

Interview preparation checklist

Job interview coming up?

As daunting as it might be, there are steps you can take to settle your nerves, feel better prepared and walk into the interview with more confidence.

Download our interview preparation checklist, then read below for more information on each step to help you plan, prepare and ace your next interview.

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1. **Examine the position description**

“Having an in-depth understanding of the position will improve the likelihood of having a successful interview outcome,” says career and interview coach, [Leah Lambert](#).

If you don’t already have one, make sure you request a copy of the position description so you can research the role before the interview. Sometimes recruiters forget to offer to send you a copy of the position description before the interview, so it is worth asking if there is one available.

“I recommend getting out a highlighter to mark up the main responsibilities, key result areas, most important relationships (internal and external to the company) and the core competencies required,” Lambart says.

“By having a good understanding of the role and competencies, you can anticipate the types of challenges you may encounter in the position, the key priorities for the role, and therefore, the areas that the interview panel might focus on during the interview.”

2. **Understand what skills you bring to the role**

Before your interview, prepare specific examples of when you have previously demonstrated the required competencies (such as teamwork/collaboration, relationship-building, analytical skills etc) and most importantly how you used or demonstrated them.

For example, have you shown strong leadership skills by managing cross-functional teams? Or have you demonstrated your strong organisational skills and high attention to detail by coordinating the staff roster?

“How well you match the key competencies or selection criteria in the position description is usually a good indicator as to how closely you will meet the job requirements,” Lambart says.

3. **Research the company**

“As well as a thorough understanding of the role, it’s an advantage to have a good [knowledge of the organisation as a whole](#),” Lambart says.

Look at the organisation’s website for information, then check out their social media pages for recent news. “Press releases and blog posts will provide you with up-to-date information about the company and an insight into the workplace culture.

“I would also recommend signing up to any newsletters available to get a sense of how the organisation communicates with their clients or customers,” Lambart says. If you know any past or present employees, having informal conversations with them will also give you insights that you can’t get through online research.

4. **Practice your answers**

While you can’t predict every question that you’ll be asked during the interview, there are plenty of ways that you can prepare to give yourself the best chance on the day.

SEEK’s [Practice Interview Builder](#) has a range of interview questions that you can choose from to create your own custom checklist. Once you’ve written out

your responses, the next step is to start practising.

“Draft your responses and then read them aloud a few times,” Lambart says. “The hardest part about interviews is that we usually talk about *what* we do at work rather than *how* we do things and what the outcomes were. When people first start preparing for interviews it often feels very unnatural to talk about yourself in this way. However, like any type of presentation, the more you practice talking through your examples, the more natural it will feel on the day.”

Once you’ve got your answers down pat, ask a friend or a family member to run through practice questions and answers with you, so you get used to thinking on your feet. The more you face your nerves now, the easier it can be to keep them at bay on the day.

5. Write down the questions you want to ask

One of the best ways to show your interest in a role is by [asking three or four great questions at the end of an interview](#). This can help you gain a deeper understanding of the role you’re applying for whilst also demonstrating to the potential employer that you’re enthusiastic about the role and have done your research.

“I would always recommend asking ‘open’ questions rather than ‘closed’ questions to generate some great two-way conversation at the end of the interview,” says Lambart. One example might be: *‘Are you able to tell me a little about the team culture?’*

“It’s also acceptable to ask at the end of the interview when you could expect to hear back regarding next steps,” Lambart says. “If you have a timeframe, this allows you to follow up in an appropriate manner without appearing too pushy.”

6. Plan your travel beforehand

If there’s one thing that could really hold you back from making a great impression, it’s being late. Make sure you know where you are going, anticipate anything that could make you late such as traffic, and aim to arrive early.

“I recommend arriving at least half an hour early,” Lambart says. “It’s better to sit in a coffee shop or your car and read over your notes rather than cutting it fine.”

Lambart also says “If your interview is a virtual interview, then make sure that you have tested the technology (i.e. Zoom or Microsoft Teams) with a friend. Ensure that you have good lighting on your face, a professional background (no unmade beds or untidy shelves) and that you are not distracted (there are no cats walking across the screen, or flatmates walking past half-undressed in the background).”

Ideally you want your head and shoulders to be in the shot. Also, try as much as possible to look into the camera when speaking to the panel.

7. Decide on what to wear

While you've been chosen for an interview based on your skills, characteristics and experience, presenting yourself well is also important.

"Do some research about the dress code prior to an interview, either by asking someone who works at the organisation or clarifying with the recruiter," Lambart says. "If you are still unsure, then err on the conservative side rather than under-dressing."

8. Manage interview nerves

It's normal to feel anxious or jittery on the big day, and there are ways to manage your nerves. "My best tip is to remember to breathe," Lambart says. "When nerves get the better of people, we often breathe only from the top part of our lungs. We take shallow breaths and limit the oxygen going to the brain."

When our brain gets less oxygen, we can go blank. "To eliminate the risk of going blank, aim to have good posture, sit up straight, breathe through your nose at an even rate," Lambart advises. "Then breathe out slowly and evenly through the mouth."

It can also be helpful to reframe your thoughts. "Instead of thinking about the interview as an interrogation, instead think of it as a conversation with other adults who are interested in what you have to say," she says. "It can help to think of the interview as an opportunity for you to assess them – not the other way around. This helps you regain a feeling of control."

9. Following up

Once your interview is over, it can be worth sending a [brief email to follow up](#). This shows enthusiasm, and puts the ball in the employers court to get back to you.

"I always suggest sending a polite email a few hours after the interview thanking the interviewers for their time and reinforcing your interest in the role," Lambart says.

There's no doubt that interviews can be nerve-racking. But the right planning and preparation can help you boost your confidence and greatly enhance your ability to take that next step in your career. Think about 'interviewing' as a key business skill that you simply must have mastered regardless of whether you are in an entry-level role or senior management position.