

Interview guidance and advice

Sample interview questions:

An interview is a chance for an employer to assess your suitability for the role and team fit, equally it is your chance to determine whether the role and company are right for you.

To enable both sides to be able to assess this to the full extent, preparation is key. Not only should you be preparing answers to likely questions but prepare your own questions for the interviewer.

Before the interview:

It is vital to prepare – what do the company do, what does the apprenticeship involve etc. Review your CV and cover letter used for the application, these will most likely shape some of the interview questions. Review the job description again, are there any skills/qualities/ attributes listed. Prepare notes, questions you want to ask, main points to assist in answering questions from your preparation or research.

Preparing for the interview:

Where and when – ensure you plan the journey allowing time for traffic and a quick refresh before you walk in. Research the employer – scour their website, search for news articles, research the industry or competitors – the employer not only wants to be sure of your interest in the role and apprenticeship, they want to see you want that specific apprenticeship with them!

Interview techniques:

Interviews tend to be a formal conversation as opposed to a dragon den style grilling. Don't be afraid to ask a recruiter to repeat or rephrase a question, and you can take a moment to collect your thoughts before answering. Communication – crisp and clear, mumbling or even being overzealous lead to confused recruiters unsure of the answer. Body language – a hand shake upon greeting and leaving accompanied by a smile and eye contact instantly builds rapport and sets you both at ease. Make sure your posture is clear, arms unfolded and sat up straight.

The interview questions: We have provided below the most recurring questions asked during apprenticeship and early career interviews, prepare a few answers and even attempt to answer them out loud.

General:

- Why have you applied for this apprenticeship?
- What do you know about the apprenticeship?
- What do you know about the company?

Skills/Experience/Knowledge:

- Can you give an example of when you have had to work independently and use your initiative either through study or work?
- Can you give an example of when you have had to deal with a difficult situation either in work, life or school, and how you managed it?
- Can you tell us about something new that you have learned in the last 6 months and what you have gained from it?
- What experience/knowledge do you have that relates to the role or qualification (work experience, voluntary, education)?

Personal attributes/characteristics:

- The training for the apprenticeship includes undertaking qualifications while working fulltime, and may at times be demanding. How would you organise yourself to balance your study and job, and ensure you complete your work on time?
- How would you rate your organisational skills on a level of 1-5 (1 being the lowest)? Can you give us an example to illustrate this?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Can you tell us how you cope under pressure and in stressful situations?
- What do you understand by working in a team, and what are 3 important attributes of a good team player?
- What do you think we are looking for in an apprentice?

Career goals/Progression:

- Where do you see yourself in 3/5 years' time?
- What are your career goals?

Closing questions:

- Is there anything we haven't asked you that you would like to tell us about yourself to support your application?
- Why should we hire you?
- What makes you different from the other candidates?

Questions to the employer:

- What progression routes are available?
- Who would you report to?
- Would you fit within the current team?
- What are day to day responsibilities?
- Will there be internal training?
- What are the next steps/timeline?

After the interview:

Manners go a long way – it certainly doesn't hurt to send a short email after your interview thanking the recruiter for their time and reiterating your interest in the role.