



## PART THREE

## GETTING THE JOB

### MODULE 12

### A STANDARD

### (STRENGTHS-BASED) INTERVIEW



## JOB SEEKING SKILLS



# MODULE 12

## A standard (strengths-based) interview

A standard interview is also known as a standard or strengths-based interview. An employer will ask you general questions about yourself and your experience to find out if you are suitable for the job.

As explained in [Module 11 - Preparing for an interview](#), it is very important that you do your research on the company because this is one of the subjects they may ask you about.

### Possible questions and answers

#### **"CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF?"**

This is a common opening question at interviews. The interviewer wants to get to know more about you and your suitability for the job. An answer lasting around two to three minutes should be enough.

Focus on the qualifications, skills, qualities and achievements that are relevant to the job you are applying for. You could also talk about interests and hobbies if they are relevant. Your answers should give the interviewer a better picture of you as a person. Be positive.

#### **"WHY HAVE YOU APPLIED FOR THIS JOB?"**

Talk about the main areas of the job that interest you. You could describe how your skills and goals tie in with the job. If you are interested in the company itself because of what you know about it, for example that it offers good training or has a good reputation in its industry, mention this. Don't mention pay, hours or holidays.

Explain why you believe you are suitable for the job and convey your enthusiasm.

Remember to focus on how employing you would be of benefit to the company and not just on what you will get out of it.

You can use the job description and person specification, as well as internet research, to help prepare an answer for this question.

#### **"WHAT DID YOU MOST ENJOY AT SCHOOL/COLLEGE?"**

Talk about the subjects you liked best and why. Also mention any out-of-class activities you liked. If your subjects or activities are relevant to the job say why you think they could be useful.

## **"WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE JOB?"**

Use the information from the job advert and description, as well as anything else you've found out from the company. You could also use information from a relevant job profile on [www.planitplus.net](http://www.planitplus.net).

## **"WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR THIS COMPANY?"**

This is where you can let the employer know that you have done some research about them. You could mention aspects of the company, and its products or services which particularly interest you.

## **"WHAT ARE YOUR KEY SKILLS/STRENGTHS/QUALITIES?"**

Focus on what they are looking for. The job description and person specification should detail what skills and competencies are required for the position you have applied for, so make sure that you know what these are.

It is also important to back up the skills or strengths that you mention. For example, if you say that you are good at working in a team then describe a time when you did, such as working on a project with other people. Have a look at the personal qualities and skills you identified in [Activity 1](#) and [Activity 2](#) of [Module 1 - All about you](#) to help you.

It is good if you can use examples from your current or previous jobs, but if you are applying for your first job then you could use examples from school, college or university or even work experience that you've done.

Your personal qualities are also important to an employer, such as punctuality, reliability and enthusiasm, which would be helpful in any job.

## **"WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN WEAKNESSES?"**

This isn't a trick question - everyone has weaknesses.

Interviewers ask this question because they would like to see how you cope with a slightly awkward question and that you are honest.

A good answer would be to pick one of your weaknesses and how you have tried to overcome it.

For example: Making presentations is a weakness that I am trying to overcome by practising more and making sure that I am well prepared.



## **“TELL ME ABOUT A DIFFICULT SITUATION AT WORK AND HOW YOU DEALT WITH IT”**

Interviewers ask this to get an idea of how you cope under pressure and to gauge your communication and problem solving skills.

If you aren't prepared for this question, it might be hard to think of something off the top of your head, so think about some good examples. It could be where you've successfully resolved a situation with a difficult customer or been able to meet a deadline that had been brought forward.

If you are applying for your first job, then think about situations at school, college or university, or in a part time job.

## **“WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB?”**

There could be any number of reasons for leaving a job, such as redundancy, dismissal, not liking the job, not getting on with the boss or looking for promotion. Some of these reasons are more difficult to explain than others!

Whatever the reason, remember not to be negative about the company or the people and never criticise a previous employer.

It might be that your previous employer didn't have any opportunities for career progression or you're looking for something that will allow you to use your full skillset. Whatever it is, make sure that you have a positive answer prepared.

## **“HAVE YOU EVER DONE THIS TYPE OF WORK BEFORE?”**

Answer truthfully – if the answer is 'yes', fine! If you have not done similar work, say so, but stress that you enjoy the challenge of learning new things, you learn quickly and you believe that your skills match what they are looking for.

## **“DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?”**

Try to have at least one question ready. For example:

- would any training be provided by the company?
- what is a typical day like in this job?
- where is the job based?
- if it's a temporary job, what are the chances of it becoming permanent?
- what are the chances for promotion in the company?
- when will you let me know the result of the interview?



It's usually not a good idea to ask about pay or holidays at the interview. You don't want the employer to think that this is all you are interested in.

This information may be available in the application pack or job description and if not, then if you are offered the job you can ask for details then.



### Activity 1: Practice makes perfect

Study the two sample job adverts and try answering the questions on [Activity 1 worksheet](#).

Now that you know how to tackle interview questions,  
you can move on to

[Module 13: Competency-based interviews](#)

Or [click here](#) to return to the main screen.