



The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

INTERVIEWS



Once you have perfected the art of CV and cover letter writing, the next hurdle is arguably the most daunting of career-hunting tasks: the interview. GraduateCoach will arm you with the knowledge and techniques to help you sail through these frequently intimidating encounters without breaking a sweat.





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Essential Guide to Interviews

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ABOUT US

Graduate Coach has been set up to help students and recent graduates acquire the skills they need to get their dream job.

Having interviewed over 3,000 students and graduates over the last three years, we have a lot of very recent knowledge about how unprepared students are for the rigors of the job market.

There are only 35,000 'proper' graduate calibre jobs available in any given year. And so as every parent and student knows, competition for jobs is therefore ferocious with any advertised position receiving well over 100 applicants. We do not believe that any of this is going to change in the near future. Indeed, if anything it will get worse as student numbers increase further and the current recession causes companies to cut their recruiting.

Our unique approach will teach students and graduates how they can acquire skills such as interviewing, presentation abilities and CV construction. We will also be offering advice and help on a more fundamental level by getting a students to really think through what type of person they are and therefore what type of job they would be best suited for.



CONTENT

INTRO

- 12 Essential interview techniques
- 13 Getting an interview
- 14 Avoiding interview pitfalls

BEFORE YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- 18 Preparing for your job interview
- 24 Confidence is key
- 27 Telephone interview tips
- 30 What to wear at your job interview
- 35 The best answer format
- 39 Common questions that you might be asked
- 45 Arriving at your job interview
- 45 Before your job interview

AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- 50 At your job interview
- 56 Things to avoid at your job interview
- 58 Difficult interview questions
- 62 The end of the interview

AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW

- 66 What to expect after the interview
- 69 Bibliography

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM GRADUATE COACH

- 77 Cover Letters and CVs
- 85 Great Presentations
- 93 Work Experience



Chapter One

INTRO



ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Did you know that some interviewers will give higher points to the candidates that ask for a question to be clarified?

These are the kind of insider tips that we as employers can let you in on. We will cover everything from the vital initial first impression to how to sell yourself without blowing your own trumpet too loudly.

Interviewers will always pose some tough questions. They will probe your weaknesses and question your abilities. Our job is to ensure that you walk into the room with the confidence to come through this test of character with flying colours.

Feeling nervous before an interview is human nature – even the most experienced of people get butterflies in these situations. What we aim to provide you with is a grounding of self-confidence that will impress your future employer and give you the opportunity to let your qualities shine to their full potential.



GETTING AN INTERVIEW

Dictionary definition: Interview – a meeting in which one or more people question, consult or evaluate another person.

Congratulations. CVs and applications are rejected by the bucket-load so getting over that first hurdle should be a boost in itself. You should process this fact and use it to build up your confidence. Being granted an interview shows that it has been accepted that, on paper, you are equipped to do the job. Now it is time to prove it in person.

You need to sell your personality and your skills and to do this you must market yourself as a package. Be prepared, well-presented, motivated and self-confident and you have the perfect opportunity to prove that you are a ‘must have’ for the job in question. If you can impress here, there’s no limit to what you can achieve.

Be warned, however, interviews are tough. They can be tense affairs and interviewers won’t go easy on you. Don’t expect friendly smiles and easy conversation, expect to be quizzed and cross-examined. Just remember the key phrases: preparation, practice, confidence and self-belief.

Stars from the world of sport have to have an enormous amount of self-belief. They don’t just say, “I hope I win this one,” they say, “I’m going to win!” Muhammad Ali pumped himself up by saying, “I am the greatest, I am the double greatest!” He believed in himself and by combining this belief with his natural ability, he fulfilled his own prophesy.



AVOIDING INTERVIEW PITFALLS

DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT A TYPICAL INTERVIEW

We never really know what questions are lurking at job interviews. There are, however, plenty of pointers to keep in mind that will save you from tripping up almost immediately.

First impressions don't count

You may think that the shoes you are wearing won't affect whether you get the job or not, but you would be surprised how often they do. Making a good first impression is vital. You need to look and feel the part.

A trend for the rest of the interview can be established at the very beginning. If the interviewer takes an immediate dislike to you, it can be tough to get things back on track. Instead of having to redeem yourself after making a bad first impression, you have to ensure that you have given yourself the best possible start. Presenting yourself impeccably is a must.

You are there to make up the numbers

Interviewers have enough work to do. They would rather not interview people that they already know are unsuitable for the job from their CV. You are there because they want you there.

All interviewers ask the same questions

Never predict that what goes on in one interview will definitely occur in another. Different jobs require different information. The more you prepare, the better off you will be. You can try to predict what questions will be asked of you by referring to your CV and the job description.

Your interviewer will use trick questions to catch you out

Try not to think of your interview as something that is being done to you. The sole purpose of an interview is to establish whether you're right for the job and not to trick you.

You are inferior to your interviewer

There is no need to be submissive as the interviewer will not want to employ someone who thinks of themselves as 'unworthy.' Look at it as more of a meeting of two adults that are both looking for the same thing and seeing if they are right for one another.



SUMMARY

AVOIDING INTERVIEW PITFALLS

- Go into the interview with a positive attitude.
- First impressions do count whatever people say.
- You are there because they think you'll be able to do the job – not to make up numbers.
- Do prepare for certain questions but be aware that you'll have to be able to think on your feet.
- Think of yourself as an equal to your interviewer.
- Your interviewer is not trying to trick you.

Chapter Two

**BEFORE
YOUR JOB
INTERVIEW**

PREPARING FOR YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

Confidence is an essential component of a successful job interview. It's no use just being cocky for the sake of being cocky. However, true confidence comes as a result of being comprehensively prepared before facing the employer's questions.

There is nothing more irritating than coming out of an interview and remembering a great response to a question that you answered badly. Here are some tips to ensure that you are primed for even the toughest lines of enquiry.

COVER ALL BASES BY DOING YOUR RESEARCH

Get on the internet and research the company back to front as soon as you have been granted an interview. By ensuring that you are clued up on what the company is all about, you can impress interviewers with your knowledge, initiative and enthusiasm. During the interview, you can call up useful pieces of information you have gleaned from your research. Dropping in well-informed references to the website will show that you are a self-starter which is what many employers will be looking for. Just remember, most interviewers are experienced in sniffing out weaknesses. And if you haven't done any research or preparation, it won't look impressive.

Good tip

This is the right kind of enthusiasm to show. If you turn up too early for your interview or try too hard to impress, it can be construed as being a little desperate. Arming yourself with the right kind of knowledge will not be looked upon in the same way.

GO TO THE FUNCTIONS

Many companies hold regular presentations so why not head along? You may even meet your interviewer and get a chance to establish a rapport with him or her.

BROADEN YOUR MIND

Read up on literature that corresponds to the industry you are planning to enter. For instance, if you're going for a job in finance, have a read through Money Week or Finance Magazine. Stay alert to news that concerns the company you are to be interviewed by. If they pop up in a story you can use the information to broaden your understanding of the firm and to impress in your forthcoming interview.

SNOOP AROUND

Utilise your social network to find someone who works at the company who will be interviewing you. Slip them a quick email asking if there's anything that they can think of that would be useful to you. Questions might cover aspects such as the general atmosphere in the office, how people tend to work, if they socialise together, the style of management, etc ... The better your knowledge is, the more confident you will be.

DO IT NOW!

Everyone with internet access can look at a company's website, so make the effort to go that bit further. If you know who will be interviewing you, Google them. See if they've written any articles, do they have a blog, are they on Twitter? Look for articles on the company in newspapers or industry magazines.

TRY TO PREDICT THE COMPANY'S REQUIREMENTS

Go back over the list of specifications in the job advert and try to delve deeper into their meanings. For example, if it reads 'candidate must have advanced communication skills', this probably means you will need to be easy to talk to and confident when meeting new people.

If it says, 'candidate will need to be a self-starter', chances are that the role may be unstructured and that you will need to be the one to structure it. The more you can convey your understanding of the job, the more the interviewer will think you are suited to it.

Practice on the advert below

Business Graduate Programme

This business program has been designed to create the leaders of tomorrow.

You will enjoy real responsibility from the start, facing challenges that will stretch your abilities to the full and develop the skills you need to make a real difference to our future.

Along with a 2:1 degree in any discipline, you must be geographically mobile and determined to pursue a career in business. Does this sound like you?

DO IT NOW!

Now read between the lines of your job adverts.

NOTES

CONFIDENCE IS KEY

“ *If you sit in on auditions, the best actor never gets the job: especially in television. You get the job when you walk in the door. In a weird way, we are not selling acting. What we are selling is confidence.*”

This is what George Clooney says about auditions. Most interviewers will agree that if you carry yourself confidently, it bodes well. Be natural and eager, but not so excessively that it will appear desperate.

Employers want someone that will not only work for them, but will work with them.

Try to convey a sense of ‘It’s not that I need this job; it’s that I really want it’.

BEING CONFIDENT IN YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

There are two simple ways of conveying an air of natural confidence.

Don’t put all your eggs into one basket. Have a few interviews or job prospects in the pipeline which you would happily fall back on. If you have focused on this job only, an aura of desperation can infect the interviewers and increase the tension.

Essentially, interviews are about having enough faith and confidence in someone to give them a wage in return. If you show that you have the same kind of belief in yourself, they will be more likely to pick you for the job in question.

It may sound like motivational speak, but it is important to believe in your ability to do the job. Even if you are not yet equipped to

perform the task in question at the optimum level, you need to have faith that you will keep improving. Most employers are looking for potential in graduate recruits. Keep that in mind. It is thought that we only use 10% of our potential. Imagine how much you could use if you were pushed.

Another way of gaining confidence is to simply relax. Confidence comes in all sorts of forms – it doesn't mean that you have to be a loud extrovert. Just be authentic.

Don't try to be someone you're not. Interviewers are highly experienced at making calls on personality, so are good judges of character.

Leave it up to them to decide whether you are right for the job. It is not your decision.

ANTICIPATING YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

Testing

It is possible that you may be asked to complete some tests or evaluations at some point during your interview. You should be told in advance of your interview, but if you are unsure then call ahead and ask the company's Human Resources Department.

Psychometric tests

These are the most likely tests to come up and you can practise them on www.shl.com.

You will find that they ask some slightly ridiculous questions, but they have been designed to give an insight into your personality that may not be achievable through an interview alone.

Good tip

If you think about your answers too much and try to be logical, you will send yourself around in circles. These tests aren't logical, so just answer them quickly and honestly.

Presentations

Another interview technique is to ask candidates to do a presentation. It could be on a variety of subjects: you, the company, the job in hand.

The main thing is that around 30% is about what you come up with and 70% is about how you present.

If you've been asked to give a presentation then it is likely that the job will entail being comfortable doing those sorts of activities regularly. You are also showing your dedication and commitment to producing the goods on demand.

A lot of the rules that apply to nailing an interview also apply to nailing a presentation.

Do your research, follow the brief and remember to have confidence.

*In-depth presentation guidance is available from GraduateCoach. To really get an edge on the competition, read *The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to Great Presentations*.*

Buy it online at www.graduatecoach.co.uk



TELEPHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

Telephone interviews are commonly used to whittle down the number of candidates.

Being good on the phone has become vital in many jobs as this is a way of assessing your telephone manner.

They can sometimes be done without the candidate knowing they're being interviewed which can be dangerous. If you speak improperly to an employer over the phone you may miss out on the job before even getting an interview.

If a 'withheld' or 'no number' call comes through, assume that it's an interview. Be polite and helpful.

Usually, however, you will be alerted to the fact that you are being interviewed. Keep calm and cool, have in front of you a copy of your CV and the job description and conduct the call somewhere quiet and distraction-free.

Specify a time that suits you

This gives you time to prepare, think about the questions that might be asked and how you would answer them. Be prepared at the specific time with your CV, a list of achievements, pen and pad for taking notes nearby. Allow yourself a bit of time before the call to relax and spend some time breathing deeply.

Use a landline

If you can, use a landline and avoid using your mobile. You don't want to lose connection or run out of battery in the middle of an interview. Don't use a speaker phone either.

Find a quiet room

Make sure you're somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. If you're using a landline, make sure your mobile phone is on silent or turned off.

Be clear

Make sure you enunciate clearly, don't speak too loudly or too quietly. When we're nervous, we have a tendency to talk fast. Make a concerted effort to slow your speech. Your interviewer will appreciate your articulation and your brain will have more time to think about the right things to say.

Smile

When someone smiles when talking on the phone, you can hear it and so will your interviewer. It will also help you relax and feel more confident.

Mind your posture

Sit up straight in a quiet place with all your notes in front of you or lay your notes out on a desk or table and stand up while you talk.

Hydrate

Keep some water handy. You don't want to keep the interviewer waiting if you get choked up or your mouth gets dry. Plus, "excuse me, I need to take a drink of water" is always an acceptable way to stall if you need a few extra seconds to think.

Talk with your hands

Use your hands when talking. Studies have shown that your brain can think of the exact words you want to use more easily when you allow your hands to move freely as you would in normal conversation.



SUMMARY

PREPARING FOR YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- Research everything you possibly can about the company.
- Go to any conferences held by the company or involving anyone working there.
- Read up on the literature that relates to the company or the sector.
- Read between the lines of the job description and specification.
- Try to find someone working within the company and get the inside track on life there.
- Have other prospects on the horizon to take the pressure off.
- You don't need this job, you want it!
- Find out if there will be any testing or evaluation.
- Don't try to be logical about psychometric tests, because they aren't!
- Be ready to have an 'unexpected' telephone interview sprung upon you.
- If you know that a telephone interview is coming your way, ensure you conduct it in a quiet, distraction-free environment.



WHAT TO WEAR AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

The interviewer is not only looking for good answers from you. First impressions at the interview factor highly in the final assessment of your suitability. To make a favourable impact, you must feel as comfortable and confident as possible. Don't ruin your chances by having to pull your skirt down in the worry that it is too short or being distracted by the stain on your collar. It's not hard to dress appropriately and with the help of GraduateCoach's tips there should be no chance of you slipping up.

STEPS TOWARDS MAKING THE RIGHT FIRST IMPRESSION

Be fashionably organised

It is a good idea to know what you are going to wear on the day of the interview as early as possible. You can then focus in on other things. Make sure everything is washed and ironed before the morning of your interview to avoid a last minute panic.

Try to fit in

If you are really unsure about what is suitable attire for your prospective work environment, then a good tip is to hang about outside the office at home time. Check out what people are wearing. Of course, you want to be yourself, but if you can stick to a theme already established within the office then all the better. You'll need to fit in with them, not the other way around and it's much easier to hire someone who looks like they will, rather than one who doesn't.

It is better to overdress than to dress down

Some work environments – the media and other creative industries in particular – operate a far more informal dress code than others.

However, even if everyone else in the office is dressed in jeans, under absolutely no circumstances are you to turn up to your interview in anything that is denim. Trainers are also a no-no. In most sectors, you'd be well advised to attend the interview in a suit, or shirt and trousers/skirt.

For women, try to be stylishly demure rather than blasé. Don't wear a skirt that stops above the knee and don't wear a low-cut top.

Only when you've got the job and people love and adore you can you unleash more of your fashion sensibilities.

Don't overlook your shoes – make sure they're clean and have been polished.

People often overlook their personal appearance. Make sure your hair is nicely styled, you don't need to rush out and get a short back and sides but everyone should think about whether they need a trim. Boys, make sure you shave or trim your beard. Girls, go easy on the makeup and don't wear garish nail colours. You want your interviewer to be concentrating on what you're saying, not wondering how much time you've spent in the bathroom.

Be comfortable

Don't wear anything too tight or too loose. Anything that makes you shift and squirm and pull your clothes in different directions across your body will make you self-conscious. The key is to focus on the interview and not your choice of attire.

Fall back on old favourites

Pick colours and shapes that you have worn before and feel good in. There's a lot to be said for how you carry yourself when you are confident about the way you look.

DO IT NOW!

Picture your wardrobe in your head or, even better, stand in front of it and piece together your interview outfit. Think carefully about the sector you are applying for and what kind of impression you will give off. Ask your friends to look at your outfit and see what they think.



SUMMARY

WHAT TO WEAR AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- Decide on what you plan to wear at an early stage.
- Have the outfit washed and ironed to avoid a last minute panic.
- If you are completely unsure of the style to adopt, check out what people are wearing when they arrive or leave the site of your interview.
- No denim, trainers or T-shirts.
- Nothing too short or low-cut for girls – it won't go down at all well.
- It's far better to be overdressed than dressed too casually.
- Make sure your clothes fit properly.
- Make sure you wear something you feel comfortable and confident in.

THE BEST ANSWER FORMAT

There are some easy ways of making sure that your interview answers are effective.

It all comes down to practice – either in front of the mirror or in front of your family. You might feel silly, but it’s a great way to build your confidence.

TECHNIQUES FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Preparation

- Step 1: By looking at the job specification and description and going back over your CV, anticipate possible questions that will be asked of you.

If a job description requires someone with bundles of initiative, you will almost certainly be asked about when you have shown that quality in a previous role.

- Step 2: Come up with scenarios that illustrate your answers to the possible questions.
- Step 3: Rehearse telling them in public.

The best answer format

Take a beginning, middle and end angle when illustrating your examples. This is the best way to make sure that your answers are rounded with all the relevant information. Remember to keep it simple. Don’t give yourself an enormous amount to recount.

Beginning: The situation that you came up against.

Middle: The way in which you overcame it.

End: The outcome and result of what you did.

Example

Interviewer: When have you shown initiative?

Interviewee: When I was working as an Administrator in a recruitment agency, the temporary recruitment consultant had to leave unexpectedly early for the day. One of our biggest clients rang in at 5.20pm and said they needed a temp to start the next day at 9am. Everyone else was very busy and so I rang around some of the people that were on the availability list. When none of them could do it, I rang up someone that had brought her CV in earlier that day that I'd thought was a great candidate. She arrived for work the next day and gave us two weeks worth of revenue.

It's important to back up all your answers with actual experience.

Good tip

You don't need to draw on experience from the workplace. A good example of leadership could be from school or being a team captain at university.

REHEARSE UNTIL IT FEELS RIGHT

Any sportsman or actor will tell you that the secret to their success is pure practise. You wouldn't go to see a play where the participants are all reading from scripts and stumbling over their stage directions.

The England rugby player, Jonny Wilkinson, puts his accurate goal-kicking down to constant practise. He often refuses to leave the training ground until his kicks are right and hones his craft even on Christmas Day.

Why should the same dedication not apply to every profession?

When told he was ‘lucky’, the successful South African golfer, Gary Player, replied, “Yes, and the harder I practise the luckier I get.”

Interviews can be stressful affairs and even the most articulate person has the potential to slip up if their preparation is not up to the mark.

Sit in front of a mirror and go over your examples of practical experience. You can check your body language as you tell your stories which will enable you to decide which phrases to keep and which ones to discard.

THE RIGHT KIND OF PRACTICE

You know those times when you read a book and you’re not really concentrating? You read the same lines over and over again and not taking one word in. This is the wrong kind of practice.

It is like trying to address a problem aspect of your life without changing anything that you’re doing wrong.

If you keep on reading through your examples without really paying attention to them then you run the risk of not being able to remember them. You will also reel them off like you’re bored of what you’re saying. One thing is for sure, if you are bored, they’ll be bored, too.

To ensure that you keep yourself interested, deploy exactly the same enthusiasm every time you practise. Concentrate on your presentation. Theatre actors need to act their lines with the same energy seven days a week and you should, too. Be wholeheartedly interested in what you’re preparing to say. After all, it’s about you.

FIND A MENTOR

A useful preparation tactic is to find someone that is in a line of work where they interview people. Take along your CV and ask them to give you a mock interview. The questions may be different, but your reactions, how you carry yourself and your listening abilities will all be the same. Your mock interviewer can tell you what they thought from an employer's perspective.

Getting another perspective can be extremely helpful. Others can see you in ways that you cannot see yourself. Very few of us can make a clear and honest evaluation of our own performance.

COMMON QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT BE ASKED

Below is a list of common questions that your interviewer might ask you. Try to come up with responses using the beginning, middle and end format.

Writing down your answers means there is far more chance of your remembering them.

Remember, you are coming up with relevant and detailed examples. Name the situation, discuss the process and then reveal the outcome.

What is your greatest achievement to date?

What is your biggest failure to date?

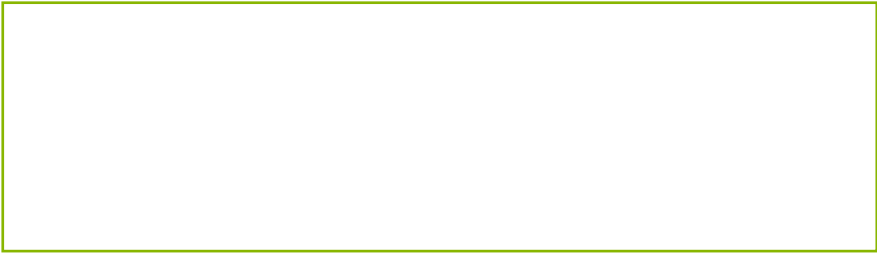
How would your friends describe you?

Have you ever been given management responsibilities?

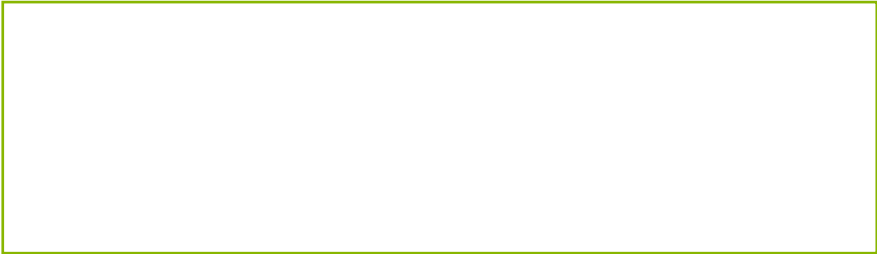
Tell us a time when you have showed leadership skills?

Tell us a time when you have worked within a team?

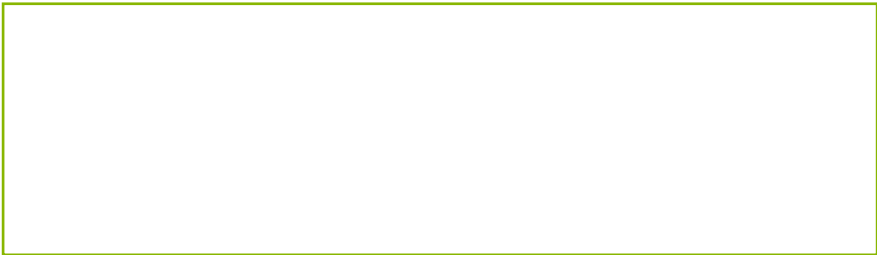
Tell us a time when you've had to work on something by yourself?



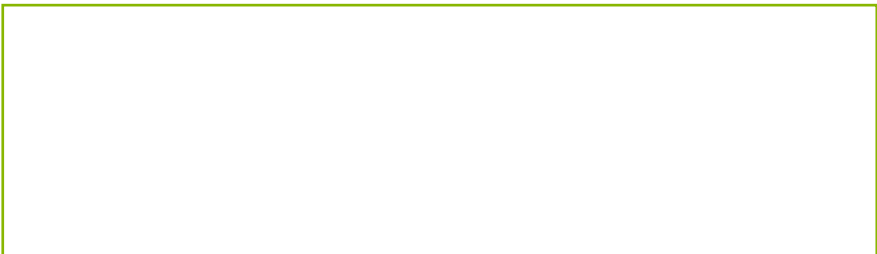
When have you received criticism and how did you handle it?



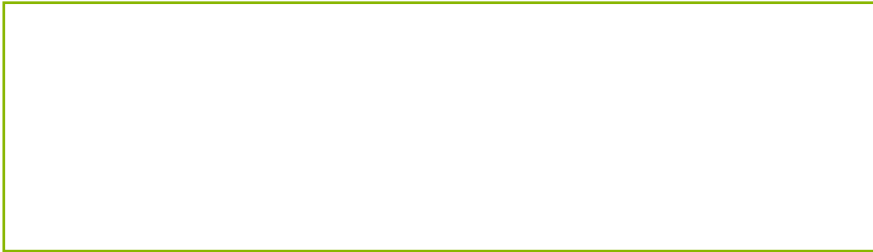
What motivates you?



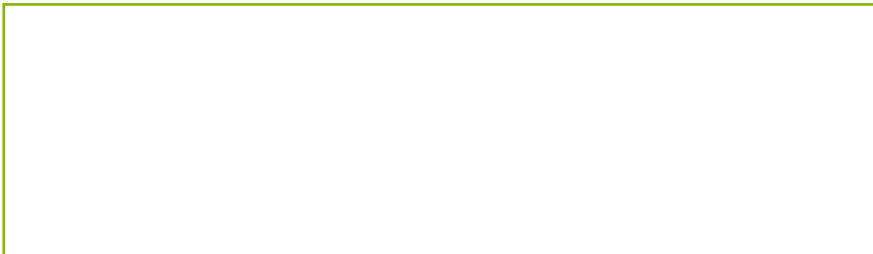
Do you know how to motivate other people?



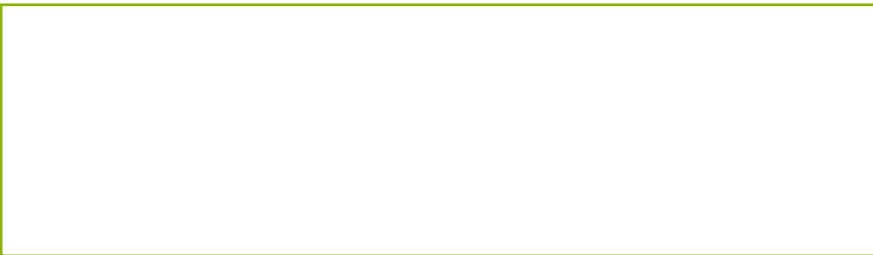
Has there been a time when you've needed to motivate other people?



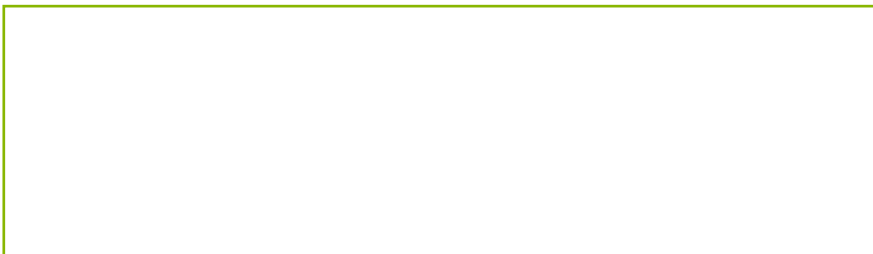
How do you handle working under pressure?



Have you ever had to work with a difficult team member?



How did you manage this?





SUMMARY

PREPARING YOUR INTERVIEW ANSWERS

- By looking at your CV and the job description, anticipate the sorts of questions you think will be asked of you.
- Come up with examples that will back up your answers.
- Format those examples from beginning and middle to end.
- Practise the examples with the commonly asked questions – at least one of these will be asked of you in your interview.
- Rehearse.
- Organise a mock interview.

ARRIVING AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

The anticipation of a job interview can really set you on edge which is why being prepared can help to calm the nerves. With our GraduateCoach interview tips we hope to make those last moment wobbles a thing of the past.

BEFORE YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

PREVENT TURNING UP LATE

Punctuality is all important. To avoid arriving late, plan your route first.

Look the address up on AA/RAC route finder or, for London, visit www.tfl.gov.uk (Transport for London). Do a dummy run the day before if you can. If not, just make sure you arrive at the venue in good time. Once you've found the address you can go and have a coffee while you wait. Only arrive 5-10 minutes early for the interview itself, however. Any more than that and you'll look too keen.

Ensure that you have taken the phone number of the company before leaving your house. If you are running late, it's much better to call and let them know.

YOU'VE ARRIVED AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

Be nice

You never know who the interviewing panel will ask about their thoughts on you. So be friendly to everyone you come across from the receptionist to the cleaner.

Take a quick trip to the bathroom

You might think that you look perfect, but it is better just to have a final check in front of the mirror. You don't want to emerge from an interview to find that you have food on your face or a stain on your shirt.

Bring your notes

You can end up waiting in reception for your interview to start, so, instead of twiddling your thumbs and getting nervous, read through your notes and CV.

Remember to breathe

If you are nervous, take a moment and try to put things in perspective. By simply reading our guide, you have probably done far more preparation than any other candidate and have nothing to worry about.

And more importantly

Remember that it is not the end of the world if you don't get the position. Everything happens for a reason.



SUMMARY

BEFORE YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- Have a quick glance at this before you set off for the interview and tick them off.
- Take a copy of your CV.
- Make sure you have the address of the office and the appropriate directions with you. Also take down the phone number in case you are late and you need to ring them.
- Ensure that you know the name of the person you are being interviewed by.
- Turn your phone off.
- Be friendly to everybody from the moment you set foot in the door to the moment you leave.
- Take long deep breaths and remember – you are prepared.
- Take the pressure off by remembering that it is not a tragedy if you don't get the position. You want the job, you don't need it!

Chapter Three

**AT
YOUR JOB
INTERVIEW**

AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

You have finally made it to the interview stage and it is time to show the employer what you are made of. Try out our helpful interview tips and secure that elusive position.

AS YOU ENTER THE INTERVIEW ROOM

“ *An interview is a little bit of a performance, and it's a little defensive, depending on your nature. But what could be more fun [than] to talk about yourself and have everyone stare at you like they're really interested?*” (Steve Martin, Actor)

It may not seem so, but try to think of your interview as a fun opportunity. Be chatty and positive. Don't treat it as a laugh, but smile when appropriate. The interviewer may well be onto his/her fifth applicant of the day by the time you enter the room. If you convey the right attitude, you will be remembered as the candidate that smiles in the face of pressure.

When you enter

Interviewers often make up their mind about a candidate within the first two minutes of meeting them so, with this in mind, make sure you do these three things:

- Make eye contact.
- Smile – give the impression of being happy to be there.
- Give a good handshake.

A pathetic handshake

It is vital not to appear half-hearted so guard against giving a weak handshake. It is like a pathetic hug you get off someone that doesn't really want to hug you and so just flops their arms loosely around you. It may be construed as displaying a lack of character and complete lack of effort.

Steps for a decent handshake

Some may find these tips patronising but many people really do not know how to shake someone's hand properly.

- Approach the interviewer(s) and present him/her with your right hand. Don't bound over, it may scare the interviewer. Be calm.
- Make it warm and enthusiastic.
- Take a relatively firm hold of the interviewer's hand, but not a grip – there shouldn't be any bone cracking sounds.
- Release the hand after a second or two. Not that much shaking actually goes on. It is just two people acknowledging the presence of each other in an agreeable manner. Whatever industry you end up in, you'll have to perform this greeting frequently.

DO IT NOW!

Now grab a friend and practice your shake. What do they say about yours?

From now until your interviewer, shake the hand of every new person you meet. Practice makes perfect.

SPEAKING AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- When you sit.
Sit upright with your shoulders back and relax. The main thing is to be yourself and at ease. If you are comfortable, you can really listen to what the interviewers are saying, which is difficult to do when you feel overly tense.
- Have a chat.
Often the questions in the first part of the interview are to find out a little more about you beyond your CV and cover letter. Subtly extend this if you can to establish a bond.

Example

Interviewer: *Where are you from?*

Interviewee: *Suffolk.*

Interviewer: *I've never been.*

Interviewee: *It's in the South East, very pretty but very quiet. Where are you from? I'm detecting a hint of Geordie in your accent?*

Interviewer: *Very good! I am from Newcastle. I've lived in London for 30 years now though, so my accent is a bit diluted.*

Interviewee: *My best friend from university is a Geordie. I've been there a few times.*

And so on. Establishing a rapport can be an immediate tension-reliever for both parties and act as a reason for the interviewer to remember you as a person he/she had a chat with and had things in common with.

This will also get the interviewer talking about themselves, which most people are happy to do. The interviewer will then associate you with feeling good about him or herself.

Dish out the eye contact

If there is more than one interviewer, share out your eye contact. If one interviewer seems nicer than the others, it is a natural reaction to focus on him or her. Don't make this mistake – it is important to continue to address all of them.

If one asks you a specific question, focus your attention on that person. Make sure, however, that you glance at the others to keep them involved.

If you can keep everyone involved, the interviewers will know that you have the potential to be able to chair a meeting, make a presentation or be able to perform any task where it is important to communicate with a number of people at the same time.

Next time you are with three or more people, take the opportunity to tell a story. Make an effort to look at all the people listening. Then watch as someone else is telling a story. Do they look at everyone? The chances are, if there are many people there and they only talk to one person, the others will stop listening.

Use your common sense about how long your answers should be

Interviewers tune out quite easily so keep it simple, relevant and interesting. Use hand gestures and keep your tone upbeat. If their eyes begin to glaze over then try to wind up your answer as soon as you can.

It's acceptable to ask for clarification

Some interviewers actually score people higher if they ask for a question to be clarified because it shows good listening skills. To say something like, "In other words ..." or "So you mean ...", is fine if you feel that restating it would clarify things.

Don't be afraid of silences

You are allowed to ponder on how you would like to answer the question. Just say, "Do you mind if I think about that?". Just don't leave it too long.

Be animated

Show that you are engaged when the interviewer is talking. An ability to listen well will definitely be picked up on. The interviewer is likely to share more information with you because you seem interested.

“ *We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.*” (Epictetus, Greek philosopher)



SUMMARY

AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

- Don't give epic answers.
- Sit upright and relax – it is much easier to listen when you're feeling comfortable.
- Feel free to double check a question's meaning.
- Ask for a moment to think.
- Be interested in what the interviewer is saying to you.



THINGS TO AVOID AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

WHAT NOT TO DO AT YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

Now that you know exactly what to do at a job interview, it is also imperative you know the kind of thing you need to avoid at all costs. We lay down the law on stamping out common errors.

- When an interviewer asks “Did you find us all right?” avoid launching into a tirade about problems with traffic and the tube, etc.
- Being late. If you are and it was caused by something beyond your control, apologise profusely and make your reasons simple and quick. It is better to just give yourself an excessive amount of time to get to the interview.
- Don’t say “we”. If one of your achievements was undertaken in the company of others, focus on your own role. The interviewers are only interested in what you did.
- Asking about your salary or any bonus schemes. Save that until you’ve actually got the job. You won’t get the job if it seems that you are only interested in the money.
- Avoid looking around the room, picking your nails, shifting in your seat, or sighing while your interviewer is talking.
- Don’t interrupt the interviewer. Even if you’re incredibly passionate about what your answer is going to be, try to keep quiet until it is your turn to talk.



SUMMARY

THINGS TO AVOID AT YOUR INTERVIEW

- Don't be negative.
- Don't give excuses.
- Say "I" not "we" when giving your examples.
- Don't mention money.
- Try your hardest not to interrupt.



DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

One, if not more, of the following questions will inevitably be asked at your interview. They are highly challenging and if you only do the minimum amount of preparation you are likely to fall short in answering them. Here are some tips on how to emerge unscathed.

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

What are your weaknesses?

We all have weaknesses. The trick is to rationalise your own foibles so that they end up emerging as strengths. Be careful not to respond with a clichéd response such as: “I have trouble leaving things until they’re completely finished”. The interviewer will most probably probe you for another one.

Make your weakness specific to the role. For instance, if you are going for a management position, you will be punished for saying that you are indecisive. If you are going for an entry-level position, however, it is not so important.

For every weakness, let the interviewer know how you are trying to overcome it. For example, if you say that you can be indecisive, make it clear that you are working on the problem by coming to a decision and sticking to it no matter what.

What are your strengths?

Remember, you are there to sell yourself but you don’t want to come across as being too egotistical when this question is asked of you. Saying, “I believe ...” or “I consider myself to be ...” at the beginning of a sentence is always a good tip.

Good tip

Remember, you are sure of yourself, you can do this job. Make sure that you make this clear throughout the interview.

Backing up your statements with examples is always a good idea. Instead of saying, “I’m extremely sociable and am excellent with people”, you could say, “I believe my social and communication skills are particularly strong. I really enjoy meeting new people and am comfortable within a meeting environment and talking over the phone with people I have never met. When I was working at...”

Good tip

Only mention qualities that are relevant to the role. If you start talking about how good you are in meetings when you won’t be stepping foot in a meeting room, it might not get you very far.

Tell us about your current/previous job.

Even if you think your boss was a total imbecile, don’t say it. Don’t even mention that you may not always have got on with people. It may be the truth, but it will make the interviewer think that you would also talk about him/her in that way.

Come up with examples of what you did in your last job. Don’t be too brief and let them picture you in your previous role.

Why do you want to work for us?

This is where you bring in your research. They are looking for reasons why you especially want to work for them and not just any old company. In a sense, they are fishing.

Reasons why you might want to work with a company might include its reputation within the business world or the way it treats its staff. It may be its ethical position or its record of creativity. This question gives you the chance to really show how much homework you have conducted prior to the interview.

Why should we give you the job?

This is where you need to emphasise what you can do for them and not what they can do for you. Think about how your experience, personality, education and skills make you the right candidate for this new job. Think back to the job description and the points that have been touched upon throughout the interview.

These classic questions will more than likely be asked so it is best to think of your answers prior to the interview. Use the tips on how to answer them and come up with some great responses. Write them down as there is far more chance of remembering them. Then sit yourself down in front of a mirror and rehearse. Next, ask for someone else's opinion on your answers.



SUMMARY

CLASSIC QUESTIONS

- Make your weaknesses specific to the role and show how you are working to overcome them.
- To avoid sounding arrogant when talking about your strengths, begin your sentences with thoughts about yourself.
- Make your answers relevant to the role.
- Don't be at all negative about your current or previous role.
- Use your research to convince the interviewer that you want the job.
- Convince the interviewer that it will be worthwhile having you onboard.



THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

When he/she has finished quizzing you, the interviewer will usually ask if you have any questions. This is another opportunity to reveal more information about your character and impress with your enthusiasm. It is a chance to appear even more passionate and involved.

If the interview is running behind schedule, you might not get much of an opportunity to pose any questions. If that is the case, ask if it might be possible to email them with other queries you might have.

Good tip

Don't ask any questions about pay and don't say, "No, I think you've covered everything".

TIPS ON THE RIGHT KIND OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

"Would there be opportunities to further my training and knowledge?"

"I noticed that you sell this product which is very similar to something that I used at university. How does the company review its product ranges and would you be open to ideas on new additions?"

"Has this job developed from a different role and is it likely to change further in future?"

Have a look on the company's website. What particular things might you like to ask about?

Have another look at the job description and do the same. Come up with a bank of questions so that you can call upon them when they occur to you during the interview.

Remember that you are on an equal footing with the interviewers. Whether the job is right for you is just as important as whether you are right for the job. It also looks great if you are passionate enough to start asking questions before you've got the job.



SUMMARY

THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

- Always ask questions unless there's no time.
- Prepare a bank of intelligent and creative questions beforehand as tense situations can make the mind go blank.
- Look at the website and the job specification in order to do this.
- The job being right for you is just as important as you being right for the job.

Chapter Four

**AFTER
YOUR
INTERVIEW**



WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE INTERVIEW

You have finally reached the end of the job interview journey. All you can do now is cross your fingers and wait and see. The wait can be stressful and a negative outcome can be demoralising, but with a positive attitude you can emerge from the process stronger.

NEXT STAGE TIPS

- If you get a letter saying that you were unsuccessful, shake it off and don't take it personally. You may have been an impressive candidate, but others will have been, too. With so many people going for the same jobs, coping with disappointment is an essential part of the process.
- If you have been looked over for the job this time, try to obtain some feedback. Ring the company and find out the email address or extension number of one of your interviewers.

- Drop them a short, polite email. Thank them for their time and then ask if there was anything you could do for next time to improve.
- Then thank them again as it may not be the last interview you have with them. They may even ring to offer you a position that they think you'll be more suited to. Politely asking for feedback will be looked on positively. Whatever you do, don't be tempted to send off a snotty and angry email just because you have been passed over. No good will come of it.
- The main thing is stay positive as something else will come along.
- Be proactive about finding more vacancies and you will forget about the rejection and will soon be back on track.
- If you are successful, congratulations! You've done it.



SUMMARY

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- If you don't get the job, don't take it personally.
- Be proactive in finding new opportunities and your energy will soon be renewed.
- Ring or email the interviewer and ask for feedback.
- If you did get the job, then well done to you!



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**ALSO
AVAILABLE
FROM
GRADUATE
COACH**





OTHER COACHING MANUALS, BY GRADUATE COACH IN THE 'ESSENTIAL SERIES'

Every coaching manual in the series splits each part of the job hunting process into easily managed chunks with easy to follow step-by-step instructions. They are filled with activities, checklists and contact forms that you'll find easy to manage.

These coaching manuals will give you the tools you need, to get the job of your dreams.

The following pages include some sample chapters for you to read.





The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to COVER LETTERS AND CVS

In an increasingly competitive jobs market, it is essential to know how to make yourself stand out, not easy when the only materials you have are your CV and your covering letter. With GraduateCoach's Essential Guide to Cover Letters and CVs writing an eye-catching CV and a perfect cover letter is well within your reach. Following our tips will give you the edge that you need to get ahead.

This complete coaching manual breaks down each step of writing your CV and cover letter into easy to complete parts.

“ *This is a really interesting book. Following the tips in this book won't guarantee you'll get a job but it will definitely increase your chances.*

The book teaches you how to select the right information and how to display it correctly in your CV. It also teaches you how to write a good cover letter with direct tips such as 'do's' and 'don'ts'. It provides lots of examples and a space to practice. It is really useful.”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

COVER LETTERS & CVS

WHY ARE CVS AND COVER LETTERS SO ESSENTIAL?

“ I think luck is the sense to recognize an opportunity and the ability to take advantage of it ... The man who can smile at his breaks and grab his chances gets on.” (Samuel Goldwyn)

When an advert for a well-paid job gets posted online, the employer will receive a multitude of CVs in no time. Rifling through them, the person overseeing the initial stages of the recruitment process starts to become more ruthless than Alan Sugar: one whiff of a bad CV and it's on the 'reject' pile. This happens countless times in countless offices across the country every day.

The average CV gets just 15 seconds to make an impression. Chances are, if you think you can do the job well enough to apply for it, you probably can. It is convincing the person in charge that is the hard part and that starts with getting noticed.

Ideally, you'd be able to ask each employer exactly what they wanted to see. Some believe the cover letter is more important than the CV, some don't. It is impossible to know in advance.

The CV shows your experience and qualifications; the cover letter demonstrates professionalism, your ability to write and your salesmanship skills. Both are equally important so it is vital not to favour one and neglect the other.

A job advert won't tell you how to sell yourself – but we will.

HOW TO APPROACH COVER LETTERS AND CV WRITING

THE FIRST STEPS TO WRITING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER

“ Any human anywhere will blossom in a hundred unexpected talents and capacities simply by being given the opportunity to do so.” (Doris Lessing, Author)

What is a CV?

A summary of a person's education, professional history and job qualifications for a prospective employer.

Things to consider when applying for a job

Always remember that with a CV and cover letter you are introducing yourself and your abilities to the employer. You are saying, “I am just what you are looking for! Here's why ...”

Both the CV and the cover letter need to show confidence and enthusiasm. If you think that you really are the best person for the job, this will come across. So convince yourself that you are.

You're the best!

You might find it hard at first to write about your best qualities, abilities and skills, but throwing modesty to the wind is essential. You've been to university and that's a major achievement in life. And when you start thinking about it, you've also done a whole lot more ...



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

BACKGROUND ON THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Finding the right person for the job is a long and expensive process for companies. If they use a recruitment agency, they will have to pay 10%-33% of your annual salary for the agency's services – usually over £1000.

Imagine that you are offered a salary of £20,000 per annum. As soon as you are hired, your employer will have to pay the recruitment agency £2,000 or more, with the possibility that you may not like the job and leave after three months. How can they avoid this? By hand-picking candidates that come across as reliable, trustworthy and able to fit well with the attitude of the company.

Nearly half of all newly-graduated employees will leave their jobs within five years.

This is another factor in why employers are so picky about who they employ. It's no small matter to invest in and train a graduate and the prospect of them only staying for the short-term is one that many companies are wary of. You need to be able to convince the employer that you are willing to commit yourself to a position. If you can't, they will choose someone who can.

UK employers spend £1.4bn per year on recruitment advertising.

If the company does the recruiting themselves, it's just as expensive and much more time-consuming. A job description needs to be thought about and written in a way that ensures the right people apply. The advert also has to be displayed in the right places and paid for.

A 2009 survey conducted by the Association of Graduate Recruiters found that an average of 48 university graduates compete for each graduate job on the market.

As soon as a job advertisement is placed, CVs start flooding in. Time and people need to be allocated to look through them. But these people are few in number and short on time. It is really important that you grab their attention and get to the point quickly.



The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to GREAT PRESENTATIONS

The chances are that in university you would have had to give the odd presentation in front of your class, maybe even as often as once a week, but there is a world of difference between talking in front of your peers and impressing at an interview. Which is why GraduateCoach has put together this coaching manual to help you. The manual is split into three sections; the Introduction, Writing a presentation and Giving your presentation.

“ *This book starts with the most important idea that everyone needs to understand: even if you do not have a natural skill to speak in public, make presentations and lead people, this skill can be learned. And this is exactly what the book is for. It explains how to organise good presentations and gives tips on how to present well.*”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

GREAT PRESENTATIONS

GIVING GREAT PRESENTATIONS AT YOUR INTERVIEW

In 2001, a Constituency Selection Panel for the Conservative Party was interviewing candidates for a safe seat in the House of Commons. Eight candidates had been selected to present, seven of whom walked in, placed their notes on the lectern that had been provided and presented from behind it. When the eighth candidate entered with no notes at all, it came as a breath of fresh air as he ignored the lectern and conducted a flawless presentation from the edge of stage. He won the seat. His name was David Cameron.

Increasingly, particularly within the corporate and sales sectors, candidates are being asked to prepare a presentation as part of the selection process. Many people would rather run down the street naked than perform this activity. It is fair to say that some are naturally better at public speaking than others. However, it is a myth that these skills can't be taught.

ASSESSING YOUR SKILLS

Your personal assessment – ask yourself these questions before going any further. They will get you in the right mindset, prepare you for what you will need to do and, depending on how much you know already, how hard you will have to work.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

How many presentations have you done?

What did you learn from any previous experiences?

What have you particularly enjoyed about doing presentations?

Were there any aspects you didn't enjoy?

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE?

- Would you like to be a presenting virtuoso?
- Do you want to be able to do a presentation without any stress or worry?
- Do you want people to automatically think of you as a good performer when they need a presentation?

HOW DO YOU GET THERE?

Wherever you are and where you'd like to be, we'll show you your route map to presentation success.

In today's tough job climate, an increasing number of candidates with similar qualifications and experience are going for the same role. Presentations during the application process are a popular way of sifting the diamonds from the rough. Ideas come and go but the skills necessary to present well are there for life and are an asset in so many jobs today.

It's impossible for us to predict what kind of presentation you'll be asked to prepare for your audience. Often you'll need to base it on the simple subject, "Why me for this job?" You may be asked to prepare a presentation about the company using all the information you can find out about it.

The point is that whatever the subject of your presentation, the rules remain the same.

In a good presentation, you are solving someone's problems, you are inspiring them to hire you and you are telling them something they didn't know before. Plus you need to do it in an interesting, concise and original way. Sounds difficult? We'll make it easy.



ELEMENTS OF A GREAT PRESENTATION

GraduateCoach has identified six key elements that go towards making a great presentation. These are:

- Understanding your audience.
- Being yourself.
- Presenting yourself.
- Structuring your presentation.
- Keeping it simple and thinking positive.

Understanding your audience could dramatically alter the way in which you approach your entire presentation. If you are speaking in front of the managing and financial directors of the company, for instance, your presentation would go differently than if you were speaking to a few brand managers who have been at the company for less than two years.

Something that we are intent on instilling in graduates is that there is no need to try to be anything you are not. By sharing some very simple tricks with you, we want you to increase your confidence in your abilities and let the audience see just how good you are.

In presentations, as in the rest of life, practice is essential. You have to work hard to be an effective public speaker. Jonny Wilkinson is a prime example of how hard graft pays off. By the end of 2009 he was the top point scorer in rugby of all time. We take examples from him and others of his calibre to accentuate how vital it is to put in the hours in order to improve.



The GraduateCoach Essential Guide to **WORK EXPERIENCE**

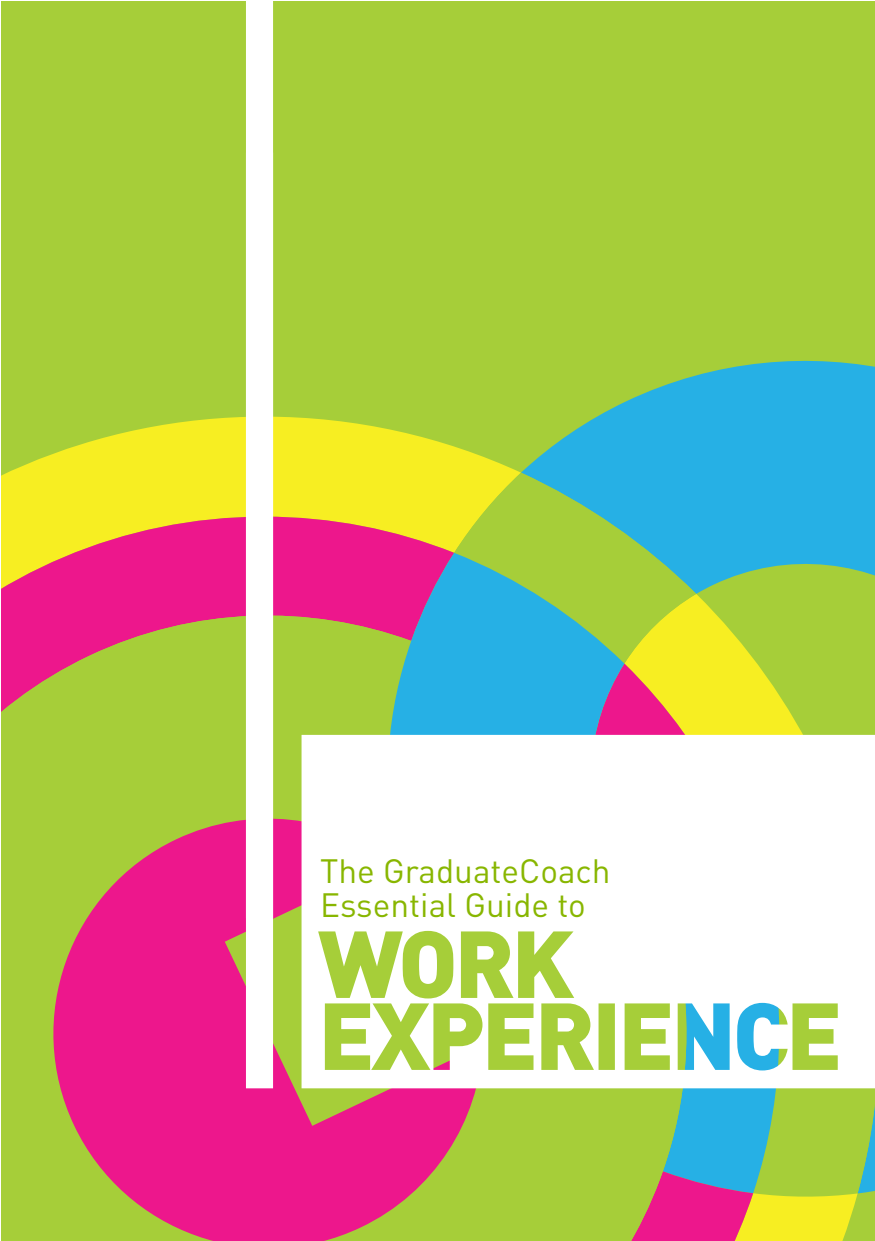
Work experience is a brilliant way to show employers that you have the initiative, ambition and determination that they are looking for. This guide will show you how and where to secure a work experience placement and how to ensure you get the most from it.

With sections covering; how and where to get a placement, using contacts for networking, CV and cover letter tips, the myths about work experience placements and after you've finished your placement and much more. It covers everything you need to know about work placements.

“ *The most practical guide about work experience you can buy.*

It explains where to find jobs, contains example, has a guide about 'myths' and 'truths' and gives basic ideas about everything that is necessary to get work experience. I consider it a complete guide to work experience. All you need to know, you will find in the book”





The GraduateCoach
Essential Guide to

**WORK
EXPERIENCE**

WHY IS WORK EXPERIENCE SO ESSENTIAL?

“ *Experience: that most brutal of teachers. But you learn – my God do you learn.*” (C.S Lewis)

Work experience placements and internships are the best way to give yourself an edge in the jobs market. Whatever industry your experience is in, you'll gain important skills that will help you in any career. At the very least, you'll have something to talk about in interviews.

One in five people that complete a work placement are offered a job in the same company. But if you are thinking that you just need to turn up and make the tea to get ahead, you might want to think again.

Every employer is looking for talented, enthusiastic people to take on. Work experience is one of the best ways of discovering whether, after a bit of scrubbing and polishing, you will slot nicely into one of their swivel chairs. It is easy to work this situation to your advantage if you know how. You can show any employer that you are the perfect person for the job if you secure the right work experience and complete it in the right way.

This guide will show you how to do that.

As well as tips and exercises to help you find work experience and make the most of it, this guide contains success stories from candidates who have landed jobs through work experience placements. You'll get inside knowledge on how and where to get a placement and how to ensure that you emerge with your prospects enhanced at the end of it.



DO WORK PLACEMENTS REALLY HELP YOUR CAREER?

If you are new to the working world, you'll soon realise that many industries are like a closed book. Some – in fact most – of the companies that operate within these industries are nearly impossible to get into – unless you are related to the CEO. The rest are only accessible if you work for them for little or no money. These are your windows of opportunity. It can be a disheartening position to start from, but it's important to persevere as you need to start somewhere, at some time. Given the current economic climate, it is best to start as soon as possible. It may not pay, but you'll gain enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.

A few weeks' free experience gives you an essential advantage when it comes to applying for jobs. Your skills and knowledge, not to mention your confidence, will immediately place you above many other candidates, so you'll have a much better chance of earning a larger salary in the long run.

Three weeks of work experience will prepare you for a job more effectively than three years of university.

There really isn't a downside to putting a work placement on your CV. If it is in the same industry as the job you are applying for, it will show initiative, commitment to the profession and passion. Even if the placement is undertaken in a completely different industry, it's a demonstration of how quickly you can learn and how proactive you've been in sorting out your future.

If your placement turns out to be the worst two weeks of your life, this is a small amount of time to spend discovering the path you shouldn't take – especially if you compare it to the long, miserable years you could have spent proceeding up a blind alley.

The trick is to make the absolute most of any placement and complete tasks that will look good on your CV. This is precisely what GraduateCoach can help you do. Some of it is about luck (where you get a placement, when and what you end up doing), but hard work and effort can get you a very long way, too. Rather than waiting for chances to fall into your lap, you can create opportunities for yourself with our guidance.

Sometimes you'll need to just knuckle down and get the job done and it might be tough. But if there's one thought to sustain you, it'll be that in completing a few days' worth of work experience, you'll be taking one huge step closer to your dream career.



SUMMARY

WHY WORK EXPERIENCE?

- Remember, everyone with a job needs to start somewhere ... and you do need to start as soon as possible.
- Getting work experience to put on your CV shows that you have initiative, commitment to the profession and passion.
- No matter how disheartening it may seem, work experience is worth it.
- Try to remember that you'll get enough experience and know-how to make up for what you lack in money.
- Two weeks could rule out a profession that you could have spent long, miserable years in.
- Don't be discouraged by a miserable outlook or lack of contacts: luck and timing is a part of it, but with hard work you can create opportunities for yourself.
- Always remember to make the absolute most of any experience you do get. Pour yourself into it – it's not forever.





