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# 9 STEPS TO SMASH YOUR INTERVIEW

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# Introduction

It's common knowledge that nobody really enjoys an interview. The prospect of having to convince someone else that you are right for a job – even if you already know you're the best candidate for them – just doesn't appeal to most people.

And with studies showing that 33% of bosses know within the first 90 seconds of an interview whether they will hire someone, the pressure to make the right impression can be exponential.



But the reality is, in today's modern society, people should look forward to interviewing, because the balance of power has shifted away from clients and towards candidates. As a result, interviewing is no longer a necessary evil that you have to endure in order to advance your career, but a form of networking in which you are given the opportunity to meet potential businesses who need access to the key skills that you possess, as they continue to invest in digital transformation.

And, working in an industry where there is an exceptionally high demand for your skills and a low number of individuals who possess them, you are more likely than not going to find yourself interviewing on a regular basis, for numerous companies and various roles.


But the question still remains: even when you are in high demand, how do you ensure that you always get the job that you want?

The answer is pretty simple: smash your interviews. Luckily, there are some key things you can do to help you prepare and do just this.

In fact; there are 9 things you can do. In our quick guide we go over the 9 steps everyone should do before, during and after an interview. From big tips like what to research and where to find the best preparation information, to the little things like how to fill your time before you arrive for the interview and what to do afterwards, read our guide to learn the best tricks of the trade and ensure you always land the job that you really, really want.







# 1. RESEARCH, AND THEN RESEARCH SOME MORE....



One of the most important things you can do before an interview is research. Although this may sound obvious, very few people actually do this well and, in our experience, so many people still attend interviews having conducted very little research. Not only can this reflect badly on yourself during the interview, it is important to remember that this is a candidate driven market, and if the interview goes well then you will have to make a choice about whether you want this particular opportunity. Doing extensive research now will help you get under the hood of the business and determine whether the role is a good match from the get go.

Luckily, the internet is a wonderful place, filled with all sorts of useful information for you to learn about your potential new employer, but you will need to invest a good few hours to make sure that you can really get to the bottom of the business.

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Although this may sound obvious, very few people actually do this well

Start by Googling the business to get an idea of what they do, how they present their offering, and ‘who’ they are; remember to not just look at the core website itself, but to take a look at their blogs and press releases, as well as all their social media channels. Then, take your search broader by looking at the news section of Google for any recent articles or online press releases to determine whether they have been spoken about and if so, why. Doing this will give you a deeper understanding of how other people perceive the business, and what kind of traction they have in their industry.

Next, spend some time learning about the industry this company operates in: who are their competitors, where does their product sit in relation to other offerings, have there been any major changes in the industry that may impact the future of this business? Having this broader understanding will not only help you answer any curveball questions thrown at you during the interview but will help you get a better understanding of the space you could be working in and might help you formulate some questions to ask your interviewers (the importance of which we’ll come to later).

Once you have the company information down, do a thorough research of your interviewers. LinkedIn is your best bet for this; research enough to know what the people you will be speaking to did before joining the current business, as this will help you seem more professional and prepared when you meet them, but you don’t need to be able to recite their entire personal history...





Finally, take a look at Glassdoor to get an unbiased view of the company itself. This is a great way to not only find out the positives of working there, but it can also be helpful in identifying any potential issues that you might want to raise during your interview.

## TR TIP 1

Google the “name” of the company and “CEO” to try and find recent interviews or articles where the CEO may have been speaking. This is a great place to get a feel for the vision of the company, the strength of leadership and picking up a talking point when you meet your interviewer.

## TR TIP 2

Try and find some common link like a previous or familiar company to provide a good talking point when you first meet the interviewer. Try looking at their LinkedIn activity; this normally gives an indication of what someone is interested in and can provide you with some good small talk points on mutual topics.

## TR TIP 3

Almost every interview will ask you about your CV so it’s critical that you actually know what’s in it! Spend some time during your research to review your CV to ensure you’re slick on any potential questions that might arise, and familiarise yourself with the sections that people are more likely to talk about, such as your previous employment history.

## TR TIP 4

Write your findings down. You don’t need to make detailed notes, but anything that stands out and you think that you might want to look over at a later time be sure to keep a record of.





A black and white photograph of a person writing in a notebook. The person's hands are visible, holding a pen and writing on a piece of paper. The background is blurred, showing other papers and a desk. A bright blue rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font and is arranged in three lines. The overall composition is clean and professional, with a focus on the act of writing and preparation.

## **2. THE DAY BEFORE THE INTERVIEW**



The day before the interview is the time to ensure you are perfectly prepared. Here's our quick check list of things you should organise the day before to ensure you can smash your interview:

## 1. REHEARSE THE CONVERSATION

One of the best things you can do the day before is to practise the interview in your head; think about the kinds of questions you will be asked and what your potential responses will be. If there's something about yourself or your experience that you know you want to discuss during the interview, then take this time to work out a way to include it in the conversation or one of your answers. For the best practise possible, grab a friend, your partner, or your recruitment consultant, and ask them to role play the interview and ask you some killer questions like:

- Why are you qualified for this role?
- What do you want to do in your next role?  
What do you not want to do in your next role?
- Why are you leaving your current job?
- What examples do you have that demonstrates your relevant experience?
- What have been your proudest career achievements to date?
- What have you failed at?

## 2. GO OVER YOUR NOTES

Refresh your memory on the research that you have done, and double check that you understand the key aspects of the business including the background, their history, the industry they operate in, their vision and the key components of the role that you are going for.





### 3. PREPARE SOME KEY QUESTIONS

Once you have gone over the interview in your head, and revised the business and role, you should draw up a list of key questions that you want answered by the interviewer. Remember, an interview is as much about you working out whether the opportunity is right for you as it is for the business to determine if you are right for them, so asking questions is imperative. Formulating questions the evening before will help you to go into the interview with clear objectives of what you want to learn and gain from the experience. Potential questions include:

- What is your vision for this role
- How do you see this role progressing over the next 12-24 months?
- What are the main challenges you envision with this role



### 4. PLAN YOUR OUTFIT

Probably the biggest question mark when it comes to an interview is knowing what to wear. If you don't have anyone to ask for advice – such as your recruitment consultant, or someone who already works there – then your safest bet is to dress smarter than you think you should.







## 3. ARRIVING AT THE INTERVIEW



You've put in all the right prep, now you just need to ensure that you can get to your interview in a stress-free way.

Always plan to arrive at the destination 10-15 minutes early and familiarise yourself with the location of the interview beforehand by doing a quick Google maps search - this will stop you from frantically wandering the nearby streets trying to find the building. Take into account the time of day you're planning your journey; the morning will be inherently busier as you join commuters on their way in and travelling around lunch time may also mean that the area is busier than normal. Again, this might sound like common advice, but when you're squeezing in multiple interviews at numerous locations it might slip your mind to double check how to get there or where you're going.

## TECH TIPS:

Take advantage of apps like CityMapper, Live Train Time UK, Tube Map London Underground and UK Bus Checker to adequately plan your journey. Knowing where you are going, and how you're going to get there, will reduce a significant amount of stress on the day of your interview.



For those of you based in New York, CityMapper is a great tool to take advantage of when planning your journey,

If you arrive more than 10-15 minutes early find a local coffee shop to sit in and collect your thoughts, check your emails, or take care of anything that needs tidying up before you switch off for the interview (TECH TIP: Find the best coffee shop near your interview with London Coffee Network). Arriving too early to your interview can put pressure on your interviewer, and you'll just be wasting your own time if you are sitting in the reception for longer than necessary.

When it gets to 10 or 15 minutes before your interview is due to start, head over to the office and get yourself signed in so that your interviewer is aware that you have arrived.





A black and white photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a light-colored blazer, smiling and shaking hands with a man in a dark suit. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or library setting with bookshelves. A bright blue rectangular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing the text '4. MEETING THE INTERVIEWER' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. A dashed white line forms a rectangular border around the blue overlay.

## 4. MEETING THE INTERVIEWER



Meeting the interviewer is always an important moment; you should exude confidence and establish your presence from the very start of your interview.

Have some small talk points for the walk from the reception to the meeting room, or for those first few moments in the interview. One of the most successful interview techniques is building rapport with your interviewer; this will help make them like you as an individual and not just as a candidate, so discussing anything from your journey to the coffee shop you just sat in is always a good start. Just try and avoid slipping into the weather cliché...




If you've taken a look at the interviewers' LinkedIn activity, this is a great point to drop in that you read something they posted. Not only does it show your genuine interest in what they have to say, but it will show from the off that you have done your research for the role.

Your body language will also say a lot about you when you meet your interviewer. Make sure you're aware of this and make your body language work to your benefit; avoid fidgeting with jewellery or pens, maintain eye contact and smile as you talk, and try not to slouch in your chair! Even if you're done 100 interviews, and even if you aren't phased by interviewing, you still might end up fidgeting so try and remain aware of your body. These little subconscious indicators will help you come across as confident and calm to your interviewer and make you look – and feel – like you are in control of the situation.

Remember, you have an in-demand skill set and the interviewer should feel like they need to make a good impression as much as you do, so getting the balance right between being confident but not being over confident as soon as you meet is key to starting the interview off on the right foot.







## 5. TYPES OF INTERVIEWS



We've covered how to prepare yourself in the lead up to an interview, and this advice stands true for almost any type of interview you might encounter. But the truth is that not all interviews are created equal; there are few different types of interviews, each of which have their own nuances, tips and tricks that can help you to ace them...

## COMPETENCY/BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS

**What:** This tends to be the most common type of interview in which there is an objective discussion of relevant examples and things that you have done and achieved in your career. For instance, questions might include: "How would you tackle XYZ; give me an example of when you demonstrated XYZ"

**How:** Remember to answer these questions comprehensively to provide the interviewer with a true understanding of what you did and what was achieved. Try and pick fairly large examples so you can drill into sufficient detail and really explain your skills.



## PANEL INTERVIEWS

Try and find some common link like a previous or familiar company to provide a good talking point when you first meet the interviewer. Try looking at their LinkedIn activity; this normally gives an indication of what someone is interested in and can provide you with some good small talk points on mutual topics.





## CASE INTERVIEWS

**What:** A case interview is a more specialised format in which you're given a business problem or puzzle to solve. These types of interviews are popping up more and more across multiple industries and are often a test of your analytical, strategic and problem-solving capabilities.

**How:** Take your time when answering attending these interviews; they are intended to give interviewers an opportunity to understand your thought process so be sure to 'think out loud' when responding. An effective answer will be one that demonstrates your ability to break a problem down into manageable pieces, think clearly under pressure, and respond appropriately.



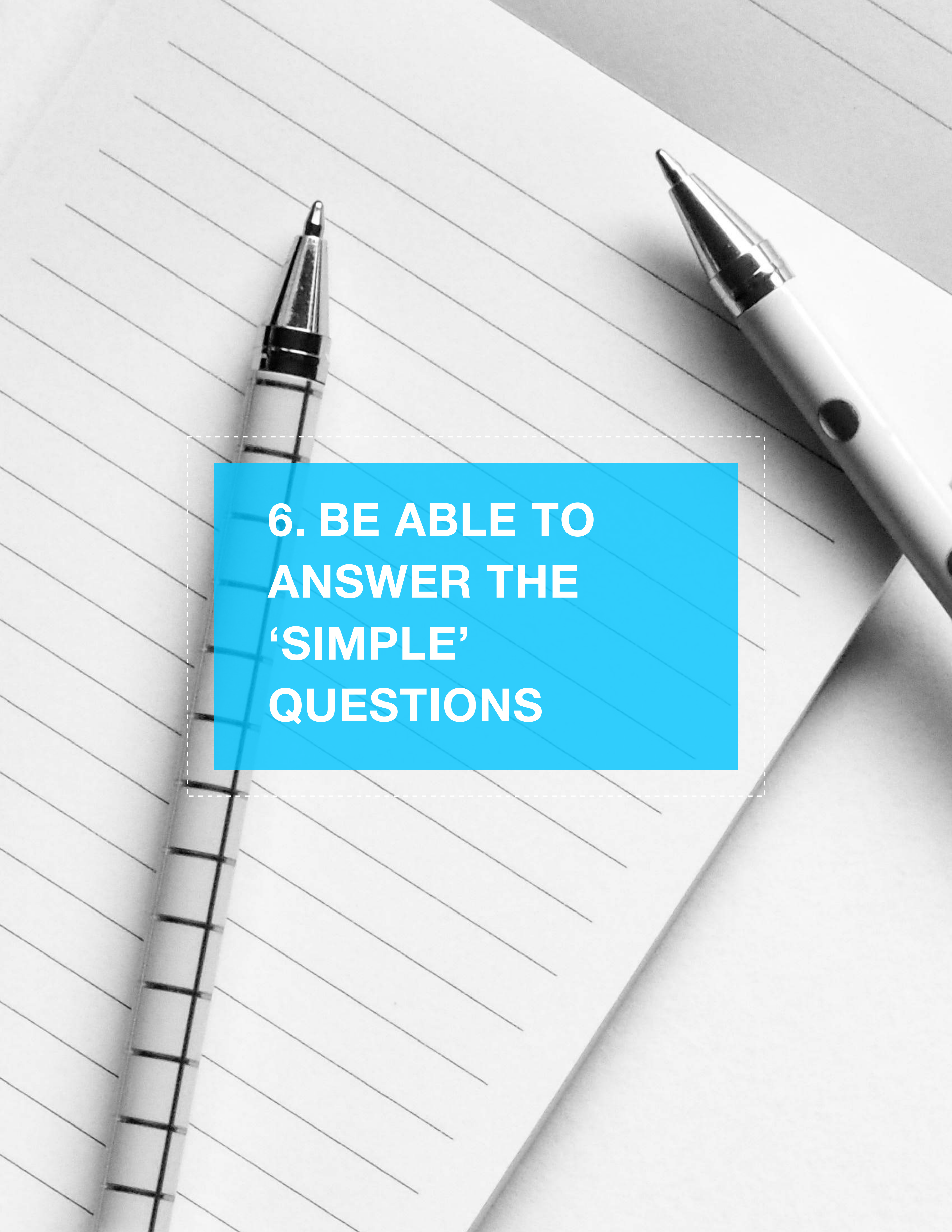
## TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENTS

**What:** Sometimes, during an interview process, you might be asked to complete a task at home. Especially common for technical roles, this step is just as it says on the tin; you'll be given an assignment to carry out in a certain amount of time outside of the interview office.

**How:** The most important thing with a take-home assignment is to not try and get the 'perfect' answer; no solution to a company's problem was formulated in an hour long online test. The business will be using your answers as a benchmark and not a definitive representation of your capabilities.





A top-down view of an open, spiral-bound notebook with lined pages. Two silver pens with black barrels are resting on the pages. A bright blue rectangular box with a dashed white border is centered on the left page, containing white text.

**6. BE ABLE TO  
ANSWER THE  
'SIMPLE'  
QUESTIONS**



Regardless of what industry you work in, most interviews will cover the same basic questions, so you'll do well to think about them in advance in order to ensure that you can give the most comprehensive – and impressive – answer possible.

And, although they may seem very basic, the truth is that you are much more likely to stumble on these questions than highly technical ones. With your skills and experience, the likelihood is that the interviewers will already know that you are technically competent and capable of doing the job. These questions, however, will be used to determine if your personality and traits make you the right fit for the role and the company. Therefore, nailing these questions might be as important – if not more so – to your success and to being offered that dream role.

Some common questions to prep for include:

## WHY ARE YOU LEAVING YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

Being honest is the best approach here, but do not attempt to discredit your employer. Common reasons for leaving could include: reaching a ceiling in terms of learning and development, the desire for promotional opportunities, changing your career direction, a desire for a new company culture, internal or operational changes in your current company.

## WHAT MAKES YOU QUALIFIED FOR THIS ROLE?

With this question, the key focus should be on showing your own initiatives and success. Ensure you talk about your own achievements and not just when you helped someone else achieve something - this can always be discussed later in relation to working as a team. When discussing your successes and qualifications for a role think about how you went about meeting a goal, what went well and what went wrong in order to show that you have used your success as a learning experience. Try and have a few successes in mind to demonstrate how you handle, and can succeed in, different scenarios.





## WHY DO YOU WANT TO JOIN THIS BUSINESS?

This is a great opportunity for you to show off all of your research; focus on specific things about the business that you like and always link this reason to your own goals. For instance, if you are interviewing at a large firm mention the fact that it's a global business and how this will help your upward career trajectory.

In general, always have at least 4 reasons why you're interested in the role and the company – focus on pull factors i.e. what is pulling you towards the opportunity rather than what is pushing you from your old job.

## WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS?

This is a perfect question to demonstrate your sense of drive and purpose. Try and avoid specific job titles you are aiming for but speak about your short and long-term ambitions in terms of what skills and responsibilities you see yourself taking on.

## WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO, AND WHAT DO YOU NOT WANT TO DO, IN YOUR ROLE?

With this question, be honest about what aspects of a future role might be less appealing, but make sure you back up your reasons why, and how you would turn a negative into a positive if your future role did include that particular task. When discussing what you do want to do, make sure you again explain why that responsibility is important to you and your growth. The goal with this question is identifying a match with what you want to be doing, and what the opportunity represents. Without open, transparent communication, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine if this match will exist.





## WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

It is obviously much easier to discuss your strengths than your weaknesses, but a potential employer will want to see evidence of self-awareness. Be honest in both parts of your answer but try and put a positive spin on your weakness and show that it is only one small part of your overall skill set. For each strength, choose something you can prove and that is relevant to the role, whilst for your weaknesses use an example that highlights your ability to recognise and overcome the downfall.

### TR TIP

You should always be confident talking about your accomplishments; people tend to shy away from doing so but a lot of the reason someone will want to hire you is because of what you've done and achieved.

## WHERE HAVE YOU FAILED? WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM IT?

It is obviously much easier to discuss your strengths than your weaknesses, but a potential employer will want to see evidence of self-awareness. Be honest in both parts of your answer but try and put a positive spin on your weakness and show that it is only one small part of your overall skill set. For each strength, choose something you can prove and that is relevant to the role, whilst for your weaknesses use an example that highlights your ability to recognise and overcome the downfall.







## 7. ASK YOUR QUESTIONS



As mentioned, you should always prepare some questions before the interview; don't underestimate what asking questions could say about you as a candidate as preparing some will definitely demonstrate to the interviewer that you are serious about the job.

In our experience, it is the people who ask lots of insightful questions who leave a better impression on their interviewers and who are therefore much more likely to land the job that they want. You should see question asking as a technique to get buy-in as much as it is for information gathering.

On that note, remember that an interview is a two-way street and an opportunity for you to decide if you really do want this job. You work in a candidate and skills short industry, and you have the luxury of being able to take the time to ensure that a role you choose is right for you and your career. Use this as a chance to clarify anything you might have come across during your research, or that might not have been made clear throughout the interview process.



Areas to explore could be:

- What is your vision for the role?
- What is your personal vision for the company?
- What skills/qualities do they feel are required to be successful for this role?
- What training and development opportunities exist?
- What are the company's mid and long-term growth plans
- Where do they envision this role being in 18 months time?
- What makes this company different to their competitors, or makes them stand out in the market?
- What does the team currently look like and how do they see it growing in the future?





Also, don't feel like you have to save all your questions for the end; if you have questions throughout the interview then don't be afraid to raise them then and there! Don't just let the interview take its course without being active in it – you're going to have to decide if you want to job if you do well, so you need to ask what you want and need to know in order to help make this decision.

## TR TIP:

Don't just feel like you have to ask questions about the role; this is your opportunity to really get to know the company and the people working there. Focus on things like why the interviewer is still there and what they think is the best thing about being there, not just what the role can offer you individually.



## TR TIP:

Ask if they have any reservations about you. It may seem counter-intuitive but giving the interviewer an opportunity to voice concerns actually presents you will the chance to address them and put their mind at ease.







## 8. THE FOLLOW UP



At the end of the interview, find out what the next steps are and when you can expect to hear back on the outcome. Doing so will not only give you peace of mind but will also show your interviewers that you are interested in the process and the role. Always do this even if you are not sold on the role. Once everything has been wrapped up, be sure to thank them for taking the time to meet with you and tell them that look forward to hearing from them soon – again, it sounds obvious, but common courtesy can go a long way and can sometimes be forgotten.



Once finished, write down your impressions; taking this moment to reflect will help you to digest the interview and settle your feelings on how it went, and how you feel about the job. If you've been working with a recruitment consultant now is a good time to give them and call and a run-down of how the interview went, as well as any questions that you might have unresolved.

Finally, take some time – whether immediately or within 24 hours – to email your interviewers and thank them for their time. Gratitude is a powerful tool and will make you memorable and attractive to your potential employers. The more than an employer feels that you genuinely want an opportunity, the more likely they are to decide to go with you and offer the job. Especially when there are multiple candidates in the process, enthusiasm can make all the difference.

## TECH TIP:

Download the Grammarly plug in for Chrome to ensure that your email reads perfectly before pressing send).







## 9. DON'T BE A GHOST



One of the most important thing to remember whenever you interview is that your personal brand matters. Even if you decide that an opportunity or a business is not right for you right now, it might be right for you in the future. How you present yourself during an interview process is about more than just turning up and answering questions correctly; it is about how you communicate with a business during a process. Or rather, how you might fail to do so.

We call it ghosting – when a candidate fails to engage with a business or a recruiter at some point in the interview process. Rather than politely declining an opportunity or expressing their desire not to continue in the process, candidates go quiet and fail to confirm interviews or to even show up. You might think it's harmless; if you don't want a job why should you waste your valuable time letting people know? But the truth of it is that you're only doing yourself damage in these situations. 6 months or 6 years down the line there may be a dream opportunity with that same business, and chances are that they won't give you a chance – no matter how in-demand your skill set is. Just as candidates will often refuse to apply with a business with whom they have previously had a negative experience, the same is true for organisations agreeing to interview candidates.



Working in such niche technology sectors only amplifies the importance of maintaining your personal brand. When there are only a handful of highly-qualified candidates working in a space, your reputation will precede you.

So, if you decide at any point in a process that an opportunity isn't right, don't be a ghost because it will more likely than not come back to haunt you.

## Conclusion

In today's skills short market, you are most likely going to be entering any interview with the upper hand. However, when you find a role that you really want, being certain that you can smash the interview is always reassuring.

Following these 9 easy steps will ensure that you are setting yourself up for success each and every time you choose to investigate a role and will help you to smash the interview for the job that you really care about landing.

