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## PREPARE FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

### Why?

Most people are nervous about job interviews. But in this, too, practice makes perfect. It is good to prepare for an interview beforehand, both in your mind and in practice.

This assignment will give you tips on preparing for an interview and offer a list of the most common interview questions. At the end, there is also an assignment that you can use to practise the interview situation in 'real life'.

Please bear in mind a few basics before you even start preparing for a job interview:

- In the interview, the main emphasis is on the big picture: the interviewer is trying to create a clear understanding of your motivation, skills, strengths, experience, mindset and ways of working.
- The interview allows the employer to evaluate your motivation and your suitability for the position and work community.
- The assessment always goes both ways: the interview also gives you the opportunity to find out if the position and organisation really are a good fit for you. After the interview, it is perfectly okay for you to decide that you do not wish to proceed in the recruitment process.
- It is in nobody's best interests if you end up in a position or organisation that is not right for you. This is why you should try to be as much of yourself as you can be in the interview.
- The interviewer wants you to do well (and may be nervous themselves).

### How?

Do your background research thoroughly. You will feel much calmer going to the interview when you have looked up the most important things about the position and employer, prepared answers to the most common interview questions and come up with your own questions for the interviewers.

When preparing for a job interview, go through the following:

- Search for information about the employer and position.
- Prepare to answer the most commonly asked questions (see list below).
- Think about what you want to ask the employer and write down your questions.
- Make it crystal clear to yourself what message you want to convey to the employer.
- Prepare to state your salary expectations. To help you do so, find out more about the collective agreement applying to the organisation or see the salary comparison pages on the Duunitori ([duunitori.fi/palkat](https://duunitori.fi/palkat)), Palkkadata ([palkkadata.fi](https://palkkadata.fi)) or Oikotie ([oikotie.fi/palkkavertailu](https://oikotie.fi/palkkavertailu)) websites. You can also find salary data on trade unions' websites. If you are a member of a trade union, you can contact your union for further advice on pay.



- Prepare concrete examples that you can use to describe your skills. You can use the STAR model to prepare stories that highlight your skills. You can find detailed instructions on how to apply the model on the page [Tools for planning your career and future](#) in the assignment file "Verbalise your skills with the STAR model".
- Make it clear to yourself when you could start in the new position (bearing in mind the period of notice at your current job, if you have one, and any other arrangements).

#### Practical preparations:

- Pack a pen and notepad, your CV, a transcript of your studies or your degree certificates, testimonials, letters of recommendation and any other relevant documents to bring with you.
- Dress smartly and appropriately for the job. It is better to dress too formally than too casually.
- Be on time! Check travel timetables and routes in advance. For remote interviews, make sure you have access to a quiet space and that your devices and connections work. Also make sure you have the interviewer's phone number so that the interview can continue if you have network connectivity issues.
- Prepare for unexpected situations, such as a group interviews, practical exercises, case studies or changing the language of the interview on the fly.
- Remember to present a positive attitude and to smile. Give a friendly greeting to everyone you meet.
- Prepare questions to the interviewer in advance: what you would like to know more about, what concerns you, etc. If you think of new questions during the interview, do not hesitate to ask for clarification.
- Prepare answers to the most commonly asked interview questions in advance, so that you can be as relaxed and confident in the interview as possible. You do not have to learn the answers by heart – it is best if the conversation flows naturally. Do not read the answers from your notes, even during a remote interview!

#### Common interview questions:

- Tell us something about yourself.
- What do you know about our organisation? What expectations or ideas do you have about the position you are applying for?
- Why did you choose to apply for this position? Tell us what motivates and interests you about this position.
- What can you tell us about your strengths and weaknesses? What skills do you have that are relevant to the position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What achievements are you particularly proud of? Why?
- What challenges do you expect to encounter in this position?
- Tell us about a time when you failed.
- What would you like to learn in this job or what kinds of skills would you like to improve?
- What are the three most important things that you have learned in your previous jobs or in your studies?



- What do you want to achieve in your new job?
- What are you like as a member of a work community? How would your previous colleagues or supervisors describe you?
- Which aspects of yourself would you like to develop?

### What to ask the interviewer?

You will usually have the opportunity to ask your own questions either during or at the end of the interview to bring up anything that is on your mind. Make use of this opportunity. Examples of questions that you can ask the interviewer:

- What can you tell me about the team that I would work with?
- What kind of orientation or training can I expect?
- How does your organisation promote the skills development of its employees?
- How would you describe your organisational culture?
- What do you think is the best thing about working in this organisation?
- How do you reward successful employees? What kind of opportunities for career advancement does your organisation have?
- What could potentially be the biggest challenges in this position?
- How would you evaluate my work over the next six months?
- What is the next step in the recruitment process and what does the timeline look like?

### After the interview

After the interview, it is polite to send a message to the interviewer, thanking them for the meeting. If the interview increased your interest in the prospective job, mention this too. In addition, you can ask questions to clarify any points you are unsure about.

Do not hesitate to ask for feedback after the interview. Particularly if you are not selected for the position, ask the interviewer for feedback on your performance during the interview and for information on what the employer emphasised in selecting the appointee. The feedback can help you in your future job interviews.

### Handling your nerves

If job interviews make you very nervous, try calming yourself down before the interview situation in any way that works for you: you can, for example, listen to relaxing music, exercise or do breathing exercises.

It is also good to remember that is perfectly okay to be nervous! If at any point during the interview you feel that you are going to freeze or that you missed a question, you can even try saying that you are a little nervous right now. This can defuse the situation. Also remember that an experienced recruiter can see your potential even through your nervousness.



## Interview assignment (in a group of three)

The purpose of the interview assignment is to simulate a real-life job interview. It will give you feedback on your performance and a chance to discuss your experience with others.

### Instructions:

- Form groups of three.
- Roles: interviewer, interviewee, observer
- The interviewee will explain the role that they are applying for (this can be a real open position or a made-up one).
- The interviewer will choose the interview questions, for example from the list of common interview questions above.
- The observer will observe the interview, paying attention to the interviewee's body language, use of voice and response content.
- Start the interview. The observer ensures that you stay on schedule.
- Do three interview rounds so that each person gets to play each role once.
- Briefly give each other – and especially the interviewee – feedback after each interview round.
- Use 5–15 minutes for each interview round and 15–45 minutes for the interviews in total, not including the final discussion (see final discussion questions at the end of this assignment).

The minimum time for conducting the entire assignment is 15 minutes, with each interview round lasting five minutes. If you can spare more time, stretch the rounds to 15 minutes each. In this case, the actual interview can last 10 minutes and the feedback session five minutes.

If you want, you can ask the observer to record your interview on video. Video recording is an extremely effective tool for analysing how you communicate. The recording allows you (on your own or with others) to watch yourself in the interview situation, giving you time to examine your body language and the way you answer questions and increasing your awareness of how you communicate.

When you have completed all three rounds, discuss the assignment together using the following questions:

- How did you feel about the assignment? How real did the interview feel?
- What was easy and what was hard?
- How happy are you with your performance as an interviewee?
- Which questions were difficult to answer? How could you answer them in the future?
- What kind of observations did you make in your different roles?
- What do you want to remember about this assignment when you are preparing for a job interview the next time?