



## Make the right impression at interviews

First impressions matter at interviews, believes Helen Boddy, assistant editor at BCS. In this article, she recommends ways of making a good impression and being well prepared.

The format and questions asked in an interview vary enormously. When offered an interview it's worth checking how long it will last, who will be interviewing you and whether you will be asked to do any specific tasks.

If you are invited back for a second interview and asked similar questions, give full answers. If the question is asked again that means they want to hear the reply again.

### Do lots of preparation beforehand

Research the company and the industry. Look at websites and news sources to find out about the company's products, services, ownership, competitors and its reputation. If you know anyone with a contact in the company or industry, phone them up and talk to them.

You can also phone the company and ask to be put through to their marketing department. Explain that you have been offered an interview and ask them to send you relevant information such as annual report or marketing literature. These can also often be found on the company's website.

Memorize the names of the people interviewing you and their job roles (remember to ask who they are when offered an interview) to help you remember who they are during the interview.

Get familiar with your CV or application form and covering letter. Look through the job advert.

Practice your answers to questions aloud and rehearse the interview with a friend. Ask your friends if you have any pet phrases or annoying habits when talking such as saying 'you know what I mean' too frequently. Then practice talking without your pet phrases.

Make sure that you have the suitable clothes to wear and are well groomed. Generally it's worth wearing a good quality suit (even if you have to hire or borrow it), washing your hair, polishing your shoes, and so on.

### On the day

- Dress smartly
- Do your best to arrive on time. Make sure you have the interviewers' contact numbers with you so that you can get in touch if you get held up
- Take three or four spare copies of your CV with you
- Give a firm handshake
- Be enthusiastic about yourself, the job and the company
- Be positive and confident. Remember you are selling yourself
- Be honest and do not exaggerate





### **On the day (continued)**

- Speak slowly and clearly, and project your voice. If necessary, take time to think about an answer before giving it. Use stalling phrases, such as 'that's an interesting question'
- Give thorough answers to questions, using your experience and knowledge to support what you say
- Don't say anything negative about previous employers. Always keep it positive
- Make eye contact
- Think about your body language
- If asked if you have any further questions and you have none, say that your questions have been answered during the course of the interview

### **Follow up afterwards**

If you don't get the job, contact the interviewer to ask if they can give you some feedback on the interview. The feedback can help with the next interview.