

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Module Five:

Interview Essentials



Cheshire West
and Chester

Interview Essentials

Content:

1. Prepare for that interview
2. Types of interviews inc online/virtual
3. Interview questions
4. Follow up the interview

Introduction to Interview Essentials

Prepare, Practice, Prepare!

From researching the company, preparing your responses to deciding what to wear; spending time on interview preparation is essential if you're going to put in a good performance and secure the job.



Introduction to Interview Essentials

- There are several steps you can take to prepare yourself for a successful interview.
- To accomplish this, you should research the company and carefully review the job description so you can demonstrate why you would be a good fit.
- Let's look at the steps to preparing for an interview...

Know your audience

- Learn everything you can about the company.
- Talk to friends and contacts, read current news releases.
- Look at the information a company is pushing out on their website and social media, by doing so, you'll get the larger picture about the company and their current business.

Anticipate the interview questions:

- Planning your answers to the most common job interview questions can help you feel more relaxed and confident - even if you can't predict exactly what you'll be asked.
- Select a range of examples of your past experience that can demonstrate (for example):
 - Key achievements
 - Overcoming difficulties/dealing with conflict

Mock Interviews

- As with every skill, the more you do it, the better you'll be at it.
- Practice makes perfect. For best results, don't go into an interview cold. A mock interview can help you practice delivering your prepared answers and show you where your weak spots are.

Mock Interviews

- Contact your local Work Zone (contact details at the end of the presentation) and speak to one of our Employment Support Officers who will arrange a mock interview with you (subject to availability).
- This will give you an opportunity to practice your interview techniques and receive feedback on your interviewing skills.
- Family members/friends can also be useful to provide support and give you the opportunity to practice.

Types of Interviews

Face-to face - the most common form of interview. You'll attend the employer's premises and be questioned on your suitability for the job by an individual or panel.

Face-to-face interviews usually last between 45 minutes and two hours, and may be preceded or followed by competency tests (eg maths, English, personality) and exercises. The questions may be strength based or competency-based eg 'give me a situation where you have demonstrated

You may be asked to deliver a short presentation. This may be pre-prepared or on the spot.

Types of Interviews

Telephone - most often used by employers early in the application process to filter large numbers of applicants down to a more manageable number. If you're successful you'll typically be invited to a face-to-face interview or assessment centre.

Plan for the type of questions they will ask you.

Expect a telephone interview to last around half an hour.

Types of Interviews

Virtual -

A virtual interview is an interview that takes place remotely, sometimes over the phone, but increasingly often using technology like video conferencing and other online communication platforms such as MS TEAMS and Zoom.

Types of Interviews

Virtual -

During a time when our government recommends that people practise social distancing, it's become essential for both employers and candidates to learn how to perfect the virtual interview process.

Types of Interviews

Virtual -

Virtual interviews are often conducted in much the same way as face-to-face interviews. That said, virtual communication requires special considerations and adjustments due to the limited ability to read body language and facial expressions.

Types of Interviews

Virtual - here are a few considerations to set yourself up for success:

- Test your technology beforehand
- Wear professional attire
- Prepare in advance
- Limit distractions
- Use professional body language

Tests, Activities and Exercises

There are lots of different interview tests that employers use:

Presentations - assess your ability to communicate clearly and formally, testing your skills in timing, persuasion, analysis, public speaking and creativity. Interview presentations usually last 10 to 20 minutes, and are prepared in advance using Microsoft PowerPoint or similar software.

However, some interviewers will present you with a topic on the day and give you 20 mins to prepare. You should be told that this will be happening beforehand.

Interview Presentations - Tips

- Design an engaging presentation and utilise graphics.
- Keep it short, don't repeat everything you're going to say.
- Practice beforehand and check your timings.
- Take 3 deep breaths to steady yourself before you start. Sounds small, but really important.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience.
- Speak loudly enough to grab everyone's attention.
- Stay within the allotted time, leaving room for questions.
- Use pauses to allow the audience to absorb your words.

Tests, Activities and Exercises

Group exercises usually involving 8 to 10 candidates, group exercises are often used in assessment centres or when organisations have multiple vacancies.

The recruiter will usually provide an industry or workplace-related problem that requires a solution.

Group Exercises – Tips

- Actively contribute, making your points clearly, concisely and confidently.
- Don't criticise, interrupt or undermine others, but politely intervene if someone is dominating.
- Follow instructions carefully, relate everything to your brief.
- Include others and delegate appropriately, choosing the best person for each task.
- Offer praise and appreciation for others, understanding and building upon their comments
- Stand up for your opinion if criticised
- Stay calm, but work quickly and decisively.

Written Tests

These interview tasks usually involve writing an essay, email, letter or report on a given topic to proofread, review or summarise.

Tasks typically last 40 to 60 minutes and assess your common sense, comprehension and written communication. Ensure that you read all the instructions and materials carefully before starting.

In-tray Exercises

Also known as inbox or e-tray exercises (if completed digitally), these business situations require you to organise your workload.

You'll have around 30 to 60 minutes to work through 10 to 30 items of paperwork such as emails, letters, minutes, reports, organisation charts, policy documents and telephone messages.

Your primary goal is to prioritise your items, explaining what action is required for each.



Interview Questions

Employers need to understand why you want the job, why you're the best person for the role, and how well your personality will fit into the organisation/team.

It's not just about the content of your answers - it's about the way you answer them; confidence and enthusiasm are particularly important.

Tell me a bit about yourself?

- This question is often used as an interview opener.
- This question is a gift! You can provide the interviewer with a great first impression.
- Preparation is key. Focus on your experience, skills, characteristics and successes, and how they make you a strong candidate in terms of the job description you are applying for.

Why do you want to work here?

- Demonstrate that you've researched the company and the role by discussing the skills you have and why you are interested in their particular company eg the company values that led you to apply.
- Draw on what you enjoy and talk about the particular aspects of the job advertisement that enticed you.

How do you prioritise your work?

- The employer wants to know whether you're organised, can meet deadlines and are able to handle multiple projects at the same time.
- The best way to answer this question is to provide examples of times when you've juggled a number of different tasks at the same time and still delivered them to a high quality and on time.
- These examples can come from previous jobs.

Give an example of when you had to cope with a difficult situation?

- This question is one of the most popular competency-based interview questions. It allows the employer to assess how calm and reliable you are under pressure.
- They want to see how you assessed the problem, how you sequenced the steps you needed to take to rectify it.
- Was conflict (eg between staff members involved), how did you deal with this and diffuse the situation?
- Think about times where you've had to meet tight deadlines or handle difficult people.

What has been your greatest achievement?

- Your answer should evidence skills relevant to the job - such as teamwork, initiative, communication, determination, organisation and impact.
- For inspiration, think about a time when you've received an award, organised an event, learned something new or overcome a major fear. Always prepare several examples.

Why should we hire you?

With this question, your interviewer is asking you to sell yourself as the best person for the position. Make their job easier by convincing them that:

- You can do the work and deliver exceptional results.
- You will fit in beautifully and be a great addition to the team.
- You possess a combination of skills and experience that make you stand out from the crowd.

Follow up the interview

- Find out the decision making timeline following the interview and ensure they have the most appropriate contact details to get in touch with you.
- After your interview, you should prepare to follow up with the employer. You can thank them for their time.
- Doing so reminds the employer of your conversation, shows them you are genuinely interested in the position and gives you the opportunity to bring up points you forgot to mention.

Interview Essentials

For support with interview preparation, contact:

- **Chester Work Zone** – 01244 972028
workzonechester@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- **Ellesmere Port Work Zone** – 0151 356 6667
epworkzone@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- **Northwich Work Zone** – 01606 288540
workzonenorthwich@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- **Winsford Work Zone** – 01606 288901
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Thank you
and
Good Luck