

Show your spark at interview

You've done well to secure an interview, but should use this opportunity to your best advantage. Interviews allow both you and the potential employer to meet in person, discuss the job and assess your suitability for it.

You're likely to have competition for the role, so bring the best of yourself on the day to stand out. Even if you are only passively looking it's important that you do a great job as you never know what other opportunities might arise in the future. Here are our tips:

1. Act like a Scout: be prepared!

While it may not seem like rocket science you'd be surprised how often people aren't prepared for interviews, and how often this opens opportunities for those who are.

Being professional and prepared is the best way to shine. Arrive on time, look professional and pay attention to your body language. Relax, be confident in your preparation and most of all, be yourself.

Interviews can take a number of formats. Try to remain flexible if the process changes through different stages of interview or if it varies from role to role.

2. It pays to do your research

It's important to have a solid background of the company you are interviewing for and the role itself. An hour or so invested will show initiative, enthusiasm and a genuine interest in them as a company as well as the role.

Some thought starters:

What are the company's core products and services?

How is the company perceived in the market place?

Who are its competitors and what makes them different?

What challenges/opportunities is the industry currently facing?

What their current priorities are: major projects, new offerings, share floats etc.

Who will be interviewing you and what can you find out about them (eg try LinkedIn)

Use this background information to your advantage by preparing examples of similar experience or tasks. As you research also think of relevant questions that will help you evaluate the role and company match against your goals.

Job Interview Guide

Handy tips from Spark Recruitment™



3. Bring your resume to life

Interviews allow you to really bring your resume to life, giving potential employers a better insight into your experience, personality, attitudes and communication skills.

Practical examples are a great way of highlighting your skills and demonstrating how they suit the role and the company. Structure your answers using the STAR approach: STAR = Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Some thought starters:

How will you describe your employment history?

How can you best explain your career moves?

What positive things can you say about your previous roles and the companies you have worked for?

How can you represent negative experiences in a positive light?

4. Be confident. Be you

You are interviewed because the company wants to hire somebody, has reviewed your resume and believes your background/experience may be suitable to the position.

Have confidence in yourself and your preparation, be open and honest, and most of all answer the questions constructively with solid examples.

- **Be prepared but flexible:** think about likely questions and your responses to them. Avoid learning answers by heart so that you can customise responses to specific questions
- **Listen carefully** to the questions and make sure you have understood them properly. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat the question
- **Think before you speak.** Don't rush your answers or speak to fill in silence
- **Be concise,** but avoid one-word answers
- **Speak clearly and confidently.** Try and maintain a comfortable level of eye contact throughout
- Show **enthusiasm** for the role and make sure you ask your questions
- Use your **research** effectively and in the right context, e.g. in small-talk or in your questions at the end. Avoid over-using research as this can put interviewers off
- Close the interview with a **handshake** and a genuine thank you; make a positive last impression

5. Understand different styles of job interview

Common types of interview

Pre-screening phone interviews briefly assess technical competencies and communication skills prior to a face-to-face meeting. Before participating in a phone interview, make sure you are in a quiet location with good reception and that your mobile is charged (or use a landline).

Panel interview, where you are interviewed by a group of people at the same time. Each representative in the panel may focus on different areas. After the interview the panel will discuss the interview and their thoughts on your suitability for the role.

Behavioural interview, this will focus on what you have done in the past and how you react in different situations, asking you to backup statements with examples of how you performed in each circumstance.

Technical interview, this will focus on your technical ability, what your skills are and how you would go about doing specific tasks. This may include written or verbal technical test

'Unstructured' Interviews cover technical skills, some behavioural questions in a more informal, almost unstructured style. They typically give a strong insight into the interviewer and whilst harder to prepare for, they are often enjoyable and highly interactive.

6. Follow Spark's interview checklist

- **Confirm time and location.** Plan how to get there, where to park and allow extra time
- Don't be afraid to ask your Spark Candidate Manager **background questions** about the company.
- **Arrive on time** and act with purpose around the office, you never know who might be looking out for you.
- **Turn off your mobile** phone on entering the building.
- Dress **professionally**.
- Ensure you have **fresh breath**, avoid smoking before the interview.
- Know the correct **pronunciation** of the interviewer/s names and their titles.
- Use a **folder** to bring anything you need:
 - A copy of your resume as they may refer to it in questions
 - A copy of the position description
 - Note paper and pen to take notes
 - Prepared Questions/ Any research notes
- Pay attention to your **body language**: smile, look them in the eye, wait for them to offer you a seat before you sit down, don't fidget.

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7. Plan for common interview questions

Here are some common interview questions that are important to think about as you prepare. General interview questions may relate to your professional or personal life. You

Common interview questions

Why are you interested in this particular role / company?
What do you know about the organisation?
What do you really want to do in your next career move?
What style of management gets the best from you?
What is the culture you have most enjoyed working in and why?
What have you done that shows initiative in your career? What were the results?
What do you perceive as your weaknesses? What have you done about them?
What do you see as your strengths? Why?
Where do you see yourself in five years time?
Which particular job did you enjoy the most?
Why did you choose your particular career?
Why did you change roles when you did? What did you learn from the changes?
Tell me about a time when you lead a project/team and what were the results
Tell me about a difficult task or problem you have faced and how you overcame it?
Tell me about a time when you met a difficult deadline and how you managed it?

should also prepare for technical questions.

Your Spark™ strengths profiler tool will help you to identify your professional strengths and shine at interview. It's free and takes just 5 minutes to [get your unique profile >](#)

8. Understand what interviewers are assessing

Interviewers will build an overall impression of you based on a number of different factors:

- Communication skills
- Personal presentation
- Technical ability and experience
- Initiative
- Personality and cultural fit
- Motivation and drive
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Enthusiasm and interest in the company and the role
- Other specific values, beliefs and interests e.g. work-life balance, corporate social responsibility etc.

**For more career advice visit Spark's [website](#) or [contact](#) us.
Good luck with the interview!**