

LEAPFROG
**YOUR
ESSENTIAL
GUIDE TO...**

**Workplace
etiquette**

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CV writing skills

**Why the cover
letter/email
is critical**

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**Successful
interview
tips**

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**Questions for
you to ask at
interview**

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**Phone and virtual
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**School leaver
and graduate
interview tips**

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CV writing skills

A CV is the first point of contact with a recruiter - your application will be your 'first impression'. A CV should have enough information on it for you to be invited for an interview. A poor CV (spelling mistakes, not easy to read) can, and often is, discarded. Writing a CV is an important task that will require you to put in a bit of time and effort. Trust us, it will be worth it!

Important note before we go further. The biggest tip we have is to take a few extra minutes to tailor your CV per application/per company. Most people have one generic CV to send out for all positions but taking the time to tailor your CV for each role is vital.

If you are applying for a specific role, then your CV needs to readily reflect the relevant skills and experience required on the job description. Read the job description carefully and make sure the skills and/or the experience needed are readily showcased on your CV. Maximize/expand on what is relevant and minimize what is not.

If you are applying speculatively to a company, check their website, check company values/ethics, check for the types of people/skills they like, they hire and again, ensure your CV showcases those areas. Are they heavily involved in the arts, in sports? Is there anything you could highlight further on your CV that could show you are the right 'fit'.

Now onto the CV...

A CV should 'ideally' be no longer than two pages, if possible, aimed at selling yourself to the recruiter in less than 30 seconds. Remember, they are busy people, inundated with CVs, and your CV should be no more than an advertisement of your key skills and experience.

(Please note – a recruitment agency may ask for as much information from you as possible as it will be their job to tailor the CV to their clients. They may ask you to expand on certain areas they believe important for their client to see).

Recruiters will be looking at your CV to find out if you have the right skills and experience, suitable interpersonal and communication skills, the ability to flourish in the company's environment and the competence and confidence to adapt to the job. These are the attributes you need to try and put across when writing your CV.

Attention to layout and good use of space has a big impact on the weary eye of a recruiter. Keep it easy to read. Is it concise and relevant?

Photo or no photo? Whilst this may be a requirement of certain places/sectors (modelling/cabin crew), we recommend no photo.

Before you begin, ensure all your dates are correct (education/ employment etc).

Remember, the following is just a guide – not all parts may apply to you.

The first page:

This should make an immediate impact on the recruiter, and it gives you a chance to show off your personality and personal attributes. After the contact details it should comprise of the following:

A descriptive or personal profile of your professional designation (e.g. a chartered accountant or web designer), backed up by key features of your professional self, relevant skills and immediate ambitions. This should be punchy, precise and no more than a paragraph. Tip – don't lie or exaggerate skills. If you are not punctual don't say you are, don't say you have great attention to detail if then in the rest of your CV you have a lot of mistakes.

Education/Key skills: Include Secondary education, college/university and any other qualifications (professional qualifications, certifications and courses taken). Ensure to include dates attended, and grades of qualifications achieved.

Most recent job experience: (Most current position listed first then work backwards. The recruiter will want to see most recent experience first without having to read through the entire CV). Include your job title, the name of the company and date of commencement. This should be followed by a two-sentence description of the role and followed by bullet points of your key responsibilities, tasks and achievements in the role. Bullet points are key as a recruiter can see the information regarding duties/responsibilities quickly and easily. They do not have time to read through long paragraphs or essay like job descriptions.

The second page:

This will contain your previous positions, company names, dates of employment and job titles. If relevant and you have space, list main duties and achievements. If you have a long, important, career history then you can continue to a third page.

Achievements: These should be presented as bullet points.

Interests/Hobbies: At the end of your CV you can include a brief personal overview including details of any non work-specific attributes and activities such as hobbies, volunteer work etc. (As long as it is relevant, and skills are transferable or show teamwork e.g. Sports/Charity Work etc.) Avoid putting in the standard hobbies such as walking/reading/listening to music but do include things like completing marathons/yoga/sea swimming/member of sports teams, art etc. Some hobbies/interests could align heavily with the company making you a good 'fit' socially.

AS MENTIONED, each time you apply for a job your CV should be customised to suit that position if possible. Remember that less is more, avoid squeezing too much onto the page, use white space to effect and choose a font that is easy to read. Carefully selected wording can turn a dull CV into a masterpiece but avoid jargon. Including insignificant detail and non-relevant experience is unnecessary. Don't worry if your CV has a few 'holes' in it from a year abroad or a study/career break or illness just ensure you do provide a brief reason for the gap ' e.g. career break', or 'to raise a family' etc. A pet hate of any recruiter is seeing unexplained gaps in the CV.

Particulars such as driving licence and nationality details can be included in a brief personal summary at the end of the CV.

TIP: Keep a record of extended travel as proof of travel e.g. travel itinerary, old passport/visas etc as companies may ask to see proof that you were indeed travelling for 3 months.

Checklist

Checking your CV is possibly the most important part of the entire process. A small error, or misleading information, can seriously undermine all your effort. At a professional level, grammar, spelling and punctuation should all be impeccable. If in doubt – get someone else to read/check it for you before sending it out.

- Is it easy on the eye?
- Have you checked the grammar, punctuation, and spelling?
- Are the names of all proper nouns correct and capitalised?
- Are all the details you've given on this particular CV relevant to this application?

Profile details:

- Is it concise, punchy and informative?
- Are your examples specific?
- Is there too much detail?
- Is the personal summary meaningful? If not, leave it out.
- Now, read through it one last time, you're bound to find one final mistake!

TIP: Keep a copy of your CV easily accessible, where you can continually add any course/qualifications/additional duties on to as you go. Makes it easier than trying to remember everything when deciding to move jobs.

When in doubt, just ask your recruitment agency to help you.

Why the cover letter/email is critical

A cover letter is your chance to showcase your skills, personality, and fit for a specific job. It can make or break your application, so you need to tailor it to the job posting and the employer's needs.

Research the company

Before you write your cover letter, you need to do some research on the company you are applying to. Find out their mission, values, goals, culture, and challenges. Look for clues on their website, social media, news, and reviews. This will help you understand what they are looking for and how you can add value to their team.

Address the hiring manager

One of the most common mistakes in cover letters is using a generic salutation, such as "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam". This shows a lack of interest and personalisation. Instead, try to find out the name and title of the hiring manager and address them directly. You can use LinkedIn, the company website, or a phone call to get this information. If you can't find it, use a more specific salutation, such as "Dear Marketing Manager" or "Dear Hiring Team".

Match your skills to the job requirements

The main purpose of your cover letter is to show how your skills and experience match the job requirements and how you can solve the employer's problems. To do this, you need to carefully read the job posting and identify the key skills, qualifications, and responsibilities. Then, use specific examples from your previous work or education to demonstrate how you have used those skills and achieved those results. Use bullet points or bold fonts to highlight your achievements and numbers to quantify your impact.

Show your enthusiasm and personality

Your cover letter is not just a summary of your resume. It is also a way to show your enthusiasm and personality to the employer. You need to convey why you are interested in the job and the company and what makes you unique and suitable for the role. You can use a professional but friendly tone, a personal story, a relevant anecdote, or a compliment to the company to show your passion and fit. Avoid using clichés, jargon, or generic statements that could apply to anyone.

Below is an article from James Caan, founder of executive headhunting firm Alexander Mann and recruitment entrepreneur.

Why tailoring the cover letter is CRITICAL -

So, you've got your CV prepared and you've seen a job you want to apply for.

Do you just send your CV out and leave it at that? Of course not. If you really want a particular job and you have exactly what it takes to do it, then a short, meaningful cover letter is your way of saying so. In fact, it's vital that you attach one.

A good cover letter takes time and effort because it makes you think hard about the job you're applying for. If you don't do one then it's probably because you're being a bit lazy, or you are not really passionate about the job. Either way it's not a good start to getting the job you really want.

I'm an employer so try to think about it from my point of view. A good cover letter takes some effort on your part, but it saves me valuable time. If it gets to the point and, even better, it presents you as a solution to my problem, I'll mark your CV for closer attention. That goes for all busy employers.

A word of warning: if you're applying online, you might try and write your cover letter too quickly just to get the application away – but don't. Don't underestimate the importance of this introduction to you - write out what you want to say and work at it before you go to the online application. It's amazing how many times a good CV is sent off with a hasty, mistake-ridden online cover letter.

The same goes for a traditional hard copy cover letter. Write it out and edit it first. Keep thinking you are the employer and what you would want to hear. There's no doubt that a good, concise cover letter adds some real power to your CV.

Okay, now the good news: there are only two main types of cover letter.

The first is the one you write when you are applying for an advertised job.

The second is the one you write when you are applying on 'spec'. In other words, for a job that you'd like but hasn't been advertised anywhere.

Either way you need to get to the point instantly but with the speculative cover letter you can say a little more, as you need to establish what you are looking for.

Try to keep in mind why you are writing a cover letter – and it's not to be clever or impressive littered with long words. Your aim is to make your cover letter as effective as possible in getting you an interview and possibly a job. No more.

As I've said above, you need good English and spelling, and you need to be concise and business-like. It goes without saying that you need to put the correct name and title of the person you are writing to.

Your cover letter needs to be no more than four to five short paragraphs. If you can't say what you want to say in that space, then you haven't thought about it. So, no more than a single page for the whole letter.

If I'm advertising a job, then in the first paragraph you need to be telling me what you have to offer that is directly relevant to the role. Start waffling here and I'll switch off.

In the next paragraph or two you need to tell me how your skills, experiences and achievements relate to the essential requirements of the job. You can even refer me to certain points in your CV.

If you're writing to me on spec then you'll need to have done some research on my company so that you can write two good, concise paragraphs on why you'd like to work for me (or my company) and what sort of role you are looking for.

As an employer, I am not going to be impressed by a cover letter that looks like it's been churned out and used for multiple applications. So don't underestimate an employer's perceptiveness.

Drop in a paragraph on why my organisation interests you and give me information that supports your statements if possible. Anything that convinces me that you have done some research and have a genuine interest is a big plus.

Finally, thank the reader for their time consideration, (you'd appreciate it if you were a busy employer) and be bold – actively state you would welcome the chance of an interview.

Guide to a successful interview

THE BEST ADVICE IS TO PREPARE. Never 'wing' an interview. Companies like to know you have picked them out and that you have a genuine interest in them.

Invitation to interview

The company has liked something enough about your application to invite you for an interview. This is then an opportunity for you to find out a bit more about the company/the role and whether or not the right match for you. From the company side, they are looking to find out more about you and whether or not you would be the right match for them, whether you have the right abilities and attitude.

The ultimate aim of an interview is to get offered a further interview and/or be offered the position. **The aim is to have choice.** If you receive an offer, you can then choose whether or not it is an opportunity you want to accept or decline. **No offer/no choice!**

The only time that does not count is when you realise during the interview that it really is not what you expected and not a company you would wish to work for.

If this is the case, let the recruitment agent know you do not want to pursue any further / if direct, send them a polite email thanking them for their time.

So interview time – **PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE.** It does not have to take you long, but a company will know when you have not looked at their website, they know when you have not prepared, and that will be an immediate negative for them. If you have not prepared, you are showing the company that you are not that bothered or that interested. Don't forget, the HR/Interviewers have all made time to meet with you, they have other people to interview as well, and they will always go for the candidate who has done some interview preparation / research and shown a genuine interest.

Information worth trying to find out before your interview.

- What is the exact nature of the Company's business?
- Who are its main competitors?
- Has the Company been in the media lately, are there any controversial announcements or decisions? Google to find out.
- Is the person/ are the people you are meeting on the company website (photo, short bio), if not are they on LinkedIn. This can be useful information to know. It might be that you went to the same school/University/ worked at the same company previously or have the same interests.
- Are you able to see how many staff work there, if there is an average age of staff, what is the Company culture etc.?
- Do they sponsor any sports teams / events, support the arts, win industry awards?
- The company ethos/ethics – some have a 'mission statement' or describe their culture, just read through and understand what it is. Make a couple of short notes to remind you (if you need to).

To find out all of this information try the company website which will usually outline any questions. Knowing this information makes a good impression and could help secure you the job.

Be prepared to answer questions about yourself

- Why did you choose this particular career?
- Why do you/did you want to leave your current/ last job?
- Why do you think you would like to work for this company?
- What are your major strengths/weaknesses?

Creating an impression

- Punctuality is essential. It is better to be early than late. Don't rush - give yourself plenty of time to get there. Make sure you know where you are going!
- Negative factors. The employer will be evaluating these and forming their own impressions of you.

Listed below are some negative factors to be aware of:

- Poor personal appearance.
- Appearing overconfident or overbearing.
- Lack of planning for the interview.
- Lack of enthusiasm.
- Fidgeting and one-word answers.
- Over emphasis of 'how much cash will I make?'
- Failure to look the interviewer/s in the eye.
- Weak or limp handshake. Practice with a friend.
TIP - you make the first move. On introducing yourself, offer your hand (if they have not already offered theirs).

Prepare yourself mentally too. Interviewers will want to see that you are focused, confident and enthusiastic. However, they will be aware that you may be nervous and will take this into account.

Think positive! You must believe in yourself for the interviewer to believe in you! Leave an impression that you deserve.

Here are a few points to be aware of when trying to develop a positive frame of mind:

- Remind yourself that you've been short-listed from many other applicants therefore you already stand a pretty good chance.
- Feeling a little nervous before an interview is perfectly normal. It's a sign of anticipation and that you're anxious to prove yourself. Use the extra energy to sound enthusiastic and keen.
- Never be afraid of failure and remind yourself it will feel right if the job is right for you. Each interview that is unsuccessful can be thought of as practice for the next one (which could be your perfect position!).



Selling yourself

In the interview your primary aim is to convince the interviewer of the following:

- You would be able to do the job competently.
- You would enhance and benefit the company.
- You are the best candidate and can prove it.

Closing the interview

- Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made or a specific salary is not discussed. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with their office first, or if you have gone through a recruitment agency, they may wish to relay an offer to the agency first.
- If you get the impression the interview isn't going so well don't be discouraged. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may seem to discourage you in order to test your reaction.
- Finally, finish the interview with a positive note thanking them for their time, a firm handshake with eye contact and make sure you know what the next step is e.g., when you will hear from them etc.

After the interview

If you have been put forward for the interview through an agency:

- Call your consultant.
- Explain how the interview progressed and what your feelings /thoughts are. This is important. The consultant needs to know whether you are interested in pursuing further and has to supply feedback to the client. The more specific reasons for your interest the better. Clients like to know reasons for being interested rather than just 'feedback was positive'. (The place seemed really friendly, they made me feel at ease, the role they described sounded really interesting, their training sounds great, they will support me in qualifications, sounds a like a great opportunity to learn about...)

If you have gone direct to the company:

- They should tell you at the end of the interview what the next step is. They should let you know when they will be getting back to you and give you a time frame as to when that might be. If they do not volunteer this information, then it is fine to just ask – just to be clear about expectations.
- Relax and give yourself time to think about whether the position or the company is what you are looking for.
- Did you come away feeling you would enjoy working there?
- Is this the right career move for you?

Interview do's and don'ts

Do

- Know where you are going! If not sure, try to do a walk/drive by to make sure you know the correct location. This can take away some nerves/ reduce stress on the day when you turn up and realise you have the wrong place! You can call the company and ask, use Google Maps (though double check as companies do not always update).
- Try to get as much information as you can about the Company/the position. Look at the company website if they have one and/or Google the company name to see what latest news there may be about them.
- Read the interview tips provided. Read through the example interview questions and think how you might answer them, get an idea now of what you might want to get across or examples you might want to bring up. Think of any questions you would like to ask the person interviewing you about the Company or position. You can write them down and take them into the interview with you in note form.
- **DRESS APPROPRIATELY FOR ANY INTERVIEW** – any employer will be pleased to see you have made an effort - clean clothes, **CLEAN SHOES** whether that be shirt, tie, jacket or smart top and trousers/skirt. If you are working already and the dress code is usually jeans and you are unable to change, just check with the company to let them know the reason (we have never had an employer have an issue - unless they were not made aware first).
- **TURN OFF YOUR MOBILE** before the interview.
- Smile, get eye contact and offer a firm handshake when you meet the person interviewing you (stand up if seated). There can be an awkward moment when neither party know if the other persons is going to shake their hand – so you to take the lead! You offer your handshake first. Limp handshakes will not give the right impression, equally – not a bone crusher either! Just a firm/polite handshake and keep eye contact - practice this with a member of your family or friends.
- The majority of places do not mind tattoos or piercings, however each business is different. To be on the safe side for interview, keep piercings conservative and cover tattoos where possible.
- Always try to maintain eye contact with the interviewer – if there is more than one person, include the others when talking or responding to a question. The role of body language during interview is based on the **7%-38%-55%** rule that suggests a mere 7% of communication is done verbally. It then hypothesises that 38% of communication comes across in our tone and voice inflection, leaving 55% of the communication to come from someone's body movement and language.
- If you feel the interview is not going well because you feel nervous, then just let them know. Don't forget we have all been in your shoes including the people/person interviewing you, so we all know what it feels like. Just say you are really nervous if you get stuck, they will completely understand and do their best to try and make you feel more relaxed.
- Do thank the interviewer/interviewers on your way out e.g. again and hand shake along with 'thank you for meeting with me and I look forward to hearing from you'.
- Do check for messages/texts/missed calls and emails. You need to check for their feedback/if they are asking for 2nd interview, or wanting to offer you the job. Check and reply promptly, taking days to respond gives the impression that you lack real interest or you have other interviews you are waiting to hear back on. If this is the case then just tell them/ keep them informed. Companies will understand you want to make sure you are making the right decision, for their sake as well as yours!

Don't

- Don't be late! Always give yourself enough time to get to where you need to be. If you are going to be late due to traffic/buses late etc, then call the company to let them know you will be a little late.
- Do not smoke or have an alcoholic drink just before an interview, smoke will cling to your clothes/ smelling alcohol does not give out the right first impression.
- Don't overdo the aftershave/perfume – preferably just leave it off. You do not want to overpower the interviewers and perfumes/aftershaves can linger long after you have left the room.
- Do not wear scruffy or dirty clothes/shoes. Borrow something smarter if you need to.
- Do not wear anything you would wear on a night out or down the beach - be on the safe side and 'dress conservatively' for an interview (depending on the type of role/sector).
- Do not discuss salary and benefits package on your first interview unless the interviewer brings the subject up.
- Do not ask about their notice period/sickness/maternity benefit – it does not look great and can give the wrong impression, causing alarm bells to ring for the interviewer.
- Do not 'Bad mouth' your current/any-previous employer/ person, try to be diplomatic and remember this is Guernsey and someone may know someone who knows someone...
- Don't go into too much detail about personal issues at interview.
- Don't worry about pausing to think about a question before you answer.
- Try not to 'over answer' questions and go off a tangent, try to keep it relevant.
- Don't lie about any information you give the interviewer, especially regarding qualifications or salary. (e.g., Companies can check your last salary as part of their reference checks.

Always try to make a good **first impression** as people usually make up their mind about a person within the first 30 seconds of meeting them. Obviously, this works both ways!

Phone and virtual/telephone interview tips

Virtual / Telephone interviews are quite common in today's job market. They are offered for a variety of reasons including cost savings, screening of candidates and out-of-town applicants. To successfully navigate these types of interview, it is important to have a solid game plan in place for preparation

Do some research

Try to find out some information on who will be interviewing you. Will there be multiple people in the meeting? Get their names and their titles and become familiar with these before the call. Try and get some background on the interviewer (LinkedIn, company website). Any insight you can gain about him/her will allow you to better tailor your responses to make the best possible impression.

Organise your thoughts

Make a list of your accomplishments, goals and strengths. On another list write out your weaknesses and what you are doing to overcome them. On a third sheet write, down why you are interested in the company. Think carefully about all of these items as they often come up in interviews.

Practice, practice, practice

A virtual interview is still an interview. Take time to practice interview questions with friends or family. Ask them to provide honest feedback so you can improve your responses. Mock interview questions can easily be found on the internet. If you get stuck on how you might answer a question, sample answers to these questions are often provided as well.

Do a pre-run

If using **ZOOM**, Teams, Skype, phone or other, ensure you have the ability to access these forums and if possible, do a practice run with a friend or family member. Make sure that they listen not only for content, but also tone, rate, and clarity of speech.

Find your location

Stake out a quiet space to occupy during your interview (turn off radios/TVs). Ideally, there should be a comfortable place to sit as well as a table to lay out your papers. Try and find a low-traffic spot where members of the household are unlikely to disturb you. For virtual interviews always check what you can see behind you! Ideally somewhere with minimal clutter or little to distract the interviews, the focus needs to be on you. Avoid being a silhouette by not sitting directly in front of a window and make sure you are dressed suitably, as you would for a physical interview.

Organise your papers

Have a copy of your CV / job description and any notes close to hand. **TIP:** add post-it notes around your screen to prompt you. Bullet point some easy to read questions you may want to ask them. Only keep what is truly necessary as too much paper can be a distraction.

Gather your writing tools

Place a notepad and several pens or pencils on the table. These will be helpful in writing down notes, questions and most importantly, your interviewer's names.

Say thank you

Say thank you; don't forget to thank the interviewers by name!

Remember, that phone/virtual interviews are just as important as a face to face interview.

School leaver and graduate interview tips

The best way to prepare for a job interview is to know what's coming.

Of course, you won't be able to predict every single question that you'll be asked but that shouldn't stop you trying. There is such a thing as 'standard' interview questions that most employers will ask in an interview regardless of what job you've applied for and in what industry.

To help you craft your answers to these typical interview questions, we've put together our list of the most common interview questions, complete with answers to guide you. We've even included competency based questions to really get you thinking!

'To give good answers to job interview questions, you need to do your research.'

FIRST AND FOREMOST, LOOK AT THE COMPANY WEBSITE.

I. Tell me about yourself...

As an opening question, this one can be pretty tough if you haven't already thought about how you may answer. It's tempting to start talking about yourself on a personal level, your age, where you're from etc. but what the interviewer wants to know is why you'd be a good fit for the position/for their company. If you've recently left secondary school, you will not have a whole lot of work experience to talk about, so you should be aiming to relate your other experiences to the job in question.

For example, if you have an interview for an administration role with a company, you could mention that studying for exams at school has helped you become organised and meet deadlines. Part time roles may have given you confidence in dealing with people/cash.

You may wish to bring up interesting hobbies or any sports/arts you are involved in. Certain companies are very sporty and heavily involved in sport sponsorship. Others have sea swimming groups.

If you look at their website/ social media and you have similar interests, let them know at interview.

2. What are your strengths?

Most of us find it difficult to talk ourselves up when asked what we're good at. When in doubt, ask a friend/teacher/tutor what they consider your strengths are. You can then say, 'I have been told by my peers/tutors that they are.....'

The key here is to think in terms of the soft job skills that you can relate back to the position. The job description should state what they are looking for (someone with initiative, proactive or leadership qualities).

'I feel that I'm a natural leader. I'm always the person in the group who is keen to take on challenges and organise other people if they need assistance. At school, I was the captain of our basketball team and I was also responsible for organising the rota for our reading club. I think my leadership skills would really come into play in this type of job role.'

3. What is your greatest weakness?

A common interview technique is to ask candidates inherently negative questions to see how they respond. Although your first instinct might be to start listing all the things that you feel not good at, the trick is to give an example of something that could also be seen as being positive. For example, in response to this question, you might want to say something like:

'I'd have to say that my greatest weakness is probably that I'm too eager to please. Because I'm a people-person, I sometimes say what I think people want to hear.'

Although you're highlighting a weakness here, you're also framing it in a positive light. You're saying that even though you're eager to please, which in itself isn't a bad thing, you just really want to make people happy.

As before, ask peers/tutors what they think and then put some thought into how you could acknowledge it and then frame it in a positive light.

4. Why do you want to work here?

This is a typical interview question that gives you the chance to show what you know about the company. You could start by explaining your personal reasons for applying for the job, for example, to gain experience in the industry, but then you should show the interviewer that you've done your research. To prepare for this type of interview question, have a look at the company's website and take some notes about what they do and try to have some facts and figures that you can quote if possible.

Example interview questions

By Thad Peterson,
Monster Staff Writer

While there are as many different possible interview questions as there are interviewers, it always helps to be ready for anything. So, we've prepared a list of potential interview questions. Will you face them all? No interviewer would be that cruel! Will you face a few? Probably. Will you be well-served by being ready even if you're not asked these exact questions? Absolutely.

Basic interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses/development areas?
- Why do you want this job?
- Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?
- What attracted you to this company?
- Why should we hire you?
- What did you like least about your last job?
- When were you most satisfied in your job?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What were the responsibilities of your last position?
- Why are you leaving your present job?
- What do you know about this industry?
- What do you know about our company?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Behavioural interview questions:

- What was the last project you headed up, and what was its outcome?
- Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty at work.
- Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?
- Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?
- What irritates you about other people, and how do you deal with it?
- If I were your supervisor and asked you to do something that you disagreed with, what would you do?
- Give me an example of a time you did something wrong. How did you handle it?
- What irritates you about other people, and how do you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict on the job?

- If you were at a business lunch and you ordered a rare steak and they brought it to you well done, what would you do?
- If you found out your company was doing something against the law, like fraud, what would you do?
- What assignment was too difficult for you, and how did you resolve the issue?
- What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years and how did you come to that decision?
- Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.

Career development questions:

- What are you looking for in terms of career development?
- How do you want to improve yourself in the next year?
- What kind of goals would you have in mind if you got this job?
- If I were to ask your last supervisor to provide you with additional training or exposure, what would she suggest?

Getting started questions:

- How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with the team?
- How long will it take for you to make a significant contribution?
- If selected for this position, can you describe your strategy for the first 90 days?

More about you:

- How would you describe your work style?
- What would be your ideal working environment?
- What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organised?
- If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person and why?
- Tell me about your proudest achievement.
- Was there a person in your career who really made a difference?
- What kind of personality do you work best with and why?
- What are you most proud of?
- What are your lifelong dreams?
- What is your personal mission statement?
- What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?
- What negative thing would your last boss say about you?
- What three-character traits would your friends use to describe you?
- If you were interviewing someone for this position, what traits would you look for?
- List five words that describe your character.
- Who has impacted you most in your career and how?
- What will you miss about your present/last job?
- What is your greatest achievement outside of work?
- What are the qualities of a good leader?
- How do you feel about taking no for an answer?
- How would you feel about working for someone who knows less than you?
- There's no right or wrong answer, but if you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
- What's the last book you read?
- What do you do in your spare time?

5. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Employers often look for people with ambition to progress within the company. When faced with this question, you want to show that it's your intention to stay with the company in the long-term. If you mention that you'd like to be working somewhere else or doing something different, an employer might not see you as a valuable investment.

You should make a point of mentioning that you'd still like to be working for the company but in a role that requires you to have more responsibility, that you will have the opportunity to progress.

6. Can you give us an example of a time when you worked in a team?

This is an example of a **COMPETENCY BASED** interview question. These questions are designed to determine how suitable you'll be for a role based on your previous experiences. If you've recently left secondary school, you may not have any work examples to mention here, so you should think about other things you could say.

Think about times when you had to do group work at school, or when you were involved in a team sport. Your answer to this competency based interview question could be something like:

'For my A-Level Geography class, I was required to work on a project with other classmates. There were four of us in the team and we were each assigned a specific role. I personally, was involved in researching. This particular project was challenging and everyone in the team really supported each other.

Even though I had my own individual part to play, I was aware that my contribution had a great impact on the overall grade that we would receive. Thanks to everyone's efforts, we each received an A for the project.'

Or it could be part of a sports team, a team member in a part time job (covering for team members, stepping in to help out colleagues).

7. Can you give us an example of a time when you have had to deal with conflict?

This is another example of a competency based interview question. The interviewer wants to see that you're able to match an example to the competencies that they're looking to test. In this question, you could think back to a time when you had a conflict with a fellow classmate or with a teacher.

You should provide a little bit of background information to begin with but focus most of your answer on how you managed to resolve the situation. In most cases, you'll want to explain how you took responsibility for the situation.

8. How would your friends describe you?

This might seem like more of a fun question because it tends to come towards the end of a job interview but you should still relate your answer to the job in question. Ask yourself what kind of person the company needs for this role and base your answer around these qualities. For example, if you're interviewing for a customer service job, your answer might be:

'My friends would describe me as friendly and good with people. I'm always being told that I am very patient and can get on with anybody.'

9. What are your salary expectations?

This question is designed to show that you know how much the type of role normally pays. Your employers want to make sure that your expectations aren't unrealistic. The trick here is to do some research beforehand. The job may have been advertised at a certain salary in the job description, in which case, you'll want to quote that figure to show that you paid attention to detail. If not, look at similar jobs online and see what salary they are being advertised at.

Or – that your expectations will be in line with a market rate, you will be guided by the level of the position available.

10. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

Knowing what questions to ask at an interview can be tough. By doing some **RESEARCH** beforehand, you may have come across some interesting information about the company or the work that they do that you'd like to know more about. This is the perfect moment to ask those questions. If you can't think of anything specific to the industry, you could try asking some questions like:

- How many people work for the company altogether?
- Are there many progression opportunities with the company?
- Is the training in house or will I be required to attend courses outside of the company.
- What sort of time period do you expect someone to be up to speed/trained.
- If I'm successful with my interview, when would I expect to hear back from you?

What your answers tell the interviewers

The questions you're asked in an interview are usually about more than just the answer you give. The panel will want to get a sense of your personality, attitude and work ethic.

TIP – you can take in a notepad/your CV and on it, make very short notes/ one word prompts that you can glance at to remind you of what you want to bring up or what question you want to ask. Let the interviewer know you do have some notes, can you quickly revert to them – they will appreciate you have come prepared and given thought to the interview process.

Questions for you to ask at interview

At some point during the proceedings, the interviewer may ask: “**Do you have any questions?**” It is then over to you!

Interviewers frequently judge candidates on the nature of the questions that are asked. Did you only seem interested in asking about the pay and benefits? Were you more focused about the day-to-day demands of the role? Or were you more interested about opportunities for promotion and enhanced responsibility? Different questions give interviewers different impressions about your motivations. Don't panic if they answered all your questions - just let them know that the questions you had, have been covered.

However, do not forget that an interview is for you too, this is your opportunity to interview them to find out more out about the job and the company. If the interviewer were to offer you the job, would you have enough information to decide whether to accept it or not?

Show an interest in the position.

There are many questions that you could ask about the role. However, remember to check that the questions you do choose to ask could not have been answered in your research.

Questions to ask could include:

- What are the day-to-day duties involved in this job? (if they have not already told you!).
- How will my performance be measured?
- How are targets set? How much say would I have in setting them?
- Who will I report to?
- Who would I be spending most of my working time with?
- How many are in the team?
- Who are the key decision makers that I would need to get along with, and how would you describe each of them?
- Could you describe your training programme?
- You might also want to find out more about why the employer is looking to fill this role:
- Are you able to tell me why this vacancy has arisen? Is it to replace someone or a new position?
- Are you looking for anything in particular from the person who will take this role?
- How do you see this role developing?
- How quickly are you looking for someone to take on this role?

Questions about the company

You could also ask questions about the structure and current challenges facing the company as a whole:

- How is the company structured?
- When was the last company restructuring, and how did it affect this department?
- What challenges is the organisation currently facing?
- Employers usually want to recruit employees who will stay for at least two to three years; so it may be worth your while to ask some questions about the future. For example, you could ask about your own future with the company:
- What training and development is given to employees?
- What opportunities are there for promotion?
- Are there opportunities to work abroad with the company?
- How does the company promote personal growth?

Interview questions **NOT** to ask

- What does this company do? (Do your research ahead of time!)
- If I get the job, when can I take time off? (Wait until you get the offer to mention prior commitments)
- Do you pay sick pay?
- Can I change my schedule if I get the job? (If you need to figure out the logistics of getting to work don't mention it now...)
- Did I get the job? (Don't be impatient. They will let you or the recruitment agency know).
- Do you have any other positions other than this one?
- What will my salary be?
- How much holiday do I get?
- Asking about flexible working / work from home opportunities -most places can be negotiable on this but this is **NOT** a question to ask for a 'trainee' level positions. Companies cannot allow someone training to work from home - they will need to be in the work environment whilst they are being trained.

The answers to some of the above will be in the offer letter. Some companies may well go through all their benefits with you at the end of an interview but if not, **wait for the offer to come to you.**

Workplace etiquette

We have compiled the following information from our own experience in the workplace and from the various Human Resources professionals that we work with across various sectors including commercial, retail, financial, hospitality and public sectors.

TIP: Whether through a recruitment agency or via a direct application, keep checking your emails/ phone for any responses. If someone is arranging an interview for you then make sure to respond promptly. A quick response shows that you are genuinely eager.

Read their messages/emails properly - it is really annoying for an employer to have to keep going back and forth to get the answers they keep asking for!

First day etiquette

These might seem obvious, but clients have asked us to point out the following basics:

Personal hygiene

Shower or bath and have clean hair, clean fingernails and if wearing nail polish then first day keep it subtle. Do wear deodorant, but do not wear very strong aftershave/perfume. Body odour is not pleasant – neither are overpowering aftershaves/perfumes. Tip on perfumes/aftershaves – if they linger long after you have left the room – them too much. Both should only be detectable if someone is stood close to you. If in doubt, ask someone close to you, such as a friend, family member or mentor.

Dress code

Ask before you start what the dress code is. It should be written into the contract they offer you, if not just ring/email the person who sent you the contract. Safest bet, just keep clothes/makeup, conservative / smart casual, don't wear what you would for a night out. Some companies have mufti days and 'dress for the day' days (the latter means if not customer/client facing you can be more casual but if a client/customer is coming in/meetings taking place, then they will expect you dress a lot smarter). Use logical thought, you would dress differently working in a law firm than you would working in a tattooists.

Footwear/dress code

Appropriate footwear and clothing for the role you have accepted. Check with your employer if you are unsure, e.g. comfortable shoes within nursing / healthcare, hospitality, steel capped or sturdy boots, suitable/strong work clothes. A hard hat and high viz jacket will usually be provided for you but just check/ask first in case you do have to bring your own (unlikely but check).

Piercings/tattoos

Most places have no issues but again, out of politeness and to be on the safe side, check with someone first. You can ask this in an interview/after the interview/check if this is mentioned in the contract or the company handbook. For those that say 'I'm not changing who I am, it doesn't affect how I do my job' totally agree ! They should, but in reality, some won't. If the company does have a problem – then perhaps not the best company for you.

Mufti days

You still have to keep it fairly smart – in summer not dressing like you are off to the beach (short shorts, crop tops) and avoid rude / provocative slogans on tee shirts.

The first day in your 'first job' can be daunting but try your best to **RELAX**. Remember **EVERYONE** including your new colleagues, your manager and even the managing director have **ALL** felt the same. Everyone has had first day nerves!

If your day starts at 9.00 be there in enough time to actually be ready to start work at 9.00, giving you time to settle in and prepare for the day. A pet hate of employers is turning up at 9.00 and not getting started until 9.15. If you get paid from 9am then you are working from 9am.

Be of the mindset that you are there to learn/gain new skills and experience. Skills and experience add value to you and your CV. Your first job is just that – the first. Learn what you can and have the right attitude; helpful, punctual, conscientious - show your employer that you can be a valued member of staff/team member.

Assist your colleagues/ask if you can help someone whenever possible, this is an attitude very attractive to employers. If you have nothing to do or are bored, do not sit around looking bored; ask one of your colleagues, team leader or manager for additional responsibility/extra duties or possibility of learning new/extra duties. There is always something to do/learn and your positive/proactive attitude will be noticed.

Accept that there will be quiet periods during training and that there will sometimes be dull work to do – everyone who ever started work – **EVER** - will have been through the same. It is a case of learning the ropes from the ground up. Remember that it will not be forever and how you respond will be observed by those around you. They invest in / train and promote those that do learn/do those tasks – not the ones that don't. The old saying 'don't run until you can walk'...

Sometimes you have to put on a certain guise or act at work. You are working alongside people who you would not normally socialise with – they are not your friends; they are your work colleagues (although you will build good friendships at work). You should aim to treat everyone and speak to everyone how you would wish to be spoken to – respectful and polite gets the best out of everyone.

Be wary of being too over familiar too quickly. Other people may have worked at the company for many years and earned any flexibility by having worked long hours, shown commitment; so, if they are late back from lunch by 5 minutes (on occasion), they more than make up for it. Don't do the same! Over time they will also have built strong relationships with colleagues, so their manner may be jokey and relaxed but be wary about copying other people's behaviour too soon (don't join in being cheeky to the boss in the first week!).

Adhere to work times. Just because someone on your team leaves early every day does not mean you do – they will often have agreements in place with management due to personal or different work contracts. Don't just do – always ask/check first.

If you are going to be late to start work, ring in or text/email someone to let them know before your start time. Do not just turn up late without trying to inform someone.

If you feel ill at work, find a manager / line manager, and explain you are not feeling well and would like/need to go home. Never leave work without telling anyone (for a variety of reasons including manners, courtesy, company insurance purposes and can cause problems if the fire alarm goes off and you are nowhere to be found).

If you are ill whilst at home and not going to be able to make it into work, call / text or email in before you are due to start work. Check your contract to find out your employers' requirements/stance on sickness/sick pay. If you are off ill for more than 3 days most companies will require a doctor's certificate. You need to inform your employer when you will be back at work - remember, they need to make arrangements to cover your duties. Not letting them know when you are returning is just bad manners.

Employment contracts and probationary periods

Employment contract

When you have successfully been made an offer of employment and you have started work, make sure you read the contract carefully before signing it. (It is illegal to **NOT** have a contract so make sure you do have one). This will outline expectations, levels of conduct, what constitutes misconduct/gross misconduct, job title and hours. Check that what you have in the contract matches what you were told at the interview.

Probationary period

This is normally a 3 or 6 month period where both parties are basically 'trying before buying'. Check the contract for the length of the probationary period. **You are not permanently employed until you have passed your probationary period.** If your behaviour/standard of work is not as you indicated, then they can fail your probationary period on one week's notice. Bear in mind that banks will not loan to anyone until they have passed their probationary period.

Probationary period

Remember that this is for you too! This is a period of time to see if you like the work, the environment and company and to see that the role/opportunities described to you in the original interview are as promised. This is a chance to try the role first before you commit to permanent. After probationary periods have been passed, notice periods (when you hand in your notice) go from 1 week to 1 month (for junior/trainee roles, 3 months for more senior level roles).

Failing a Probationary Period – companies want you to succeed, they will do whatever they can in a probationary period to help you, they may even extend your probationary period to give you extra time (you can also ask for an extension). However – they can also let you go with no notice/ 1 weeks' notice. You need to think about how you tell a new employer why you failed the previous jobs probationary period. Doesn't look great if the answers are 'I wouldn't put my phone away', 'I was always late'. Failing a probationary period or being sacked for any negative reason is not going to look good to the next employer. That would be a red flag to them – they may not think it worth putting any effort/training into someone not prepared to make an effort back. If this happens, you need to be honest with the new employer, you messed up, lesson learned, you would like a chance to prove yourself. You may think that you just have to remove this employer off your CV – again, this is Guernsey, word will get around and people always get found eventually.

Multiple jobs

Don't have multiple jobs in short spaces of time, unless they are temporary or contract positions (in which case do state temporary or contract on your CV), having too many jobs can look to a future employer that you may be fickle/ cannot stick anything out, that you have problems holding down a job – they may jump to conclusions as to why.

I don't like Mondays

Make sure you don't take too many Mondays off work ill, as it will begin to look suspicious if you seem to have a pattern of being ill 'only on Mondays'. Employers are not stupid, and they recognise cases of 'Monday-itis' early on.

Not just Mondays! – Any regular day of the week, including pulling a 'sickie' after a special event (birthday/outside of work 'do'). Book that day as holiday – don't use as a sick day.

Phones off!!

You are at work now and being paid to be there. Mobile phones – pet hate of all employers. Use your phone / check your phone in breaks and lunch hours. Remember – your employer is paying you to do the job they hired you for, socialising with you friends is for lunch times and after work.

Problems at work

If you are unhappy with any given situation, make an appointment with your team leader/line manager/manager to see if any changes can be made.

Avoid getting personal about any of your colleagues. You are now in an environment where you will be surrounded by some people that you just do not 'click' with. They will possibly be thinking the same about you. Wherever you are everyone should be treated with a level of respect and/or politeness.

Stop and think before taking dramatic measures. Walking out after a disagreement may lead to a bad reference. If you get a bad reference, it can be more difficult to get another job. Even though a reference should only state job title and dates employed, remember this is Guernsey and someone could provide a poor verbal one.

Your objective is to leave a job/company on good terms, regardless of the reasons behind the move.

Note that although companies cannot provide a "bad" reference, verbal references and comments are common, especially within a small community!

Remember, this is Guernsey, so if your contract is terminated or your work is poor, then it will catch up with you!

Honesty

Lies have a way of getting found out – especially in Guernsey. If you start looking and apply for another job, never lie about your current salary. Instead, mention your 'desired salary' or 'salary expectations'. Also have a reason to hand as to why you are worth the increase (e.g., felt very much underpaid to start with, no pay rises even though responsibility, duties, knowledge, and experience have increased).

Criminal records

- Certain companies may require you to produce a Police Disclosure which is obtained from the Police Disclosure Unit (next to the passport control office). In some companies it is mandatory procedure to have a police check - just check first.
- Only offences past the age of 18 will be taken into consideration. In the UK and now Guernsey, juvenile records are not shown on a Basic Police Disclosure – it is a copy of all unspent convictions and cautions recorded on the Police National Computer and local police systems. Enhanced Police Disclosures for certain roles (childcare / teaching) will allow access to **ALL** records.
- Fraud and deception on a police record is detrimental to any future employment. There are a lot of companies that will not be able to accept anyone with a fraud, theft or burglary convictions and it will be very difficult (but not necessarily impossible) to find employment where money or petty cash is handled.
- If you are given an opportunity to work, then make sure you get a good reference at the end. You may have a police record, but it does not have to ruin the rest of your working life. Remember that you will have to prove yourself more than someone else so the most important thing to remember is to get that great reference. Be honest about circumstances, how you have changed, that you realise you have a great deal to prove but are determined to prove it. You do not want one mistake or error in judgement to dictate the rest of your life. Your attitude and honesty now will count for a great deal.
- Some places have very strict rules on drug offences. They may have mandatory procedures – regardless of circumstances, some companies will be unable to employ you in the first place, or if you are charged with a drugs offence whilst in employment, they will have no option for anything else other than dismissal.
- A drugs offence will also mean that you will be unable to enter countries such as Australia or America, Thailand, Canada – so any thought of going travelling to these places will be an impossibility.

MEET THE TEAM

Our consultants are all here to help advise and guide you and look forward to hearing from you.



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