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# Maximizing your interview.

Based on nearly 40 years' experience of placing candidates, this pack has been designed to simplify the interview process giving you the best chance of securing the role



# The essentials.

Presentation and preparation are key to giving you the best chance against tough competition at interview stage.

Many interviews can be over before they've even begun due to a lack of care and attention to the basics. Consider the following essential rules before you attend that all-important interview:



## Look sharp

Always make sure you are dressed in smart business attire.



## Be on time

Aim to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the interview.



## Be responsive

Answer in full and be prepared to expand upon what you've said.



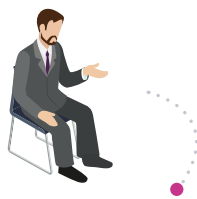
## Ask questions

Asking questions indicates your level of interest in the company and the role.



## Do your research

Learn as much as possible - the more you know, the better chance you have of selling yourself.



## Listen and answer the question asked

Answer the question they ask, not the question you want to answer.



## Show enthusiasm and energy

Always sit up straight, speak clearly and maintain a positive attitude.

## Before the interview.

- Use the job specification to match your qualities with the role requirements
- Research the interviewer, the company, the industry and their competition
- Practice responding to the different types of interview questions
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer about their job, the company and the industry

## The interview.

- Ensure you look well-presented and professional
- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early
- Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and eye contact
- Focus upon points you have prepared without sounding rehearsed or stiff
- Relax and enjoy the conversation – learn what you can about the company
- Ask questions and listen
- Determine the next steps in the process
- Thank the interviewer for taking the time to interview you

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***Information is key when it comes to interviews so do your research on the role and the company. In the interview, be specific and succinct in your answers and, most importantly, sell yourself and the impact you could have on the team and the wider business.***

**Kim**

Head of Talent, Rullion





## Interview questions.

While we can never totally predict what interviewers will ask, certain questions arise all the time and you should make sure you are ready with responses.

### **Tell me about yourself?**

This is the most common first interview question and the quality of response can speak volumes about a candidate's suitability for a role. Rehearse a short speech, no more than a couple of minutes at most. Focus on your work attributes, and if asked about your personal life, keep your answers relevant.

### **Why did you leave (are you leaving) your job?**

The key here is being positive. If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context. If you are employed, don't dwell on the downside of your current situation; focus on what you want in your next job. Never give a negative answer to this question – it may make the interviewer question your future loyalty.

### **Why do you want to work here? (aka what do you know about our company?)**

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. Researching the company and industry before your interview will ensure you stand out as an informed and well-prepared applicant. Many companies will discount any candidate that hasn't taken the time to find out more about their organisation.



***Look at the role specification and try to work out what kind of questions you'll be asked. That way, you can begin to align your skill set and experience with the role.***

#### **Debbie**

Executive Director, Rullion





### **What are your strengths?**

This is the perfect interview question, as it focuses on the positive and enables you to list the reasons why your skill set matches the position on offer. Pick two or three key strengths that are pertinent to the role and highlight how you match the requirements. Prepare specific examples that you can call upon to supplement your answers.

### **What are your weaknesses?**

This is the most dreaded interview question. Handle it by minimising your weakness and emphasizing your strengths. Always counteract a negative with a positive and only concentrate on professional traits.

### **What are your goals? (aka where do you see yourself in X years' time?)**

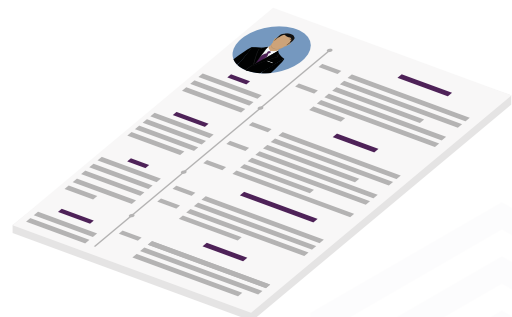
It's best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than committing yourself in the distant future.

### **Why should we hire you? (aka why do you want this job? What makes you unique?)**

Summarize your experiences. For example, "With five years' experience working in the financial services industry and my proven track record of saving the company money, I could make a big difference in your company. I'm confident I would be a great addition to your team."

### **What salary are you seeking?**

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area, and your bottom line or walk-away point.



# Competency-based interview questions.

You will likely be asked scenario-based questions, so try to have examples prepared. Never answer queries about potential gaps in your skill set and experience negatively – try to put a positive spin on everything.



## Adaptability

- Give an example of when you feel like you went 'above and beyond' in your role?

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- Describe a time when you altered your work priorities to fit in with another employees' needs.

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- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or your plans to consider new information or changing priorities.



## Communication

- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.

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- Tell me about a time when you really had to pay attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

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- Describe a recent situation which the strength of your communication skills resolved an issue.



## Client Focus

- Give an example of how you provided a service to a client beyond their expectations. How did you identify the need? How did you respond?

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- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client service issue. How did you resolve the situation?

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- Describe a situation in which you acted as an advocate within your organisation for your stakeholder's needs, where there was some resistance to overcome.





### **Organisational awareness**

- Describe the culture of your organisation and give an example of how you work within this culture to achieve a goal.

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- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.

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- Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of your organisation to achieve a unique goal.



### **Problem solving and judgment**

- Tell me about a time when you had to identify the underlying causes to a problem.

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- Describe a time when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.

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- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision that required careful thought. What did you do?



### **Results orientation**

- Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a specific goal.

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- Tell me about a time when you improved the way things were typically done in your organisation.

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- Describe something you have done to improve your own personal work performance.



### **Teamwork**

- Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team.

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- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.

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- Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?

# Role specific competencies.

You will likely be asked role-based questions, so you should prepare using the role specification to match your skills and qualities to the role requirements.



## Developing others

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance. What did you do?

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- Describe a time when you provided feedback to someone about his or her performance. How did you handle the situation?

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- Give me an example of a time when you recognized that a member of your team had a performance difficulty/deficiency. What did you do?



## Impact and influence

- Describe a recent situation in which you convinced an individual or a group to take on board your ideas.

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- Describe a time when you went through a series of steps to influence an individual or a group on an important issue.

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- Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.



## Innovation

- Describe something you have done that was new and different for your organization that improved performance and/or productivity.

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- Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual or different approach for addressing a problem or task.

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- Tell me about a recent problem in which previously used solutions wouldn't work. How did you solve the problem?



## Relationship building

- Describe a situation in which you developed an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client. How did you go about building the relationship?

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- Tell me about a time when you relied on a contact in your network to help you with a work-related task or problem.

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- Give me an example of a time when you deliberately attempted to build rapport with a co-worker or customer.





### Self-management

- Describe the level of stress in your job and what you do to manage it.

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- Describe a time when you were in a high-pressure situation. How did you ensure you performed to the best of your ability?

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- Describe a time when things didn't turn out as you had planned and you had to analyse the situation to address the issue. What did you learn?



### Strategic thinking

- Describe a challenge or opportunity you identified based on your industry knowledge, and how you developed a strategy to respond to it.

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- Describe a time you created a strategy to achieve a longer-term business objective.

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- Describe a time when you used your business knowledge to understand a specific situation.





## Answering tough questions.

Many prospective employers will seek to test your ability to think on your feet and express yourself by throwing one or two tougher interview questions into the mix.

When answering unexpected questions, remember to:



### **Stay calm and collected**

Keep your nerves under control. Speak at a normal talking pace and don't rush, no matter how much you want to.



### **Maintain a positive outlook**

Even if you're talking about a negative experience, try spin it a positive light and discuss what you learnt from the experience.



***Never speak negatively about your current role or employer – it can be a major turn-off for a potential employer.***

**Chris**

Divisional Lead, Rullion



### **Pause before you answer if you need more time**

Take a couple of seconds to think through your answer – your interviewer won't mind.



### **Don't argue with the interviewer**

This should go without saying. Interviews are not the time or the place for arguments.



### **What motivates you?**

The worst thing you can say in this situation is “salary” - the interviewer is looking for an insight into your aspirations and work ethic. The key to successfully answering this question is to answer with the interviewers’ goal in mind. If they are seeking somebody who can ‘get the job done’ or a ‘team player’, keep this in mind.

### **How do you handle criticism?**

The key here is show that you can take constructive feedback on board and move forward.

### **How do you cope under pressure?**

This question will only be asked if it applies to the role in question. Always respond with a positive and be prepared to give examples of when you have worked in a pressurised environment and succeeded.

### **What do you dislike about your current role/employer?**

This is a difficult question as it forces you to be negative about your current position. The safest answer is to say you cannot think of any specifics – if the organisation you are currently employed by is vastly different to your prospective organisation you could highlight any differences.

### **Why have you job hopped?**

If you have frequently changed roles and organisations, you can expect this question early in the interview. Rather than focusing on each specific instance that you have changed jobs, it’s better to give an all-encompassing answer such as “I am seeking a company where I can settle down and make an impact. I’ve found in my previous roles that in order for my career to remain challenging I’ve had to move employers. I feel the opportunity with yourself offers long term prospects whilst also offering fresh challenges”. Then feel free to justify your most recent move with an example.

### **What have you done about your job search so far?**

You want to show the interviewer that you have been proactive in your search and are in demand. Indicate to them that you have entered the process with other organisations and are interviewing elsewhere. Don’t make it seem like you are on the verge of accepting another role, as this can look staged and like you are trying to force them into a decision.





## Contact.

We exist to unlock the potential in all of us by creating products, services and experiences that help make the world of work more fun and fulfilling. We're committed to evolving with our clients and candidates, priding ourselves on being the trusted partner of some of the UK's best-known brands.

If you have any further questions related to your interview, please get in touch with your consultant.

For more interview tips, visit:  
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