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# Interview Hints and Tips

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The thought of an apprenticeship interview might make you very nervous, it might be the first interview you have ever had. To help you we have put together some useful information for you.

## Before the interview...

Please prepare. By preparation, we don't mean getting a fancy new hairdo, but do some research into the company and the apprenticeship you are applying for. Find out who their customers are, what sectors they work in, what their mission is, what the company values are what benefits and training they offer to their staff. Remember this isn't just them interviewing you, it should feel right and be a good fit for you too.

Take a copy of your CV and Cover Letter with you, the details you've shared with them as these will most likely shape some of the interview questions. Print off the apprenticeship job description so you have it to hand. Look at the careers page of the organisation, they will probably have something dedicated to their apprentice recruitment. Take a note book with you to make any notes.

Make sure you know where the company is based, how long it will take you to get there and who to ask for at reception, give yourself plenty of time, arrive 10 minutes early and use the loo before the interview, it's difficult to relax with a full bladder!

If you or someone you know has a LinkedIn account look up who will be interviewing you, see what roles they have had in the past, some may have started out as apprentices. A good conversation point!

## What to wear...

Many people get in a tizz about what to wear for an apprenticeship interview. It's a toughie and will very much depend on the apprenticeship and the company you are applying to.

The default interview wear is a suit, shirt and tie for boys, or a tailored jacket, blouse and skirt or trousers for girls.

Otherwise, if you think full-on business wear might be over egging it, opt for smart casual. The key is to look smart, professional and like you'll fit in at the company.

## **Handling interview nerves...**

There's really no reason to be nervous. Remember: they aren't just interviewing you, you are interviewing them too. An apprenticeship interview is also your chance to find out more about the company and the people that work there.

The key is to position yourself so it looks that, whilst you're interested and enthusiastic about the job, you have a sense of your own self-worth; you aren't desperate for the role.

It's natural to be nervous, but if you are prepared, holding back on the red bulls & coffee, eating well before the interview, taking some deep breaths and slowing down your speech during the interview, you will do well.

Try to relax; it'll really help you in the interview. Remember they just want you to be you.

## **Preparing for a phone interview...**

Make sure you answer the phone! If you have given out your home phone number and your relatives are at home, make sure they know that someone is about to call you. If you have given them your mobile number make sure it is fully charged.

Find a quiet space to take the call away from any distractions and make sure you speak clearly.

## **Interview techniques...**

The best interviews are more like a formal conversation than a grilling. Don't be afraid to ask an interviewer to repeat a question, and don't be afraid to say "can I have a few moments to think before that question".

Try not to interrupt your interviewers, good listening skills are something employers look for. Make sure you put your phone away and it is switched off.

Sometimes interviewers like the sound of their own voice and can't resist the temptation to rattle off a long spiel about their company. Even if they are boring you witless, always try and look like you're listening attentively.

It's also worth thinking about your body language. Make eye contact with the interviewer when you talk to them. Make sure your arms are uncrossed, your shoulders are back and you are sitting up, try not to fiddle with anything on the desk or your clothing or hair.

Slouching with your arms crossed won't exactly make you look like a model employee. Perhaps most importantly, don't forget to SMILE.

Come to the interview armed with some questions about the company and the apprenticeship. It's a great way of showing that you are genuinely interested in the role. Often at the end of interviews, interviewers like to say "Do you have any questions?"

It's probably best not to ask them questions like "Which football team do you support?" or "Is Justin Bieber's career over?"

The safer questions to ask are ones about the apprenticeship:

"What will be my normal working day?"

"How much time will I spend with the learning provider?"

"How many apprentices are you employing this year"?

or about the company:

"What is the company culture like?"

"What could happen after the apprenticeship?"

"What are job prospects like for apprentices within the company?"

And our favourite "What do you like about working for this organisation?"

Oh, and shake hands with your interviewers when you meet them, and at the end of the interview. A good firm handshake does wonders. A 'finger breaker', however, does not!  
After the interview...

We British love our good manners, so it certainly doesn't hurt to send a short follow up email after your interview, thanking them for their time and reinstating your interest in the apprenticeship (if indeed you are still interested).

If you don't get the apprenticeship, try not to take it personally, ask for some honest feedback from the employer as to why you weren't right for the role and how they think you can improve.

### **Finally...**

The employer isn't expecting you to have bags of experience but they will be looking for good potential, enthusiasm and a willingness to learn. They'll also want to get a sense of who you are as a person, so just be yourself.

By that, we don't mean swear like a trooper or tell them about your Drake/Skepta/Little Mix obsession; be your polite, professional self.

Good luck!

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