Interview Questions

In preparation for interview you should examine the advertisement, analyse the capabilities listed in the role description and consider the overview of the role/section (if given) including any particular challenges described. On the basis of those, try to anticipate the kind of questions you will be asked. Write yourself a series of questions you might expect to be asked and prepare and practice your answers to them (either out loud or in writing – or better still, both!)

Generally, the committee prepares its questions by analyzing the advertisement and determining the skills knowledge, experience and attributes required to meet the capabilities and to perform the duties efficiently. This allows the panel to assess the skills and aptitude of each candidate. Most panels will also ask you if you have any questions or if you have anything further to add. This is when you should use a summation statement.

Behavioural Questions

Under the GSE Act panels are obliged to use primarily behavioural questioning at interview – below is a typical example:

“Tell us about a situation where you implemented change. What difficulties arose and how you handled them?”

This question helps to extract information about your behaviour in particular situations. It is an invitation to showcase how you have been effective in past roles and also to demonstrate how you have learned and developed through your experiences.

Other types of Questions you could get at the interview:

OPEN

“What do you see as the role of the Legal Assistant?”

This question leaves the detail and complexity of the answer up to you.

CLOSED

“State the steps involved in preparing a voucher for payment of an invoice.”

This question requires you to give a specific answer.
**HYPOTHETICAL**

“What would you do if your manager was in an important meeting and an irate client was at the counter demanding to see the manager? This question will test your initiative, quick thinking and relevant experience.

**PROBING**

“If the client won’t accept your answer and is still demanding to see the manager, what further action would you take?”

This question helps to extract more information from you. It is usually a sign that the panel requires more information from you on a particular question.

**PADDING**

Not all the questions that you are asked will necessarily be useful ones, so you need to anticipate useless as well as useful questions. Some may be ice breaker questions and some may be just poorly thought through. Whatever the rationale for including them you need to deal with them gracefully.

Examples:

- Reasons for applying/why you want this job
- Your strengths and weaknesses
- Your qualifications, work experience, skills and interests, (all of which are your resume).
- What you know about the organisation/industry/location
- Why we should employ you
- Proudest achievements of your career
- Your career aspirations

**A sample of typical interview questions**

- Tell us why you are the best person for this position.
- What is your understanding of what the job will involve?
- How do your previous experience and qualifications relate to this position?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time?
• What initiatives have you taken in your current position or in previous positions?
• What qualities do you think a good supervisor needs?
• What can you contribute to this position?
• What do you know about this agency / section and how does this position fit into it?
• How would you solve typical problems which occur in the position e.g. ...
• Could you outline your communication skills?
• What are the elements of good communication?
• What do you consider to be the role of the supervisor?
• How would you train new staff?
• How would you handle an angry customer in a face to face situation?
• Give an example of an important goal which you may have set in the past and your success in reaching it?
• Describe the most significant written document / report / presentation which you have had to complete?
• How would you go about implementing access and equity practices in this role?
• As a supervisor, how would you promote WH&S in the workplace?
• What do you believe to be the key areas of effective customer service?

TIPS

Answer your questions out loud or if you have a person you feel comfortable with you can do a mock/practice interview with them.

You can also try sitting in front of a mirror and watch how you answer each question.

Manner

Your manner in the interview is also very important. Answer questions confidently, but think before you speak (what are they looking for in this question?). Do not ramble. Stick to the point. If you do not know – say so.
**ACTIVITY: INAPPROPRIATE/UNACCEPTABLE QUESTIONS**

For the following questions indicate whether you think the questions are acceptable (Y) or not (N) and/or whether they are confusing in their current form and should be rephrased (R).

If the question is unacceptable or confusing change/rephrase it, in the space provided, to make it an acceptable question.

Not all questions will need to be rephrased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Acceptable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any personal circumstances that preclude you working outside normal hours?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you live a long way from here?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you married?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How will you get here punctually?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you get on with the opposite sex?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How well do you cope with stress?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imagine you have an important meeting on. As you are getting ready for work you notice one of your children is ill and has to stay home from school. You have no contingency arrangements for child minding. What do you do?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you fluent in any language other than English?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In this job you will contact people of many different races. Do you hold any racial stereotypes? And how are they useful?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine something really urgent and important comes up last thing Friday. Would you get it done for Monday morning by: coming in to work on Saturday or by doing it at home, or by coming to work at the crack of dawn on Monday?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you find it difficult to get on with some people? Why do you think this is?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The committee wants to know if the only reason you applied for this job is because it is close to home?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We notice there is a twelve month gap in your employment record. Why is this so?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What an unusual name you have - what is your nationality?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are not an Australian citizen, does your passport allow you to work here/do you have a work permit?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need someone who is going to give at least 2-3 years commitment to this job. Can you do this?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given your experience and qualifications why did you apply for this lower graded position?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to pursue promotional opportunities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What additional skills other than those required for this position will you be bringing to this organisation?</td>
<td>Y/N R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACTIVITY: Interview Preparation

Make a note of all the things you would consider in your preparation.
Practicing interview questions

Use the space provided below to write two questions you might expect to be asked at interview – make sure at least one is behavioural

The name of the role you are applying for:

____________________________________

Two questions you would like to be asked at interview:

Question One

Question Two

Write down some ideas on how you will answer these questions below.

Question one
Question two

Now reduce this to some keywords

Question three – never let this go without saying something positive about yourself!

Prepare a summation statement. Summation means 'a review or recapitulation of previously stated facts or statements, often with a final conclusion or conclusions drawn from them'. It needs to be a short and concise statement about you, what you can bring and why you should get the role, it can reiterate your strengths, achievements and experience and can be used to cover things about yourself the committee has not touched on.
You may also use this as a time to mention skills and knowledge gained from voluntary work, sporting interests and hobbies if relevant. You can also include why you want this job, what you can bring and how it fits in to your career. Practice this out loud!! Be able to adjust to omit areas already covered.

Now reduce this to some keywords
Activity: Anticipating types of assessments

In your groups look at the Role Description/s for the role/s you intend to apply for.

Work through the capabilities, challenges and accountabilities listed and devise assessment activities you could use to test them e.g. for Plan & Prioritise you might use a scenario where an employee has to meet competing demands and explain the rational they used.

Record the ideas you come up with

How would you best prepare to undertake each assessment type?
Preparing for & presenting at interview

**Work Samples:** If you have written examples of work you have produced that relate to the selection criteria, place them in a folder, label or have a means to identify the criteria and use them if you need or want to give an example.

**Using Notes:** If you go blank in interviews prepare yourself a one page document of keywords that relate to each capability with an example for each. Keywords from your summation statement can also go on this page. The note pages must be neat and tidy and discreet. Be sure to ask the committee if it is ok to use it. Some panels will give you a copy of the interview tasks and questions ahead of time giving your an opportunity to make notes on the spot which you can then refer to in interview or when describing how you tackled the assessment task.

**Referees:** Contact your referees - let them know you have an interview, give them a copy of the job advertisement and your application. Ask what they might say about you, or give a reminder of some of the things you have done to reinforce your skills, competencies and attitude.

**What to wear:** decide on this in advance and have the outfit ready – you will feel more composed.

**Nerves:** Consider your symptoms of nervousness, what triggers them and how you are likely to show them? Then make the necessary accommodations.
How to get there: work out how to get there and know how long it will take you - being late could make you a nervous mess!!!!!!

The panel’s role and your role

At the interview the interviewers have a job to do. This is very simply to gain the information that they need in order to be able to make a decision.

But the interviewee has a job to do too – and it involves more than simply responding to questions. The interviewee needs to take some control of the process too. As an interviewee, you can influence the final decision to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the competence of the interviewers.

Some of the things you should do include the following:

- Arrive early (thinking and de-stressing time)
- Greet each committee member (shaking hands is up to you)
- Sit comfortably, and look at each panel member, when a person asks you a question respond to that person.
- Listen carefully to each question, and spend a few seconds processing what is asked. Short periods of silence are OK.
- Clarify any unclear questions
- Be concise, but don’t confine your answers to yes/no. Sell yourself even if you think that the interviewers already know all about you. They all won’t!!
- Don’t ramble, if stuck on a question, use your notes or an example or ask if you can come back to it.
- Conclude the interview on a positive note
- Don’t volunteer information on your weak points – try to turn every question to a positive end
- Ask the interviewers if you may take notes if you want to
- Don’t argue with the interviewers
- Take every opportunity to sell your strengths
- Bring a copy of your application so you can refer to it
- SMILE!
Ideas that have worked for others

Avoid

- Being late
- Taking a passive approach
- Lacking real knowledge of the position / unit / agency
- An apparent inability to express yourself clearly
- A distinct lack of confidence and poise

Never, never, never……..

- Answer just ‘Yes’ or ‘No’
- Ramble on
- Answer a question if you do not understand it (ask for clarification)
- Claim a skill without demonstrating how you used it
- Discuss problems, apologise for anything or volunteer your worst features
- Get angry with the committee, whatever their faults in the interview.

Post selection counselling

The purpose of post selection counselling is to provide you with constructive comments on the information you supplied in your application form, how you performed in any test and your presentation at interview.

Post interview counselling can occur after you have been notified of your outcome from the process, whether interviewed or not.
Having put a lot of effort into your application and prepared and presented at interview this is an excellent opportunity to find out what you did well and areas you can improve on. Think about the areas you want feedback on, write down questions and make a time to speak with the convenor of the selection committee.

Information gained from this session will help you to prepare yourself for future applications and interviews. Learn and use this information.

Candidates may feel that they have been victimised or discriminated against when they don’t get the job – especially if they have actually been doing the job for some time prior to it being advertised. That is rarely the case. It is much more likely that they simply were not the best applicant.

There are plenty of reasons why people miss out on jobs. Some of the more common ones are listed below.

- You may lack the skills necessary to do the job
- You may not have the level of skill of the successful applicant
- You may not have shown up well at interview e.g. you may not have given the committee enough information about your skills. Remember, the committee are not mind readers
- You may not have been able to back up information that was in your application
- Your referees may not have been able to back up what you told the committee

Hints for Success

- Regularly read the notice boards, be active online via Jobs.NSW, keep your profile up to date and set up alerts so you receive notification of suitable vacancies.
- Apply for everything you want to which you realistically think you can lay a fair claim - ensure you meet the essential requirements
- Make enquiries via the contact person and download an information package about the job before you prepare the application – all information is online
- Accurately address the role requirements
- Keep a copy of any application, update it with qualifications, training courses, duties etc
- Make your application fit the job. Only include details that are relevant to the position. Don’t forget outside experience, both paid and voluntary
• Prepare yourself carefully for the interview, anticipate how you are going to answer obvious questions, don’t be afraid to clarify questions that you don’t understand
• Be honest at the interview
• Nerves are natural, remember the panel is not your enemy
• Say what you have to say, keep your answers clear and concise
• Don’t assume the panel knows about your background, you must inform them, stress the relevance of your qualifications and experience
• If you don’t get the job contact the convenor to discuss your performance, use it for future improvement
• If you do get the job, meet all the requirements you claimed you could at the interview
• Success won’t be automatic, sound preparation and interview experience will improve your chances