

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Once you've handed in your job application, you'll wait to hear a response. If your application is successful, you'll be invited in for interview. Make sure you prepare well, as preparation is the next vital step in successfully attaining an apprenticeship. The application form or CV can say in words what you are like to the company, but an interview enables you to verbalise and expand on your skills and experience.

Research the company beforehand

Researching the company will not only impress the employer, it'll also allow you to answer questions with confidence. Have a look at the organisation's mission statement and values, understand who their target market is, and if you want bonus points in the interview, mention something big the company has done recently. Try to ensure that you know more about the company than any of the other candidates.

An interview is a two-way process for both parties to find out more information. You will be asked questions about the job and how your skills and experience meet the job requirements. It is also an opportunity for you to find out more about the job as well as ask any questions you may have.

Prepare interview answers

Make sure you have answers to any typical questions you expect to be asked. Here's a few typical interview questions you may be asked:

- Why did you apply for this job?
- What makes you different from the other applicants?
- What are your strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Give me an example of when you worked as part of a team?
- What do you know about the company?
- Why do you want to work for this company?

It pays dividends to think and prepare answers before going for interview. It'll also give you time to think of smart answers like 'my greatest weakness is that I obsess over the little things when I work'. This could be seen as a weakness, however your employer may just see that you have great attention to detail. We will give you some guidance on how to answer them on a further helpsheet.

Prepare interview questions

It's inevitable that at the end of the interview they'll ask the question 'So do you have any questions?'. You may be

exhausted from answering so many on the spot, you may see the opportunity to remove yourself from the situation by replying with a simple 'no', however, asking a question may set you apart from other candidates and is another chance to show interest and enthusiasm. Interviewers will want to make sure that apprentices are certain of their career path and will not leave shortly after starting their apprenticeship. Think of questions that give the impression that you're passionate and ambitious, and not just looking for any job to do.

Here's a few you could ask, ensure that they haven't covered these before you ask them!

- What will my typical day look like?
- What training will I receive?
- Who will I be working with? (i.e who's in my team?)
- When will I attend college?

Dress smartly

Dressing smart for an interview is critical. It shows an employer you have made an effort and are professional.

Dependent on the sector you are looking to work in, it might not be appropriate to wear 'smart office wear', but you must always look presentable at interview.

If your role requires you to wear 'smart office wear' consider wearing your school uniform, if you don't have other smarter clothes.

The interview

Remember, as soon as you arrive in the building anything you do or say could be taken into account! Act professionally and be aware that they'll be looking at your behaviour to see the type of person who they'll be working with. Try to remember these tips:

- In this digital era, it can be easy to accidentally forget to **turn off your phone** or put it on silent. However, it could damage your chances if you have to excuse yourself mid-interview while you fumble around in your pocket trying to turn your phone off because you've got Social Media notifications coming through!!
- Smile! It's quite hard to forget a happy person with a beaming smile. Don't worry if you're not feeling your best, the employer will expect you to have a degree of nervousness. Show your personality by being yourself in the interview, they'll want to gauge your personality by the way you approach the interview.
- Shake hands. As you will most likely know, shaking hands is a sign of respect and good etiquette for meeting a person for the first time in the business world.
- Maintain eye contact. It may be hard to keep your eyes locked on the interviewer, especially when you're

thinking of answers to questions – just try to keep your eyes off the floor as much as possible. If there is an interview panel, ensure that you give equal contact to the panel when answering all questions.

- Introduce yourself. You both already know who you are (hopefully!) but it's good practice and helps put your name to your face later on when they're deciding who to pick for the job.
- Don't be afraid to mention that you're nervous. Humility is a good trait, and employers know that as an apprentice you will be feeling a little uneasy.

Make sure you stand out from the crowd

Remember that the interviewers want you to do your best. To do well, you need to communicate well. Be clear, confident and positive and make the most of this opportunity.

You may be invited for interview at a time when no other candidates are in the building. Alternatively, employers may invite all candidates on the same day and call you for interview individually. Either way try your best to stay focused and calm.

It can be hard to stay collected and not be flustered in an interview, if you're struggling, you could practice a mock interview with the Apprenticeship Recruitment Team or family/friends.

Good luck!

We wish you all the best applying for an apprenticeship. For more guidance and support, contact our Apprenticeship Recruitment Team on **01278 655111** or email apprenticehelp@btc.ac.uk.