

Interview Guidance

Well done! You've been shortlisted for interview. Now you need to prepare well to ensure that you make the most of this opportunity. Interviews can make even the most confident of people nervous but there a number of things you can do to help make the best impression on the day.

Preparation, preparation, preparation

Interviews are a lot less stressful if you have prepared well beforehand. Whilst you will never know what they are going to ask you, you can do a number of things before the interview to take out (some of) the stress of the day:

Plan your journey. If travelling by public transport, check timetables and routes. Make sure you are aware of any planned engineering works or industrial action which may delay your journey. If you are driving, make sure you are confident about your route, where the traffic hot spots might be and where you are going to park (don't forget to take change with you if you need to pay). Give yourself plenty of extra time to get to your destination. Better to be far too early than even a little bit late!

What are you going to wear? Planning your outfit before the day of your interview will help you to avoid unnecessary stress (think missing or unwashed items, previously unnoticed stains or rips, trousers or skirts that no longer fit!). If you need to buy something new and money is tight, visit your local charity shops or borrow from a friend. Employers are looking for smart and well presented candidates, not for expensive outfits and designer labels. The main thing is that clothes are clean, ironed, fit well and are appropriate for a business setting. Finally, don't forget to have clean, scuff-free shoes.

Research the organisation. You will have done this when making your application for the role but now is your chance to refresh your memory and to really read up on what the organisation does. As a minimum you should thoroughly review the company website, but you could also search for any relevant news articles and press releases. You may also want to research the wider industry the company operates in as this can give you information about what is currently influencing the sector. As you do your research, make a note of any questions you may have as these will be useful later.

Review your CV or application. Make sure you are very familiar with your own CV and/or application form. Take a copy of it with you into the interview as you may be asked questions on it.

Re-read the job description. Thoroughly review any information you have about the role, including the original advert, the job description and person specification. Look at the key skills and experience needed for the role and think of examples of how you have demonstrated those skills and experience. Write down several examples to remind yourself at the interview (just bullet points will do as you may be too nervous to read much on the day).

Think of some questions to ask. Asking relevant questions at the end of an interview will show that you are interested in both the job and the organisation. Avoid questions about the terms and conditions (such as the hours and pay). Good questions to ask can include finding out about the team you will be working with, and what the key priorities are for the role. If there is anything in the job description that you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask.

Practice answering questions. Without psychic abilities you will never know what an interviewer is planning to ask you. However, you can make an informed guess and do some research. For example, if the role requires someone with good customer service skills, think about examples of when you have demonstrated those skills. There are standard interview questions which frequently get used ('Tell me about yourself', 'Why have you applied for this role?', 'Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?'). A quick search on the internet will bring up common interview questions and guidance on how to answer. Don't copy someone else's answer but use it as a way to get you thinking about your own experience and skills.

On the day...

Remember your paperwork. An interview is not a memory test. Therefore, it is absolutely ok to take paperwork (a copy of your CV or application form) and a notebook (containing your examples and questions) into the interview with you and to use these as a prompt if your mind goes blank.

Positive body language. Offer the interviewers a firm handshake. Smile and maintain eye contact. Remember to sit up straight and do not cross your arms (it looks defensive). Nervous fiddling (biting nails, a tapping foot etc) will be distracting so try not to do this.

Manage your nerves. It's easy to get caught up in feeling nervous but try to remember the basic point of the interview is for the employer to assess if you have the right skills and experience for the role, but equally for you to find out more about the role and the organisation and whether you would like to work there. A good employer will not try to intimidate or trick you, but will simply want to get the best out of you on the day.

Switch your phone off (or set it to silent). There is nothing more irritating than being interrupted by a candidate's phone ringing. However, if you forget and it does ring, simply reject the call and apologise for the interruption. Don't be tempted to answer the call.

Listen to the questions. An important element of good communication is listening. Listen carefully to the questions they ask you. If you are asked something which you haven't prepared for don't try to shoe-horn in an answer you prepared for something else. If you need the interviewer to repeat or explain the question don't be afraid to ask. If your mind goes completely blank, refer to your notes. If that still doesn't help, ask the interviewer if you can come back to that question later.

Don't be modest. Modesty may be a virtue but it doesn't work well in interviews. This may be your only chance to show the interviewers why you would make a great employee. Whilst you should always be honest (a good interviewer will be able to tell if you are lying), it's important to be positive and 'sell' yourself. Believe in yourself and the interview panel will follow your lead. Positivity is infectious!

Leave on a positive

At the end of the interview it is good practice to thank the interviewers for their time. If you are want to be offered the job then let them know how keen you are and that you are looking forward to hearing from them. Even if you don't think that the role is right for you, then still remain positive and professional.

And finally.....

With these hints and tips there is a high probability of you doing well at interview but if you don't get offered the job, don't let rejection get you down. Take each interview as a learning experience and ask for feedback whenever you can. Being good at interviews does take some practice and it is unusual to be offered the first thing you apply for.

Questions and feedback

Please do contact our Professional Development Manager if you have any questions about applying for jobs within the Parking sector. Has this guide helped you to get a job within parking? If so, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at sarah.f@britishparking.co.uk