

Preparing for the interview



Lesson 8

lesson outcomes

Specific Outcome 4

Demonstrate the ability to apply for employment.

Assessment Criteria

4.1 Procedures and methods to be followed when seeking employment are demonstrated for telephonic, by-hand, written and face-to-face applications.

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- list guidelines to follow when being interviewed.
- complete answers to interview type questions.
- role-play an interview.

starting blocks

Your CV is one way to get people to know something about you and what you have to offer. If your CV has created a favourable impression on a prospective employer, you will be called to come for an interview. When you meet a person for the first time, he or she will begin to form an opinion of you. You only have one chance to make a first impression.

In this lesson you will pick up some tips of what to do and what not to do during an interview.



Guidelines for interviews

Once you have sent a covering letter and a CV to someone, they will usually ask you to come in for an interview. In an interview, you will have to answer questions about yourself. You will also get a chance to ask questions.

Interviews are stressful for many people, but they don't have to be. Here are some guidelines if you are being interviewed:

- Prepare for the interview. Think about the different questions the interviewer could ask and think about how you will answer them, e.g. tell me about a time where you had to work under pressure.
- Listen carefully to the questions the interviewer asks – don't interrupt before s/he is finished talking.
- Answer the questions clearly and honestly.
- Support your opinions with facts or examples.
- Prepare a few questions for the person who is interviewing you.

Hints on how to conduct a good interview

The **first impression** is very important. Make sure you are dressed neatly, that you arrive on time and that your body language conveys a positive message. Smile and appear relaxed. Remember that the interviewer will usually form his/her opinion during the first few minutes of the interview. Some interviewers will want to shake hands, others will not, so a good idea is to follow the interviewer's lead and do what he/she does. It is important that you know the interviewer's name, if at all possible, and that you greet him/her using that name and his or her title. Don't use their first name unless they ask you to do so.

There is usually an **awkward period** at the start of an interview, don't be tempted to say the first thing that you think of, rather sit quietly and make yourself comfortable.

Never arrive at the interview and **bore the interviewer with complaints** about the weather, the difficulty in finding the offices or problems with your sleeping patterns. Avoid talking about religion, politics, race, gender, age or national origin. Now is not the time to ask about lunch or when you will be getting a cup of coffee!

Be sincere. Good interviewers will see through any insincerity - such as complimenting their appearance or mentioning names of important people in the company. Remember that although the interviewer is not there to catch you out, he/she will ask you questions that are meant to test you - be prepared for these questions.

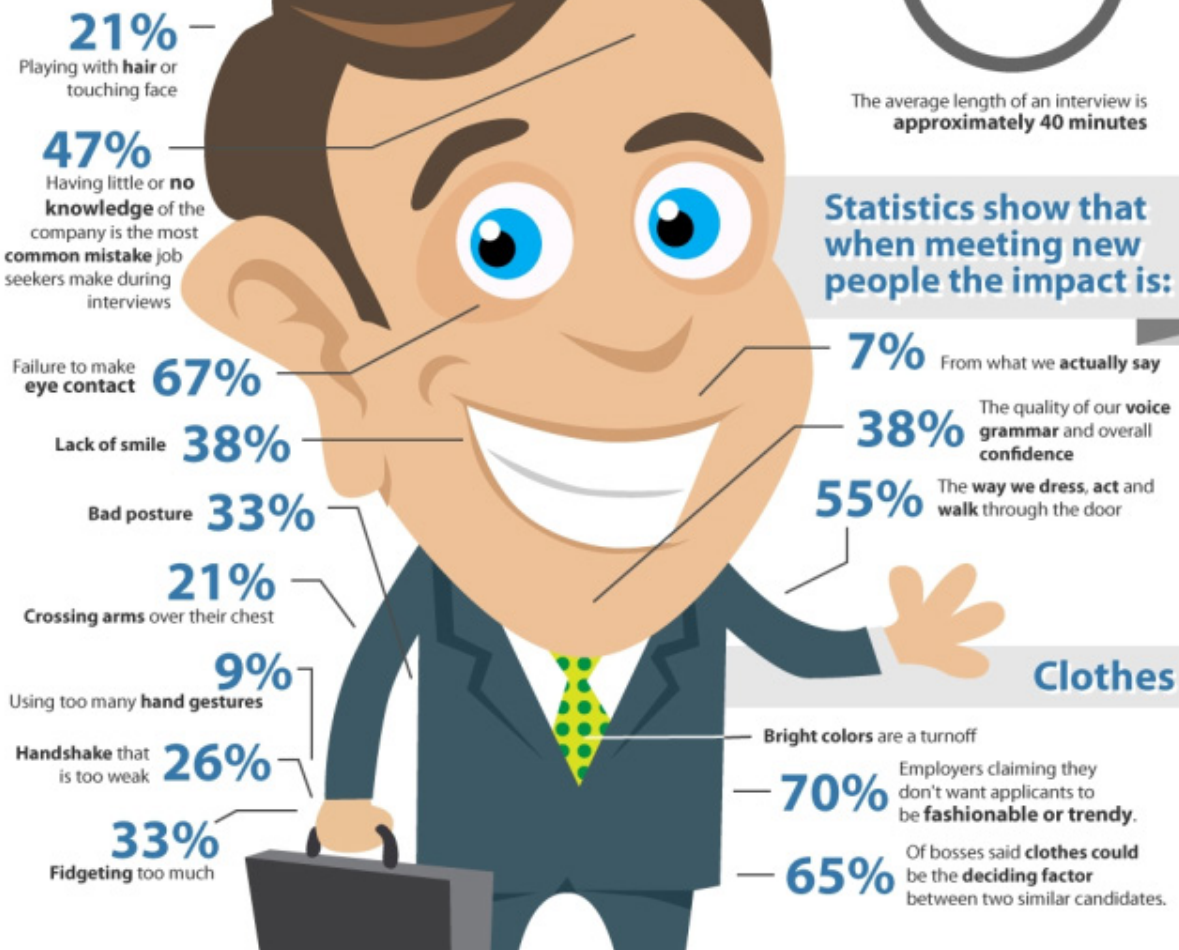
Always **maintain eye-contact** with the interviewer, but don't stare. Use "we" instead of "I" as often as you can. This will not only emphasise that you are comfortable as a team member, but it also allows you to mention some of your achievements, without bragging.

Don't be boastful about educational achievements, this will make you seem arrogant.

Don't ask about salary and benefits at the outset of the interview, this will create the impression that you are more interested in the money than in doing the job. You must be prepared to surrender information such as your previous salary and reasons for leaving your previous job. Secretiveness about these aspects will create an unfavourable impression. Give the necessary salary details, but do not get into a conversation about your financial affairs.

Common nonverbal mistakes made at a job interview

From a survey of 2000 bosses



Always **get to the point in an interview** - never babble. Answers that are too long create the impression that you can't distinguish between what is important and what is trivial. Let the interviewer control the interview. If you take over, it will hurt his/her pride, which will probably mean the job will be given to someone else!

Be **aware of irritating mannerisms** such as playing with your hair, snapping your fingers, licking your lips, clenching your teeth, playing with your car keys, tapping your pen or biting your nails. These will often lose the interviewer's attention. Do not chew gum or smoke. Watch your language - swearing and rudeness will be viewed unfavourably by the interviewer.

Finally, if you have established a good rapport with the interviewer, you will sense when the interview is nearing an end. The interviewer will say something like: "Well, Esther, it looks like" or "The next step is...", or he/she will stand up and shake your hand. You must be ready to leave. Don't hang around for too long. Make sure you understand what the next step is and that he/she knows you really want the job.

Thank the interviewer and leave with a smile!

Adapted from: Secrets of a Successful Job Interview by Lisa Collier Cool

Remember that both the CV and interview are equally important when trying to find a job.

individual tasks

Task 1

- 1.1 What advice would you give a candidate preparing for a job interview? Write down 10 points that you think are important to remember.

10 marks

Task 2

2.1 Write down answers to the interview questions below as if you were in a real interview.

Interviewer: Hello and welcome to JTAG. How are you?

Interviewer: Excellent. Did you find our offices alright?

Interviewer: Right, let's get started. Tell me a bit about your job at the moment. What are your responsibilities?

Interviewer: Alright. What are your strengths?

Interviewer: What are your weaknesses?

Interviewer: What are your interests? What do you do when you're not working?

Interviewer: Tell me about a time where you had to work under pressure.

Interviewer: That's all from me. Do you have any questions?

10 marks



How to Handle Illegal Questions

Some interview questions may surprise you or may not be obviously connected to the job you are applying for. Remember that the interviewer is also trying to establish what kind of person you are, what your life goals are and whether you will fit in well with the company culture.

However, there are some questions that the interviewer is not allowed to ask you as they are considered prejudicial and discriminatory. The recruiter is not allowed to use any of the following as a reason not to employ you and therefore should never ask these questions.



- They may not ask about your **HIV status** unless it has specific bearing on the job, for example, you are a nurse who will be working with blood and needles and there is a possibility of accidental transfer to a patient. Obviously, this would not be relevant ninety-nine percent of the time.
- They may not ask about your **sexual orientation**. This has no relevance to how you do your job and is legally regarded as sexual discrimination.
- You may not be asked about your **religious beliefs** or even whether you are religious. The only time this may be asked is if you are actually applying to become a priest or religious minister.
- You may not be asked if you have ever been **arrested**. All citizens have the right to employment and may not be discriminated against even if they have an arrest record. However, this question may be asked if you are applying for a job in the finance or banking sector. The recruiter may only ask if you have been convicted of fraud or embezzlement.

- Finally, they may not ask you if you are a South African citizen. **Citizenship** is not a requirement for employability. As long as you have proof of a work permit they may not discriminate against you on these grounds.
- Other things like your **age, family situation, marital status and disabilities** are also not relevant to your employability and these questions should not be raised.

Off-limits:

Race
Age
Religion
Color
Place of birth
Disability
Marital status
Children

**So what should you do if one of these questions is asked?**

- Remember that the interviewer isn't trying to catch you out and that in some cases they may just be asking questions about your family and situation to get to know you better. Don't immediately take offense, consider what the interviewer's motive is for asking the question.
- If an interviewer asks "How many children do you have?", you can politely reply, "I have three children, but they won't affect my ability to do the job." This will let the interviewer know that you have understood the intent of the question and will probably remind them that they are asking the wrong sort of questions. If you smile and are friendly, you will rarely go wrong.
- An aggressive interviewer who continues to ask illegal questions should alert you to the fact that you may not want to work for this company. You may respectfully refuse to answer or state that these questions have no relevancy to your ability to do the job.

In conclusion, if you prepare well, practise using these suggestions, relax and smile, you will give a successful interview that will greatly influence whether you get the job you have chosen!



individual tasks

Task 3

Role-play an interview with a partner. Take it in turns to be the interviewer and the person being interviewed. You may **choose one** of the following situations:

- You have been asked to come for an interview for a promotion. The interviewer is your potential boss.
- You have applied for a new job and have been asked to come for an interview by the HR Manager at the new company.
- You would like to be chosen to study for a one-year qualification that the company is offering. The HR Manager calls you for an interview to explain why you should be chosen to do the qualification.

Read through the assessment grid to see how you will be assessed.

Assessment Grid	Competent	Not yet competent
Appropriate greeting and leave taking.		
Register and tone are appropriate to the situation.		
Topic of conversation is followed.		
Turns in conversation are taken and yielded.		
Appropriate body language is used.		
Questions and answers are clear.		
Questions and answers are rephrased where necessary.		
Own and other person's understanding is checked.		
Express your feelings and opinions with supporting examples.		
Comments		

10 marks

 glossary

HR Manager	Stands for Human Resources Manager; this person is responsible for hiring new people and training current people in the company.
potential	Something that could happen in the future e.g. your potential boss could be your boss if you get the job.
prejudicial	Something that counts against a judgement or choice being made in your favour.
discriminatory	Something used as a basis for unfair treatment.