**Preparing to Answer Questions in an Interview**

Top Tips:

* These are questions for all sorts of interviews: apprenticeships, university, part-time jobs, full employment. You will need to adapt these to what suits you best.
* Take a notebook into the interview. You can write notes/answers to the questions below into it. This way you don’t have to panic about remembering it all, and, if you have to refer to the notebook for specific statistics/figures it is fine. It shows you did your research and are prepared.
* Above all be positive, smile and be enthusiastic. This is the one thing that employers say separates out the better candidates.
* Do your research. Write down your answers to the questions below and practise saying them out loud. Then get someone to ask you the questions which gives you practice of being put on the spot.
* If this is a face-to-face interview, walk into the room with a smile. Say hello, look the interviewer in the eye and shake their hand firmly (but don’t crush it!).
* If this is a telephone interview, set yourself up in a quiet room/space. If using a mobile phone, be sure to have enough charge to last the call. Speak loudly, slowly and clearly.
* If this is a video/Skype-type interview, see the separate guidance on preparing for an online interview.
* The questions below are the sorts of questions you might be asked. These are examples from other pupils’ experiences.
* Be prepared to talk with depth and detail, giving lots of examples to prove what you have done or give evidence. Help the interviewer so they don’t have to keep prompting you for more answers. Watch for the clues though, that you are saying too much. There might be a time limit the interviewer is keeping to, so look out for signs of them wrapping up or moving on to the next question.
* Listen carefully as well. Listen to the question or what you are being asked and pause to think before you answer. Don’t rush in.
* Try not to be negative, and NEVER say anything bad about or blame someone (ie a teacher, school, organisation etc). This is a certain way to be discounted. If you can talk negatively about someone here, then what’s to say you won’t badmouth them in the future?
* For some of the questions below you are encouraged to have say, three examples prepared but only talk about 1 or 2. This gives you flexibility with your answers so, if you have mentioned something for a one question, you will have different things to talk about in other areas. Try to avoid repeating yourself too much (eg if you are captain of a sports team, then you could use this in a number of the questions below. Try not to do this.)

|  |
| --- |
| **Possible Questions:** |
| *Tell me a little about yourself (include interests/hobbies).* Have 3 prepared, but probably talk about 2. Be prepared to talk in detail about each one, (for eg when you began, the name of the team/group/organisation you are in, how often a week, what you do, why you enjoy it etc).  |
| *Tell me about the course you are applying for. What will have gained at the end?* Make sure you have done your homework and researched this. Check out the prospectus or website for information. You need to know how long the course will last for, which level it is, what you will be doing in each year, what you will come out with at the end, and what you could go on to do later.  |
| *Why are you applying for this course/apprenticeship/job*? Think about this carefully. Answers may include reputation, you might have spoken to someone who has done this before you, the teaching style might appeal to you, how this course will get you to where you are heading later on, opportunities for advancement etc.  |
| *What can you tell me about the company/business/training provider?* This is vital! Do your homework on this! Read the prospectus and/or look on their website. Know their history, address, what sector they are in. Talk about the setting/location, student support, extra-curricular activities, staff student benefits, reputation, gradings/statistics etc.  |
| *Have you had any work experience in this field/sector?* If yes, then where, when, who with, what skills you learned, what you enjoyed, what relevance it has for this position/course etc. If no, you can say, “Not directly, but I do have experience with..” and then talk about other jobs/ experience you have, and talk about team working skills, customer/people skills, punctuality, organisation, responsibility etc – all transferable skills you can take onto this course or into this job.  |
| *What would you say are some of your strengths?* Have 2 or 3 here ready, but be prepared to talk about 2, unless they ask for more. Be ready to give evidence or “prove” it, talking with depth and detail. Examples include: confidence, responsibility, organisation, trustworthiness, attention to detail, not giving up, independence etc.  |
| *What are some of your weaknesses (and what have you done to improve them)?* Whatever you say here, be prepared to show what you are doing to improve this. Do not say “I am too much of a perfectionist,” as this is a bit of a strength turned around a bit. Examples include: nervous in interviews, talking in public, shy, lack of confidence, talking before thinking, loud, bossy. Always say, “Sometimes, I can be abit/a little/quite….” which dampens it down a little!  |
| *What gets you up in the morning?* This is a question a student was once given. It’s a tricky one. I don’t think it matters how you reply, just answer it. Answers may be: being with my friends; my paper round; walking the dog; I am a morning person, I can’t stay in bed; going to school; wanting to get on with the day ahead etc. Sound motivated. |
| *What would you say is your greatest achievement? What are you most proud of?* Have 1 or 2 ready here and talk about 1. It can be anything. Examples include an award you have won, new skill learned/achieved, test/exam results, overcoming a problem/hurdle/crisis etc.  |

|  |
| --- |
| *Tell me about a difficult decision you have had to make* Again have 1 or 2 ready and talk about 1. This can be a personal one or a school one or something else. Examples include GCSE options, choosing to live with mum or dad, friendship issues, moving schools etc.  |
| *Describe your ideal course/job/apprenticeship.* This question means what would they have to do to make you happy (ie what you would want from them)? Examples include student support, friendly knowledgeable tutors, a good team around you, somewhere that you feel safe, to be treated as an adult, coursework marked quickly with useful feedback, constructive criticism, proper breaks, a chance to advance or be promoted etc.  |
| *In a work/college environment, you often come across negative people. What makes a negative person and how would you deal with this/them?* Examples: A negative person can moan a lot, criticize those above or around them, hog conversation, make life difficult for others etc. To deal with them you might always smile at them, be nice to them, ignore their negativity, ask for help/support from someone else etc.  |
| *Are you a leader?* This is a bit of a trick question. Basically you need to be able to say that you are a leader or can be a leader (and give detailed examples of this), but you should also say that you can be a team player too (and give detailed examples of this).  |
| *Tell me about a time you were under pressure*. Again have 1 or 2 ready and talk about 1. This can be a personal one, a school one or outside school. Examples include tests/exams, a situation on a sports field/court/tournament, a situation at work etc. Be prepared to say how you dealt with it. Be careful not to be seen to criticise anyone or any place. You will need to choose your words carefully.  |
| *Why should we take you on?* Be honest and be enthusiastic here. Examples include I really want this, I will work hard, I will be an asset to your course/company/organisation, I will give 100%, I am eager to learn etc.  |
| *Have you got any questions to ask me?* Have 1 or 2 written into your notebook ready. If they have already answered them, just say, “I’ll have a look,” (and look in the book), then say, “No thanks, you have answered all the ones I have here.”  |
| *If you were a crayon in a box, what colour would you be and why?* This is an example of a question out of left field, one that you are not expecting. If you get one of these, it is testing you to see how you react. It doesn’t matter what answer you give, just that you deal with it and give an answer. I have had students panic and overthink this. Just give an answer and a reason. Examples include red, as it’s my favourite colour; something sparkly, as I love bright things; yellow, as it is bold and bright like me; sky blue, as it reminds me of a summer’s day etc.  |
|   |
| *Scenario Question:* *You are walking along in the office/lecture hall/corridor and you trip over a cable. What would you do?* This is a situation question. Think carefully before you answer. It’s all about health and safety. You really should answer in this order: check that you are okay (and that no-one saw you fall (how embarrassing!)), make the area safe (tidy the cable away or put a chair or something around it so no-one else can trip on it) and then report it to someone higher up than you.  |