

SESSION FOUR

CVs, Contacts, and Interviewing

Flip Charts

1.

AGENDA

Welcome and Sharing
CV Workshop: Review Sample CV
Introduction to Making Phone Contact
Interviewing: 'Thinking Like an Employer'
and 'Controlling the Direction'
Debrief

3.

QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

What key abilities and personality traits are needed?

Questions that will show these traits and abilities.

Observations on aspects of behaviour and appearance that reveal these

2a.

MOST DIFFICULT THINGS ABOUT ASKING FOR AN INTERVIEW

4.

THE MAIN IDEAS OR POINTS THAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERING "CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF?"

2b.

WAYS OF OVERCOMING THESE DIFFICULTIES

5.

SESSION FOUR DEBRIEF WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DIDN'T

HAND-OUTS FOR WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES and ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HAND-OUTS

SESSION FOUR: Hand-outs for Workshop Activities

4-1a Sample CV: Teresa Marks

4-1b Revised CV: Teresa Marks

4-2 Script: Asking for an Informational Interview

4-3 Script: Asking for a Job Interview

4-4 Arranging an Interview: Speaking with the Gatekeeper

4-5 Arranging an Interview: Speaking with a Potential Employer

4-6 Getting an Informational Interview

SESSION FOUR: Additional Information Hand-outs

4DRESS Dressing for the Job Hunt

4TELLME Tell Me About Yourself

4APP Applications

4APP2 Two Sample Job Application Forms

DIALOGUE	INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHICS	HAND-OUTS AND NOTES
<p>CV Workshop: Today, we are going to work together on a sample CV using the wonderful guidelines that you generated yesterday. What we're going to do in just a moment is to break into groups of 2-3 and take about 20 minutes to hold an idea-sharing session to critique a sample CV.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">II. CV WORKSHOP</p> <p>A. CV Reviews</p> <p>A. Present: Ask: "Who is working on using a CV in their job search?"</p> <p>B. Practice: Participant groups of 2-3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idea-sharing session to critique a sample CV. Distribute "Sample CV: Teresa Marks" Trainer may want to provide the groups with flip charts and markers to take note of their ideas. <p>C. Debrief: "What was effective / not effective with this sample CV?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainer may choose to debrief by section of the CV <p>D. Summary.</p>	<p>20-30 Minutes</p> <p>Break into groups of 2-3</p> <p>HANDOUT 4-1a: "Sample CV: Teresa Marks"</p> <p>HANDOUT 4-1b: Improved "Sample CV- Teresa Marks"</p>

DIALOGUE	INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHICS	HAND-OUTS AND NOTES
<p>PHONE CONTACT: So far this week, we have practised using many of the building blocks that contribute to a successful interview. We know how to present our skills in the best light, how to handle difficult questions, how to make contacts that get us an interview, and how to make our CV serve as effective calling cards.</p> <p>Today we're going to first focus on making direct phone contact with the employer and then on the interview itself.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">III. DIRECT PHONE CONTACT</p> <p>A. Introduction to Making Phone Contact</p> <p>1. Introduction:</p> <p>“Experts point out that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some recruitment situations, if an employer really likes an applicant, then all the prior steps of filling out applications and sending CVs become just formalities. • So then it is wise to try to contact the employer or manager directly as the first step, rather than the last step.” • However, some recruitment situations have to follow a set process, where CVs are sifted and a short-list is drawn up for the recruitment manager. <p>2. Present: Getting Past the Gatekeeper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer demonstrates several ways of asking receptionist for manager/supervisor. <p>“I’m doing some research on the field of _____.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“I want to speak to him/her about career opportunities in _____.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“I have a matter of personal interest to speak to him/her about.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer asks: “How did that sound?” • Trainers will demonstrate two sketches: ‘Asking for an Informational Interview’ and ‘Asking for a Job Interview’ 	<p>10-15 Minutes</p>

Informational Interview:

Another hurdle you might want to prepare for is when you are trying to get an interview even if the person says the company has no immediate openings.

- Why would you want an interview even if there are no openings?
- What kinds of things might you say in this case?

Possible answer: "I'd be interested in speaking with you about future openings, and to get your advice on a career in this field."

B. Asking for an Informational Interview

- A. Good morning, _____. My name is _____ and I was referred to you by Alice Carter in the Purchasing Department. I have been researching the type and range of jobs available in the field of materials handling as part of a job skills workshop. I wondered if I could make an appointment to come and talk with you about how materials handling works at Smiths Industries.
- E. I'm not sure if we have any immediate openings, if that's what you're looking for.
- A. I understand that, _____, but I'm really interested in finding out things like the scope of the job, its importance in the general scheme of things, how it works in different types of companies, and the special challenges presented by the products you handle. The information I want just isn't available in books or the Internet. What I really need is to speak with someone with your expertise in the materials-handling industry.
- E. Well, I don't know if I'm really an expert, but I could tell you how the job works at Smiths Industries.
- A. I'd really appreciate it if you would, _____. Could you tell me a good time to come and talk with you?
- E. How long would it take?
- A. About half an hour depending on how much information you have to share, but this is completely at your convenience. Are you available any time this week?
- E. Fridays are fairly slow here. How about Friday at 1pm?
- A. Friday would be fine. Shall I come to your office?
- E. Yes. The address is _____.
- A. Thank you, _____. I look forward to Friday.
- Trainer asks: "What do you think of this conversation?"

JOB

INTERVIEW:

We're going to illustrate one more type of phone contact before we give you a chance to practice. In this one our applicant is asking for a job interview.

C. Asking for a Job Interview

- A. Good morning, _____. My name is _____ and I was referred to you by Alice Carter in the Finance Department. Do you have a moment?
- E. Yes.
- A. I understand you have an opening coming up for a good materials handler so I wanted to introduce myself to make sure my name would be considered when you make your decision.
- E. My personal assistant is the one who takes the applications for me. Why don't you fill one out and send it to back to us?
- A. Of course, I'll be happy to do that but I was hoping for an opportunity to meet with you and share my qualifications.
- An application or CV can't always give a very complete picture of someone's qualifications and I believe a job is too important a thing to leave to chance.
- What I've heard about Smiths Industries has led me to believe that it's a good company to work for. I'd like the opportunity to make myself known to you and to hear more about Smiths. Is there a good time when I can meet with you? I'm an experienced shipper and a good employee with good references.
- E. (laughs) Well, you certainly seem to know what you want. I'll tell you what. I'll be in on Friday morning and if I'm free when you come in to get an application form I'll give you a few minutes.
- A. Would 9 o' clock be okay? If not, I can make myself available any time at your convenience.
- E. 9 o' clock is fine.
- A. That's Friday the 27th at 9am at your office. Right?
- E. Right.
- A. Thank you, _____. I look forward to seeing you then.
- Trainer asks: "And what were your impressions of that conversation?"

<p>Practice: Let's take some time now to try it out. Each of you has to find your own style of making these calls so you can feel comfortable with them. We're going to practice them now in groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We'll practise both of the calls we just described: one to schedule an informational interview and another to schedule a job interview. <p>We are handing out three hand-outs that can be used as scripts when you call.</p>	<p>3. Practice:</p> <p>In groups of three, participants practice asking for informational interviews and job interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant • Employer/receptionist • Observer <p>Distribute 3 hand-outs.</p> <p>Debrief: "What was it like to be the employer, applicant, and observer?"</p>	<p>30 Minutes</p> <p>Break into groups of three.</p> <p>3 HAND-OUTS:</p> <p>4-4 "Arranging an Interview: Speaking with the Gatekeeper"</p> <p>4-5 "Arranging an Interview: Speaking with a Potential Employer"</p> <p>4-6 "Getting an Informational Interview"</p>
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D. STRESS INNOCULATION

15-20 Minutes

1. Present and Post on Flip Chart:

- “What are the most difficult things about asking for an interview?”
- “What are some ways of overcoming these difficulties?”

2a.

MOST DIFFICULT THINGS ABOUT ASKING FOR
AN INTERVIEW

2b.

WAYS OF OVERCOMING THESE DIFFICULTIES

2. Practice: “Which of these ideas will you use?”

- Trainer encourages participants to vocalise their choices for overcoming difficulties by:
 - To the participant sitting next to them
- OR
- To the larger group
- OR
- To indicate on the flip chart with a check mark.

DIALOGUE	INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHICS	HAND-OUTS AND NOTES
<p>Thinking like an employer: In a moment, you are going to assume that you are employers looking for someone to fill a job.</p> <p>You will have to plan how to use the job interview to find out if the applicant would be the right person for the job.</p> <p>Your prime focus in this exercise will be to plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What <u>questions</u> to ask your applicants in order to find out about their abilities and personality traits (like dependability). • What <u>observations</u> to make, what to look for in their behaviour or appearance (things like grooming and posture). <p>Choose a recorder and spokesperson in each group.</p> <p>Debrief: Why did you decide to ask or look for that trait or ability?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You've really shown that you can think like employers and figure out what they'll be looking for when <u>you</u> go for an interview. • Do you think that <u>all</u> employers prepare as thoroughly for an interview as you have just done? 	<p>IV. INTERVIEWING PART I: THINKING LIKE AN EMPLOYER</p> <p>A. Interviewing</p> <p>1. Present: Flip Chart - Questions and Observations</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>3.QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS</p> <p>What key abilities and personality traits are needed?</p> <p>Questions that will show these traits and abilities.</p> <p>Observations on aspects of behaviour and appearance that reveal these traits and abilities.</p> </div> <p>2. Practice: Get participants into two sub-groups, each with a flip chart: Group 1 focuses on salesperson for shoe shop. Group 2 focuses on security guard for a shopping centre</p> <p>3. Debrief: Post each group's flip chart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have spokesperson read results. • Have participants give the reason why they would ask about or look for each item. 	<p>30 Minutes</p> <p>Break into two sub-groups</p>

DIALOGUE	INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHICS	HAND-OUTS AND NOTES
<p>Controlling the Direction: Many employers or interviewers are highly skilled. So you have to be well prepared when you go to an interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some employers <u>don't</u> know how to conduct a good job interview and are very nervous about it. Not every employer is as thoughtful as you have been about what to ask. <p>When this is the case, you have to know how to get your strong points across anyway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which brings us to an important question – just <u>who</u> controls the job interview? Answer: They control the questions – YOU control the answers. <p>EXAMPLES: Experience, work style, personality traits, strengths, education, concrete examples etc.</p>	<p>V. INTERVIEWING PART II: CONTROLLING THE DIRECTION</p> <p>A. Interviewing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Present: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Who controls the job interview?” What are some of the ways the applicant has control in the interview? What is an open-ended question?” <p>“Examples of open-ended questions: What are your greatest strengths? Why should I employ you? What qualifications have you got to do this job? Tell me about yourself.”</p> Practice: Participants give advice to a hypothetical friend, Pat Brown (37 years old, interviewing for middle-management position at one of the big three car manufacturers). Pat is sure that they will ask her the question – “Can you tell me about yourself?” <p>Flip Chart:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>4. THE MAIN IDEAS OR POINTS THAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN ANSWERING “CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF?”</p> <hr/> </div> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Debrief: Trainers review the participant-generated flip chart. 	<p>15-20 Minutes</p>

DIALOGUE	INSTRUCTIONS AND GRAPHICS	HAND-OUTS AND NOTES
	<p style="text-align: center;">VI. CLOSING</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present: Review day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV workshop: Review Sample CV • Making Phone Contact • Interviewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thinking Like an Employer ○ Controlling the Direction 2. Practice and Post: Participants give feedback on what did and didn't work. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>5.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SESSION FOUR DEBRIEF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DIDN'T</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px solid black;"/> </div> 3. Debrief: What was effective? What was not as effective? 4. Preview next session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell Me About Yourself • Best way to end an interview • Practice complete interview • Planning for setbacks • Closing exercise 5. Closing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go around the room and have each participant share one thing that sticks out in his/her mind about today's session. • Have a pleasant and productive day. We'll see you tomorrow. 	<p>5-15 Minutes</p>

SESSION FOUR – Hand-outs

Sample CV – Teresa Marks

Teresa Marks

10 Arkwright Street, York, YO17 9RD
0165 368 0000, teresa.marks@emailadress.co.uk

Education University of York, York, Graduated July 2014
Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy (2.1)

Experience **Joy Centre** **Ryedale**
Job title: Intern
September 2014 – June 2015 Duties: I was responsible for working with patients 3 days per week. This was a part of my educational training. I also did a seminar on adjusting in society and the changes that might result after an accident.

Park Vista **Northallerton**
Job title: Volunteer
May 2014 – August 2014 Duties: I was responsible for preparing patients for transporting, and supervising therapy. I also visited patients on a regular basis. I also worked with patients as they used diverse equipment.

University of York **York**
Job title: Student Volunteer
September 2012 – June 2014 Duties: I was responsible for giving campus tours and answering questions about the University. In my second year I was part of the selection process for the new orientation leaders for the following year.

Affiliations Students' Union Council where I held offices
British Occupational Therapists' Association

Awards Outstanding Undergraduate Award for the University of York Service Club
Dean's List

Activities University Film Club
Photographic Society

References Available on request.

Sample CV – Teresa Marks

Teresa Marks

10 Arkwright Street, York, YO17 9RD
0165 368 0000, teresa.marks@emailaddress.co.uk

Career Objective	An Occupational Therapist position in a nursing home and/or hospital unit.	
Education	University of York, York, Graduated July 2014 Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy (2.1)	
Related Coursework	Anatomy and Physiology Advanced Biological Science Physical Assessment	Counselling and Psychotherapy Psychology of Older People Theories of Occupational Therapy
Experience	<u>Occupational Therapist Intern</u>	Joy Centre, Ryedale
September 2014 – June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed patients' prognosis as part of an interdisciplinary team Developed treatment programs for 27 patients with mental health conditions Maintained accurate records, progress reports determining discharge Coordinated, implemented on-going 'readjustment' seminar Counselled 21 patients and families on adjustment issues 	
	<u>Elderly Aide Volunteer</u>	Park Vista, Northallerton
May 2014 – August 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared patients for therapy, involving instructions and lifting Accompanied occupational therapist on rounds of 30 patients weekly Supervised use of manual dexterity equipment 	
	<u>Orientation Leader</u>	University of York, York
September 2012 – June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised schedules to assure optimum benefits for new students Evaluated, discussed, modified program in weekly staff meetings Selected and trained new orientation leaders 	
Affiliations	British Occupational Therapists' Association	2013-Present
	<u>Students' Union Council</u>	
	Vice President of Student Affairs	2013-14
	Deputy Treasurer	2012-13
	Council Secretariat	2011-13
Awards	Outstanding Undergraduate Award for the University of York Service Club	May 2013
	Dean's List	All quarters

Activities	University Film Club Photographic Society	2012-14 2011-14
References	Available on request.	

Asking for an Informational Interview

E: Employer
A: Applicant

- A** Good morning, _____. My name is _____ and I was referred to you by Alice Carter in the Purchasing Department. I have been researching the type and range of jobs available in the field of materials handling as part of a job skills workshop. I wondered if I could make an appointment to come and talk with you about how materials handling works at Smiths Industries.
- E** I'm not sure if we have any immediate openings, if that's what you're looking for.
- A** I understand that, _____, but I'm really interested in finding out things like the scope of the job, its importance in the general scheme of things, how it works in different types of companies, and the special challenges presented by the products you handle. The information I want just isn't available in books or the Internet. What I really need is to speak with someone with your expertise in the materials-handling industry.
- E** Well, I don't know if I'm really an expert, but I could tell you how the job works at Smiths.
- A** I'd really appreciate it if you would, _____. Could you tell me a good time to come and talk with you?
- E** How long would it take?
- A** About half an hour depending on how much information you have to share, but this is completely at your convenience. Are you available any time this week?
- E** Fridays are fairly slow here. How about Friday at 1pm?
- A** Friday would be fine. Shall I come to your office?
- E** Yes. The address is _____.
- A** Thank you, _____. I look forward to Friday.

Asking for a Job Interview

E: Employer
A: Applicant

- A** Good morning, _____. My name is _____ and I was referred to you by Alice Carter in the Finance Department. Do you have a moment?
- E** Yes.
- A** I understand you have an opening coming up for a good materials handler so I wanted to introduce myself to make sure my name would be considered when you make your decision.
- E** My personal assistant is the one who takes the applications for me. Why don't you fill one out and send it to back to us?
- A** Of course, I'll be happy to do that but I was hoping for an opportunity to meet with you and share my qualifications.
- An application or CV can't always give a very complete picture of someone's qualifications and I believe a job is too important a thing to leave to chance.
- What I've heard about Smith Industries has led me to believe that it's a good company to work for. I'd like the opportunity to make myself known to you and to hear more about Westin. Is there a good time when I can stop by and meet with you? I'm an experienced shipper and a good employee with good references.
- E** (laughs) Well, you certainly seem to know what you want. I'll tell you what. I'll be in on Friday morning and if I'm free when you come in to get an application form I'll give you a few minutes.
- A** Would 9 o' clock be okay? If not, I can make myself available any time at your convenience.
- E** 9 o' clock is fine.
- A** That's Friday the 27th at 9am at your office. Right?
- E** Right.
- A** Thank you, _____. I look forward to seeing you then.

Arranging an Interview: Speaking with the Gatekeeper

The following script may give you some ideas on what to say to a “gatekeeper” so you can speak with the potential employer.

1. List name and phone number of employer.	Brown Street Nursery School 0207 765 4321
2. Note where you got the job lead.	Neighbour, Mia Ahmed
3. Call and introduce yourself.	“Hello, this is _____”
4. Ask for manager’s name (person who makes the recruitment decisions).	“Would you please tell me the name of the manager?”
5. Ask to speak to the manager.	“May I please speak with Ms _____?”
6. Ask when to call back.	“When would be a good time to reach her?”
7. Thank the “gatekeeper”.	“I’ll call back tomorrow. Thank you very much.”

You may wish to use this space to write what you would say to a gatekeeper

Arranging an Interview: Speaking with a Potential Employer

The following script may help you prepare for a conversation with a potential employer.

1. Greet manager/introduction.	"Hello Mrs Smith, my name is Jasveen Kaur."
2. Identify where you got the job lead.	"My neighbour, Mia Ahmed, suggests I call you about..."
3. State the position you are interested in.	"... a teaching assistant.
4. State a sentence or two about your job skills, training and education that relates to the type of position in which you are interested.	"I have a BTEC (Level 2) in Child Care and 3 years' experience of being a teaching Assistant in a pre-school programme in London and further respite experience working with parents. I have excellent references and I love kids."
5. State a sentence that includes the personality traits that are important to employers.	"I'm a hard worker and able to relate to all types of children. The respite work involved children with disabilities"
6. Request an interview.	"When would it be convenient to come in for an interview?"
7. Ask about future openings if there are no current openings.	"I'd love to come in and talk about future openings."
8. Repeat interview time.	"Today, from 3.00 to 3.30."
9. Express enthusiasm and thank the potential employer.	"Great, I look forward to meeting this afternoon. Thanks!"

Arranging an Interview: Speaking with a Potential Employer

You may want to use the space below to write down what you would say to a potential employer

1. Greet manager/introduction.	
2. Identify where you got the job lead.	
3. State the position you are interested in.	
4. State a sentence or two about your job skills, training and education that relates to the type of position in which you are interested.	
5. State a sentence that includes the personality traits that are important to employers.	
6. Request an interview.	
7. Ask about future openings if there are no current openings.	
8. Repeat interview time.	
9. Express enthusiasm and thank the potential employer.	

Getting an Informational Interview

1. Greet respondent and ask for the manager's name.

Get the correct spelling if unsure.

2. Ask to speak to the manager.

If the respondent asks for what purpose, you can say:

"As part of a job skills workshop I am doing, I've been assigned to gather information on jobs in the field of _____. I understand that Mr/Ms _____ is expert / well versed / knowledgeable in this field."

OR

"I am doing research on _____ and I would like to talk to Mr/Ms _____ concerning this."

What you plan to say is:

3. Greet the manager and give your name.

4. State why you are calling.

Listed here are a couple of options of responses to why you are calling. There is also space for you to write a script that you would feel most comfortable with:

"I am seeking information on job titles and job descriptions in your field for a job skills program I am participating in. The program helps me and others who are changing careers."

OR

"I am doing personal research on the jobs in the _____ industry / business. I would like to set up an appointment to interview you about the job of _____."

If the manager asks, "whom do you represent?" or "what is this for?" responses can be:

"I am currently considering a career change and heard that you are very knowledgeable about the field of _____. Would it be possible for me to meet with you for about 20 to 30 minutes to learn more about this field?"

OR

"I'm gathering some information for a community program. This program helps people who are entering or changing careers find out about different jobs. Job titles in books don't provide very useful information. I'm wondering if you can share with me some of your knowledge about this field."

What you plan to say is:

5. Ask for an appointment.

"I'd like to interview this morning / afternoon. When would be a convenient time?"

6. Write down time and date.

7. If needed, ask for instructions on how to reach the site.

8. Repeat date and time over the phone to confirm.

9. Thank the person for his or her time and assistance.

Session Four – Additional Information Hand-outs

Dressing for the Job Hunt



FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE IMPORTANT!

The first impression you make on an interviewer is the most important one and can affect the rest of the interview. You can make a positive impression by:

- A firm handshake
- A warm smile
- Relaxed body language
- Dressing appropriately

Dress in a way that is appropriate to the job

Consider the image you want to present and what type of clothing is suitable for the job. When the workplace or job is less formal, the dress code may be as well. If you're not sure what to wear, it's fine to check with the person scheduling the interview.

Dress in a way that respects the interviewer

Consider the interviewer and dress in a way that shows the interview is important. While the workplace or job may be less formal, making considerations around what you wear and how you present yourself will show the interviewer that you are professional and respect the interviewer.

Some general guidelines

- Wear clothes that fit well and are clean and well pressed.
- Clean, well-groomed fingernails. Avoid chipped, brightly coloured or glittery nail polish.
- Brief cases, purses, pens, notebooks or anything else that you take into the interview should be in good shape and present a professional image.
- Jewellery should be simple and conservative. Avoid dangling earrings or arms full of bracelets.
- Your hair should be neat, clean and conservative.
- Avoid strong perfumes and aftershaves.
- Make sure you have fresh breath. Brush your teeth before you leave for the interview, and don't eat or smoke before the interview. If in doubt, take a breath mint before the interview.
- Try to visit the bathroom before the interview to check your appearance.
- If possible, don't wear the same outfit to a second interview with the same person.

Tell Me About Yourself

Open-ended questions like *“tell me about yourself”* or *“why should I hire you?”* come up at almost every job interview and are usually the most difficult to answer well. However, if you prepare properly, there is no need to hate this question.

What the “Tell me about yourself” question is

This question is an opportunity to let the employer know that you are the right candidate for the position. It is an opportunity for you to set the tone of the interview and to emphasise the points that you want a potential employer to know about you.

What the “Tell me about yourself” question is not

This question is not an open invitation to talk about what you did as a child, where you grew up, what your favourite football team is. If you start an interview talking about anything not related to why you are the best person for the job, then there is a good chance the interview will be cut short.

What is the interviewer looking for?

In a nutshell, the interviewer is trying to find out enough about you to decide if you're a good fit for the position you are applying for. The interviewer wants to hear about your previous work experience, education, and what led you up to this point in your life.

REMEMBER – You are trying to make an impression regarding the job you are applying for so it is important that you stick to talking about how you are the best candidate for the job.

What to include when answering this question

Key Skills and Strengths

- Incorporate 3 or 4 key skills or strengths that you've obtained and how you can bring it to the job you are interviewing for. These can be skills obtained at a previous job, school, or transferable skills from being a carer, volunteering, or courses you've been on.
- Use concrete examples to describe your skills and strengths, and draw as many links back to how they are essential to the job you are applying for.
- Do not be afraid to brag be positive – the purpose of the interview is to **sell** yourself.

Recent Work Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer is not looking for you to go into detail about <i>every</i> job you've ever had. Instead, stick primarily to your most recent relevant work experience, and how your experience at that job prepared you for this one. • It is okay to touch upon older positions if you need to, as long as you have acquired relevant skills or strengths from those positions.
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be afraid to be positive. This question gives you the right to be really positive about yourself. Give the interviewer 2 or 3 relevant achievements that you've obtained from a previous job. • Don't worry if you have no major achievements - lightly touch upon job duties or your life experiences and how those helped you to develop certain skills it takes to be successful in the position you are applying for.
What you have learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about what you have learned at previous jobs and how it has prepared you for this position.

Diffusing Fears

If any fears about your background come up, defuse them.

"I had to leave school early because money was tight and I had to earn a living. I always continued to learn through seminars and individual courses, including some that apply directly to this job."

How do I answer this question if I have no previous work experience?

If you are a recent school leaver, are returning to working life after a long illness, or have been a carer for either relative or children, you may be wondering how to answer this question.

However, having no previous work experience does not mean that you don't have the skills needed for the job you are applying for. **Transferable skills** gained from volunteering, participating in organisations, caring et cetera, and linking these to the job you are applying for, can be as effective as skills and strengths gained from a previous job role.

Example 1:

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: I have been caring for my mother for the past 6 years. As a carer I have learned valuable skills that I am sure your company will admire. Caring has allowed me to develop the right balance of skills needed to ensure that my mother was cared for properly, including communication and organisational skills, patience, and nursing skills. I have to organise appointments with health professionals, be able to respond quickly to my mother's health needs and be ready to change any arrangements without warning.

I personally understand that for this position I would be faced with challenges in which I will have to overcome certain obstacles, and I feel that my experience and skills are perfect for living up to this challenge. I can give you more examples if you like. (Provide examples in which you've demonstrated these abilities if the interviewer asks for them).

Example 2:

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: I have just left college. Throughout my time at college I have had the opportunity to be involved in several organisations such as _____ [e.g. Students Union, Football, et cetera]. Not only have I been a part of these organisations, I also held official positions in those organisations such as _____ [e.g. Welfare Officer, Photographic Society secretary]. Throughout these positions I have learned valuable skills that I am sure your company will admire such as leadership, teamwork, diligence, dedication, multitasking, the ability to work to tight deadlines (if the position has other strengths and characteristics that the organisation admires, then talk about those).

I personally understand that for this position I will be faced with challenges in which I will have to overcome certain obstacles, and I feel as if these positions I have held will allow me to complete those tasks as efficiently and timely as possible. I can give you more examples if you like. (Provide examples in which you've demonstrated these abilities if the interviewer asks for them).

Be sure to tell the interviewer that you can give more details if they would like; this lets them know that you have thought about your strengths and skills, and that you are well prepared.

Make sure that your answer is no shorter than 30 seconds and no longer than 2 minutes – you want to give the interviewer a brief description of your qualifications without sounding like a broken record (if the interviewer wants more details, they will ask).

How do I answer this question if I do have work experience?

If you do have previous work experience, just follow the same steps listed above, but instead of talking about positions you have held in organisations, talk about the key aspects mentioned earlier:

Skills you have learned at a previous job: Be sure to include the skills you learned at a previous job and how those skills are going to contribute to the success of the position.

Achievements at your previous job: For example, if you were your company's top salesperson then it will be worthwhile to put that in your answer (remember, do not be afraid to be positive about yourself).

	Refer to situations that demonstrate the strengths and skills that employers value.
Refer to situations that demonstrate the strengths and skills that employers value:	
Dependability	
Hardworking	
Honesty	
Cooperation	Describe strengths, skills and accomplishments using concrete examples.
Enthusiasm	
Quick learner	
Creative problem solving	
Get along well with others	
Flexibility	
Organisational skills	Are there any fears you would like to defuse? Anything else you would like the employer to know?
Motivation	
Leadership	
Diligence	
Communication	
Reliability	

Applications



Information Required to Complete a Job Application

When you complete a job application, regardless of whether it is a paper application or an online application, there is information you will need to provide in order to complete the job application.

As well as providing personal information, work history, education, qualifications and skills, you will also be asked to verify that all of the information that you are giving is accurate.

Not telling the truth, fudging employment dates, leaving out information, and other inaccuracies can be grounds for not being recruited or for being sacked in the future, if the company finds out that you misrepresented your background or lied on your job application.

The following is the information that is required to complete a job application:

Personal Information

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| • Name | • Address |
| • Phone Number | • E-mail Address |
| • National Insurance Number | • Are you eligible to work in the UK? |
| • Have you been convicted of a crime within the last five years? | |

Education and Experience

- School(s) attended, leaving date
- Certifications (O-levels, GCSEs, NVQs, BTECs, A-levels, Degrees etc.)
- Skills and qualifications

Employment History *(for both current and previous positions)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Employer | • Supervisor/line manager |
| • Address, telephone number, e-mail address | • Salary |
| • Job title and responsibilities | • Starting and end dates of employment |
| • Reason for leaving | • Permission to contact previous employer |

References (*usually three referees*)

When you give out someone's name as referee, first of all, be sure that you have permission to use them as a referee. Secondly, let them know they may expect to be contacted. Provide some information on the job you have applied for, so your referee can relate your experience to the job and give you the best possible reference for the job.

Former bosses, co-workers, customers, vendors, and colleagues all make good professional referees. So do school, college and university teachers and lecturers.

If you're just starting out in the workforce or if you haven't worked in a while you can use character or personal references from people who know you and can vouch for your skills and attributes. These individuals do not necessarily have to be people that you have worked under directly. A personal referee should be someone who knows you well enough to provide good insight into your personality and overall character.

- Name
- Job Title
- Company
- Address, telephone number, e-mail address

Availability

This is information about when you could start the job and the days/hours you are available if it's a job with a flexible schedule.

- Days available
- Hours available
- Date you are available to start work

Declaration

At the end of most job applications there is usually a declaration that you must sign and date. An example of a declaration:

I certify that the information contained within this application is accurate. I understand that false information may be grounds for not offering employment or for ending my employment contract at any point in the future.

By signing the declaration you are attesting to the truth of the information that you have included on the application. If the application is online, you will click a box to acknowledge that you are submitting complete and accurate information. That box will act as your signature.

Job Application Mistakes to Avoid

The job market is competitive so you need to make sure that your job applications, both paper and online, are as polished as possible. A mistake in a job application can cost you a chance of getting an interview.

Take time to carefully complete every application you fill out to be sure the information is accurate, your dates and job descriptions are correct, and there are no spelling or grammatical errors. Here are some common mistakes to avoid.

Skimming Instructions

Skimming the instructions and missing the real intent of application questions. Read carefully and don't rush. After all, who wants an employee who doesn't follow directions?

Writing "See Attached"

Writing "see attached" to avoid filling in material on applications. Many employers will screen primarily on the application itself so fill in all of the blanks even if the information is duplicated in your attached CV.

Submitting Your Application Incorrectly

Submitting your application to the wrong person or department. Make sure that you direct your application to the individual or department referenced in the advert or online.

Spelling or Grammatical Errors

This is one of the most common (and most easily avoidable) errors. Copy and paste online descriptions into a spelling and grammar checker like Word first. Then put your finger on every word and make sure that it is spelled correctly. Read your document out loud to check for grammatical errors and, when possible, have someone else review your document before you submit it.

Writing Descriptions That Don't Include Achievements

Even though the application says 'job description', take that to mean a description or two of how you added value as opposed to a bland list of duties.

Neglecting to Explain Job Gaps

If you have legitimate reasons for gaps in employment, find a way to explain why you were out of work such as "I left in good standing to care for my new-born baby or an ill parent."

Appropriate E-mail Address

Set up a separate, professional sounding e-mail account for job-related purposes. Unprofessional: partygirl@yahoo.com. Professional: teresa.marks@yahoo.com.

Application Form – Example 1

Application for employment as

Surname

Other Names

Address

Postcode

Tel (home)

E-mail Address

Education and Training

.....

Information in support of your application

Please include any skills and experience you have acquired that can support this application whether within the working environment or outside.

.....

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes ☐ No ☐

(Declaration subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974)

Do you have any disabilities that might affect your application?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please tell us if:

- a. there are any reasonable adjustments we can make to assist you in your application
- b. there are any reasonable adjustments we can make to the job itself to help you carry it out

.....

Do you need a work permit to work in the UK?

Yes ☐ No ☐

When can you start work for us?

.....

References

Please give the names and addresses of two persons as referees, other than your present employer or relatives who we can approach now for references. No approach will be made to your present or previous employers before an offer of employment is made.

1

2

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the above information is correct.

Signature Date

Application Form – Example 2

Application for employment as:

Surname

Other names:

Address

Postcode

Telephone

E-mail Address

Education and training

.....

Details and results of any examinations taken

.....

Further education (e.g. technical college, evening classes)

.....

Any craft or other training

.....

Employment history

1. Present employer

Address

Postcode

Job title

Duties

.....

Rate of pay

Date employed: from to

Reason for leaving

.....

No approach will be made to your present employer before an offer of employment is made to you.

Please tell us about other jobs you have done and about the skills you used and/or learned in those jobs.

.....

Please tell us why you applied for this job and why you think you are the best person for the job.

.....

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? Yes ☐ No ☐

(Declaration subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974)

~~If you have a disability~~ Please tell us about any adjustments we may need to make to assist you at interview

.....

Please tell us if there are any dates when you will not be available for interview

.....

I can confirm that to the best of my knowledge the above information is correct. I accept that providing deliberately false information could result in my dismissal.

Signature Date