

# How to avoid common interview mistakes

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## Do your research and PREPARE ANSWERS



Q&A

Make sure you know what the organisation wants to achieve, what their values are and that you understand what the job will involve. If you aren't clear, phone the recruiter or connect with someone in a similar role and ask them. Think about what you offer that will help them meet their objectives and how you meet the role requirements. Be sure to talk about it in the interview. It is impressive to hear a candidate say, "I know you are committed to x, I hope that in this role I could help you because of the experience I have from doing y".

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## WATCH THE NEWS Read the papers



Make sure you know what is happening in the external environment that could impact the organisation you are applying to join. For example, how does the Government obesity plan impact their work? What might Brexit mean? What regulations are in place that could affect what you could or couldn't do? Nutrition and health claims are a great example. Understanding the bigger public health picture is critical.

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## ANSWER FULLY but don't bore



The STAR technique (a clear framework to follow when answering interview questions that ask for you to share an example, clearly describing the Situation, Target, Action you took and the Result) is great and can really help make sure you get as many points as possible in a competency-based interview. It can however be quite dry. Make sure you talk with passion, add in extra ideas when relevant. For example, what did you learn from the experience, what would you do differently now?

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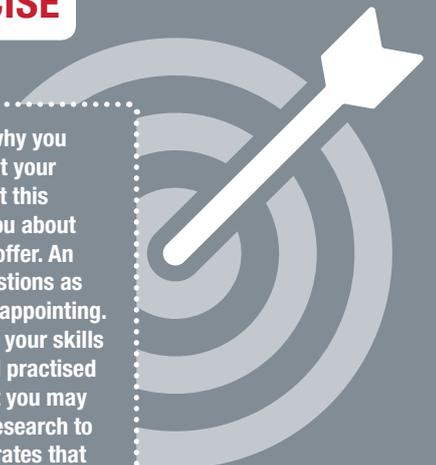
## Talk about YOU



There is always a place for we, but in an interview setting it is all about YOU. Make sure you say "I did....." It is important to show what your role was, what you were responsible for and how you went about a task. You can share what you learned and how you applied it, making your interviewer learn more about how you work as well as what you know.

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## Be CONCISE



Be able to quickly explain why you are the best candidate, what your strengths are, why you want this position, what appeals to you about the role, and what you can offer. An off-the-cuff answer for questions as obvious as these is very disappointing. You can better demonstrate your skills with a well thought-out and practised response. Think about what you may be asked and apply some research to your answer. That demonstrates that you have the ability and initiative to complete investigative work yourself.

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**SELL YOURSELF sensibly**

There is a careful balance to be reached between being confident and clear in telling someone about your skills and experience, and overselling yourself, which may make the interviewer nervous! For example, saying you are a 'Leader' when you have just graduated may be pitched too high. Of course, if you have lead projects or teams, that would be the ideal way to communicate such experience.

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**Don't blag and TAKE YOUR TIME**

If you don't know the answer to a question, say you don't know and talk about how you would go about finding the answer. Equally if you need clarity, ask, "is this what you mean?". Pause to think. It's fine to take your time. If unsure from the interviewer's body language, check then and there if the answer you gave was satisfactory or if you have misunderstood the question. This is your opportunity to make sure you give them the information they are seeking.

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**LOOK in the mirror**

Be sure to look enthusiastic. Body language is key. Lean in to the table. Look like you want to be there, even if nerves are getting the better of you. The impression you make is critical, make sure you are enthusiastic and engaged and try your very best to make good levels of eye contact with those interviewing you. Dress appropriately for the organisation. Smart or smart-casual is your best bet for interviews. Also try to avoid looking flustered and aim to get there 10-15 minutes early.

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**QUESTIONS**

This is an opportunity for you to further demonstrate your passions, your specific interest in the company and team. There is no set list of questions an interviewer will expect you to ask but do ask something! You could use it to include something you have forgotten to mention or would like to emphasise. An example shared with us shows how this could be achieved: "I saw in the description the job involves x or in the company vision it said x, I have an interest in that, would it be helpful if I....? One example of a don't ask: "Can I wear high heels to the office?"



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**Pick up THE PHONE**

Before and after interviews are great opportunities to build a relationship and gain knowledge about the company and the team you are hoping to work with. Ask about the interview if you aren't given much information so you know what to expect. Who will be in the interview? Will there be competency-based questions or are you expected to deliver a presentation? If you aren't successful at interview, ask for feedback to understand how you can improve. This also demonstrates how passionate you were about the job which may come in useful in the future.

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