



Interviewing Skills

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What is the purpose of an interview?

Whether you have applied for a Teaching Assistant or teaching post in a school or for an Initial Teacher Training course, the purpose of the interview is for the employer or course provider to get to know you better and find out more details about the experience and skills that you outlined in your application, personal statement and/or CV. This is your opportunity to show the employer your knowledge, abilities and personality in order to convince them that you are the best person for the job. You should not assume that everyone interviewing you has thoroughly read through or remembers your whole application in detail, so throughout the interview you should provide examples from your experience to support your answers, even if this means repeating information that you included in your application or CV. Finally, the interview is also your chance to find out whether the job and organisation (or course provider) are right for you.

Before the interview

It is essential to begin preparing for the interview at least a few days beforehand.

Research the school/university/course you are applying to and be able to talk about it in the interview. Employers and course leaders will be impressed that you have taken initiative and you may even be asked in interview why you have chosen that particular school or course. Start by visiting the school or university website, read through the Ofsted report for schools at www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report and for courses visit a university or department Open Day.

Find out about the job.

- Carefully read both the job description and person specification.

- If you are applying for a training course, think about the job you will be training to do.
- Make notes of your relevant experience and skills and make a list of examples that illustrate your suitability for the job.
- Make a list of 8-10 questions that you might be asked during the interview. For a list of questions that might be asked in an interview with a school or ITT provider see www.kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/ivteaching.htm.
- Prepare the answers to the questions on paper so that when you are asked those questions in the interview you will have an answer ready and be able to speak with confidence. It is expected that you will repeat examples or other information that you included in your CV, application or personal statement.
- Speak in the first person and keep your answers concise rather than telling a story.
- Also prepare a few questions about the course or job that you can ask the interviewer in order to show that you are interested, proactive and well-prepared.
- Ask someone to conduct a practice interview so that you can practice saying the answers out loud. If you have an adviser, ask them if there is somewhere you can go to get interview practice. Also try asking your Local Authority if they know of any interviewing skills training or practice opportunities available in your local area.

Be aware of current issues in the Education Sector:

- Read the National Curriculum for your subject area and key stages at:
www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum
- Learn about changes within the education sector at www.education.gov.uk/schools
- Keep up-to-date on recent news about education. Some places to look include the Times Education Supplement (published every Friday and available in local newsagents or sign up to receive their e-newsletter at www.tes.co.uk) or the BBC at:
www.bbc.co.uk/news/education
- Be able to speak about Equal Opportunities and Inclusion in schools. Start by visiting:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport

- There is a wealth of information on the National Curriculum, Department for Education and other websites listed at the bottom of this information sheet. Some topics to read up on include academies and free schools, assessment and accreditation (e.g. GCSEs, AS / A levels, Assessment for Learning), teaching and learning, behaviour management, functional skills, regulation and inspection of schools by Ofsted to name just a few.

Make a good first impression:

- Always plan your route well before your interview and leave early to avoid arriving late.
- Have the phone number for the school/university department with you so that if there is an emergency and cannot avoid being late, always ring the office to inform them how late you think you will be.
- Wear smart clothes that you feel comfortable in and do not wear too much jewellery or make-up. Do not wear shorts, short skirts or low-cut tops.
- Always turn your mobile phone off.
- Think about body language. Do not cross your arms, make regular eye contact and remember to smile.

Know what to take with you:

It is a good idea to ring the school or university at least a few days before your interview to find out whether you need to bring anything with you and to ask what the format will be. If you are asked to prepare a presentation or lesson, ask what resources and equipment you will be provided with so that you know what to prepare and whether you need to take any other materials. Always be sure to bring:

- Pen and paper.
- Any qualification certificates as well as the UK NARIC certificate of comparability if you have one.
- Proof of identification.

During the interview

Interview structure

Interviews in the Education sector might involve a one-to-one or panel interview, a group interview, an examination to test essential skills or subject knowledge, and/or an example lesson.

One to one or panel interviews

Every interview will include a chance for the interviewer or panel of interviewers to speak to you individually. During this part of the interview you will:

- be told about the school, job or course
- be asked questions to decide your suitability for the job in terms of your abilities, character and motivation
- have the chance to ask questions about the job, organisation or course
- be told what to expect next and when you will find out the outcome of the interview

Group interviews

In a group interview you will be interviewed alongside other applicants and you may be asked to have a discussion, complete a task or prepare a presentation as a group. You will be assessed on your ability to interact and communicate well with others.

Interviewers will be looking out for things like:

- Listening skills
- How you respond to others
- How assertive you are
- What sort of personality you have

Presentation

You could be asked to prepare a short presentation:

- Find out before the interview what equipment you will have available (e.g. computer, projector, flipchart, whiteboard) so that you know what format you can use.
- Practice your presentation before the interview in front of a friend or adviser and be sure to stick to the allotted time.

Sample lesson

You might also need to prepare part of a lesson or if you are applying for a teaching position, you might be asked to go into a classroom and take over teaching for some or all of a lesson.

- Have several ideas prepared for each part of the lesson (intro/starter, main activities, conclusion/plenary).
- Begin by establishing control over the classroom. One technique for asserting your authority is to assign seating arrangements at the start of the class. For more ideas, have a look at videos available online at www.teachersmedia.co.uk.
- Always plan your introduction carefully and focus on the objectives of the lesson, writing them up on the whiteboard or flipchart.
- Have appropriate resources prepared, including a back up if you are using ICT.
- Make sure there are a variety of tasks planned (e.g. group / pair work, teacher led / discussion, reading / writing).
- Think carefully about what your learning outcomes are and about how you will assess the students' understanding throughout the lesson. Build in questioning, self / peer assessment or presentations.
- Differentiate the tasks in case it is a mixed ability class by planning different tasks or outcomes for the different ability levels within the class; have extension work ready for gifted students in case they finish quickly.
- When questioning, try to get as many students to answer as possible. Don't just get the keen ones to answer. They will be looking for you to ensure the whole class is engaged in the lesson.

Written Tests

You might be asked to complete a written test which might cover:

- Your subject knowledge
- English language and literacy

- Numeracy / maths
- Computer (ICT) skills.

After the interview

After the interview, although the most difficult part is over, there is still some work to be done.

- Most interviewers will tell you when you can expect to hear from them about the outcome of the interview so you should not contact the school or course provider before the date indicated.
- If after this time period you have not had feedback, then get in touch, preferably by phone, to ask for information on the status of your application.
- If you have been successful, then a letter of offer will be sent to you in the post with instructions on what to do next.
- If you are unsuccessful, then it is important to ask for feedback so that you have a full understanding of why the decision was made. Each time you have an interview that is not successful you have the opportunity to gain valuable feedback that you can use to improve your interviewing technique and increase your chances of succeeding at future interviews.

Initial Teacher Training interviews

The above guidance on general interviewing techniques also applies to Initial Teacher Training (ITT) interviews. Here are a few additional things to know about ITT interviews:

- During an ITT interview the course provider will be looking for evidence to show that you have the qualities necessary for teaching. When planning for your interview, think about the characteristics of a good teacher and make sure to have examples ready to prove that you have these qualities.
- Initial Teacher Training applicants are expected to already have a good understanding of their subject area so be prepared to speak about your subject and make sure to read the part of the National Curriculum relating to your area.
- ITT interviews will very often include several parts such as a panel interview, group interview, presentation or sample lesson AND written test. You might be tested on your subject knowledge during any or all

of these stages of the interview.

- If you have been asked to bring proof of any GCSE equivalent qualifications and you arrive without these, in many cases you will be refused an interview.

Further information

BBC Bite Size www.bbc.co.uk/schools/bitesize

Exercises and practice exams for curriculum subjects provide a useful tool for determining the level of knowledge you require in teaching different key stages.

BBC Education Section www.bbc.co.uk/news/education

The Department for Education www.education.gov.uk

The government department for education website includes information about the education sector and relevant government policies.

National Curriculum

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum Read the National Curriculum online.

Ofsted www.ofsted.gov.uk

To view a school's latest Ofsted report go to www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report where you can search for reports by the name of the location and the school. On the results page click on the school name then on the PDF under 'Latest reports' and click on the name of the file to view it.

Prospects www.prospects.ac.uk/interview_tips.htm. An excellent resource for further advice on general interview skills.

Teachers Media www.teachersmedia.co.uk

Watch videos of teachers in the classroom or covering whole-school

issues.

Times Education Supplement www.tes.co.uk

Read about issues in education, search job ads and look at the forums to hear teachers' views on a wide variety of subjects concerning teachers.

University of Kent www.kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/ivteaching.htm

Find a comprehensive list of interview questions that might be asked in Initial Teacher Training or teaching job interviews.