



## Interview success

### Preparing for an interview

Not every application that you send will result in an interview, but when one does - you need to apply the same degree of thought, preparation and research for the interview as you did for the application.

You may take a notebook and pen with you to the interview - check first that the interviewer is happy for you to ask questions and note down points you may otherwise forget during the course of the interview.

### What to wear

This does not have to be a problem. Many organisations in the field of childcare, particularly smaller organisations, will not expect you to wear a formal suit to the interview. You should dress comfortably and smartly and feel confident in what you are wearing.

If you have taken a lot of care and attention with the preparation of your CV and covering letter, which is the first impression that you will make on a prospective employer, put a similar amount of effort into ensuring that the interview, your first face-to-face meeting, goes as well.

### Check out your route

Make sure you know exactly where the interview will be held and how to get there. Leave plenty of time for your journey. If you are at all unsure about getting there, make a practice journey beforehand if possible. Remember, public transport can be unreliable and you should always aim to arrive with spare time.

Keep the phone number of your interviewer or their admin person to hand and make sure your mobile phone is charged and you have credit. If you are going to be late, you must phone ahead and give a reason and expected arrival time. It is not good to arrive late but if you do – apologize immediately to your interviewer and thank them for still giving you an interview.

### Attending the interview

When you first enter the interview room, be aware of how many people are in the room and where they are seated. Make brief eye contact with each of the people in the room, to let them know that you are acknowledging their presence in the room, and their role in the interview. You will want to make a good impression on all of them.

You may feel nervous in the interview, but interviewers may also be nervous. Unless someone from human resources is interviewing you - the chances are that the person interviewing you



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does this as part, but not a major part of their job. A good interviewer will ask you a simple question, perhaps about the weather or your journey, to put both you and themselves at ease. Have a response ready and take the opportunity to relax and get ready for answering their questions.

### Answering questions

Begin by listening to the questions and take your time to respond. Try to understand what the interviewer is asking of you. If you don't understand the question, ask the interviewer to explain or ask them if your interpretation of the question is correct.

Take care to speak clearly. When you are nervous – it's easy to speak too quietly, too fast or too much. It is acceptable to pause for thought after a difficult question. You should avoid yes and no answers - the interviewer wants to know detail about your skills and experience and not simply that you have them.

If you are asked long questions with many parts, do not be afraid of breaking them down individually answering each in turn. You may also answer some parts of a long question and forget the next part. This is quite common. Just ask the interviewer to repeat the next part of the question for you.

If there are several people interviewing you, they will often ask questions in order. Direct your answer mainly to the person who has asked you the question but maintain eye contact with everyone else in the room by glancing at them from time to time as you answer.

### Typical interview questions

You will be asked some general questions. There are questions that will tell the interviewers more about you as a person, and your approach to work and the job that you do.

Examples of these might be:

- What experience do you have of working with children?
- What qualifications or training do you have?
- Why have you chosen to apply for this job?
- What do you know about this organisation?
- Why have you chosen to apply to this organisation?
- What do you understand by Equal Opportunities?
- What are your ambitions?



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- What do you hope to be doing five years from now?
- What skills do you think are needed for this position?
- How do you prioritise your workload?
- Give an example of how you work well as part of a team?

## Other interview techniques

In addition to the interview and the questions, you may be asked to undertake some other exercises that will give the interviewers more information about the way that you work.

## Psychometric testing

This is a multiple-choice test, and you may be asked to undertake more than one. Depending upon the test that you are asked to undertake, the employer could be assessing your verbal reasoning skills, by asking you to compare two statements.

## Presentation

You may be asked to address a particular question or problem by writing and preparing a presentation. You will often be able to select which form of audiovisual equipment to use. This could be a Powerpoint presentation, an overhead projector or slides and a screen.

## Written response

Instead of making a formal presentation, you may be asked to prepare a written response from a question that has been sent to you with the application form. You may then be asked to talk through your response at the interview or to leave your response with the interviewers.

## Multiple-choice questions

If your applying for a job that has a number of technical elements to it, or where the interviewers want to quickly identify your level of knowledge and skills - you may be asked to complete a multiple-choice test.



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### Ending the interview

At the end of the interview you will usually be asked if you have any questions. Don't panic, the interviewer only wants to ensure that you have all the information you need to help you decide whether or not you want the job. It's best not to ask about the salary, holidays, or perks at this stage. You may ask about 'safe' subjects include training, opportunities for personal development, supervision, appraisals, promotion prospects and more information about any aspect of the job you would like to discuss further. Some organisations are quite happy to discuss salary but not as the first question. The information you received before the interview is likely to have covered holidays and salaries.

When you leave the interview you may want to shake hands if it feels appropriate. Don't forget to thank the interviewer for their time.

### After the interview

After any type of interview you should review your performance and consider any improvements/adjustments you could make.

### Accepting the job

It is a great feeling to receive a phone call or a letter offering you a job you have been working hard to get. Often you will receive a phone call within a couple of days of the interview, followed up by a letter. This letter should include the formal offer of the post, details of salary, the starting date and other conditions of employment. If you are happy with this information, you need to accept the job offer in writing.

Your offer may well depend on satisfactory medical examination and references. If you are working with children you will also require a criminal records bureau check (CRB).

### If you are unsuccessful

If you are not offered the job after an interview - try not to let it affect your optimism and enthusiasm. The fact that you got an interview is an achievement as there is much competition and every interview you have is good practice.

Many organisations now offer you the opportunity to call and discuss your interview and to receive 'feedback' as to why you were not successful. This feedback can help you to appraise your skills and evaluate your experience, ready for the next time.

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