

inspiring the future

Interview Skills Workshop

CIPD Guernsey

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Introduction

Going for any job is a daunting task, however if you prepare for your interview it will help you immensely. In this hand out we have pulled together key information which will help you get ready for an interview, please take the time to review this and ensure you are ready.

Hints on how to research a company

In order to impress an employer when you apply for a job, apprenticeship or even to volunteer, you need to go out of your way to research the organisation – its purpose, its products, even its history. This sounds like a huge task, but fortunately there are lots of resources you can turn to that will help you in your search.

What is a 'resource'?

Anyone and anything can be a resource. Time and money, for example, are two very useful resources. A place that holds the information you need, such as a library, is also a resource, as are people with the skills and knowledge you are looking for. In your search for information the following places might be of help:

- Libraries – they are often staffed by people who are very skilled at helping you find information, they may also have a selection of trade or business magazines that might be useful
- The internet
- Friends and family, and their friends, and their friends...
- Social networking – Facebook and Twitter (As you gain more work experience you may also want to consider setting up a LinkedIn account – this is a the social network used for professional purposes)
- If applying or interviewing for an apprenticeship then there is lots of information available locally.
- Make a list of all the resources you can think of that are available to you (places and people).

How to research an organisation: a step-by-step guide

Imagine you find a job or apprenticeship advertised on the internet, or in the local newspaper. You are interested, but the advert doesn't tell you much about what the company does, or how long they've been in business, or who their customers are... so...

Step 1: Call or send an email to people in your 'network' you think may be able to help. Perhaps a relative or friend knows someone who works for the organisation – you never know so it's worth asking around.

Step 2: Search on the Internet – enter the company name into Google (or a search engine of your choice) to see whether they have a website or LinkedIn/Twitter page.

Step 3: Look for the relevant pages on their website: 'About us' 'Our people', 'Careers' or 'Working with us' sections might be particularly useful. The organisation might also have its Twitter feed or LinkedIn page – have a look to see if any information on there might be of use.

Step 4: You want to find out what the company *culture* is like – what is really important to them – so, if they have one, make sure you look at the 'Mission statement' or 'Values' page on their website. If they have a 'News' page this might also be helpful as it will give you an idea of the current issues that are relevant to the company.

Step 5: Make a note of useful words and phrases that you come across in relation to the organisation, and think about how you can link these to your knowledge, skills, and attitude within your application or interview.

Employability Skills

Skills Guernsey in partnership with local businesses has developed a matrix of skills which employers are looking for when recruiting young people. Please refer to appendix 1 for examples. Understanding the employability skills will help you immensely; you can refer to each of the descriptions and utilise these on your CV and application documentation. By understanding the skills you can self-assess your own abilities against the skills listed and help identify your development areas. Employers will be asking about these skills in your interview.

Interview styles

There are many different types of interviews that can take place:-

Informal – This may seem more like a chat and will be fairly unstructured, however please note most organisations will follow a structured approach

Formal – This may be one to one with a HR Manager/Manager and will be based on structured questions. Organisations will often carry out an interview with more than one person, so be prepared that you may be facing 2 or more people.

Panel - You may be faced with a panel of interviewers from across the business so be prepared to face questions from different people.

Telephone –Some companies like to start the recruitment process with a telephone interview. This may occur prior to a face to face interview and is very popular in customer service type roles.

Skype – If you have applied to work for a company who have offices offshore, or the management is based off island, they may choose to interview by Skype.

Multiple Interviews –In larger organisations, you may have to go for more than one interview and therefore you need to factor in the time to go to these and they may be over an extended time e.g. a few hours.

To help prepare for your interview, you can call up the organisation to find out what style of interview it will be and who will be interviewing you. This will help you prepare properly.

Hints on personal impact and presentation

This information will help you prepare for your job interview and understand how to make a good impression. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression!

Step 1: Prior to the interview – preparation

- Always confirm that you will be attending by phone, email or letter.
- Show your interest by asking for some information on the company.
- Do your research on the job/apprenticeship and company and practise your interview technique, perhaps with a friend or family member.
- Make a practice trip to the interview location so you know where you are going and approximately how long it will take to get there. If you are travelling by public transport, remember to factor in time for delays!
- Save a contact number in your phone, in case you are delayed and need to let the interviewer know.

Step 2: Prior to the interview – plan what to wear

This is a job interview so do not wear anything that you would wear for a night out with your friends.

- No denim, no leggings, no jogging bottoms, no shorts, in fact no sportswear.
- Trainers
- Trainers, flip flops, Ugg boots, espadrilles, crocs and trainers are not suitable footwear.
- Take a look at what the contestants wear on *The Apprentice*. They are dressed for business but will impress any interviewer for any job.

The rule of thumb – interview clothes should be smarter than anyone would wear to work there. Your dress sense is clearly very personal and individual to you; however, these guidelines might help:

For Men	For Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 piece suit – light grey to dark colours, shirt with collar and tie, proper shoes and socks. • Or smart dark plain trousers, plain sweater or contrasting jacket and shirt with collar and tie, shoes and socks. • You could substitute collar and tie for smart plain polo shirt or short- sleeved shirt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skirt or trouser suit (any colour) with blouse/shirt and proper shoes and tights (short skirts or very high heels are a bad idea). • Or a plain, smart dress with proper shoes/sandals and tights (if wearing a skirt). • Or skirt/trousers, sweater/pullover, shirt/blouse and shoes.
<i>Remember you are best to go for the most formal look, even if you think the job will not need you to dress that way or provides a uniform.</i>	<i>Never wear flip-flop type sandals and if wearing a skirt make sure it is long enough to be comfortable and professional.</i>

Everyone:

- Your clothes must be clean, fresh and ironed; shoes should also be clean too.
- No offensive logos on display, minimal jewellery and make-up (unfortunately some people are still negative about piercings so take them out).
- Remember, some jobs may mean that long nails and nail varnish are not allowed, for example nurse/carer/caterer.
- Whatever the fashion, please keep underwear under clothes; plunging necklines, visible bra straps or visible boxers can give the wrong impression.

Step 3: Ensure you are clean and freshly showered/bathed

- Don't overuse the 'smellies' but clean hair nails and breath is vital.
- If you smoke, try to not have a cigarette just before your interview as the smell will cling to you and your clothes.

Step 4: On arriving at your interview

- Arrive 10 minutes early.
- Smile and be polite to everyone.
- Remember to shake hands and look people in the eye.

Step 5: Speech and voice

- Speak clearly and always say 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Never use rude, offensive or swear words. If a bad word pops out by mistake, apologise immediately. After all, you were nervous.

Step 6: Saying goodbye

- Thank the interviewer for their time and shake their hands.
- Leave them with an impression that will make them want to call you back!

Hints on interview questions and answers

This factsheet is designed to give you an idea of the types of question you can expect to be asked during most job/apprenticeship interviews and what you should think about in your answers. University interviews tend to work differently, so do ask your teachers for advice on how to prepare best for those.

Interview questions will vary according to organisation, but essentially all interviews are designed to find out:

- Your suitability for the job or apprenticeship – skills, knowledge, experience (this could be voluntary rather than paid work experience)
- Your enthusiasm and interest in the job or apprenticeship
- Whether you will fit in with the rest of the team and organisation

Think about these questions in advance, using real-life examples to illustrate your points.

Q. Tell me about yourself...?

This is a standard opening question used in many interviews. When you answer this question don't be tempted to give a short response – use this time to introduce yourself to the employer in the best possible light. Your response to this should be well rehearsed, confident and *relevant*. Don't reel off your life history – instead, focus on things that relate to the job you're going for.

Include some impressive achievements – awards you have received, competitions won, leading a school club or society, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, volunteering activities or charity fundraising.

Talk about how enthusiastic you are about the job and the organisation – do your research beforehand so you know what to say.

Q. Why do you want this job?

Your answer should reinforce why you are a good fit for the job and convey your enthusiasm for the role. You should mention:

- The good match between your skills and what the job requires
- Your interest in the organisation's area of business/products, for example, if you are going for a role at New Look and you always shop there – say so!
- The job being an exciting challenge for you

Q. What are your key skills/strengths?

Focus on what you know they are looking for, even if it has only been a small part of what you have done to date. Download the person specification or job description from the company website, work through it carefully and think about how your experience and skills meet their requirements.

Q. What are your development areas?

Keep it professional – think about areas that you know you need to develop, or that teachers, previous employers or even your parents have singled out for improvement. For example, being too shy in the workplace can prevent you from speaking up in meetings. But, on the other hand, being too outgoing can lead to you being too forceful with others, speaking over them or not respecting others' opinions.

Most importantly, acknowledge that improving your 'development areas' is important to you and, where possible, show how you are working to develop them. For example, you might be someone who is shy, but you purposefully make an effort to talk to people as you recognise this is an issue.

Q. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years' time?

Your interviewer will want to know how the job you are going for fits in with your long-term plans. It's okay if you haven't worked out the next 20 years in your head – very few people have. However, you should have a general idea about what your interests are, what kind of areas you would like to work in and even perhaps where you see yourself in the next few years.

Tell the interviewer how the job and how their organisation fits in with these ideas – perhaps the organisation offers lots of opportunities for training and development, which in time will help you progress. You might see yourself managing projects or even other people within the organisation one day. Don't make it sound as though the job is just a 'springboard' to something better – take care to reassure the interviewer of the importance of this job for achieving your longer-term goals.

Q. Do you have any questions?

Most interviews will end with the interviewer asking you this. As a rule, it is good to ask your interviewers a question or two as it shows an interest. Here are some questions you might consider asking:

- What is the team like?
- If successful, what are the backgrounds of the people I would be working with?
- What's the best thing about working here?
- When can I expect to hear your decision?
- What training am I likely to receive when I start?
- Who will I be working with?
- What is included in your induction programme?
- How long does it last?
- What does your probation include?
- What would I be working on should I be successful in the role?
- Who will I be working for?
- What is the key focus for the company in 2014?
- How would you describe the culture of the company?
- What are the biggest challenges for the company right now?

To help you we have also included some other questions that you might get asked:-

Education

- Why did you choose those particular subjects?
- What have you enjoyed most / least about them?
- What grades are you expecting to achieve in your exams?
- Looking at your grades how happy are you with your grades or expected grades?
- What aspect of your education has prepared you for this job?
- Looking at your interests out of school, what have you learnt from these?
- What have you learnt from xxxx project that you completed at school?

Past Experience

- You took part in some work experience / part-time job(s) whilst at school, can you tell me about your role(s) and your duties?
- What did you like most/least about the positions?
- What do you feel you have learnt from this or these placement(s) that you can utilise in this job?
- I can see you have a part time job at xxxxx, what skills have you learnt?
- If I was to ask your present employer (if they have a part time job) about you as an employee, what would they say?
- What organisations/clubs do you belong to?

- What positions of responsibility have you held and what did you enjoy most / least about them?

About the company

- What are your reasons for applying to this business unit / area of business?
- Which aspects of working for our company do you find most appealing? Why?
- What do you know about our company?
- What was it about our business that influenced you to apply?
- What other positions have you applied for? If so are they in the same area/type of business?

About the role

- What is your understanding of the role you have applied for?
- What would you say is the most important thing you are looking for in a job?
- What might influence you to leave this role?
- What are your long term employment or career objectives?
- What kind of job do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you feel you need to develop in terms of skills and knowledge in order to be ready for that opportunity?

Teamwork

- Can you tell me about a situation where you have had to work as part of a team that did not work well. What did you do to improve / resolve the situation?
- What is important to you when you are working as part of a team?
- Can you give me an example of when you have had to motivate others in order to achieve a goal?
- What do you see as the advantages / disadvantages of team work?
- Do you prefer working alone or in groups?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to get on with?

About you

- Describe your proudest achievement? Why is it your proudest achievement and what was challenging about what you did?
- Can you give me an example of when you have achieved a target despite unexpected setbacks and problems?
- Tell me about a time when you have had a particularly heavy workload. How did you deal with this? What aspect did you find most difficult?
- What has been the highest pressure situation you have been under in recent years? How did you cope with it?
- What things frustrate you the most? How do you usually cope with them?
- What was your most difficult decision in the last 6 months? What made it difficult?
- Would you rather write a report or give a verbal report? Why?
- What kind of writing have you done?
- Can you describe a situation where you felt that working independently was most effective and why?
- What kind of things do you feel most confident in doing?
- What do you like to do the best?
- What do you like to do the least?
- What would you say your key strengths are?
- What would you say your development areas are?
- When have been told/ or when have you discovered yourself that there is a problem in your performance, what have you typically done about it, can you give me an example?
- How would you describe yourself as a person?

You do not have to ask all the questions listed, the HR practitioner will also choose a selection from the list and adapt to their individual businesses. At the end of the interview DO NOT ask the interviewer how they think the interview went. You won't get immediate feedback and it will not reflect well on you. Interviewers will understand you being nervous but you will appear far more confident and self-assured if at the end of the interview if you shake their hand, thank them for seeing you and tell them you look forward to hearing from them.

Finally, remember...

- Always say 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Look as smart as possible.
- Make eye contact with your interviewer.
- RELAX – nerves are understandable but don't let them ruin your interview. Be yourself and don't try to 'second guess' your interviewer.

If you require any further support please feel free to contact CIPD Guernsey at guernsey@cipdbranch.co.uk









Employability Skills



Employability Skills can be defined as the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them 'employable'. That is the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job.

Employability depends on your knowledge, skills and attitudes, how you use these and how you present them to employers.

A range of Guernsey-based companies has compiled the table below, and it lists the Top 5 Employability Skills that they look for in potential employees – that means you! We asked the companies to define exactly what these skills mean, and how you could show evidence of these skills in an interview or application for a job.

SKILLS THAT EMPLOYERS WANT	WHAT THAT MEANS	YOUR EVIDENCE IN SCHOOL	YOUR EVIDENCE OUTSIDE SCHOOL
 1 Communication Skills	The ability to explain what you mean in a clear and concise way through written and/or spoken means. To listen and relate to other people, and to act upon key information/instructions. The awareness to ask questions if you are unsure and the willingness to answer other's questions.	I presented the findings of a Science coursework project as a report and PowerPoint presentation to the rest of my class. I write articles for the school newsletter. I acted as an ambassador talking to prospective students & parents at an open day.	I am part of a debating club / society that helps my communication skills by persuading others and getting across my views and ideas. I help with a local cub/brownie group where I communicate and give instructions to participants. I do volunteer work chatting to the elderly at a care home.
 2 Positive, 'Can Do Attitude' / Motivation	The ability to see every challenge as an opportunity and find solutions, not simply raise issues. Determination to get things done, make things happen & constantly looking for better ways of doing things. Give things a go.	When my computer crashed & I lost my homework. Instead of telling my teacher, I stayed in during lunch to re-do the work. I showed a positive attitude by encouraging and suggesting ways my English project team could to complete the project when time was running short.	I motivated the others in the football team to keep trying when were losing. We went on to score another goal and win the match. At my summer job, the manager was not around on my first morning, so I introduced myself to the other team members & offered to help.
 3 Teamwork	The ability to work together towards a common goal, sharing knowledge and skills. Important to have a flexible approach to helping others and encouraging others to learn. An understanding of how teams work and how one can best contribute in different ways in different team situations.	In a group project I worked with a team of students with different designated roles. The first job we did was to identify how each of us will have a valuable input to the task in hand.	I am part of our after school Drama/Rugby/Swim Club that meets every week. We often do activities as teams and I really enjoy it.
 4 Numeracy	Being able to manage everyday mathematical problems with confidence. The ability to understand basic maths (add, subtract, multiply, divide and percentages),	During the Young Enterprise Scheme, I had to calculate what price we should sell our product for whilst taking into account the costs associated with buying and packaging the product.	Working at the Newsagent on Saturday's, I have to mentally add up the cost of goods for customers. I have been saving for an iPad & have had to calculate how much to budget & save each week so I can buy one within 6 months.
 4 Computer Literacy	Being able to use appropriate IT packages, e.g. word processing, databases, spreadsheets, Power Point, web and email.	In my Science coursework I produced a PowerPoint presentation with graphs & emailed it to my teacher to mark. I often use Word to do my homework and use the web to research school projects.	I used the computer to design an advert for a competition. I help at a hotel/restaurant where I sometimes have to input data on to a database. At my dance school, I used email to co-ordinate rehearsal times with my group.
 5 Honesty, Integrity & Diversity	Treating people with respect & empathy, ability to see things from other people's point of view. Being open & honest in your dealings with others & knowing the difference between wrong & right & acting on it. Knowing the value of diversity & what it can bring. Understanding & being considerate of the different needs of different individuals.	When a computer was accidentally broken, I was brave enough to tell the teacher what had happened. I did a charity event with some of the younger pupils and although I didn't believe their idea was the best, I listened to what they had to say and agreed to give it a go.	Working at Waitrose involves working with people that are different from me in terms of age, gender, nationality, race, disability etc. I have learnt to get on with & learn from many different people. I handle money at the till which shows that I am trusted to be honest.