



Interview skills

Age range: 14-16

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
60-90 mins	<p>By the end of the activity students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that interviews help the employer and employee assess their match for one another Identify different types of interview and their purposes Apply and use the STAR method to answer some common interview questions Understand how to research information ahead of an interview and take part in a simulated interview activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview skills presentation slides Interview skills student worksheet Virtual Interview Practice tool

Contents

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Activity four (optional): Practice online assessments	30-40 mins	13
Activity five: Face to face mock interviews	45-60 mins	14
Activity six: How being proactive got Alfred hired	6-30 mins	15

Always start the session by agreeing ground rules with the group. For advice on this and other ways to establish a safe learning environment, download the content guide [here](#).

- If running all three core activities, begin by explaining to students that in this session you are going to discuss how to prepare for an interview and that they'll have the opportunity to practise and improve their technique
- As an icebreaker, you may choose to talk about your own experience of having an interview, citing any memorable interview experiences, whether they are positive or negative. Remember to carefully choose the examples you share to ensure that young people receive positive messages about the interviewing process
- The third activity utilises the Virtual Interview Practice tool, a guide to which can be found below



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of autistic students.

If teaching a lesson including autistic students, here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

- Often reasonable adjustments will be made in an interview to allow autistic candidates to showcase their skills. When thinking about the 'I factor', remember that autistic people may struggle with positive body language and eye contact. Focus on other ways that they can have the 'I factor' e.g. showing they are knowledgeable about the career area and using strategies that can help them communicate their strengths.
- Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally e.g. autistic students may literally interpret a question that starts with 'can you do this..?', answering 'yes I can' but because it's not a specific instruction they may well just not do it – it wouldn't be down to rudeness, because they may not understand what has been asked of them.
- A reasonable adjustment autistic jobseekers can request, is that interviewers avoid hypothetical or abstract questions, for example, "How do you think you'll cope with working if there are lots of interruptions?" A better question would be "Think back to your last job/task. Can you tell us how you coped with your work when people interrupted you?". Avoid using metaphors, although you can use similes when talking with the autistic student.
- Another reasonable adjustment autistic jobseekers can request, is for interviewers to avoid asking multi layered questions. For example, instead of asking 'In your last post when you were asked to prepare a report at short notice, how did you deal with this situation, what was the process that you went through to produce the report and how did you keep your Manager up-to-date as you went along?' Break down the questions and ask one at a time: 'Thinking back to your last post, did you ever have to prepare a report for your manager at short notice?'; 'How did you respond to the request at the time?'; 'What process did you go through to prepare the report?'; 'How did you keep your Manager up-to-date when you were preparing the report?' – allowing time to answer in between.
- Some activities may take autistic students longer to process and complete than others so add contingency time to your planning if it is needed. Some autistic students may also need additional guidance and support. If interviewing, allow processing time.
- Body language and eye contact – it might not be possible for some autistic people to develop in this area: A reasonable adjustment for those who struggle with this could be to say to the employer – e.g. 'please do not misconstrue lack of eye contact with lack of interest'.

Before this session, why not run one of the following lessons:

- CV skills lesson one: [Writing a successful CV](#)
- CV skills lesson two: [Fine-tuning your CV to stand out to employers](#)
- Core transferable skills: [Lessons focussing on seven skills employers need](#)

Activity one

What are the different types of interview?

1. Discuss how an interview helps an employee showcase their skills

- To gauge students' starting points and enable them to demonstrate their progress later, ask them to consider the following questions and record their thoughts in the form of a mind map, drawings or a 'graffiti wall':

What different types of interview have they heard of?

How might different interviews be suited to different situations? E.g. an employer may choose a phone or Skype interview for jobs that are abroad, assessment centres are used for a high level of applicants, etc.

Have they heard of the STAR model, and if so, how have they used it before?

- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Some forms of recruitment can disadvantage autistic jobseekers, causing high anxiety meaning they are less able to perform well. Phone interviews and assessment centres can be particularly off-putting making people less likely to apply. If disclosing their autism to an employer, applicants could request reasonable adjustments such as a work trial instead, or interview questions in advance, etc
- Ask students to consider why an interview process takes place; how it helps an employer get to know each applicant, understand what skills they can bring to the role and why it is an essential part of securing a job

How else could employees work out how to hire someone?

2. Discuss ideas

- Show **slide 2**. Discuss students' ideas and help them see that interviews are a two-way process, helping both employers and applicants find out more
- When the students imagine an interview, do they think of a face to face scenario, or do they reference other types, such as panel, assessment centre, telephone, video?
- Ask the students to think about why there are these different kinds of interview. Some interview styles allow candidates to demonstrate their skills and not just talk about them. Ask the group to think about what skills each of the interviews could showcase, e.g.
 - Telephone interview – communication, confidence
 - Assessment centre – teamwork, leadership, problem solving, creativity

3. Getting to know different types of interviews

- Explain that different interview scenarios require you to adapt your approach to suit your audience

How might you act differently in a face to face interview and a panel interview?

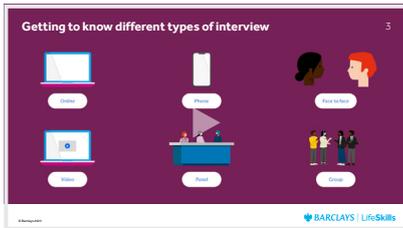
Who do you direct your questions and answers to?

How might you adjust your body language?

Activity one

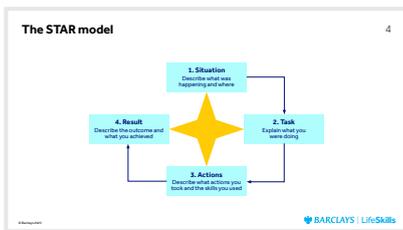
What are the different types of interview? (cont'd)

4. Using the Different Types of Interview and Assessments tool



- Load the [Different Types of Interview and Assessments interactive tool](#). Explore the possible interview formats and allow time to pause and discuss key points around what to expect and how to prepare, including:
 - Why this type of interview might be used
 - What skills an interviewer might be able to gauge in candidates
 - How students might feel when taking part in this type of interview

5. Introduce the STAR model



- Show **slide 4**, and ask if any students have heard of the STAR model. Explain that it is useful to think about when answering a question because it helps give all the information an employer might be looking for in a clear, structured way
- Review each element of the STAR model and explain that students are going to practise giving good interview answers using STAR to help

6. Using STAR to answer an interview question

- Show **slide 5** and talk them through the example:
 - **Situation** – recently given a task in school to work on a project together in teams
 - **Task** – created and advertised a perfume themed on 'winter' but there were too many ideas being put forward and they weren't getting anywhere
 - **Actions** – arranged an extra planning session to organise who would be responsible for what and monitored everyone's progress
 - **Result** – achieved 350 votes in the final judging and the rest of group appreciated the organisational skills
- Ask students to come up with an answer to the following question using their own skills and experience:

Can you tell me about a situation when you had to work as a team? What challenges did you face, and what did you do to overcome them?

- If they're struggling, you may want to give them some prompt examples, e.g. playing in a sports team, being in a band, organising a charity fundraiser, working with co-workers at a part-time job

Activity one

What are the different types of interview? (cont'd)

Activity summary

- Show **slide 6** and briefly recap on the key points covered in this session
- Explain that it is normal for interviewers to challenge people or to explore areas in which they appear less confident. Discuss what would be a positive way to respond to this style of questioning
- Remind students that every answer is an opportunity to sell themselves to the employer, even ones that ask them about their biggest weakness or mistake. These can be used as examples of how they have developed resilience and learned from their experiences
- You may wish to ask students to revisit their baseline mindmap to show progress towards the learning outcomes



Activity two

Preparing for an interview

1. Introduce the 'I' factor

- Let students know that in this first activity you will be focusing on the preparation involved in getting ready for an interview
- To gauge students' starting points and enable them to demonstrate their progress later, ask them to consider the following questions and record their thoughts in the form of a mind map, drawings or a 'graffiti wall':

What do they know or remember about ways to dress appropriately for work?

What do they think are key 'dos and don't's' for an interview?

What would they consider when planning for an interview?

- Ask for a show of hands of anyone who has had an interview before. Ask a couple of students to tell the class about their experience:

What was it for?

How did they prepare?

How did they feel during the interview?

- Ask students to consider some dos and don'ts of job interviews
- Ask students to consider what they have seen or discussed. For example;
 - Positives – greeting with a handshake and smile, maintaining eye contact
 - Negatives – fidgeting, hesitant speech, being unprepared, lack of insights and understanding of the company
 - Anyone who wants to shine at interview and get the job they want needs to have the 'I' factor
- To be ready for the big 'I' – their interview, they will need to have planned and prepared in advance, done their research, made sure they present the right image and make a good first impression

Activity two

Preparing for an interview (cont'd)

2. Plan the interview preparation

- Ask students to get into teams of two to four
- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Some autistic students can find group work challenging as it can cause high anxiety. You may need to think of this as a reasonable adjustment for the student/s. Avoid pressuring/forcing or judging them. Instead listen, to understand any concerns they may have. Be flexible and prepare in advance so you can offer options and alternatives – such as working in pairs/smaller groups/assisting or working with the teacher/support instead. Also, don't make them feel left out/isolated or assume that they can or can't join in – everyone is different and a lot may depend on the environment they are in and how comfortable they feel. Ask them what would be best to do and help them get the best out of their learning
- Their first task is to think about what goes on 'behind the scenes' of an interview: the preparation and research they should do to be ready on the day. Groups can fill in the **Preparing for an interview worksheet** so they have a guide to take away with them
- Ask teams to discuss each stage of the preparation process – once the interview is confirmed, a few days before and then the night before, and collate these ideas under the relevant headings. Key elements to reference include:

Once the interview is confirmed:

- Researching the organisation e.g. what they do, their mission and values, competitors, size of team, departments
- Thinking about possible questions and answers e.g. what are your strengths and weaknesses, how would your friends or colleagues describe you, why do you want to work here, what can you bring to the organisation?
- Thinking about possible questions and answers e.g. what are your strengths and weaknesses, how would your friends or colleagues describe you, why do you want to work here, what can you bring to the organisation?
- Researching career progression and training opportunities
- Accessibility support – if needed
- Checking the location and planning your route
- Considering what to wear

A few days before:

- Practising responses you might be asked with friends and family, asking them to check you have used the STAR model where possible
- Preparing questions to ask – ensure the basics have been covered e.g. working hours, next steps, start date, benefits, and think of questions that will help you stand out e.g. key objectives of the role, organisational structure, opportunities for progression or training

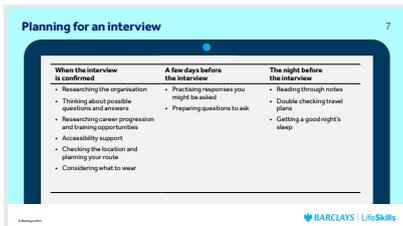
The night before:

- Reading through notes
- Double checking travel plans
- Getting a good night's sleep

Activity two

Preparing for an interview (cont'd)

3. Feedback to the wider group



- Ask the teams to feed back to the wider group on their thoughts. Highlight any elements from the list above which they might have missed, using the list on **slide 7**. Based on their comments, which team will be the most prepared?

5. Plan to make a good impression



- Ask teams to think about how they'll make a great impression, then show them **slide 8** which links to two 30 second clips around handling nerves (first two clips on the page) and one about body language. You can also access another video about body language [here](#)
- Ask teams to think about their clothing and appearance on the day of an interview. Ask them to write down their ideas for what to wear and how to look, and some things they should avoid. Students should consider how style of dress might change according to the type of organisation they are interviewing with

Would they wear the same clothes if interviewing at a bank as they would at a production company or at a veterinary surgery?

- Now ask teams to think about making the right entrance. They need to remember that this is an interview, not a stage

How can they come in and make a good impression on their interviewer?

- Explain to students that it's important to think about your audience when preparing for an interview, as interview styles can be quite different. To put this into context, ask the students to imagine if they were being interviewed for a place in a college or sixth form by their own teacher or by a headteacher from a different school/college – how might they act differently? For example, their initial greeting, introduction, tone of voice and manner may all change when speaking to a familiar face or to a stranger

Activity two

Preparing for an interview (cont'd)

6. Students share their ideas

- Explain that you'd like each team to present their ideas about how to make a good entrance before explaining what they think would be appropriate clothing. Give teams a few minutes to select a job and prepare
- Bear in mind that some students won't feel comfortable standing up in front of the class, watch out for body language and enable less confident students to verbally share their ideas
- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Also bear in mind that some autistic students may struggle with maintaining eye contact and understanding and interpreting body language. Body contact such as handshakes can be a real challenge for some people too
- You may want to clear some space and act the role of the interviewer, with someone from each team making a good or bad impression. Make it clear that students need to think about the very first impression they make, considering how they enter a room and greet an interviewer, before sharing some dress and appearance tips. As the interviewer you can showcase how to make a good (and/or bad) impression, and refer to your actions afterwards, e.g. greet with a smile and confident handshake, positive body language, make eye contact, look smart
- Ask the class to treat each team with support and respect
- Give feedback to students and congratulate them on their ideas

Activity summary

- Show **slide 9**. Summarise the key points to think about when preparing for an interview
- Drawing on other points discussed earlier in the session, help students gather their ideas into some dos and don'ts for preparation, dress and entrance



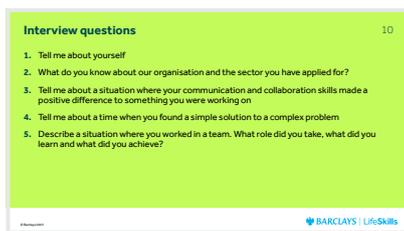
Activity three

Practising for an interview

1. Using the Virtual Interview Practice tool

- Load the [Virtual Interview Practice tool](#) at the front of the room. For a guide on how to use this, see page 17 of this lesson plan. Explain that, for the rest of the session, students will practise responding to typical interview questions before evaluating their answers. You can use the recording function to record each student's answer and listen to it back so they can self reflect
- You can choose which industry works best for your cohort of students, or select 'general questions'. The questions are the same but have been adapted to reflect the chosen industry
- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Introduce this to autistic students gently keeping the level of expectation low – so they be gradually introduced to interview skills and being recorded. These are very good skills for autistic people to get used to, but some may need a little longer to get used to it. Be supportive and understanding if students do struggle

2. Planning interview answers



- As the students are working through their answers to the proposed questions, make sure they're thinking about how STAR can help them deliver an effective response – if you haven't already, refer to activity one of this lesson plan for guidance on using the STAR model
- Allow them time to plan and prepare their answer with STAR in mind
- You can display the list of general questions using **slide 10**, or hand out the **Practising for an interview worksheet** with the list of five general practice questions
- Use the recording function to record students' answers, or get students to record their own answers if they each have access to a computer. Encourage them to listen back and reflect on what they could add or amend before moving on to the next question

3. Helping students structure their response

- Facilitator/s should circulate offering hints and tips on student performance and what to include:
- 1. Tell me about yourself**
 - Reference interests and hobbies, educational achievements, aspirations
 - 2. What do you know about the organisation and the sector you have applied for?**
 - Discuss your knowledge of the field, different features of the organisation, specific projects they've worked on, etc.
 - 3. Tell me about a situation where your communication and collaboration skills made a positive difference to something you were working on**
 - Offer a specific example, using details that demonstrate how you used these skills
 - 4. Tell me about a time when you found a simple solution to a complex problem**
 - Use an example from a school project or extracurricular activity, be specific and use the STAR model
 - 5. Describe a situation where you worked in a team. What role did you take, what did you learn and what did you achieve?**
 - Offer specific examples, reference your role in the group, demonstrate organisation and communication skills, successes and challenges

Activity three

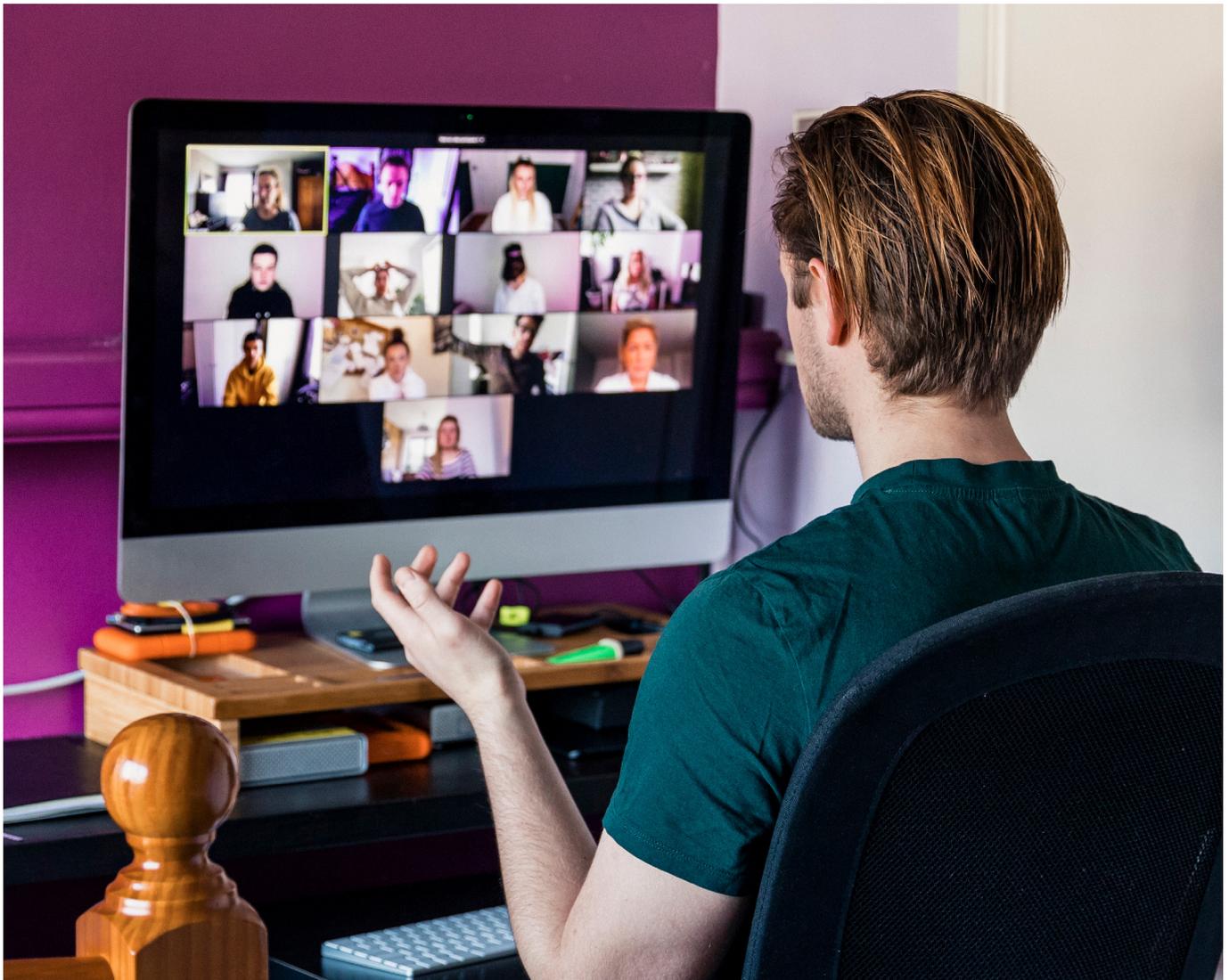
Practising for an interview (cont'd)

4. Share feedback

- Ask a selection of students to share their responses to one of the questions and ask them to comment on what it was like to use the STAR model. Invite other students to provide helpful comments on how a student might improve their answer
- Discuss answers as a class and encourage them to comment on what they found most difficult. Be sensitive to the fact that some students will not be as confident as others and there may be variations in performance

Activity summary

Facilitator/s should give their own feedback, helping students see that a good answer uses the 'actions' element to showcase their skills and the 'results' element to showcase their achievements
 Finish by congratulating the students on their efforts, especially if they have not done this before and wish them luck with their job searches.



Activity four (optional)

Practice online assessments

If relevant to the group of students you're working with, you may wish to use the [Interactive Practice Online Assessment tool](#) to help students understand how potential employers assess a candidate's personality and abilities. This can also be set as a homework activity.

1. Discuss why employers use online assessments

- Start by asking students if they know that during the recruitment process, some employers may ask candidates to complete a series of online tests. These often cover things like verbal reasoning, situational judgement and personality traits
- Why do they think employers might ask candidates to do this? What kind of insights might employers derive from these that will inform whether or not the candidate will be suited to their organisation? They might be looking for insights into ability, judgement skills and personality type

2. Load the interactive Practice Online Assessment tool

- Work through the set of tests on the screen at the front of the room, asking students to discuss answers with their group for a couple of minutes before taking a class vote and selecting the chosen answer. Once completed, ask students to comment on the tests

Did they learn anything about themselves?

How do they think an employer might view their test results?



Activity five

Face to face mock interviews

Time needed: 45-60 minutes

1. Planning for a mock interview

- Before running the mock interview, ask students to select one of the three job advertisements on the **Applying for a job worksheet** and ask them to choose one to use as the job they will be interviewed for. Alternatively, search online for some job advertisements from a range of sectors relevant to your group
- Ask students to think about the skills and qualities each employer might be looking for and think about how they can showcase each of these, using their CV as a reminder

Ask them to also consider what they should try to achieve in their interviews. What questions might the interviewer ask them? How can they give great answers that will help them land the job?

2. Running a mock interview activity

- Explain to the students that they are going to take part in a face to face mock interview to practise their interview skills and learn from the experience
- Introduce this to autistic students gently keeping the level of expectation low – so they be gradually introduced to interview skills and being on screen and recorded. These are very good skills for autistic people to get used to, but some may need a little longer to get used to it. Be supportive and understanding if students do struggle
- Point out that some students will have more time to prepare than others, and this will be taken into account when you review how they performed

3. Carry out the interviews

- Arrange the session so each student is interviewed for about 10 minutes in total, including a few minutes for feedback
- Some autistic applicants may struggle with language and communication skills – so be careful how you feedback on this because it may be difficult for some to develop in this area. Using the STAR tool and interview practice are good ways to encourage development however, and they help to build confidence and familiarise so applicants are prepared well, in advance
- The answers students prepared in activity 3 on pages 13/14 can be used as a guide and students should make brief notes on the feedback form (**Mock interview worksheet**)
- Congratulate students on what they did well and provide some constructive ideas on what they could improve and how they might do this

Activity six

How being proactive got Alfred hired

1. Read about Alfred

- When students are not being interviewed ask them to read through [How being proactive got Alfred hired](#)

Ask them to particularly focus on this quote from Alfred: “When it comes to creating opportunities for yourself you have to think, ‘What do I bring to the table?’”

- In small groups, ask them to brainstorm proactive ways they might stand out to potential employers. Ask them to also consider how they might talk about their own skills and experience in a creative way in an interview

Using the STAR model, ask them to prepare a two minute response to the question ‘What is my unique selling point?’

2. Remember to stay safe

- Remind students that while it’s good to think out of the box and come up with creative, innovative ideas to stand out to employers, it’s important to never do anything which could lead to taking risks with personal safety or getting into trouble because it’s illegal. It’s also important to be wary of job offers from unsafe sources

Try next

If you have time within the session or as a follow up, you can use the following related resources on the LifeSkills website. Suggest that students also spend some time looking through the articles and tools to help them prepare for an interview.

Videos

[What to wear for an interview](#)

[5 tips on the STAR interview technique](#)

Tips

[Top 5 questions to ask in an interview](#)

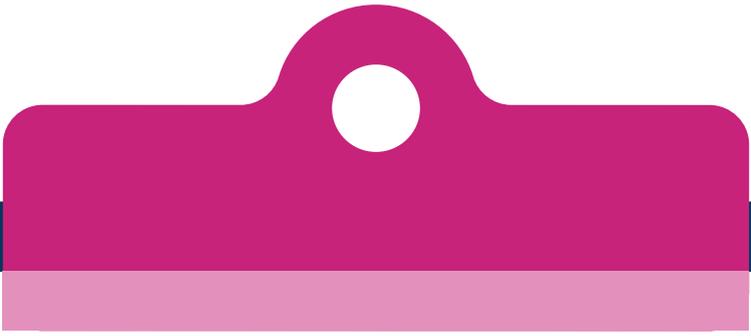
[How to bounce back from interview rejection](#)

Tools

[Personal Values](#)

Lessons

[Recognising and building personal skills](#)

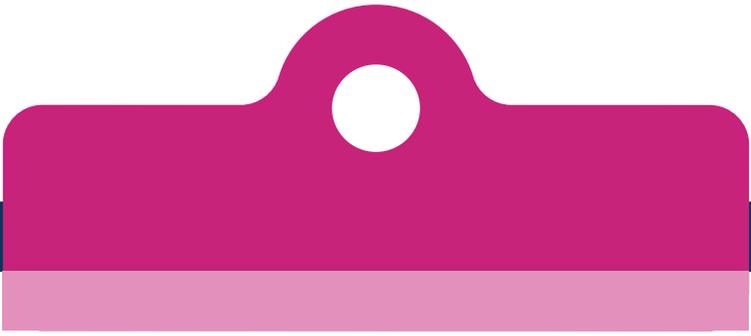


Preparing for an interview

When the interview is confirmed

A few days before the interview

The night before the interview



How the Virtual Interview Practice tool works

The [Virtual Interview Practice tool](#) is designed to help students practice responding to questions they're likely to be asked in interviews.

1. Open the tool and select an industry, or choose the 'general questions' option. The questions are the same but the language is focused on that specific industry.

2. Decide whether you'd like students to record or write their responses. We recommend encouraging students to record audio, as it's good to practice talking through answers as they would in a real interview setting.

3. Students will then be presented with 5 interview questions, with pointers on what they might want to include in their answer. They will have time to read through these and consider before recording their response. There will also be a list of the core transferable skills relevant to the question, which students should try to demonstrate in their answers if possible. Students will have the option to use the STAR model to help structure their answers if required.

4. Once they have written or recorded their answer, students will be able to evaluate their response by clicking the 'Go to evaluation' button. Here they can listen back to what they said and reflect on how they could improve.

5. When they have answered all the questions, students will receive a score.

They will then get the option to watch a sample of films on how other young people have answered interview questions.

Practising for an interview

1. Tell me about yourself

2. What do you know about the organisation and the sector you have applied for?

3. Tell me about a situation where your communication and collaboration skills made a positive difference to something you were working on

4. Tell me about a time when you found a simple solution to a complex problem

5. Describe a situation where you worked in a team. What role did you take, what did you learn and what did you achieve?

Applying for a job

Digital marketing agency – digital marketer graduate job

The key to a successful digital marketing campaign is creating an experience for the end user that is enjoyable and relevant, providing the solution to a current problem and offering new, exciting answers to the questions that haven't even been asked yet.

Our agency is all about creating dynamic, inspiring tools that go above and beyond the client's expectations by showcasing genuine innovation and forward-thinking. Developing hassle-free, engaging interactive content for a variety of purposes, from web analytics to awesome infographics, is at the core of what we do.

That's why we're looking for bright, imaginative minds to join a diverse and collaborative team to grow from within a globally renowned digital marketing agency. Excellent communication, both written and verbal, teamwork and analytical skills will be key, as will the ability to work independently and to meet deadlines across multiple projects.

Graduates with a degree in advertising, media and communications, business and technology, creative design or marketing are preferable. Good knowledge and experience of using Microsoft Office and a basic understanding of databases, HTML and CSS is also beneficial for candidates. However, if you simply have true creative flare, a good analytical business mind and a passion and eagerness to learn the ropes of digital marketing, this is the perfect role for you.

With us you'll receive:

- ✓ A competitive salary and possible bonuses
- ✓ A private healthcare package
- ✓ High quality in-house training with industry experts
- ✓ Opportunities to progress professionally and build new skills
- ✓ A fun and friendly team ready to help, listen and build on your ideas

Applying for a job (cont'd)

Mechanical engineering – Motor mechanic graduate internship

Our constant priority as a leading automaker is to improve quality, whether it's design, manufacture or customer satisfaction. At the core of our values is the longstanding commitment to developing innovative strategies that ensure our vehicles are of a higher standard and the utmost levels of safety. What's more, our sustainability goals don't just stop at reducing CO₂ emissions – the rights of our workers and the sustainable usage of key sources like water are an integral part of our business strategy.

We are always looking to grow promising new talent from the heart of our company. A great way to do this is by joining our Graduate Internship Programme, which provides hands-on, industry-specific experience. You will be assigned projects on a rotational system, so as to gain exposure to a number of different departments and network with senior management teams, get first-hand advice from a range of employees and develop key technical skills which will enable you to work towards building a future career with us.

A 2.1 or first-class honours degree in mechanical engineering is required. Any additional training within the areas of business, computer aided design or manufacturing is also desirable. Excellent teamwork, communication skills and the ability to time manage effectively to meet high-pressure deadlines are also highly important attributes.

With our programme, you can expect to get the full benefits of:

- ✓ High quality training within a variety of departments
- ✓ Professional development throughout your placement
- ✓ Ample chances to network with high-level employers at a number of social events
- ✓ A comprehensive education programme
- ✓ Placement opportunities upon completion of the programme

Applying for a job (cont'd)

Retail banking – Foundation apprenticeship

Success is open to all at our bank. We strive to encourage an environment where ideas, knowledge and innovation are shared every day, within a team of dedicated, inspiring people. Our Foundation and Higher Apprenticeships are designed to give everyone the chance to build a lasting career with us. We don't see age, background, experience or disabilities or health conditions as barriers. All we look for is potential.

From adjusting our initial application procedures to making your working environment work for you throughout your career, we'll help you perform to your best. Because the further your potential takes you here, the better it is for our customers, our clients, and our business. We're looking for someone who is ready to develop leadership, proactivity and a positive attitude to build lasting relationships with customers, partners and colleagues. We also want top problem solvers and creative thinkers who are ready to take on real business challenges. But don't worry, we don't expect you to have everything from the offset – we'll be there every step of the way to guide and mentor you towards acquiring the skillset you'll need to thrive with us.

The Foundation Apprenticeship is ideal for you if you're over 16 and either completely new to the world of work, or returning to employment after a break. If you've got a year's work experience under your belt, or are due to finish school with 200 UCAS points at A-level or equivalent, then one of our Higher Apprenticeships is the option for you.

Whichever apprenticeship you follow, you can expect:

- ✓ A rounded and rewarding experience
- ✓ A relevant qualification
- ✓ Plenty of support
- ✓ Specially designed training
- ✓ A competitive salary and benefits package



Mock interview feedback sheet

Student name:

Interviewer name:

Strengths

Areas for development

First impressions

Body language and
eye contact

Language and
communication skills

Quality of examples
and references
to skills and
achievements

Asked questions at
the end

Other comments or suggestions
