

Job interviews: Part 2

by Jamie Keddie

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives:

- To demonstrate to learners that preparation is the key to success in interviews.
- To provide learners with a number of standard interview questions and to discuss strategies for answering them.

Necessary materials:

- Accompanying worksheet
- The recruitment section of a newspaper (it doesn't have to be in English)

Procedure

- 1 **Optional:** Show your students the following image and ask them if they know what is happening:

<http://klipd.com/screenshots/411839aa62dd25fef60476955c28ee98-2.jpg>

(This is a scene from the 1996 film *Trainspotting*, in which Spud, played by Ewen Bremner, is interviewed for a job he doesn't want to get.)

- 2 Tell your students that you have a list of eight common job interview questions. Ask them if they can predict any of them. (This is an opportunity to work on question forms).
- 3 Dictate the eight questions to your learners.

- Do you have any questions you would like to ask us?
- Tell me about yourself
- What are your weaknesses?
- What do you know about our company?
- Where do you see yourself in five/ten years?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Why should we recruit you?

- 4 Get your students to complete the worksheet. Let them compare their results with each other before going over the answers together as a class.

Answers: 1 (b); 2 (h); 3 (d); 4 (g); 5 (c); 6 (f); 7 (e); 8 (a)

- 5 Give your students the recruitment section of a newspaper. Have them look through it to find an advertized position that interests them.
- 6 Ask students to imagine that they are going for an interview for the job that they have chosen. Ask them to prepare answers to the eight standard interview questions.
- 7 Have students role-play interviews and practise the questions and prepared answers.

Follow-up (optional)

- 8 You could now play students the three interviews (provided as three separate mp3 files) for the position of officer manager at the fictional company, Slinky Stationery and have them complete the additional accompanying activities.

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Eight standard questions

Write the eight questions in the appropriate spaces:

Question 1: _____

This is often the first question you will be asked. It is also one of the most difficult if you are not prepared. Remember, the interviewer does not want to hear about your star sign, football team, love life, pets or unusual hobbies – this is a job interview not a dating agency. The interviewer will want to hear you talk for a minute or two about the following:

- Your work experience and skills
- Your achievements, successes and results in previous working situations
- Your personality in the context of the job for which you are applying (motivated, hardworking, easy-going, reliable, etc.)

This is a precious opportunity to sell yourself. Make sure that you have thought about what you are going to say before the interview.

Question 2: _____

Like the previous question, this one will require you to sell yourself. Although people will often want to give a general answer (*"because I'm friendly, reliable and love a challenge"* etc.), the best strategy is to be specific: consider your achievements, skills and experience that are most important and relevant to the position you are applying for – anything that makes you stand out from the other applicants. Identify the qualities you have that are truly valuable to the employer.

Question 3: _____

Research is the key to answering this standard interview question. If you have done your homework, this can be used as an opportunity to show off your knowledge of the company's revenue, number of employees, competitors, challenges, etc. In addition, the more you learn about the employer, the better equipped you will be to answer the next question.

Question 4: _____

Imagine the following situation:

Customer: Hello. I would like to buy a car.
 Salesman: Certainly sir. What type would you like?
 Customer: I don't know. A green one perhaps?

Anyone buying a car will have a basic idea of what they are looking for. Similarly, anyone applying for a new job should be able to say why the job is right for him/her and perhaps more importantly, why he/she is right for the job.

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Many professionals say that the secret to answering this question is to use a weakness to your advantage. In other words, tell your interviewer how you identified a weakness, overcame it, learned from it, and are now a better person as a result. One standard, perhaps cliché answer in this situation is to say that you are a perfectionist. Do not assume that perfectionism is a desired quality in the workplace – perfection is time-consuming and often unnecessary.

Question 6: _____

Warning: never criticize your previous boss, colleagues or company. Nobody likes a complainer. It may be better to accentuate the positive and focus on the things you enjoyed in your last job. If you have a good understanding of the job to which you are applying, you can then focus on the new opportunities that it will present you with.

Question 7: _____

So you hope to be sailing around the world or spending more time with your racing pigeons. Don't let the interviewer hear this. You must speak about your future in connection with your field or with the job that you are applying for. Find out about the opportunities that the new job would present and make the interviewer realise that you are motivated to succeed there.

Question 8: _____

Never answer “no” to this question. An inquisitive candidate is a serious one (assuming that the questions are intelligent ones, of course). As you investigate your new potential employer in advance, questions about the job will arise naturally. Many of these will be answered during the interview. Some of them will not.