



# Interview skills 1: Get the best start

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



# Module overview

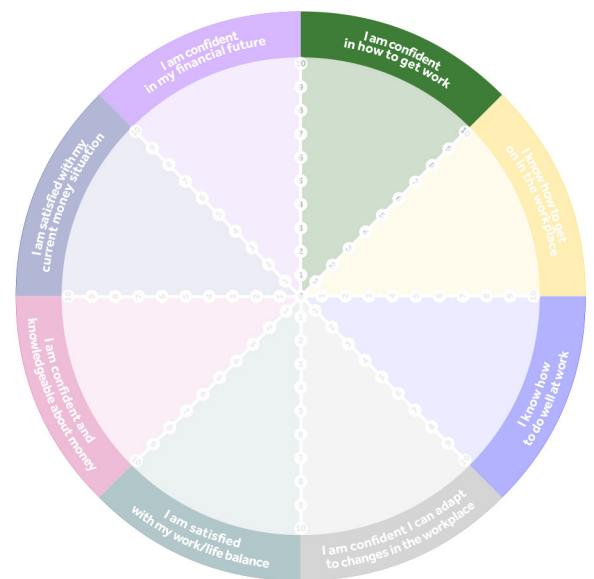
This module will introduce learners to the purpose of job interviews and the process of preparing for one: what to wear, how to research a company, and the best ways to make a great first impression.

Time	Key learning outcomes	Which will lead to
40 mins	<p>By the end of the module, learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand why employers hold job interviews</li> <li>Be able to research a potential employer and use this research to prepare answers to some of the most common questions</li> <li>Understand what to wear for an interview, and what should be avoided (where possible)</li> <li>Be able to identify three things that make a good first impression when attending an interview and how to apply them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved confidence in preparation for an interview</li> </ul>

## Important

Introduce the activity and theme and remind your learner of the coaching-based approach. Agree the desired outcome of the session with your learner.

Throughout the activity, we have included **'do now'**, **'do soon'** and **'do later'** actions which may help your learner to think about the next steps they could take. Alternatively, you could use the **'do now'**, **'do soon'** and **'do later'** headings to help your learner come up with their own actions.



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# Introduction

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 2-3 mins	<p>Refer back to your learner's LifeSkills wheel and discuss how they scored themselves in relation to this module.</p> <p>Discuss what they need to know/do to be able to increase how they rate their satisfaction with this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners are reminded of where they are now and what they need to do to reach a higher satisfaction score in this area</li> </ul>

## Core activity one

### Identifying relevant jobs

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 3-5 mins	<p>Find out what sort of work your learner would like to secure by using prompt questions to establish a starting point:</p> <p><b>Why do you want to do this type of work?</b></p> <p><b>Have you previously done this type of work?</b></p> <p><b>What would be the biggest benefit to you/your career if you secured this type of work?</b></p> <p>Encourage further discussion with follow up questions:</p> <p><b>What are the barriers you might face in securing this type of work?</b></p> <p><b>Will you need to undertake any additional training?</b></p> <p><b>Have you considered what type of company you might like to work for?</b></p> <p><b>What research have you done so far into jobs in this field?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should have an understanding of the type of jobs that they could/would like to apply for</li> <li>Learners should have an understanding of the experience they may need for this type of work, and the companies that may be hiring</li> <li>Learners should also understand that they may face barriers to entry and be encouraged to explore what these might be and how to overcome them</li> </ul>


# Core activity two

## Understanding interviews

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 3-5 mins	<p><b>Run through the basics of an interview and the difference that some preparation can make. Explain to your learner that employers will hold interviews to gain an understanding of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate's experience, skills and personality</li> <li>• Why the candidate applied for the job and what they will bring to the organisation</li> <li>• The candidate's understanding of the role and if there are any concerns about the candidate's skills and abilities</li> <li>• The candidate's track record: experience, skills, impact they've made in other companies</li> <li>• The candidate's 'soft' skills: what motivates them? Are they a team player? Will they add value to the company?</li> </ul> <p>Talk through how your learner feels about attending an interview. Discuss any gaps in knowledge about why interviews are necessary and discuss any major challenges that they may have.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners should gain an understanding of why companies hold interviews and the types of questions that they may be asked</li> </ul>

# Core activity three

## Researching jobs and preparing for interviews

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
 <b>7-10 mins</b>	<p>Together talk through the Case study. Discuss how Simon researched the companies he wished to apply for.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Plan when to spend some time next week researching a company you'd like to work for. Commit to this date</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> Stick to your plan and spend the time slot researching the company</p> <p><b>Do later:</b> Spend another slot of time looking at similar companies and the types of roles they offer</p> <p>Next, hand your learner the <b>Examples of employer-specific interview questions</b>. Draw your learner's attention to the points that will help them to answer the questions that they may be asked at interview. Thinking of a particular type of job they would like to do, talk through each question in turn and help your learner to understand the sorts of things they'd need to research to prepare for an interview.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Re-read the employer-specific interview questions</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> Sit with a friend and have them ask you the questions. Thinking of a particular type of job, practise answering them</p> <p><b>Do later:</b> Sit with another person and try answering the same questions with a different job in mind</p> <p><b>The learner should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the job description carefully and highlight key requirements</li> <li>• Research the values of the organisation</li> <li>• Research the typical skills, attributes and experience required for the role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners should gain confidence in researching a job and an employer that they'd like to work for</li> <li>• Learners should gain a further appreciation of the types of interview questions that they might be asked. This knowledge can be used for further exploration in a later module</li> </ul>



# Core activity four

## How to make a good impression

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 5-7 mins	<p>Talk through the practicalities of the interview process and how to confidently approach them.</p> <p>Ask for your learner's input about how they could set a good impression with their potential employer. Then hand them the checklist on How to make a good impression at interview. Talk through some of the salient points with your learner.</p> <p><b>Do now:</b> Stick this checklist somewhere you'll see it regularly</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> Using the checklist, identify ways in which you can improve the impression you give during an interview</p> <p><b>Do later:</b> Think about any other ways you can make a great impression at your next interview opportunity</p> <p>Together, look through the <b>Planning your journey checklist</b>. Learners should work through the steps they'd need to take to plan for a successful start to their interview. For example, turning up 10 minutes early — do they need to arrange child/elder care, do they need to avoid certain traffic routes, do they need to organise transport?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should be able to identify at least three things that will help them to make a good impression at interview</li> <li>Learners will understand why planning their journey to an interview is important and how to organise themselves in case they need to change their plans</li> </ul>

## Wrap up

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
⌚ 5-7 mins	<p>Discuss any gaps that your learner feels they have in knowledge, skills or confidence in preparing for interviews and agree how these might be addressed.</p> <p>Reflect on the score that your learner gave themselves on the LifeSkills wheel in relation to this module:</p> <p><b>Do they feel closer to improving their score on the wheel now that they have an understanding of the interview process?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should feel more confident in discussing gaps in their knowledge of interviews and have a plan to address them</li> </ul>

# Optional extension

Time	Educator guidance	Expected outcome
🕒 10-20 mins	<p>Learners should use any extra time to plan their interview outfit and their journey.</p> <p><b>Do soon:</b> When you practise interview questions with your friend, wear the outfit that you plan to wear to an interview. This will help you to get comfortable with what you'd be wearing during the actual interview.</p> <p>Discuss appropriate interview attire with your learner, based on their knowledge of the company (refer to previous research), and what they believe would be inappropriate.</p> <p>For example: if applying for a job in a professional services firm (solicitors' offices, accountancy practice, HR firm etc.) then a smart outfit – a suit, or something similar, would be appropriate. However, if applying for a job in a more casual environment (building site, some retail outlets, creative space, factory, warehouse, etc.) then a clean pair of black jeans, smart trainers or casual shoes, and a button-down shirt, would be appropriate.</p> <p>Depending on the time you have available (and whether you have computer access), you could use the <a href="#">Virtual Interview Practice tool</a> to help your learner put the STAR technique into practice.</p> <p>This interactive tool allows learners to work through a range of questions they might be asked in an interview, with prompts on what they should include, relevant skills they could reference and pointers on how to use the STAR technique to structure their answers.</p> <p>They can choose whether to write or record themselves giving their response. We recommend using the record function, as it's good practice for learners to try saying their answers aloud as they would in a real interview, and gives them the opportunity to listen back and reflect on what they said.</p> <p>Encourage learners to think about how they can use the STAR technique to make each of their answers as persuasive as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners should feel comfortable in choosing their interview outfit and have this clean and ready for when they are called to attend an interview</li> </ul>

# Case study

## Job and company research

Following relocation from East Anglia to the West Midlands to be closer to his partner's family, Simon found himself in unfamiliar territory. Simon had previously enjoyed a long-term career as a professional driver. However, because he did not know the road networks in his new area, Simon found himself unable to secure a new driving role.

Simon saw his situation as an opportunity to change jobs. He'd always wanted to work in the events industry, so he decided to apply for a role as a stage hire manager. Because Simon loved live music, he felt that he would be a good candidate and his driving experience would come in useful.

Firstly, Simon undertook an internet search for 'stage hire' in his local area. This directed him to online job boards, including the online version of his local newspaper. Simon came across two vacancies at two different lighting and event equipment hire specialists.

Simon knew that he did not have all of the skills and experience required for the role, so he wrote down everything he could that matched what the firms were asking for. This list helped him to understand how his transferable skills matched the job vacancies.

Job requirements	Simon's skills
<b>Excellent customer service skills</b>	Simon had daily interaction with customers via his previous driving job. Often dealing with a range of people who required patience, understanding and confidence.
<b>Drive and construct/take down stages</b>	Simon had ten years of driving experience with a clean licence. He was also used to manual work and was often required to lift heavy items for his customers.
<b>Help to organise delivery of other event equipment such as lighting, power cables etc.</b>	Simon had previously managed a small fleet of vehicles for his ex-employer including arranging MOTs and vehicle inspections. He therefore had excellent organisation skills.
<b>Be a key part of the out-of-hours on-call team</b>	Simon was used to late nights and often worked until 5am with his previous shifts.

Simon then researched the firms to understand what type of environment he could be working in. Using the internet, he found the websites of both companies. This helped him to determine:

- How far he would need to travel to work
- The company's history
- The services they provided

This research helped Simon prepare his CV and covering letter. Within a week of his application, one of the firms called Simon in for interview.



# Interview skills 1: Get the best start

## Examples of employer-specific interview questions

Below are examples of some of the most common employer-specific interview questions. Asking these questions helps an employer to find out:

- If a candidate has done their research and therefore how committed they are to the interview process
- How much the candidate knows about the company and what gaps in knowledge need to be filled by the employer
- If the candidate is a good match for the company environment and culture

Practising answers to these questions will help you to prepare for an interview.

Employer-specific question	What they really want to know
<b>What do you know about our company?</b>	<p>This question might sound a little vague and open-ended. The answers your interviewer will expect will go beyond the information you can easily find out on in the first few paragraphs of the company's home page.</p> <p>They will expect you to know the basics of the products and services they provide, who they are, where they came from, and anything major that's happened recently — any positive press they've had or awards they've won.</p>
<b>Why do you want to work for us?</b>	<p>This is crucial, because the company will want to know that you're not just applying for the role because you need any old job or that you're simply after the money. They'll want you to demonstrate genuine interest in their business.</p> <p>Think about why you want to work for the company. Is it because they offer great training? Do they have an amazing team culture? Do they offer career progression? Do they share your own social, political or environmental views?</p> <p>Your interviewer will want to make sure you're a good fit so do your research and answer this question wisely.</p>
<b>What is your favourite type of work environment?</b>	<p>Your interviewer is not trying to trip you up; they're genuinely interested in the type of environment you'll thrive in and whether their business is a good fit for you — and vice versa. This is where honesty and research go hand-in-hand.</p> <p>The nature of the business will give you a good understanding of whether or not you'll like the environment. If you love working as part of a team but the job requires you to be alone for the majority of the time, you may not be suited to the role. This is the type of information that you should research ahead of time so that you're totally prepared to answer this question.</p>

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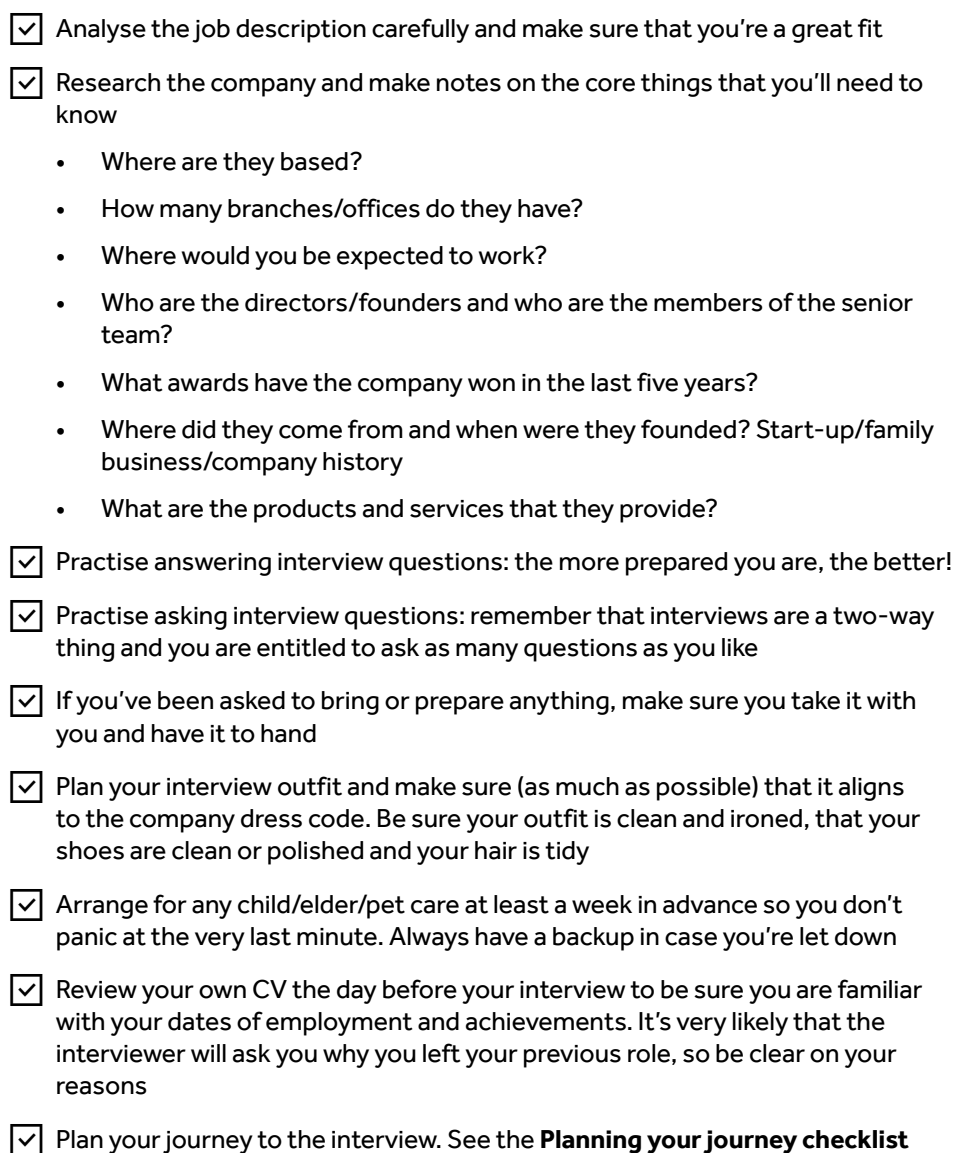
## Examples of employer-specific interview questions

Employer-specific question	What they really want to know
<b>What can you bring to our company?</b>	<p>This question throws a lot of candidates off track so it's better to be overly prepared with your answer. The interviewer is looking for candidates who are not afraid to talk about their skills and how they might be of benefit to the business.</p> <p>Think about the job you are applying for and pick out your top skills to discuss with the interviewer.</p> <p>Don't forget to back them up with examples. Are you a team player? Then prove it – provide an example of when you've had to work hard as part of a team and any obstacles that you've had to overcome to win results, as a team.</p>
<b>What do you know about our competitors?</b>	<p>Your interviewer is trying to find out how well you know the industry and if you've researched who their competitors might be.</p> <p>They don't want candidates to unfairly criticise their competitors, but they will be looking for any knowledge you're familiar with competing brands/businesses.</p>
<b>What would you like to know about us?</b>	<p>Don't forget that an interview is a two-way street. By asking this question, interviewers are keen to open up a deeper dialogue about their business.</p> <p>By asking intelligent questions, you could really uncover some great nuggets of information to make sure the job is for you. Some examples might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could you tell me more about how you won your recent award?</li> <li>• Could you show me around the office/warehouse/work space?</li> <li>• In what ways does the company support the local community/give back to charity?</li> <li>• What learning opportunities do you offer?</li> <li>• Who would I be reporting to?</li> <li>• How would you describe the company's culture?</li> </ul>

# Interview skills 1: Get the best start

## Checklist: How to make a good impression at interview

Making a good impression at interview will be key to your success in securing the role. Here's a list of things to run through to make sure that you're fully prepared on the day!

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- ☒ Analyse the job description carefully and make sure that you're a great fit
  - ☒ Research the company and make notes on the core things that you'll need to know
    - Where are they based?
    - How many branches/offices do they have?
    - Where would you be expected to work?
    - Who are the directors/founders and who are the members of the senior team?
    - What awards have the company won in the last five years?
    - Where did they come from and when were they founded? Start-up/family business/company history
    - What are the products and services that they provide?
  - ☒ Practise answering interview questions: the more prepared you are, the better!
  - ☒ Practise asking interview questions: remember that interviews are a two-way thing and you are entitled to ask as many questions as you like
  - ☒ If you've been asked to bring or prepare anything, make sure you take it with you and have it to hand
  - ☒ Plan your interview outfit and make sure (as much as possible) that it aligns to the company dress code. Be sure your outfit is clean and ironed, that your shoes are clean or polished and your hair is tidy
  - ☒ Arrange for any child/elder/pet care at least a week in advance so you don't panic at the very last minute. Always have a backup in case you're let down
  - ☒ Review your own CV the day before your interview to be sure you are familiar with your dates of employment and achievements. It's very likely that the interviewer will ask you why you left your previous role, so be clear on your reasons
  - ☒ Plan your journey to the interview. See the **Planning your journey checklist**

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## Checklist: Planning your journey

Once you've received an invitation to attend an interview, it's time to plan your journey. Knowing how to get there and making necessary travel arrangements well ahead of time will relieve a lot of stress on the day.

### You should consider:

- ☒ Check (and double-check) that you have the right address for your interview. If the company has multiple branches nearby, always double-check which one you are expected to attend
- ☒ If you need to use public transport – bus, train or taxi – make sure that your arrangements are in place at least two days in advance
  - If you need to book a taxi be sure that the taxi firm knows where to go
  - Buy your train fare in advance. Using a rail app will help you to see train times and platform information to better plan your journey
  - If travelling by bus, be sure you know which bus stop and in which direction the bus is travelling to get you to where you need to go
  - Check how far you might have to walk between the train/bus station and the interview destination. Allow plenty of time so you don't arrive out of breath
- ☒ If you are walking or travelling by car, do a test run so you know how long it will take you to get there. This will help you find out if there are any routes that need to be avoided on the day
  - If using a sat nav, double check that you have the right postcode
  - Use Google Maps or Google Earth to virtually travel to your destination ahead of time. These apps will also tell you how long (approximately) your journey is likely to take
- ☒ Take some spare cash with you in case of emergencies. If your bus or train is running late, you may have to change tact at the very last minute and find an alternative method of transport
- ☒ Aim to arrive at your interview at least 10 minutes early. This will give you time to freshen up if you need to and settle any last-minute nerves
- ☒ If you are running late always call ahead and let your interviewer know. It is better to admit that you'll be late than have them think that you're not coming at all