

Preparing for your interview

Useful tips for preparing and getting through the interview process

Research the organisation that you are applying to;

- Type of provision – pre school/day nursery/out of school club
- Committee run
- Size
- Location

This can be done by asking around in the local community, requesting an information/parents pack to help you prepare or see if they have a website.

Be prepared in advance for the interview.

Ensure you accurately make a note of the date, time and location of the interview. Allow plenty of time to get there and plan your route carefully, you may even do a 'dummy run'.

If you have a disability, contact the employer beforehand to make necessary arrangements.

Prepare everything you are asked to take such as:

- Copies of certificates
- References
- Presentation
- Examples of work you have done
- Your letter inviting you to interview to show if necessary.

First appearances can be very important so make sure you dress in a smart manner and are alert and fresh for the day. Have an early night the night before and avoid smoking before the interview.

Prepare some answers in advance to common questions such as:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your areas for development?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why did you apply for this job?
- What skills do you think you can bring to this role?
- Tell us about yourself
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What did you do in your last job? What responsibilities did you have?
- Be prepared to answer questions about your CV – any gaps in employment, voluntary work, hobbies etc.
- Where would you like to be in 5 years time?

Be prepared on the day of the interview.

Be punctual – not too early or not too late. Lateness can be considered as rude and makes you look disorganised and a bad time keeper. Being too early may annoy the interviewers who may feel under pressure and unprepared for your arrival. A good time is 10 minutes before your interview time. Don't rush in right on the time slot as you may be flustered and not well prepared.

Be polite and professional to everyone you meet at the organisation as you don't know who is who. The young apprentice answering the door maybe the be owner's daughter or the cook may be the owner—you never know!!

Remember the interviewers are likely to be just as nervous as you as recruiting staff is a very expensive, time consuming and important process so there is a lot of pressure on them to recruit the right staff. It is likely that there will be more than one person interviewing you as it is good practice to get more than one opinion from interviews. Again this is a good thing and you should not let this intimidate you.

During the interview remember to stay as relaxed as possible. Don't fidget, holding your hands together on your knee can help. Speak slowly and clearly. Remember the questions aren't there to catch you out or embarrass you; they are simply there to find out about what you know and who the best person for the job is. An interview is as much for your benefit as it is for the employer as you may decide the job isn't right for you.

Shake hands with the interviewers on arriving into the room and maintain eye contact during the interview. Try and smile and be yourself as much as possible—that's what the interviewers are wanting.

Where possible do not just give 'yes' and 'no' answers, but elaborate and explain your answers thoroughly, while remaining focused. If you don't know the answer to any of the questions, don't lie, either ask for clarification or say that you can't answer the question.

Don't at any point be negative about your previous employer or any other past experience. Employers much prefer positive people who are keen to develop and move on.

Plan some questions yourself in advance so when they ask if you have any questions you are prepared. This shows you are interested in the company and the job and that you have prepared.

Increasingly you are likely to be asked to complete an activity as well as the interview as this gives a deeper insight into your skills and abilities. This could be a presentation or a piece of work which they will observe. Welcome this as something positive as it is a good method of recruitment and allows you to demonstrate your skills in another way as well as the interview situation.

Be prepared. Be yourself!