

SWAC Interview Tips & Techniques

Before you attend any kind of work interview it's always a good idea to prepare!

The art of a successful interview is being prepared and anticipating the interview environment. This includes your research on the company, understanding the job and how you fit in with the company and the role. So the more you know about the company and the job role, the easier it will be to answer the interviewer's questions and the questions you ask will be more relevant.

Remember to take a copy of your CV along and any supporting documents (project work related to the apprenticeship etc.) or notes for you to refer to.

Below is a list of questions you might get asked in your interview. Preparing answers to these questions and testing your responses out on family or friends will help you on the day and impress the interviewer.

- Why have you applied for this apprenticeship?
- Why do you want to have an apprenticeship in this industry?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Give an example of a time when you have coped well under pressure
- Give an example of how you have dealt with a difficult situation
- What do you think we mean by customer service and how will it relate to this job role?
- Give an example of a time you have worked independently
- Give an example of a time you have worked as part of a team
- Please give details of any hobbies that you have
- What work experience have you done?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us to support your application?

1. Do your company research

First, make sure you have thoroughly researched the company you have the interview with. Make sure you're ready for the big question - "*what do you know about our company?*" You can learn about them by browsing the "about us" section on their website. But to get all of the up-to-the-minute information it's definitely worth checking out their social media, what are they tweeting or posting about on Facebook? Also check if they have a LinkedIn business profile and read their latest updates.

When you're asked the question, just make references to some of the things you've seen. If they've just won an award or a new contract make sure you mention it!

2. Understand what the apprentice role is all about

People often get carried away researching the company that they completely forget the ins and outs of the apprenticeship they're applying for. Although it is important to know about the company, give yourself enough time to go over the job specification to see exactly what you would be doing in the role.

What you need to do: Read over the job/person specification and think of an example of how you possess the skills and an example of how you've used them. For example, the job specification outlines that you will be working in a team. You would give an example at school/college where you have had to work in a team and how you went about this. Know what the apprenticeship is and why you want it!

3. Plan your route to the interview and factor in traffic or roadworks

Work out how long it'll take you to get to the interview and give yourself plenty of time to get there. Take into account traffic and public transport timetables; you should aim to arrive at least ten minutes before the start of the interview.

Don't be late! Make sure you take the contact details of the interviewer with you, including their telephone number, email and the address of the company, so you can get in touch if you are unexpectedly held up.

4. Plan what you're going to wear

There's nothing worse than waking up on interview day and going into a full blown panic about what to wear, make sure you've already planned out your interview clothes for the interview.

More often than not, you can gauge what to wear based on the company. A formal business suit might not be appropriate for a plumbing apprenticeship interview, but it might be for an accountancy apprenticeship. If in doubt, opt for smart casual. Make sure your clothes are clean and you look smart and presentable.

5. Have questions ready

Often at the end of interviews, interviewers like to say "Do you have any questions?" Unfortunately, it's not really a case of asking a question if you want to; they're actually saying: "Ask us a question now".

It's easy to feel anxious, so it certainly doesn't hurt to prepare some questions in advance.

It's probably best not to ask them questions like "Which football team do you support?" or "Which Kardashian is your favourite?"

The safer questions to ask are ones about the apprenticeship avoid questions about salary and the benefits; use this to find out more about the role and the company:

- "What will be my normal working day?"
- "What is the company culture like?"
- "What are the main goals of the company?"
- "What are the future prospects for apprentices within the company?"

6. Stay calm during the interview

We know it's easier said than done but remember, you're still young, they're not expecting you to list off your unbeatable knowledge about the industry/company you're applying for. It's also okay to take a few moments to think of your answer after they've

asked the question or to ask them to repeat it, most interviewers prefer a well thought out concise answer opposed to an endless list of mumbling and umms and errs.

7. Leave a good impression

You may be so relieved when the interview is over that you forget to leave a lasting impression. Before you jump out of your seat and run off, make sure you've had a chance to ask all the questions you want and that you thank the interviewer at the end for the opportunity and for their time.

Always shake their hand before leaving and make good eye contact, this shows you're professional and courteous.

If you are unsuccessful, don't be disheartened and don't take it personally. Many of these positions have a lot of applicants so there will always be competition.