

NAIL YOUR NEXT JOB INTERVIEW: YOUR **STEP-BY-STEP** GUIDE TO **SUCCESS**



WHAT'S INSIDE?

Welcome to your Interview Guide! Here you will find all the tips and advice you need to guide you through your next job interview and ensure it's a success - whether it's taking place in person, over video or phone.



PART 1: YOUR PRE-INTERVIEW TO-DO LIST



PART 2: WHAT TO DO ON THE DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW



PART 3: AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW – WHAT'S NEXT?

PART 1: YOUR PRE-INTERVIEW TO-DO LIST



DO YOUR RESEARCH

In order to get yourself interview-ready, you need to research and speak to your recruiter about these four things:



1. THE INDUSTRY

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Any recent developments, trends and changes.

WHERE CAN I FIND THIS INFORMATION?

Search engines, news stories and company websites.



3. THE HIRING MANAGER

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Who they are, their role, their expertise and their career experience.

WHERE CAN I FIND THIS INFORMATION?

Their LinkedIn profile, search engines, the company websites, speaking appearances (try searching YouTube), and your recruiter.



2. THE COMPANY

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

The company's history, products and services, mission, values and purpose, customers and its culture.

WHERE CAN I FIND THIS INFORMATION?

Their company websites, annual reports, marketing material, company social media accounts, employee social media activity, news stories, events and review sites.



4. THE ROLE

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

As much as possible about this role and any previous work the team has completed.

WHERE CAN I FIND THIS INFORMATION?

The job description, company social media accounts, employee social media activity and company websites.

PLAN HOW YOU ARE GOING TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF

A key part of getting ready for your interview is preparing how you will introduce yourself and talk through your 'story' so far. So, how should you structure your introduction?

1 Firstly, explain your relevant **educational and professional background**

2 Next, discuss the **key skills and expertise** you have which directly relate to this opportunity, using measurable examples

3 Finally, describe **what you are looking for** in your next role and why this role, at this organisation, appealed to you

I am a business management graduate with a master's in Digital Marketing. Since leaving university I have enjoyed a two-year marketing career within the sports industry.

During my time within this industry, I have been able to apply what I learnt during my master's, whilst building upon my digital marketing expertise even further. I believe that my digital marketing skills are best showcased by an email marketing campaign I recently led, which increased our conversion rate by 10%.

My previous organisation has helped me develop the digital skills I have today, however, I believe that for the sake of progressing my expertise further, it's time to move on. Therefore, I'm looking for a more challenging role within a fast-paced global organisation, where there is plenty of room for me to grow as a marketing professional; hence why I was so pleased to be invited to interview for this role.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

When talking through your CV, ensure you do so in chronological order – focusing on only the roles which are relevant to this job interview.

Keep your language simple, and where possible, use **action verbs** to better showcase your skills.



PREPARE YOUR ANSWERS TO THESE COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Once you've introduced yourself and spoken through your CV, you will likely be asked some common interview questions. Here are some that you should prepare for:

1. "WHY ARE YOU LOOKING TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT JOB?"

The interviewer will ask you this because they want to understand what motivates and fulfils you, and what type of company culture you are best suited to.

Don't focus this answer on what you dislike about your current role or organisation; focus on the opportunities that you see in the position you've applied for.

4. "WHY DO YOU WANT THIS JOB?"

Structure your answer with these four key points:

1. Why you are passionate about the company?
2. Why you are passionate about the role?
3. How this opportunity would allow you to progress?
4. Reiterate how pleased you are to have been invited to the interview.

2. "WHY SHOULD I HIRE YOU?"

This is an opportunity to sell yourself; think about what benefits you will bring to the company if they take you on, rather than someone else. Identify three skills/experiences you're going to mention. This list should include 'hard skills' mentioned in the job description (i.e. technical abilities), as well as transferrable or 'soft skills', like communication and the ability to work as part of a team.

5. "CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME THAT YOU FAILED?"

This will help the interviewer to assess how you deal with set-backs; do you take a step back and think about where you went wrong, or do you sweep it under the carpet and act like it never happened?

Plan which example you are going to talk about – not something which is a thinly veiled success story, but is a genuine example of where you made an oversight or error in judgement.

Some key points to remember: explain clearly how it happened, don't make excuses, don't blame others and show that you have learnt from the situation.

3. "HOW WOULD YOUR FRIENDS DESCRIBE YOU?"

By asking this question, the interviewer is trying to determine if your personality suits the role, team and company.

What kind of personal attributes of yours would be useful for demonstrating your suitability for this role?

6. "WHAT ARE YOUR SALARY EXPECTATIONS?"

Make sure you are aware of the industry standard for your role and level of experience before going into your interview.

Having this information will allow you to answer this question with a lot more conviction, and will put you in a much better position should you need to negotiate.

YOU ARE ALMOST INTERVIEW-READY, WITH JUST SIX FINAL PREPARATIONS LEFT...

Ensure you're clear on these six practicalities:



1. WHAT TIME AND WHERE THE INTERVIEW WILL TAKE PLACE

If the interview is being conducted at the organisation's office, ensure you know how to get there and how long it will take.

If the interview is being conducted remotely, ensure you're clear on the technology used – and plan where you will sit, thinking carefully about what you'd like your background to be. Also ensure you inform anyone you live with about the interview, so as to avoid any noise disruption.



2. BE READY TO EXPLAIN ANY GAPS ON YOUR CV

It is common to have gaps on your CV, whether that's down to redundancy, travelling, illness and so on.

Whatever the circumstances, this is very common and explaining the gap in an interview doesn't need to be a source for stress or worry.



3. HOW LONG THE INTERVIEW WILL LAST

As a general rule of thumb, a face-to-face interview will last around 45 minutes to one hour.



4. WHAT FORMAT THE INTERVIEW WILL BE

Will it include tests, or meeting the team?



5. WHAT THE DRESS CODE IS

This is still important even if the interview is taking place remotely.



6. THE JOB DESCRIPTION

It's a great idea to print this out to have with you, just in case.

If your interview is face-to-face, you can have this in your bag for some final preparations on your way.

If your interview is remote, you can have this to hand so you can refer to it at any point.

If you're feeling unsure about any of these points, your recruiter can help you.



PLAN THE QUESTIONS YOU'RE GOING TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER



When you are asked “Do you have any questions?”, it’s important to use this as an opportunity not only to determine if this truly is the perfect job role, company and team for you, but to demonstrate your creative thinking, curious mindset and genuine interest to your potential employer.

FOCUS YOUR QUESTIONS ON THESE SIX AREAS:

1. THE ROLE

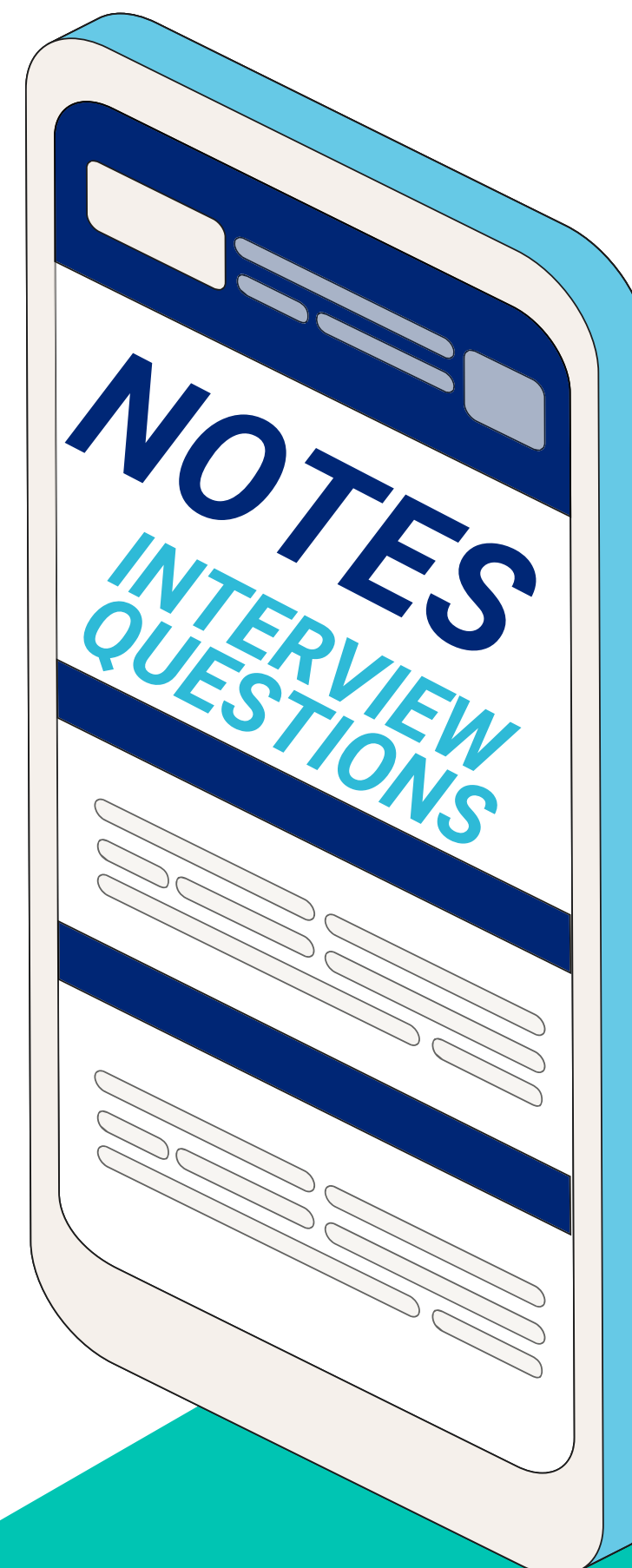
- Is this a new role? If not, how has it evolved?
- Is there scope for career progression?
- What does success look like in this job?
- What does a typical day look like?

2. THE TEAM

- Can you tell me more about the team?
- How does the team fit into the overall structure of the company?
- What constitutes success for the team?

3. THE HIRING MANAGER

- What’s your background?
- From your perspective, what’s it like to work here?
- What is your management style?



4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- How often would my performance be reviewed?
- What training opportunities are available?

5. THE ORGANISATION

- What are the main challenges and opportunities the business faces?
- How long do employees usually remain with the business?
- How does your organisation live its purpose?

6. NEXT STEPS

- What is the next step in the hiring process?

PART 2: ON THE DAY OF YOUR JOB INTERVIEW



MAKE THE BEST **FIRST IMPRESSION POSSIBLE**

It's essential that you are mindful of the fact that the second you step through the door – before even meeting your interviewer – you are already making your first impressions. So, on the day of your interview, ensure you:

- 1** Refresh your mind of the job description, your CV, and any key notes you have made.
- 2** Be polite to everyone you meet – whilst receptionists and passing employees will not be deciding if you get this job or not, they could play a factor. Be your true, authentic self when meeting anyone during your interview process.
- 3** For a face-to-face meeting, wait professionally in the reception area before you're invited for your interview. Rather than scrolling through your phone, look around you. Are there posters that tell you more about the organisation? Or marketing materials like booklets that you could flick through? This will not only help to illustrate your interest in the company from the outset, but will also teach you more about the organisation.
- 4** For an online interview, make sure your technology is working before. Ensure your laptop has enough battery life, your camera and microphone are working, and that your wifi is stable. Check that you have the correct details needed to join the meeting.
- 5** Whether it's in-person or online, arrive on time - being 10 minutes early is best. But if you're running late because of factors outside of your control (like unexpected travel issues), then let your interviewer or recruiter know. Being on time is essential for a video interview too – while being early for this isn't necessary, be sure you are ready to go 10 minutes prior to the meeting.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR MIND GOES BLANK **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

- 1 STAY CALM AND DON'T PANIC**
This is crucial. It's important to know that the sense of dread and impending disaster washing over you isn't everything you fear it is. Staying calm will allow your mind to think more rationally and logically, rather than being in a panicked state of mind.
- 2 TAKE A DEEP BREATH**
Not only will this give you a moment to collect yourself, a deep breath also sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. In a job interview, your brain has reacted to a situation it perceives as threatening, and you taking a deep breath is calmly sending it a polite message, in response, that this time.
- 3 HAVE A SIP OF WATER**
At the start of a face-to-face interview, ensure you accept an offer for a drink; similarly, if you are at home for a video interview, make sure you have a drink nearby. This is because when you're faced with a tough question or your mind goes blank, you can take a sip of water before answering. This will be a natural pause in conversation, buying you some more time to calm your mind and think of your answer.

REMEMBER:

- **SWITCH OFF YOUR PHONE**
- **DON'T CHEW GUM**
- **SMILE!**



ENSURE YOU BUILD RAPPORT WITH **YOUR INTERVIEWER**

Build a meaningful connection with your interviewer by...

1. SMILING

Make a conscious effort to smile when you are first introduced, when you say goodbye and regularly throughout the interview. This might seem obvious now, but nerves could make you forget.

2. REMEMBERING YOUR INTERVIEWER'S NAME

Use it quite often during the interview and as you leave. This is a trick that politicians use when establishing rapport with journalists who interview them, and it's surprisingly effective.

3. BEING MINDFUL OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Even the seemingly simplest things, like sitting up properly in your chair and maintaining good eye contact, can make a big difference to both your own mindset and how the interviewer perceives you.

4. NOT INTERRUPTING THE INTERVIEWER

Whilst it's important to make the interview feel more like a conversation than an interrogation, it's important you are patient and ensure the interviewer has finished speaking before responding. If you're interviewing remotely, be aware of any time lags due to technology.

5. STARTING YOUR ANSWERS WITH A POSITIVE AFFIRMATION OR AGREEMENT

Such as "great question". This is another great way to humanise the interaction between you and the interviewer.

6. ASKING FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Again, make this more of a conversation. If the interviewer gives information you're interested in when delivering a question, once you have answered their question, be sure to follow up and show your interest.

7. RELAXING, AND BEING THE REAL YOU

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through to help your interviewer see who you really are. Answer questions honestly and clearly.

8. KEEPING IT POSITIVE

Maintain a positive attitude and avoid negative comments about previous employers or colleagues.



TOP TIP FOR A REMOTE INTERVIEW :

To appear as though you are providing eye contact during a video interview, remember to occasionally look into your camera while delivering your answers and when receiving a question. That way, you will look engaged when listening, and you will be more engaging when you are speaking.

A woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a bright red sweater, is sitting at a wooden table. She has her arms raised behind her head and is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a living room or office. The image is overlaid with a large blue diagonal arrow pointing from the top-left towards the bottom-right. The arrow contains the text 'PART 3: WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR JOB INTERVIEW' in white, bold, sans-serif font. There are several colorful triangles (teal, blue, orange, purple, pink) scattered around the image, some overlapping the arrow and the woman's sweater.

PART 3: WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

NEXT STEPS – WHAT YOU SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

Well done – your interview is now over! So, what's next?

While you're waiting to hear back from your interviewer or recruiter, follow these dos and don'ts:



DO



REFLECT ON HOW THE INTERVIEW WENT

It's time to consider your impressions of the interview. Was it what you expected and did it match what you prepared for?

Identify what you did well and where there's room for improvement. Contrastingly, what can you better prepare for?

What were your thoughts on the interviewer and the hiring company?



TALK TO YOUR RECRUITER AFTER THE INTERVIEW

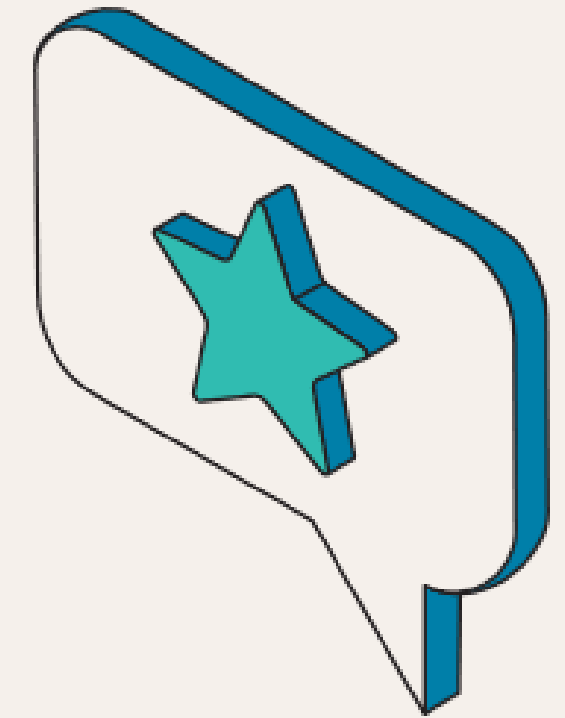
Following on from your interview, speak to your recruiter as soon as possible and provide feedback on how you think the interview went, whilst it is all still fresh in your mind.

Reiterate your enthusiasm for the role and how much you enjoyed meeting with the interviewer. This will be relayed to the company and will work in your favour.



GIVE YOUR REFERENCES A HEADS-UP

Your references should be aware that they are being used as a reference, but drop them a note to remind them and ask them politely to keep an eye out. Ensure you thank them after they have provided this.



DON'T



CUT TIES WITH YOUR RECRUITER

If you are not successful following this interview, then don't lose hope and certainly don't cut ties with your recruiter. Thank them for their support so far, and get as much feedback as you can as to why you weren't successful.

Your recruiter is a valuable ally to have during your job search, and it is important that they get to know you and what you're searching for in your career.



BE TOO OBVIOUS

Just because a new opportunity is on the horizon, that doesn't mean you should clock off and let your performance drop within your current role.

Maintain both your reputation and relationship with your current company. You don't know how much longer you will be working there, and even if you are offered another role, you never know when you might need their help in the future.



LOSE TRACK OF WHO YOU HAVE INTERVIEWED WITH

Keep a spreadsheet or list of the names of the companies, hiring managers and job titles which you have or plan to interview with.

Make sure this spreadsheet is up-to-date so that you are clear where you are at in the application process with each role, and always review that list before picking up the phone or sending that email.

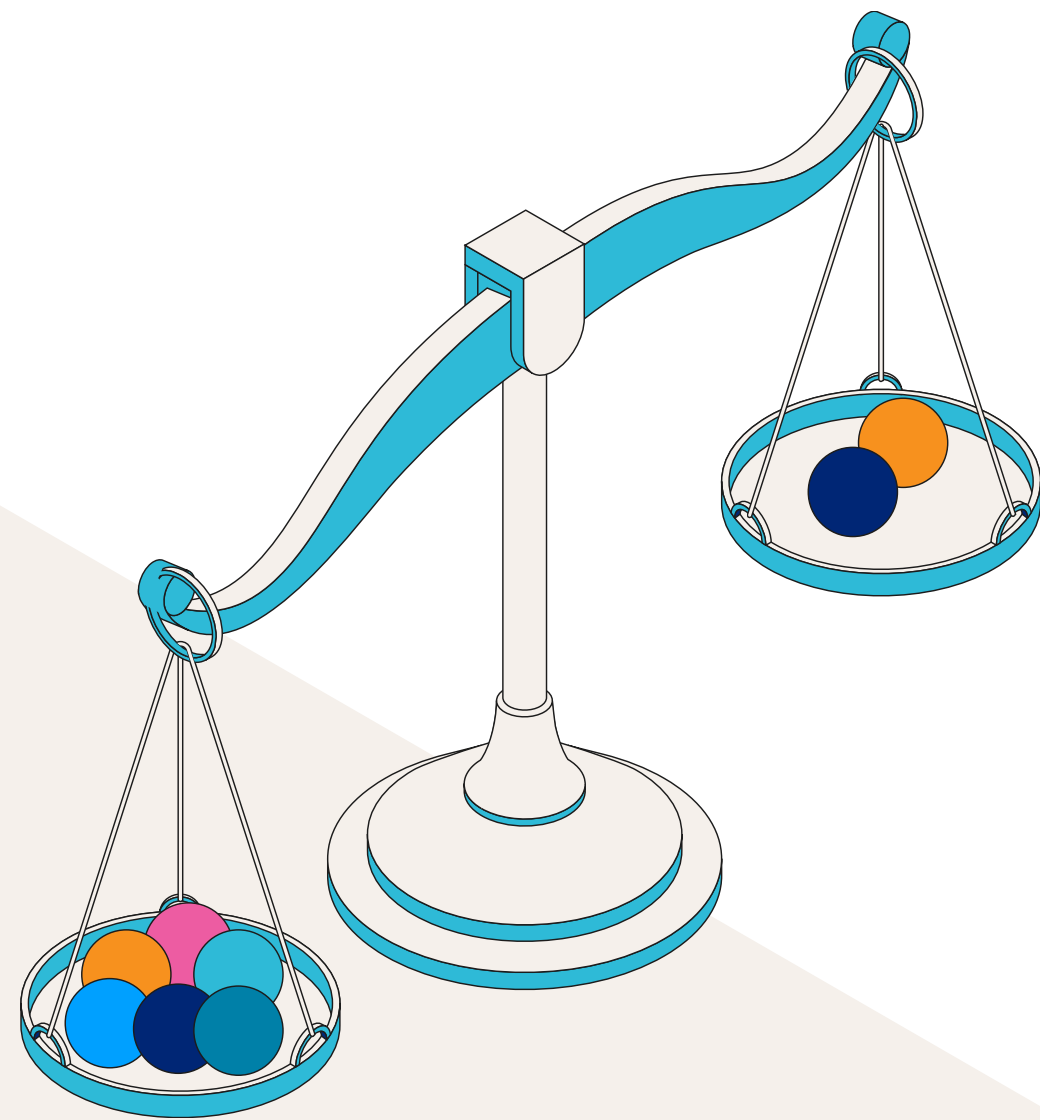


CALL OFF THE JOB SEARCH

However well this interview went, do not by any means cancel any other upcoming interviews you have scheduled for different roles, or give up the job hunt on this basis alone.

Think about what is making you so keen for this specific opportunity, and use these key points to steer your search for similar roles.

ASK YOURSELF THESE FOUR QUESTIONS TO DECIDE IF THIS IS THE RIGHT JOB FOR YOU



1 DO YOU FEEL EXCITED ABOUT THE JOB?

- Now you have been to the interview and found out more, can you honestly say this opportunity would push you to your full potential?
- How does it fit in with the career plan and objectives you first set out when you embarked upon your job search?
- How did you feel when the interviewer was explaining the role in more detail; did you feel excited, and like this is the challenge you have been waiting for?
- Does this new role have what your current one lacks?

3 WHAT DID YOU THINK OF YOUR POTENTIAL NEW MANAGER?

- How did your potential boss come across during the interview?
- Did they explain the job and their expectations for the role clearly?
- Did they listen to your answers, and were they encouraging and receptive to what you had to say?
- Were they approachable and welcoming? Did you feel comfortable talking to them and asking them questions?
- Were they interested in your ambitions for the future, and what you hoped to achieve if successful in this role?

2 IS THE COMPANY RIGHT FOR YOU?

- How did you feel about their purpose, values and culture?
- Would you feel proud and passionate about working there?
- Does their company “personality” suit your personality?
- What were your first impressions of potential colleagues (if you were introduced to them)?

4 WHAT IS YOUR “GUT” TELLING YOU?

- Your gut feeling isn’t just a suspicion; it is your intuition telling you that a certain decision is for the best, even if it doesn’t make complete sense at the time.
- If you walked away from this interview feeling more excited than when you walked in, even though certain boxes in your “perfect job” criteria remained unchecked, then that’s your instincts kicking in, and you should pay attention to them.
- But ensure you pair this gut feeling with facts and logical thinking. When we feel enthusiastic about things, our rational thinking can be ignored. So, make sure you don’t get swept away with your excitement.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR INTERVIEW WENT BADLY

If you think your interview didn't go very well, then don't worry. You may well be able to salvage the situation, or at least make the best of it, by following these steps:



1. WRITE DOWN AN HONEST ACCOUNT OF HOW YOU FELT THE INTERVIEW WENT

Do this in chronological order – start right at the beginning of the day, and end with the final point of your interview. This will allow you to offload your many thoughts and feelings about the interview so you can recollect more clearly how it went.

Once you've written everything down, it will be easier to pinpoint the mistakes you made during the interview. Did you forget to prepare questions to ask at the end? Did you ramble too much with one of your answers? Did you accidentally speak negatively about your last employer? Whatever it was, identify how the mistakes happened so you can avoid them for next time.



2. GIVE BALANCED AND PROFESSIONAL FEEDBACK TO YOUR RECRUITER

Now that you have a clear recollection of the interview, you should speak to your recruiter. It is worth letting them know from the get-go that you don't feel the interview went as well as it could have.

When feeding back about your performance, it's important that you're honest, but also that you aren't too negative in the language you use – or cross the line from self-aware to self-deprecating. Be sure to also highlight the lessons you have learnt.



3. TAKE YOUR RECRUITER'S FEEDBACK ON BOARD

Once you have fed back to your recruiter, listen to what they have to say. They have plenty of experience in coaching jobseekers for interview situations and gathering feedback from their clients, so they will be able to provide you with some advice.

The recruiter might also have some feedback from your interviewer, so remember to listen carefully. If they picked up on some of your slip-ups, don't panic. Let the recruiter know the reasons you think you made these mistakes, and how you will avoid them in the future. This shows self-awareness and honesty – both valuable traits, and both of which can be fed back to the interviewer.



4. KEEP CALM AND CONTINUE YOUR JOB SEARCH

In the stressful 'limbo' period that is waiting to hear back about your success in the interview, it's important that you keep calm and positive.

Don't give up on your job search whilst waiting to hear back. Relax, spend some time with family and friends who can boost you up, and then get ready to bounce back and carry on looking for new roles.

FOR EXAMPLE, INSTEAD OF SAYING:

"This was a really bad interview. I completely messed up one of my answers. I wasn't expecting the question, so I just rambled and talked absolute rubbish."



YOU MIGHT SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

"One of the interview questions caught me off-guard. Having never been asked this in an interview before, I rambled a bit. Next time I'll draw a few deep breaths and perhaps ask for a couple of seconds to think about my answer."

SIGNS THAT YOUR **INTERVIEW WENT WELL**

- You were in the interview for longer than expected.
- The interview felt conversational.
- You were told what you would be doing in this role - for example “in this role, you would be expected to...” as opposed to “the successful candidate would be expected to...”.
- The interviewer seemed engaged - consider their body language and their responses.

- ▶ You were asked “closing questions” at the end – such as questions surrounding your notice period and when you would be able to start.
- ▶ Your questions were answered in full – this shows the interviewer was eager to sell you the opportunity.
- ▶ The interviewer was clear about the next steps.
- ▶ You were introduced to your potential new colleagues.
- ▶ The interviewer gave good feedback to your recruiter.
- ▶ You were introduced to senior decision makers.
- ▶ You feel excited about the company and the role.

The main differences between your first and second interviews lie in the objectives of the interviewer. The key information they are most likely looking for in a second interview is:

1. Your level of interest in the role and organisation
2. Do you have the skills required?
3. Are you the right ‘fit’?
4. Addressing and resolving any reservations or doubts
5. Your availability and salary expectations

WHAT TO DO IF YOU’VE BEEN **INVITED BACK FOR A SECOND INTERVIEW**

Firstly, congratulations if you’re reading this section of your Interview Guide! That must mean you’ve been invited for a second interview, so well done. But how will this differ from the first?

WHO WILL YOU BE MEETING IN YOUR SECOND INTERVIEW?

At the second interview stage, you will most likely be meeting someone more senior within the business; the person who will ultimately have the final say on the hiring decision. Before your interview, confirm with your recruiter who will be conducting the second interview. This will allow you to research them beforehand online, be it on LinkedIn or via the company website (following the **same steps** we covered earlier in this guide that you used for your first interview).

WHAT FORMAT WILL THE INTERVIEW BE?

Don’t assume the format of your second interview will be the same as the first. You may be prepared for a one-on-one interview, only to be faced with a **panel of stakeholders** on the day. Check with your recruiter how many people are interviewing you and how the interview will be formatted.

Remember to interact with all people in the room and not just those who are asking you the most questions. Remember everyone’s name and address them as such. You may also be asked to undertake a task or test – something which would test your proficiency for the role.



FURTHER JOB SEARCH ADVICE

At Hays, we are your lifelong career partner, so can support you throughout each stage of your job search.

YOU MAY FIND THE BELOW ADVICE USEFUL:

- [Creating and updating your CV](#)
- [Finding your perfect job](#)
- [Accepting a job offer](#)
- [Starting a new job](#)
- [Get in touch with your local Hays team](#)

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