

The job interview

Preparing for your interview

You've been invited to interview? Congratulations! That tells you the company wants to find out more about you. Your task now is to prepare for the interview so that you can persuade the recruiter that you're their ideal candidate – both **professionally** and **personally**.

Practically all interview preparation manuals will tell you 'confidence is key!'. But we all tend to feel most confident in situations where we can behave **authentically** and **naturally**. Self-confidence is not really something you can fake and experienced recruiters will quickly pick up on it. Preparing for an interview provides a great opportunity for honest and sincere **self-reflection**. One good way to become aware of your **strengths** and **weaknesses** is to talk to friends, acquaintances and family and ask them how they see you. You can then develop strategies to build on your existing strengths and address any weaknesses you have identified. This kind of approach not only bolsters your credibility with interviewers, it will also help you in your **personal development**.

We also recommend making written notes as you prepare for your interview. Having a written record of important questions and other issues that you want to address in the interview can be very valuable, as you'll probably be nervous on the day of the interview – and when you're nervous, there's always a risk that you might forget something important.

The job interview itself

How the interview is conducted and how long it lasts will depend on the company and the position being offered. In Germany, job interviews normally last **between 45 and 90 minutes**. Typically, interviews are divided into several parts, the order of which may vary:

Part I – Welcome and introductions

Interviews generally start with a relaxed round of introductions. It's a good idea to practice **introducing yourself** briefly (no more than one or two minutes) in an interview situation. Members of the interviewing panel will also introduce themselves and explain how the interview will be structured.

Part II – CV and professional skills

The interview will normally be based on what you have written in your CV. The interviewers will ask you questions about the different stages of your education and career or may ask you to provide a brief recap of your background and career history. A potential employer will tend to look first at your professional skills and you may be asked to analyse a **case study** or complete an **assignment**.

Part III – Personal (and leadership) skills

As well as wanting to know about your professional and technical skills, recruiters will also want to find out more about your character and personality. In most interviews, you will be asked about your strengths and weaknesses and how you see your career progressing in future. You might also be presented with a specific scenario and asked how you would react. If you are applying for a management position, the interviewers will also ask you about your relevant experience and skills in this area.

Part IV – Detailed description of the job and questions from the interviewee

If they haven't done so before, the recruiters will provide the interviewee with more details about the company, the advertised position and the role's day-to-day responsibilities. You will then be given the opportunity to ask **questions**. Prepare a few questions in advance so that you can demonstrate your interest in the company.

A short glossary of interview question types

Interviewers use a variety of questions to find out more about you. We've listed a few of them below. To prepare for the interview, we recommend that you think of several questions in each category that the recruiter might ask you and then practise answering them.

Situational questions

Interviewers use situational questions to find out how you think you would handle or behave in a particular workplace scenario.

Open-ended or closed questions

Open-ended questions give you the chance to provide detailed answers; closed questions on the other hand are usually answered with a simple yes or no response.

Self-assessment questions

Recruiters use this type of question to find out more about how you see yourself.

Mirror probes

Interviewers can use mirror probes to validate their own assumptions about you or even to provoke a contradictory response. A provocative question, for example, might be: 'You're extremely confident in your own abilities. Am I right?'

Third-person questions

Here the interviewer may ask you to put yourself in someone else's shoes to help you see yourself from their perspective. A question of this type might be: 'What would your best friend say if I asked them what your biggest weakness is?'