

How to perform well at interview

Research Office

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So you have got an interview? The first thing to do is take some time to feel good about it! Getting as far as the interview stage is an achievement in itself.

With lots of other people in the market for a job or course your application form must have had all the right ingredients to make them want to learn more about you and your suitability for the role. Although an interview is ultimately your one chance to impress there are lots of things you can do before hand to prepare. And the more preparation you do, the calmer you will feel on the big day.

1. Why do you want the role?

This is an important question and one that is almost always asked but answering in a concise and meaningful way can be difficult without prior preparation. The real answer to the question may be “because I need the money/want to stay on in Higher Education/I am not sure I just applied for lots of things” but to say any of the above would not give your interviewers the best impression. So think about what attracted you to the advert. Is it in a subject area you really like? Is this opportunity a stepping stone to a more distant aspiration? Think about how you might weave in some facts that make you attractive to the interviewers such as “I really enjoyed the dissertation I did during my undergraduate studies and want to build on the expertise I developed whilst undertaking this part of my degree.” This demonstrates that you already have some of the key skills you will need to do a postgraduate qualification.

2. Do your research

In answering the all important “why do you want the role?” you can demonstrate that you are really serious by having an understanding of the business/university you are hoping to join. Research key facts about the organisation before hand, using existing contacts or the internet to get a good overview of your potential new workplace. Think about why one university and not another? Is it the subject area, eminent researcher or excellent facilities that attracted you? Using this information will make the interviewers feel that you have taken the time to get to know their business and hearing good things about their own place of work will put them in a good mood too.

3. Be confident

You may feel that you are in the spotlight at interview but it is worth bearing in mind that lots of interviewers feel nervous about their role in the process too. Nobody wants to see someone whose nerves have got the better of them. The panel want to get to know as much about you as possible in the short time slot you have been allocated so try to be yourself. Good preparation will help you to achieve this. If you can get friends, family or colleagues to help, ask them to put you on the spot with difficult questions. Practice makes perfect!

4. And finally.....

Have a dry run. Try on your clothes to prevent any last minute wardrobe nightmares. If in doubt, ask for advice from someone you trust. Looking your best will boost your confidence. Worrying about whether or not you are dressed appropriately is a distraction you can do without. Before the big day make sure you know exactly where you are going! Take money and a mobile and a map if your interview is not on familiar territory and give yourself plenty of time to get to your destination on time. Your journey should be a chance for you to mentally rehearse your interview answers and not to worry about what excuse you will give when you arrive late!

For further help, advice and information please e-mail: gro@southwales.ac.uk or talk to the Careers Service.

Go online to book an appointment with a careers advisor:
careers.southwales.ac.uk/appointment