

## Preparing for a job interview

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This article will take you through all the steps you need to take as you prepare for a job interview. I am sharing over 20 years of my work experience in mainstream human resources and HR consulting. I have interviewed junior employees, executives, and hundreds of Chief Executive Officers. I have been a board member for more than 8 organizations including listed companies and international organizations. That opportunity allowed me to interview Directors and Chief Executives Officers. Furthermore, I have worked closely with hiring managers, to understand what they look for in job candidates. As a Consultant for more than 15 years now, I get the opportunity to design interview questions and chair interview panels for senior staff. It is this experience that I want to share with you as you prepare for your next job interview. I will outline below a step-by-step process for you to follow as you prepare for a job interview. These preparatory steps will make you an ideal candidate.

### Step 1 – Research the company



At this stage, I assume that you have been given enough notice to attend a job interview. Under normal

circumstances, you often get your notification for a job interview a week in advance. However, there are cases when the notice is too short. Whatever scenario you end up with, you can still follow these steps. One way to [impress hiring managers](#) is by demonstrating your wide knowledge of their organization. It is embarrassing for you to go for a job interview without sufficient knowledge about what your target employer does and how they are doing generally on the market. The good thing about this age of technology is that you can get all this information with a click of a button. Go on the internet and [research your target employer](#). The company's annual reports are also a good source of information. Quoting the annual reports, during the interview determines whether you proceed through the hiring process or you go home.

They have invited you for a job interview and you can do yourself a big favor and research them. You do not want to go to a job interview and fail to give basic information about the company should you be asked. Use the internet to google the company. If it's a modern organization they probably have a website. Look at what is on the website and also what has been said about the company by other sources in the public domain. Check for their social media accounts. Follow them if you can and browse through past posts. What do they seem to emphasize in their posts? Determine the [company culture](#) from its digital presence and its posts to ensure that it's a good fit for you. Demonstrate this culture fit in the interview.

The other good thing about researching a company before you go for a job interview is that when you collect sufficient information you will be able to decide on whether the company is the right fit for you. There is no point in going for a job interview when the information you have gathered seems to indicate that the company is not a good fit for you from both a cultural perspective and also from a career perspective. Never dismiss [culture fit](#), many well-meaning and good professionals failed due to unsuitable company culture.

As you dig into the background of the company, get an appreciation of the company's vision, mission, and values. When you have this kind of background information on a company before a job interview you are likely to contextualize your answers to their needs. That is a plus for you in the job interview. Never skip this stage as you prepare for a job interview.

## **Step 2 – Understand the job you are being interviewed for**

Make sure you have a very clear understanding of the role you are being interviewed for. Secondly, it is imperative to ensure that the role fits your [career goals](#). In the majority of cases, you respond to a detailed job advert with details on the job. Read and understand that job profile. Make your

interpretation of what the duties mean. Check if these are duties you have done before. Understanding the job description enables you to create a job application that presents you as an ideal candidate. I would caution anyone attending any interview when they have not done 80% of the duties listed on the job advert. Go through the duties one by one and put more details from your experience. How did you perform these duties in your previous roles? How successful were you in carrying out those duties? When you feel you successfully executed those duties before your confidence goes up. Your answers in the job interview will exude the same confidence. This is a core component of preparing for a job interview, never omit it.

### Step 3 – Rehearse the job interview questions



You must rehearse the [common interview questions](#) you may be asked in the job interview. You already know there are standard questions you are likely to be asked, start with those. Go online, and research the job interview tips and questions. Examples of [job interview questions](#) you are likely to be asked include; tell us about yourself. When you are not prepared this will be a very complicated question for you. I have seen very senior people struggle with such a simple question. This question is not asking you

about your life history. As you answer this question give your profile experience but focus specifically on why each of your career experiences is important for this role. This question can be rephrased to read [“Why should we hire you?”](#) The best way to answer this interview question is to focus on those facts and experiences that make you stand out against other candidates. Another question you are likely to be asked is; Why do you want to leave your current job? Do not focus on money issues on this question, highlight career opportunities being presented by this new opportunity. Rehearse all the possible questions. Get someone in your circles to take you through a [mock interview](#). Get feedback from them and adjust your where necessary.

Related: [25 Unique Questions to ask interviewers \[& 10 Questions to avoid\]](#)

### **Common interview questions:**

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What makes you so special that we should recruit you?
4. What do you want to gain from a new job?
5. What is your greatest professional accomplishment?
6. In five years, where do you see yourself?
7. What do you know about this company/organization?

**Protip:** To rehearse your answers you can do a mock interview with family and friends. You can also try online [job interview quizzes](#).

### **Step 4 - Read your CV and understand it**

Sometimes I see very confident men and women being embarrassed when they are asked about things on their CVs that they are not aware of. Your [CV](#) is you, you must know it inside out. Read your CV and understand what each sentence and statement there means. Interviewers may pick things from your CV and ask to give more details. If you have not read it, you will be embarrassed and that is a sure way to fail your job interview. I want to repeat this before you go for any job interview, read and understand the contents of the CV that you submitted with your application.

**Protip:** To land your dream job, it's vital to create a [customized evidence-based resume](#) that showcases your key accomplishments and professional skills. The professional skills must match the relevant skills outlined in the job description.

Related: [How to write a CV that gets shortlisted by both robots and humans](#)

## Step 5 – Dress properly for the job interview



Dress formally for the job interview unless you have been given a specific dress code. Your [interview attire](#) speaks volumes about you to the hiring manager or the interviewing panel. Poor dress sense tends to put interviewers off. You must remember that interviewers are human beings with lots of biases. You may fall victim to this if you do not pay attention to how you dress when you go for a job interview. Whatever outfit you decide to put on must be very clean and presentable. Get someone in your circles to review how you are looking hours before you leave home for the job interview. Your dressing is absolutely important in presenting an image of a ready and organized person. A bad dress sense will

spoil your opportunity to present what you know. When you dress properly for a job interview you gain confidence. When you get the dressing out of the way you are set for the actual interview. Approach everything with confidence and be positive.

## **Step 6 – Go early to the interview location**

There is nothing as distracting as arriving for a job interview late for whatever reason. Never allow such a scenario to happen in your career. This is something that you can avoid with good preparation. Get to the interview venue on time preferably 30 to 40 minutes before your turn. If you do not want to be waiting at the reception for too long, be within walking distance of the interview location. If you are within this range you can then move to the interview venue so that you arrive at least 20 minutes before your time for the interview. This will give you enough time to relax before your turn. It is not ideal for you to walk into the interview room sweating or breathing at the top. Such scenarios will likely unsettle you and distract you from responding to the interview questions. Arrive at the interview venue early enough to allow you to settle.

## **Step 7 – Switch off your phone in preparation for a job interview**

Please switch off your phone when you are ready to go into the job interview. You must switch off your phone the moment you get to the interview venue. I have observed people get marked down for being disorganized because their phone rings during a job interview. This is something you must bookmark every time you go for a job interview. Never forget it, it could cost you a job that is ordinarily yours. If you cannot switch off the phone, at least make sure it's on silent. Be careful though with this one as some smartphones only remain silent for short period and after that, they default to the ringing mode.

**Related:** [15 Resume Advice You've Never Heard Before](#)

## **Step 8 – Job Interview Venue etiquette**

When you arrive at the interview venue until you leave the interview venue, there are practices that you need to be aware of and observe.

Maintain professional conduct while you are waiting for your turn. Most of the time when you get to the interview venue you are asked to wait in a reception area or you are given a separate room. While you are waiting for your turn make sure you converse in a lower voice should there be a need to talk to anyone at the interview venue. These could be fellow job interview candidates or employees at the company you are interviewing for. Should you need to talk on the phone while waiting for your turn, please make sure you move out of the reception area so that your conversation is private and does not distract other people from doing their jobs. Please remember step 5 above; switch off your cell phone the moment you get to the job interview venue.

**Note on etiquette:** The covid19 pandemic accelerated the use of technology and popularised new ways of doing things, among them being [virtual interviews](#). There are specific etiquette and preparatory measures you need to follow in a video interview.

Related: [How to Handle an Aggressive Interviewer](#)

## Step 9 – In the job interview



When your turn comes, you will be ushered into the interview room. Here you will meet a job interview panel. Walk with energy as you go into the room. I have heard interviewers giving comments such as, “This person cannot handle this job when they walked in they showed no energy. This job requires someone with lots of energy”. This comment may not have anything to do with how the candidate will do the job, but it matters when the panel gets concerned to this extent. The panel is likely to give you low ratings if their consensus assessment is that you do not have the energy for the job. Also, pay attention to how you handle your handshake with panel members. Be firm and professional. A firm handshake could signal confidence. The walk into the interview venue and the handshake should all exude energy.

When you are being introduced to the panel, make sure you remember the names of the panelists and you can even write down their names for reference. Mixing up names could signal to the panel that you have poor attention to detail. Occasionally as you answer questions it may help to say, “Thank you, Mr Martin, for that important question” then you proceed to answer the question.

Maintain professional eye contact as you respond and interact with the panel. I have often seen job candidates looking down or sideways because they cannot face the panel. This could lead to you being marked down. Your voice should be assertive and well projected. If you find the panel saying to you “speak up” your voice projection will be too low.

**Related:** [Here Are 9 Reasons You May Not Be Hired-and What You Can Do About It](#)

**Protip:** Desist from complaining, bad-mouthing, or speaking [negatively about your previous employer](#) in an interview. Your potential employer perceives it as a red flag.

## **Step 10- The actual job interview**

You are now in the job interview responding to questions. There are a few tips you need to master. The best way to answer interview questions is to be factual and support every answer with an example of how you have handled similar assignments or challenges before. That way I can almost guarantee that you will land your dream job. When you use evidence-based responses to interview questions you will be rated very high by the panel. Avoid long winding answers that reflect that you do not know what you are talking about. In cases where you genuinely do not know let the panel know instead of wasting their

time. However, do not get into the habit of just saying “ I do not know” because they could be rated negatively. Try to answer all questions to the best of your ability.

**Protip:** Hiring managers look for people who [fit the company culture](#), make sure you demonstrate culture fit when answering questions.

**Related:** [10 Signs that your job interview went well](#)

## Conclusion

If you follow the above guidelines, I am very confident that you will get that dream job. If you do get the job after reading this article, please come back and leave a comment. I have coached people in preparing for job interviews and my success rate is over 90%. Therefore these steps in preparing for a job interview should work for you. Good luck.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What should I do before an interview?**

It's a good idea to do at least one mock interview before the real interview.

### **What is a face-to-face interview?**

You'll attend the employer's office and be questioned on your suitability for the job by an individual or panel.

### **What are the benefits of video interviews?**

These have increasingly been used due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw the majority of things move online.

### **What is an assessment center?**

Assessment centers- enable employers to compare the performance of lots of candidates at the same time.

### **What questions will you be asked?**

It's a decent bet that you'll be asked questions like: Why are you thinking about leaving your current job? What interests you about this opening? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

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