matter how terrible they were, this will never leave the right impression on a hiring manager.

**Don't turn up too early** - In good time but not too early is best. It's easy to think that turning up early makes you look professional but it can actually make interviewers feel pressured to change schedules or start an interview early. It can also result in you just having to be left waiting for quite a while, which is never good for the pre-interview nerves either!

**Don't claim to have no weaknesses** - All this suggests is that you are delusional or that you have a lack of self-awareness

**Don't pass up the opportunity to ask questions at the end** - This can be a great way to close off an interview and can also be a deal clincher in the employers eyes. You can read additional tips on this subject matter [here](#).



## **Good Luck for your interview**

