



## Outplacement Support Interview guide



 **Marshalls**



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## Outplacement guide

We understand that any change can be difficult to deal with, and without the right information at the right time any stress it causes can be made worse. To help you to transition to the next stage of your working life we've created this guide that covers everything you need to know about interviews. From how to prepare, what to wear and the overall do's and don't's.

This guide has been designed to support you through the process and give you a 'route map' to help you find your next job. However, it's also important to take time out to reflect on what you might want to do. Often redundancy allows us the opportunity to look at other options; we might decide to follow a long-held dream or passion, whether that be starting your own business, retiring, studying or travelling. You may want to do something different, consider what your transferrable skills are or take the opportunity to learn something new.

## **Interview skills**

An interview is a two-way conversation between you and an employer to find out if you have the right skills and attributes to do the job. It's also an opportunity to help you decide if it's the right job and company for you. There are certain rules and conventions to follow in the interviews. Here's some 'top tips' to consider before attending an interview.

### **Preparation**

Preparation for an interview is absolutely key. It can be the difference between your success and failure. Good preparation not only gives you an insight into the organisation, it can also give you confidence.

### **Company research**

Interviewers will expect you to have a good grasp of what their organisation does, who their customers are, how big it is, and who its main competitors are. Visit the company's website as well as other resources such as Glassdoor and LinkedIn. With these facts under your belt, you'll be able to hold a meaningful conversation about the company and put any details you've learned ahead of the interview into context.

Be sure that you are clear on why you're interested in working for this particular company. Showing you've done some independent research on the company shows that you really want the role.

### **Role research**

You need to make sure you understand the job description fully and know how it fits into the overall structure of the company. If you have any queries about it then try to raise them before the interview or be prepared to bring them up during an interview.

Be clear on what attracted you to this particular role. Ask yourself what the key skills for the job are and think of examples which enable you to demonstrate those skills.

Be ready to talk about your knowledge, experience, abilities and skills that fit the role. Have at least three strong points about yourself that you can relate to the company and job on offer.

### **Interview research**

Make sure you find out what format the interview will take. They can be a mix of standard interviews and role-specific tests (such as role plays or psychometric questionnaires).

Also find out who your interviewer(s) will be and their role within the organisation. You can look these up on the company website, or try finding them on LinkedIn.

## Dressing for Interview

One of the vital ingredients for a positive first impression is to 'dress for success'. You will want that first impression to be a great one. This serves two purposes: creating a positive first impression and raising your confidence levels.

For men, a suit is the most typical attire and more often these days, men can just wear a smart (ironed) shirt rather than a full suit. For women, a suit is appropriate, but skirts, smart trousers and dresses are acceptable as well.

Keep in mind that each employer is different and some may be more relaxed and informal. If in doubt, ask the recruiter or hiring manager what the dress code is for their company culture.

Here's some general tips to creating a great first impression:

- Get your clothes ready the night before, make sure these are clean and tidy
- Get up in plenty of time so you have enough time to prepare
- Collate all the documents you will need to take with you the night before:
  - CV, job description, job advert and covering letter
  - map of the location, postcode for sat nav, bus/train times, parking
  - names of people you're meeting, invitation letter
  - examples of your work, qualification certificates
  - identification to prove you have the right to work in the UK
- Set off early, allowing yourself plenty of time to arrive at the location - preferably 15 minutes early. If you're not sure how to get there, try and make the journey the day before (if possible). Being late because you got lost doesn't send out a great first impression. Also, it won't help your stress levels. If you're going to be late for any reason then make sure you inform the interviewer as early as possible
- Don't slouch in your seat or do anything that may make you look disinterested
- Don't let your nerves get the better of you - use some basic breathing exercises, and remember it's not life or death - there are other jobs out there!
- Be yourself (the best version of course!)

## The Interview Process

The interview process varies for every job. After the initial application process, some employers choose to screen candidates further by inviting them to take a test, have a chat on the phone or even prepare a case study before coming in to have a face-to-face interview. All of these steps are equally important in impressing future employers and landing a good job.

Many interviews are carried out on the phone or by **video call** (e.g. Zoom, Teams, FaceTime). Here's some things you should consider:

- Ahead of the interview, test your phone or computer is set up for whatever application the video call is using. If you need help from a friend with this allow plenty of time for both of you before the interview
- Find a quiet, private, well-lit place, free from interruptions. Check what's in the background behind you isn't anything you don't want the interviewer to see!
- Make sure your internet connection is stable
- Close any unnecessary web browser tabs and applications

- Dress professionally and avoid bright colours or stripes that don't come across well on camera
- Have a pen, notepad, copy of your CV and any other information you might need with you
- When listening, nod and smile to show you are engaged
- Use hand gestures when appropriate
- Put your mobile phone on silent mode
- Have a plan B in case your technology doesn't work e.g. Suggest you carry out the interview on the phone (ask for a phone number ahead of the call, just in case you need it)

Here's some information that may help you successfully overcome the hurdles of attending an interview. Some things you may find obvious, but these are often the things we forget.

- Greet your interviewer with a smile and firm handshake (but only if a hand is offered). Make eye contact. Try to make small talk during the walk from the reception area to the interview room.
- Answer questions properly - even if you need a few moments' to collect your thoughts. It's better to say you need a minute to think about your answer rather than speak instantly and regret it afterwards. If you don't understand the question, ask them to repeat it or ask for clarification.
- Your interviewer will be thinking about what it would be like to work with you, so the last thing they'll want to hear is you talking about your boss or current colleagues behind their back. Interviewers like to see someone who enjoys a challenge and is enthusiastic.
- It is not what you say, but how you say it. During the interview, don't fold your arms and lean back or look to the floor! Sit upright and try to maintain good eye contact. Use your hands and lean forward when making a point. Many people can't think and control their body language at the same time, which is why you need to prepare.
- Be honest - the interviewer may see through untruths. If you haven't done something, say so, but show some initiative and suggest how you might approach it
- Avoid controversial topics such as religion and politics
- Don't swear, or use slang words
- Don't be arrogant and assume you have the job

### **Interview Questions**

You can't predict every question, so approach the interview with a list of important points about yourself that you want the interviewer to know.

Often, your initial interview will be a review of your CV. You will be asked to talk through your CV so make sure you can comfortably walk through your CV and confidently talk

about why you left each position. Remember to keep this positive.

You may also be asked other **general questions** about your suitability for the job and why you've applied for the role, which may include the following types of questions:

- Why do you think you are suitable for the job?
- Why have you applied for the job?
- What qualities can you bring to the role?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? What development needs do you have?
- What are your career aspirations or where do you want to be in 5 years' time?

Below are some on-line references of the types of questions you may be asked and how to best respond:

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm>  
<http://www.totaljobs.com/careers-advice/interviews/interview-questions>

Another common type of interview is a **Competency Based Interview** which may also be referred to as a behavioural interview. This isn't as scary as it may sound! The interviewer is looking for you to provide real life examples of what you have done to demonstrate your competence for a certain aspect of the job you are interviewing for.

When answering competency based interview questions a good tip is to structure your response in the following way using the STAR technique:

**S - Situation:** describe the situation you were in - set the scene

**T - Task:** what tasks did you need to undertake?

**A - Action:** what action did you take and if you were in a group situation what **you** specifically did rather than other members of the team

**R - Result:** what happened in the end, what was the outcome? What did you achieve and learn? How was success measured?

Give a fully rounded answer that demonstrates what you actually did and try not to generalise. Spend some time preparing your answers. Consider work that you have been involved in that you are particularly proud of where you feel you have made a good contribution. Be familiar with the job description and think about the types of questions that may be relevant to the job. Be prepared but don't worry - the important thing is to be honest and be yourself.

## **Assessments**

In addition to an interview you may be asked to complete some form of assessment or be invited to an assessment centre. This may involve different activities which provide a more rounded and comprehensive picture of how you deal with situations. They aren't designed to trip you up but to see how you practically approach a task. The exercises should also be designed to give you a realistic impression of what the job entails. You should feel challenged but not 'out of your depth'. Assessments are designed for the employer to ensure they hire the right person for the job and increase their predictability

of your job success. The types of exercises you may be involved in are:

**Ability tests** (usually around numerical, accuracy, logic and verbal skills). May be timed and taken on paper or on-line.

**Group exercises** observe how you behave in a group situation and how you discuss and tackle a particular problem.

**Questionnaires** (Personality, Motivation or Interest) look at your preferred style of working with no right or wrong answer!

**In tray exercises** view your approach to a piece of work or given task or tasks.

**Presentations** - you may be given a topic to research in advance or given information on the day of the interview. You will be asked to present your findings back to your interviewers.

**Role play** assesses how you deal with colleagues, customers or other people in situations such as selling and negotiating, dealing with problems or coaching.

Here are some useful websites to learn more about assessments. Some of them contain practice questions:

<http://www.shldirect.com/en/assessment-advice/about-assessments>

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview\\_tips\\_assessment\\_centres.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips_assessment_centres.htm)

[http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview\\_tips\\_psychometric\\_tests.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips_psychometric_tests.htm)

Once the interviewer is finished with their questions, it's common for them to turn the tables and ask if you have any questions of them. Be prepared with questions to ask - this demonstrates a strong interest level and helps you assess if it's the right job and company for you. Here are some examples:

- Can you tell me more about the day to day responsibilities of the role?
- What would a typical day look like?
- What are you expecting from me in the first 3 months? What would impress you?
- What is the company's plan for the next 5 years?
- Are there opportunities for training or progression?
- What's the working culture like?
- What do you enjoy about working here?
- Can you tell me more about the team I'll be working with?
- When I can expect to hear back from you?

**Asking about money:** ideally this should be covered in your final interview or as your last question (unless they raise the subject first!) Remember to ask any questions that you may have **from your research into the company.**

### **After the interview**

If you have your interviewer's contact details you can follow up by sending a 'thank-you' e-mail, saying how much you enjoyed meeting them and how interested you are (assuming you're keen on the job!) This is optional but can help your interviewers remember you and stand out from the crowd.



## Considering an offer

You are likely to receive a verbal offer first followed by confirmation of the full terms and conditions of the offer in writing. Once you do receive your offer you may wish to consider the following points which you may or may have not covered during your interview:

- Clarify the role and make sure you're comfortable with it
- Know your reporting lines and how you fit into the team
- What are your key relationships?
- Is it the right environment for you and a good place to work?
- How will your performance be measured?
- Is the business in a good state?
- Consider the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)
- Do the company values match your own?
- Does the role match your career goals and development needs?
- Does the offer fit with your domestic, logistical and financial situation?
- Work out the full implications of the package on offer (financial and benefits)

Seek input from your trusted family and friends and don't be afraid to go back and ask questions!

## References

Depending on the company, you may need to provide contact details of people to provide you with a reference. References are usually from people who know you personally (a personal or character reference), someone you've worked with who can provide an objective appraisal of how you work, or a company reference.

Remember to get permission from your referees before putting their names forward. Marshalls can provide a reference for your new employer by contacting [PeopleServices@marshalls.co.uk](mailto:PeopleServices@marshalls.co.uk)

## Appendix 1 Personal Career Appraisal

### Technical and business strengths

List what you regard as being your most important **technical** and **business strengths** – the particular **knowledge, experience** and **skills** you've acquired that you feel will be an asset to the job you want to do:

Technical and business strengths	Are these transferable to other jobs?
1.	Yes / No
2.	Yes / No
3.	Yes / No
4.	Yes / No
5.	Yes / No
6.	Yes / No
7.	Yes / No
8.	Yes / No
9.	Yes / No
10.	Yes / No

### Personal Strengths

Tick or highlight 10 statements which you feel reflect your personal strengths and attributes at work:

I am able to accept a challenge I am a good communicator I am able to make decisions easily I am good at managing other people I am well organised I am good at meeting deadlines I am good at seeing the root of a problem and resolving it I am able to use my initiative I am good at delegating responsibility to others I am able to understand the needs of others I am not easily put off obstacles I get on well with people I like to be part of a team I enjoy working under pressure I am good at persuading other	I am tolerant I enjoy teaching others I like making presentations I set myself high standards I have a keen eye for detail I like finding new ways to do things I establish relationships easily I am able to work hard and consistently I have a good sense of humour I am determined to be successful I am ambitious I have lots of common sense I am a good judge of people I am adaptable to change I am able to implement new ideas easily I am good at presenting complex information simply
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I can handle several different tasks simultaneously I am good at prioritising my work I enjoy providing a good service to others	I enjoy participating in the social side of working life I find it easy to praise others
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**Think of some examples of how you've demonstrated your strengths. They will be useful for your CV and interviews.**

**What would you regard as being your weaknesses/things you aren't so good at?**

**What have you done to address your weaknesses or what could you do?**

**Can you reproduce below any comments made about you in your most recent performance appraisals at work?**

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**Finally, in this section, identify 5 important personal achievements or high points in your life:**

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

**The work you have done so far will form an important basis from which you should be able to do the following:**

- Begin to plan your next steps
- Clarify your background, experience and objectives
- Start to understand better the sort of person you are
- Maintain your confidence in your ability
- Construct a good CV
- Help you describe yourself well to someone else

Why not share your Personal Career Appraisal with someone who knows you well at work to see if they agree with you and have any feedback.