

Kickstart Employment Sessions

Self-directed learning modules

Interview Practice: Part 2

How to use this sheet : Follow the sections and write your responses on a separate piece of paper. This should take approximately 2 hours.

Interviews are tricky! It's rarely fun being put on the spot and getting across the best version of yourself when you're nervous and under pressure! But if there's one thing that can help make interviews less uncomfortable it's practice, practice, practice (and a bit of structure!)

In **Interview Practice: Part 1**, we focussed on answering behavioural questions during job interviews and how to structure your answers to stay calm, concise, and communicate your skills as clearly as you can. In this module, we'll be exploring a few common interview questions and ways you can structure your responses to them. Of course, this list of questions isn't an exhaustive list, but it's a start in tackling common questions you're likely to be asked in your typical interview.

Again, practice and preparation is key to not feeling anxious about being caught off guard, about not knowing what to say, about rambling, and about lacking control in a situation where you want to come across as confident, capable and professional.

So, let's start part 2!

Your Turn

Follow these questions and respond to them using the suggested tips
Write your answers on a piece of paper as we go.



"So, tell me about yourself"

Sometimes you might hear this in other forms, like "Introduce yourself", or "give us a bit of a backstory". This is your big opener and we can think of it as breaking your answer down into a 3-part "marketing pitch" for yourself, which you can prepare and repurpose for any future interviews.

Remember: Don't repeat your entire CV, but do reference impressive achievements or relevant work experience when talking about your professional background.

- 1. Start with a brief summary of your career history**
- 2. Talk them through briefly about how your career developed**
- 3. End your answer with a one-sentence statement** indicating what you're looking to do next in your career, ensuring it matches exactly what the employer and the role is offering.

A condensed response structure might look something like this:

"I left university having been heavily involved in the Student Union and organising events on campus, particularly as a way to meet people, network, and provide inclusive social spaces post-pandemic. When I graduated and secured my first job in x, I developed a real interest in working with young people and exploring the impact social inclusion and cultural engagement can have on young people's development. This is somewhere I feel my lived experience and professional experience can have the greatest impact and where I most want to explore, and I feel this role will be a brilliant space to further develop that"

Remember, you're more than just your work! Feel free to mention a little about who you are and what's important to you.



"Tell me about your work experience"

How familiar the interviewer is with your CV can vary. Maybe you're talking to a hiring manager who has read your CV, maybe you're sitting across a Trustee who skimmed it. Regardless, this question gives you the chance to detail your experiences that are most valuable to the role (but not give a chronology of everything you've done).

Employers want to know that you've reflected on their expectations for a qualified candidate and that you have directly relevant or transferable skills. So we want to structure this answer by quantifying your experience, relating how it connects to the role, and ending with a goal statement of how you see it applied to this role.

Let's see how that might work building on an example.

- 1. Quantify your experience:** "I have 2 years of experience in social media management, and I have assisted executing 23 campaigns and events, and increased X company's social media following by 30% across platforms, and a 60% increase across TikTok."
- 2. Illustrate connections to role:** "As a social media assistant, I've worked with micro-influencers to increase content reach with hyper-focused, niche audiences, which increased content engagement by 40% while reducing costs across paid partnerships."

3. End with a goal statement: "As a social media coordinator for x company, I'm keen to integrate my knowledge of new platform outreach pathways and strategy development to reach new audiences and push for the organizations impact amongst young audiences. "

Your Turn

Try answering these questions about yourself and adapting it to your own work experience. Pull examples from your most recent, relevant job and see if you can memorise the structured answer, without it being word for word, until you can speak about yourself confidently and with good flow.



"What interests you about the role?"

This question could also take the form of "why are you leaving your current role (if you're still employed) for this role?"

Hiring managers often ask this question to ensure you understand the specific role you're going for, that you've done your research and looked into it in depth, and to give you an opportunity to highlight your relevant skills. Study the job description and compare its requirements to your skills and experience. Choose a few responsibilities you particularly enjoy or excel at and focus on those in your answer.

Example answer: **"While I highly valued my time at my previous company, there are no longer opportunities for growth that align with my career goals. This position fits perfectly with my skill set and how I'm looking to grow in my career. I'm also looking for a position at a company like yours that supports underserved communities, which is a personal passion of mine."**

This question could also be phrased similarly as "What interests you about working with this company?" In this scenario, your response would be specific about the company, not the role. You could be an Events and Marketing Assistant elsewhere, but why THIS company? This is also different from talking about why you want to work in this industry. Your answer shouldn't be because you really want to work in marketing and advertising, so that's why you're here at this company. They're looking to demonstrate you're aligned with the values specific to the company, and you're wanting to be entrenched in the kind of work they do and the impact they have.



"What is your greatest weakness?"

This question isn't always phrased as an extreme in this way, sometimes it can look like "tell us something about yourself you want to improve on".

It can feel awkward to discuss your weaknesses when you're trying to give a great impression, but it's actually an opportunity to show that you are self-aware with an interest in continued growth and learning— really attractive traits for employers!

Select a weakness that is honest, but professionally relevant, give context, provide an example, and explain how you overcame it or continue to work on it.

1. Select an actual weakness (not a strength) that is honest but professionally relevant: "I'm naturally shy..."

2. Add context: "...From high school and into my early professional interactions, it sometimes prevented me from speaking up..."

3. Provide a specific example: "...After being a part of a team that didn't meet our strategic goals two quarters in a row, I knew I owed it to my team and myself to confidently share my ideas..."

4. Explain how you overcame or are working to overcome it: "...I actually joined an improv acting class. It's fun and has really helped me overcome my shyness. I learned practical skills around leading discussions and sharing diverse perspectives. Now, in group settings, I always start conversations with the quieter people. I know exactly how they feel, and people can be amazing once they start talking."



"What is your greatest strength?"

In your answer to this question, share your most relevant technical and soft skills. While it may feel uncomfortable to talk highly of yourself, remember that this is your opportunity to tell your interviewers what makes you a great candidate – and they want to hear it.

With this we can follow the structure of sharing positive qualities and attributes, backing up with examples, and relating back to the role you're interviewing for.

1. Share one to a few positive qualities and personal attributes: "I feel I've always been a strong leader..."

2. Back them up with examples: "...I've exceeded my KPIs every quarter and have been promoted twice since I started the job 12 months ago. I look back at those successes and know that I wouldn't have reached them if I hadn't built and led teams composed of highly skilled and diverse individuals, which required managing the energy, enthusiasm, and direction of a group from very different backgrounds, communication and working methods."

3. Relate them back to the role for which you're interviewing: "...I've also regularly honed my management skills through 360 reviews and candid sessions with my team, and I know continuing to build my leadership skills is something I want from my next role."



"Why should we give you the job?"

This might also look like "Why do you think you're the best candidate for the role?"

It can feel like you're being put on the spot to boast about yourself, but what you want to do is demonstrate how you align with the candidate they outline in the job description. Making these comparisons clear is pushing for why they should trust you to be the person who'll do the best job. Your answer should focus on what you offer the company and not the other way round.

So not, "I'd be a good candidate because I work in marketing and this is a marketing agency". It's, "I'd be a good candidate because I have 4 years experience in marketing at a similar level, I've lead teams to measurable success and improved the companies development profile with 2 million pounds of contracts."

Back your answers up with examples. Anyone can say that they have good organizational skills, but if you have demonstrable specifics, "I have excellent organizational skills and in the past 12 months I have personally organized and supervised 6 corporate events with up to 300 participants on each one", you will make a stronger impression.

If it's applicable, this can be a great opportunity to discuss the value of any lived experience. This isn't job experience, but it's how you are someone whose personal experiences are entrenched in the subject matter the company deals with and you have a valuable perspective informed by how you live and your experiences.



"Do you have any questions for us?"

This is a very important question because it allows you to explore any topics that haven't been addressed and shows the interviewer you're serious about the role, and can dig a bit deeper. You are interviewing the company too and this needs to be a fit for the kind of work and culture you want to be involved in.

Take time to ask the interviewer questions about their own experiences with the company, gain tips on how you can succeed if hired, and address any lingering questions you have.

It can sometimes come across quite clearly that you've anticipated you'd have to ask employers questions and memorised some but they're not actually important to you. For example, "what does a day in the job look like?" can be quite surface level as is. This isn't a bad question to ask, but try and pad it out, contextualise it, and also consider what asking that question says about you - have you listened to what they've been saying, if they've already mentioned this throughout the interview?

If you're applying for a role as a carer and need to travel to and from people's homes, or there are different shift structures, that question is great if you contextualise it. For example, "from the point of night shift handover to morning handover, is there a typical structure the shift follows for a carer? What are the broad day to day tasks and timings?" This shifts from what does a typical day look like, to is there a typical day? And it's contextualising your question within information you already know about the role. Between shift changes, differences between day and night routines for example. Here are a few questions that dive a little deeper;

- **What are some of the challenges previous candidates have faced during the role?** This leads on to a follow up question - is there anything in place to support these challenges or give the person what they need to do this better? How have these issues been tackled previously, how would you have liked to see that handled?
- **Is there anything about this role that you'd like to see change in future?** This gives them an opportunity to highlight areas for growth and improvement and gives you an insight into where you could position yourself within those improvements.
- **How would describe the workplace culture? Are you quite close as a team?**
- **Has the pandemic changed the way you engage with the team? And any structural changes been made to work expectations or if it back to business as usual?**

Ask questions that are specific to what you know about the role first, and then have some more general questions to lean on but contextualise them in the role and what you already know. Remember, saying you don't have any questions is a missed opportunity. It isn't an indication that everything was discussed comprehensively, and can come across as a lack of inquisitiveness, critical analysis, and engagement with the role. Always have more questions prepared than you need because it's often the case that questions you've prepared will be addressed throughout the conversation.

Over to you

Have a go practicing your own responses to these questions and memories structures so, even if the question is phrased differently, you'll know how to adapt your response and not be flustered under pressure. Interviewing is a skill in itself and no matter how skilled you are on paper, if you can't communicate it well you'll miss opportunities.

Practice, practice, practice! Good luck!

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