



Australian Government



ABORIGINAL
HOSTELS LIMITED

Interview Preparation Guide



The big picture

Be prepared

Our experience has shown that candidates who spend the time preparing well for their interviews, consistently outperform those who don't prepare, even if they are potentially a stronger match on paper.

Preparation for an interview is critical. Nobody is so experienced that they don't require significant preparation for each interview they attend. Preparation for an interview is not a quick flip through the potential employer's website and job specification.

Appropriate amounts of preparation for your interview will:

- lead to less nerves at interview
- Increase your capacity to describe your experience in a structured, professional manner
- leave you in a stronger position to relax during the interview
- allow you to understand the role better, helping you to avoid making incorrect career choices
- maximise your chance for a successful interview.

Feel free to bring notes including any specific questions you need answered, this sort of preparation will be seen as sign you are a strong potential hire for the employer.

Put yourself in their shoes

The interviewers are trying to uncover three key things.

- Can you do the job, do you have the necessary skills, qualifications and experience?
- What is your motivation for doing the job?
- Will you fit into the team, are you a match for the culture, will you be someone they will enjoy working with?

If you are prepared to answer these questions for the client at the interview and can do it in a structured manner with relevant examples, you are heading towards becoming the employee of choice.



Do your research

The best way to understand your audience is through thorough research. Your research should focus on:

- who is your audience
- what is their role
- where do they fit into the organisation
- what they are looking for
- what are their expectations for the role
- what is the context surrounding the vacancy.

Personal and professional networks

Find out more about your new potential employer and interviewers by calling and speaking with those most likely to be in the know. Don't be afraid to ask for a personal referral from your networks. If used wisely a personal referral or recommendation can be a huge advantage at an interview.

The world is at your fingertips online

We are often blessed with a huge amount of information online about organisations. Google is your best friend when it comes to preparing for interviews.

Take advantage of this information so you are able to go into your interview with eyes open. But remember, the web is only one source of information - it is dangerous to rely solely on the internet for interview preparation.



Know your CV and career

Know your story inside and out. Think through your experience and make sure you can articulate your career movements in a positive and logical way.

You should be able to clearly articulate your motivations and goals, including :

- previous job or career changes
- your motivations for changing roles
- work you prefer doing and why.

It sounds counter-intuitive, but knowing your work experience intimately is key to your success at an interview.

Understand the job specification, selection criteria and core competencies

Make sure to study the job duties and reach out to the contact officer if things about the role are unclear.

For roles where the critical requirements of the position are detailed in a selection criteria or a list of core competencies, it is important that you:

- prepare detailed examples relating to each criterion or competency
- steer interviewers to positive outcomes you have generated through your work with well-chosen, targeted examples.

Know where you are going

Be 100% sure of the time, date and location of the interview and research travel times, public transport and parking well in advance. Always make sure you come to the interview with the contact details of who you are meeting.

Arriving later than the agreed interview time will make a bad impression. If you are going to be late for a legitimate reason, make sure to phone ahead and apologise.

Any more than 10 minutes early is arriving too early, if you do arrive too early, wait in the car or take a short walk to calm yourself.



Prepare responses to commonly asked questions

There is a wide range of commonly asked interview questions that when prepared for, can allow you to concentrate on more difficult questions and on building rapport with the interviewers. Remember, just because the questions are common, it doesn't mean they will be easy to answer so preparation is vital.

Tell me about yourself

Although this seems a simple question, many people find this one very difficult to respond to. To get the most out of the situation, you need to prepare a response as it is easy to get carried away and present a lot of irrelevant personal information.

Your answer to this question needs to be targeted to the job, selection criteria and the organisation. Key things to remember:

- set a framework by preparing the 3 key points that have led you to this point in your career
- mention your previous roles and how this prepares you for the role you are interviewing for
- present just enough detail without getting into a rambling autobiography. 2 minutes is a good rule of thumb for this question.

Strengths

Common questions about your strengths include:

- how would your referees describe you
- what accomplishments are you most proud of
- what achievements define your career to date
- what will you bring to our organisation.

Remember to focus on providing a mix of personal and technical strengths – we recommend preparing a minimum of five overall with detailed examples to support your statements.

Make sure you:

- target your strengths to the role you are interviewing for
- avoid self qualifying statements or self affirmations if they are not supported by evidence
- provide a breadth of responses.



Weaknesses

Common questions about your weaknesses include:

- what weaknesses are there in your performance to date
- where do you feel you could improve your performance
- in your last performance review, what were the key areas for development raised.

When describing weaknesses it is best to give only one or two examples. Describe your weakness as a point for development you have identified as the interviewers are keen to see you demonstrate self-awareness and emotional maturity.

Honesty is always the best policy, but make sure you frame your response in a positive or constructive light.

Behavioural questions

The theory behind these questions is that your past performance is the best way to predict future achievements. These questions require you to give specific examples of work situations to show your previous performance or behaviour. They are meant to be tough to answer, and require significant preparation to answer them well.

Following the initial question, they are often followed up with prompts to steer you towards providing an answer that meets the requirements.

Typical prompts include:

- what action did you take
- what were you responsible for
- what were the consequences
- what was the result.



What are your salary expectations?

Generally, this one is better handled in a second interview or conversation once the employer has clearly identified interest in employing you. If you are held to providing an answer, we recommend only answering if you have a full understanding of the requirements of the position and wherever possible indicating a salary range.

Other questions you should prepare answers to include:

- what are your long-term and short-term goals
- what motivates and interests you
- why are you interested in this job
- why did you leave your last job
- what do you know about our organisation and team.

The STAR method

The STAR method to answer questions focuses your answers by giving them a framework

There is a lot of information available online about using the STAR technique to answer interview questions however the key things to remember are:

Situation: Set the context by describing the circumstance where you gained the experience.

Task: What was your role in addressing the requirement/problem?

Action: What specific action did you take? How did you do it and how did you make the outcome a positive one?

Result: What did you achieve? How was it measured? What was the feedback? How does it relate to the role you are applying for?



First impressions count

Be well presented

This may seem obvious, however, you do not want to receive feedback from an interview where your appearance has led to negative impressions.

Key things to remember are:

- dress appropriately
- be well groomed with neat hair
- make sure your clothes are ironed
- avoid strong perfume or aftershave
- don't smoke before your interview
- don't chew gum
- make sure your mobile phone is switched off.

Greet each interviewer with a firm, fhand handshake and make sure you keep eye contact. Keep the interaction as genuine as possible and seek to establish rapport early.

Be aware of your posture and body language during the interview, non-verbal cues leave a lasting impression. Keep your body language positive and neutral, sitting upright in your chair with your hands relaxed.

Finishing the interview

Aim to leave a positive impression by remembering:

- be genuine and professional but not overly familiar
- confirm your interest in the role and why, many people are successful because they are highly motivated to win the role
- address any possible shortcomings noting your awareness and commitment to ongoing development
- aim to leave the interviewer(s) with a strong impression of you, take the time to shake the hands of all attendees.





If you have any questions concerning employment in AHL, please contact the
AHL Recruitment Team on (02) 6212 2001 or applications@ahl.gov.au



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