

UNIT 4

Successful interviews

- Preparing for the interview
- Making a positive first impression
- Dealing effectively with interview questions
- Talking about yourself
- Avoiding common mistakes
- Proving you've done your research
- Demonstrating you've got what it takes



Preparing for the interview

Congratulations! If you have been invited to an interview, you have passed a significant test. Your CV and cover letter have made a strong first impression. You have been selected in front of your rivals, and made it to the short list.

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. The other candidates may have similar qualifications, skills and experience. The interview is your opportunity to prove you are the best candidate for the job. Ensuring you are well-prepared will help you to reduce stress, increase your confidence and improve your chances of being offered the job.

1 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Have you ever been interviewed for a job in English? How did it go?
- 2 How do you feel about going for an interview?
- 3 How can you prepare for an interview?

b In pairs, discuss the following tips for preparing for an interview. Which ones do you think are more important? Which ones would you do first?

- Try to predict the questions you are likely to be asked during the interview.
- Do some research into the company you are applying for a job with.
- Find out exactly what the job involves.
- Analyse your skills and experience and identify areas where they match the job requirements and the company needs.
- Rehearse the interview.
- Decide what you're going to wear.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview.

Making a positive first impression

Before you arrive

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. People start forming their impression of you immediately, looking at the outside and making assumptions about the inside. It is your responsibility to ensure that you send out the right message about who you are, through your physical appearance, your clothes and your body language.



- 2 a** Imagine you met somebody new today. After a few minutes talking to you, what might they say about you, for example how successful or wealthy you are, your level of education, or your professionalism?
- b** In pairs, discuss what you can do to create a positive first impression with an interviewer. Think about the following points.
- your appearance
 - body language
 - how to 'break the ice' with the interviewer
- c** In pairs, discuss the following interview tips. Write *do* or *don't* next to each tip.
- 1 Arrive ten minutes early.
 - 2 Speak English with a friend before the interview.
 - 3 Bring a close friend or relative with you for support.
 - 4 Take a copy of your CV and examples of your work with you.
 - 5 Learn some impressive words and phrases to use in the interview.
 - 6 Memorise long answers to questions that you anticipate being asked.
- d** ▶ 4.1 Silvia Carnali has been invited for an interview at the communications agency, Futerra. Before her interview she meets Nina, a human resources manager, for some interview preparation tips. Listen to the conversation and write Nina's opinion (*do/don't*) next to the tips (1–6) in Exercise 2c. Do you agree with Nina? What tips does Nina mention that are not included in the list above?

Small talk

The outcome of an interview can be decided in the first five minutes. From the moment you arrive for an interview you are being assessed. Even before the interview itself begins you will be communicating a message about who you are. In order to create a positive impression, it's important that from the moment you arrive what you say is clear, confident and enthusiastic.

- 3 a** ▶ 4.2 Listen to extracts from the beginning of Silvia's interview at Futerra and Alex Mencken's interview at a London theatre. Answer the following questions.

- 1 Why is Mr Lewis late for the interview?
- 2 What does Silvia read while she's waiting?
- 3 What useful information does Silvia get from the receptionist?
- 4 How does Silvia create a positive first impression with Mr Lewis?
- 5 What do Alex and Karl chat about before the interview?
- 6 How does Alex create a positive first impression with Karl?



b In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Silvia is very polite to the receptionist. Why is this important?
- 2 What does Silvia ask the receptionist? How could this help her application?
- 3 Alex mentions that a friend of his who works at the theatre suggested he applied for the job. Do you think this was a good idea?

c ▶ 42 Match the conversation openings (1–8) to the responses (a–h). Listen to the extracts again and check your answers.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 I'm afraid Mr Lewis is in a meeting at the moment. | a No, no trouble at all. |
| 2 Can I get you anything while you wait? | b No, thank you, I'm fine. |
| 3 I'm sorry I'm late. Our meeting overran a bit. | c I know. It's awful, isn't it? |
| 4 How are you? | d Thank you. It's nice to meet you too. |
| 5 It's nice to meet you at last. | e You were highly recommended to me by a friend. |
| 6 Did you have any trouble finding us? | f I'm very well, thank you. |
| 7 I can't believe the weather at the moment! | g That's quite all right. |
| 8 How did you find out about us? | h That's okay. I was just admiring the office. |

d In pairs, practise the small talk in Exercise 3c.

e Look at the following examples of interview small talk. Match the beginnings (1–10) to the endings (a–j). Would you say these to the receptionist (R), the interviewer (I) or both (B)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Do you think I could have _____ | a I got caught in the rain. _____ |
| 2 Do you have a company brochure _____ | b your toilet to freshen up? _____ |
| 3 I'm very sorry I'm late. | c a glass of water while I'm waiting? <u>R</u> |
| 4 Do you think I could use _____ | d I was planning to be here over an hour ago, but my train was cancelled. _____ |
| 5 I was just admiring your office. | e I could have a look at while I'm waiting? _____ |
| 6 Are there many other candidates _____ | f Is it always this busy? _____ |
| 7 I had terrible problems parking here. | g It all looks very modern. Is it new? _____ |
| 8 I'm afraid I'm not feeling very well. | h Do you have many people working elsewhere? _____ |
| 9 The office is smaller than I expected. | i Could I sit down for a few minutes? _____ |
| 10 Is there somewhere I could leave my umbrella? | j scheduled for interviews today? _____ |

f Having some small talk helps to build a positive rapport with the interviewer. In the UK the weather and transport problems are very common and appropriate small talk topics. In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 What small talk topics are commonly discussed in your country?
- 2 Are there any things you would avoid talking about?

g In pairs, role play arriving at an interview and making small talk with the receptionist.

Student A, you are the candidate. Try to get some useful information from the receptionist which you can use later in your interview.

Student B, you are the receptionist.

Swap roles and practise again.

Body language

Much of the impact you create at an interview is based on your body language, and getting this right is essential. The way you walk, sit and act may influence your interviewer's opinion of you as much as what you actually say.

4 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 How could your body language let you down in an interview?
- 2 How can you avoid these problems?

b ▶ 4.3 Listen to five people speaking about body language and bad first impressions in interviews. Write the extract number (1–5) next to the problem it mentions. Then match each problem (a–e) to the advice on how to avoid it (A–E).

Problem	Advice
a Trembling voice ____	A Make eye contact, but remember not to stare.
b Sweating ____	B Politely decline tea or coffee.
c Bad posture ____	C Breathe slowly and deeply.
d Shaking hands ____	D Sit up straight and lean forward when speaking.
e No eye contact ____	E Make sure you know in advance how to find the interview venue.

c What tips on body language would you give someone being interviewed for a job in your country?