

ROBERT WALTERS



# The complete interview guide

Helping you land the perfect role



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# Welcome to Robert Walters



**Toby Fowlston,  
Chief Executive Officer**

## Helping professionals find fulfilling careers

Our story begins in 1985 when the Group opened its first office in central London. Since then we have developed into a global specialist professional recruitment group, operating in a diverse range of markets worldwide.

For over 32 years, we've been helping talented professionals develop their careers, job move after job move. It's a success story we're proud of and one that's built on the strength and passion of our people.

As the business continues to expand, we operate with the same commitment to service and quality. Every candidate is treated as an individual with a focus on advising, consulting and helping you to succeed through the job screening process.

It's one of the reasons we've produced this comprehensive interview guide. We are committed to helping our candidates conduct successful interviews and therefore outshine the competition. Regardless of your level, this guide will help you to perfect your interview skills.

Our consultants often come from industry backgrounds and know what hiring managers want, so they're also well placed to help you prepare for an interview. They take the time to listen to your career goals and match you with the right role.

In addition, unlike the majority of our competition, we will put you forward for all suitable roles, regardless of which consultant you speak to. We also promise to never send your CV out without your permission.

We hope you find this guide useful and invite you to get in touch if you would like to discuss your next career move. Our contact details are at the back of the guide.

**Toby Fowlston, CEO,  
Robert Walters Group**

# Prepare to be the best you

“We see it all the time – great candidates being passed over because they didn’t prepare for an interview properly. Even if you don’t have the full skill set you can still land the job by being well prepared and enthusiastic.”



## How to prepare

The importance of preparation cannot be overstated. As well as boosting your confidence, it will help you to show the best you.

Interviewers frequently test a candidate’s preparation to see how enthusiastic they are about the role and the company. Thorough preparation demonstrates to them that you’re serious about the job.

For a fairly straightforward interview you should allow half a day’s preparation time, but for more senior roles which will require you to go deeper, it’s best to allocate a full day.



## Research

The first thing to do is visit the company's website and social channels. Make sure you read the home page, about us and services/products sections and note down the key points you learn about the company including its history, vision and mission.

Then move on to a web search of the company to find out if it's been in the news lately. This will ensure you come across as informed and up-to-date with topical issues. It's also a good idea to know who its competitors are and what differentiates them from other businesses in their field.

## Learn

Learn your CV off by heart so that you can talk naturally and fluently about your employment history and key achievements. Spend some time mapping out how your skills and experience match the job description. You want to make it easy for the interviewer to see how you're a great fit for the role. It's also wise to research your current and previous employers online so you can answer questions confidently.

## Practice

Ask someone you trust to help you practice common interview questions and competency-based interview questions. Practising out loud will stop you from 'rambling' on the day and help you to communicate your thoughts clearly and succinctly. We cover interview questions later in the guide.

## Devise your questions

Try to think of questions that will make you stand out from other interviewees. Interviewers tend to be impressed by candidates with an enthusiastic attitude and those who have gone the extra mile to prepare for the interview.

Use your questions to demonstrate your preparation and insight. For example, if you've looked at some of their employees' LinkedIn profiles and seen that people tend to get promoted every two to three years, then ask about that.

While it's a good idea to look at the interviewer's LinkedIn profile, it's important to ensure you don't come across as 'creepy' by commenting on personal information you've gleaned – it's best to keep it professional.

Likewise, read the annual report and latest press releases. Look for things where you can make a link to the role and department you are hoping to join. For example, "I read that you've just launched x. What will that mean for the growth of this role?"

Be creative and imaginative, and remember to avoid questions about pay and benefits in the first interview. These topics can be discussed once you've been offered the job.

## Fast facts

- Go the extra mile with your research
- Map out how your skills and experience match the job description
- Do a mock interview with a friend or your recruiter
- Prepare interesting questions to make yourself stand out

**“I always start by asking people to explain what our business does. This deceptively simple question floors lots of people – it's amazing how many interviewees struggle with it, perhaps because they're attending several interviews in a row and haven't made the time to do much research.**

**But if you don't come across as having a firm grasp of the company and why it's hiring, the interviewer can only conclude that you're not really that bothered about the job.”**



## The day of the interview

While preparing for the interview is important, it's also vital to prepare for the day itself by planning your outfit, transport route and what to take.

**“While it’s important to dress professionally you don’t want to appear a clone – it’s ok to express your personality through your dress, just don’t overdo it. You want the interviewer to recognise your skills and experience, not to be distracted by what you’re wearing.”**

### What to wear

With 6 in 10 managers saying how an interviewee dresses has a big impact on their employability, first impressions really do count. However, nowadays there is a lot of flexibility and variety in what people wear to work, so it's important to do your research by looking at social channels such as Glassdoor and Youtube to see what the dress code is. You don't want to show up at a tech start-up in a three-piece suit!

Your recruitment consultant will advise you on the dress code, but if you're dealing directly with the hiring manager, then it's perfectly acceptable to ask them outright. For example, “I hope you don't mind me asking but can you please tell me what the dress code is for the interview?” Dressing professionally will help your skills, achievements and personality to shine through. Remember to subtly change your outfit for the second interview.

### Plan your journey

Research your route the night before, ensuring you build in plenty of time in case of delays. You may like to arrive in the area early so you can go over your notes at a café. Regardless of what time you arrive, don't report to reception until 10 minutes before your interview time.

### What to take

It's always a good idea to take several copies of your CV in case the interviewer unexpectedly brings a colleague to the meeting. You will come across as calm and organised if you can hand out additional copies without becoming flustered. Writing down the company address, interview time, and name and title of your interviewer is also advisable, in case your mobile phone fails on the day.

### Fast facts

- Find out the dress code before the interview
- Research your transport route
- Arrive at reception 10 minutes early
- Take extra copies of your CV and a portfolio if appropriate



# Make a strong start

“One candidate I interviewed recently asked me a non-stop string of questions about my family, the job, the company, things in the news – all sorts of things. But he didn’t really have much to say himself and he didn’t really wait to hear my answer before asking the next question, so he just came across as rather anxious and scattered.”



## How to maximise the first five minutes of an interview

We’ve all heard it said that first impressions count and it’s especially true of job interviews. One third of bosses say they know within 90 seconds whether they will hire someone, so starting strong is a must.

From the all important hand shake to making small talk and maintaining eye contact, there are so many things to be aware of in the first five minutes of an interview. Given these first few moments can have such a decisive impact on how well the rest of the interview goes, here’s how to start strong – together with some cautionary tales of what not to do from real interviewers.





## 1. Remember the interview starts as soon as you leave the house

The interview starts long before you shake hands and sit down around the table. You never know who you might bump into as you get off your bus or train, or enter the company's building – for all you know, your interviewer could be in the same coffee bar queue as you. So make sure you project a friendly, confident, professional air from the moment you set off.

Doubtless you'll have made sure you arrive early. Give yourself time to have a comfort break and make sure you're hydrated. Make conversation with the receptionist, switch off your phone and take in your surroundings – you might notice something that will make a useful small-talk topic later. Don't try to cram in any last-minute facts – you want to come across as calm and organised, not flustered and under-prepared.

## 2. Treat everyone you meet as your interviewer

Make sure that you're polite and friendly to everyone you come across in the interview process. From greeting the receptionist, to the people you share a lift with, to walking through an open-plan office to reach your meeting room – these are all touchpoints with your

potential future employer. Co-workers will often share their impressions of visitors afterwards, so you want everyone who comes into contact with you to see you in as positive a light as possible.

## 3. Create a strong first impression

First impressions count, and non-verbal cues matter even more than verbal ones. So in those first few minutes, it's all about smiling confidently, shaking hands firmly, making eye contact and generally looking as if you're glad to be there and you want the job. Lean in slightly, look alert and interested, and wait to be invited to sit down. In everything you do, project an attitude of energy, enthusiasm and interest.

Clothes-wise, try to match your dress style to that of the company you're meeting.

You want to project some personality and charisma, but you also want to come across as a good fit, so if in doubt always err on the formal side.

## Fast facts

- Be professional from the moment you leave the house
- Be courteous and friendly to everyone you encounter
- Make sure your body language shows you're engaged and enthusiastic
- Match your dress style to that of the company you're meeting



**“It's important that you stand to greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, eye contact and a smile. Remember not to sit until you're offered a seat. They may initiate some small talk to put you at ease, so use this opportunity to demonstrate your interpersonal skills.”**

“I like to make a point of coming down to greet candidates in person. On one occasion, a candidate assumed I was an assistant, treated me in a very offhand way and rather rudely asked me to get them a drink. They got quite a shock when they saw I was heading up the interview panel! But what most disappointed me was the idea that it’s appropriate to treat staff of any level in such a way.”

#### 4. Be ready for the small talk

Getting the small talk right (or wrong) can have big consequences. It’s a way for people to build rapport and affinity, and start to generate that elusive, intangible quality of ‘chemistry’ that characterises all effective business relationships.

So as part of your interview preparation, it’s a good idea to think ahead to some likely topics that might come up, to help keep the conversation flowing smoothly. The key is to think of some topics where you have a shared interest, so that you’re able to both ask and answer credible questions.

For example, if you see a picture of your interviewer’s family, perhaps you could ask about them – and be ready with a family anecdote of your own. Or if you’re a sports fan and you spot signs that your interviewer is too, perhaps you could ask a suitable question that you’ve also got an interesting answer to (‘Do you ever get to the matches?’ ‘So who’s going to win the Cup this year?’ etc).

Think, too, about topical themes. For example, has your potential employer been in the news recently? Or could you ask about the potential impact on the company of a recent development, such as Brexit or falling share prices or a serious malware attack? In each case, make sure you have an interesting thought of your own to contribute too.

#### 5. Be on message from the outset

Politicians coached in handling the media are always advised to have a maximum of three key messages to get across, which they should stick to and repeat throughout any interview. Similarly, it’s a good idea to have two or three key points that you want to make about what you have to offer and what you’re looking for. For example, ‘I’m ready for the challenge of managing a team’, ‘I combine compliance experience with technical expertise’, ‘In my career, I’ve developed an extensive digital transformation skill set’.

These are the three key points that you want your interviewer to remember about you. So try to work them in naturally whenever you can, even in the first few minutes. It’s also important to have a ready answer for some of the most common questions that come up early on, such as ‘Tell me why you want this job’ and ‘What’s your understanding of what this job involves?’



“I once heard someone standing outside our building, smoking furiously and complaining loudly on their phone about the early start time of their meeting and wondering aloud why they were even there. When I got to my next interview, I realised to my dismay the noisy moaner was my next candidate. Not a great start!”

# Know your interview questions

“Make sure you’re listening to the questions and tailoring your answers – you can prepare, but you need to understand the nuances of the person interviewing you. You may have great intentions about what you plan to say in the interview, but don’t force it if it’s not natural.”





## Common interview questions

There are some interview questions that you can almost guarantee will come up in one form or another, so make sure you've got some good answers at the ready.

### 'So how was your journey?'

The interviewer may initiate some small talk with a question like this to help put you at ease. They're looking to test your interpersonal skills too, so just relax and answer naturally. Avoid one-word answers, and don't be afraid to ask a relevant question or two back.

### 'Tell me about yourself'

Most interviewers start by asking you to talk about yourself and your career history. What they're really asking is 'What would you be like to work with and what difference could you make to the organisation?' This is your opportunity to talk about your strengths, skills and experience. Don't give a detailed account of every single job you've ever had. Instead summarise your career history by highlighting the most important points that relate to the job you're interviewing for. Keep your summary to five minutes. Think about your personal brand and the story you want to tell, and ensure you display enthusiasm and flexibility.

### 'Why do you want to work for us?'

Look beyond the obvious points such as the size of the company or its current bottom line. Say something different that shows you have really done your research. For example, you could point to a new product or CSR initiative, or a staff project presented on the company's social media pages. Show how the things you mention about the company align with your own personal values too.

### 'Tell us about your strengths'

Answering this question well is all about showing your ability to do the job, your commitment to work, and your ability to function effectively as part of a team. Choose three qualities that focus on how your strengths will benefit this specific role, and try to include a combination of hard and soft skills.

### 'Where do you see yourself in five years' time?'

Think realistically about where this job can take you and how that fits with your career plans. You want to come across as ambitious, but not impatient or ruthless. Ideally you'll find a way to show how your goals and ambitions align with those of the company.

### 'Tell us about your hobbies and interests'

This is a good chance to show another side of yourself and to hopefully build rapport with the interviewer. Look to surface something surprising or unexpected that will provoke curiosity and help you to stand out in the interviewer's mind.

### Fast facts

- Practise summarising your skills, experience and career history
- Make note of your strengths and weaknesses
- Think about the future and how you want your career to grow
- Know why you'd like to work for this company

**“Don't exaggerate when answering common or competency questions. It's important to tell the truth and discuss what you learned through the experience.”**





## Tell a powerful story

Interviewers are relying more and more on competency questions to help them differentiate between competing candidates. But what are they exactly – and what's the best way to approach them?

**“Stories are a powerful communication tool because they appeal to both the emotional and rational sides of the brain. Use competency questions to tell your unique story.”**

## Distinguish yourself

Competency questions are a useful way for employers to distinguish if you're a good fit for their organisation, and to differentiate between different candidates with similar levels of skill and experience. That's because no two stories – and no two storytellers – are the same.

Stories are a powerful communication tool because they appeal to both the emotional and rational sides of the brain. They're a chance for you to show more of your personality and establish a warmer connection with your interviewer that goes beyond the data of your CV. You can also use them to demonstrate more of what you're capable of, and to steer the interview in the direction that best showcases your suitability for the role.

## What will I be asked?

There's a wide range of topics that you might be asked a competency question about. The questions tend to fall into several predictable categories, such as personal qualities, interpersonal skills and team behaviour, leadership and management, commercial and client skills, as well as problem-solving and decision-making skills.

## Here are some examples:

- ‘Tell us about a time when you had to deal with challenging feedback on your work’
- ‘Tell me about a time when you were able to resolve a conflict within your team’
- ‘Tell me about a time when you were able to help a team member who was struggling with morale issues’
- ‘Describe a situation where you were able to directly influence your company's bottom line’
- ‘Can you tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult strategic decision and win over others in the process?’

You can often infer the sort of questions that you might be asked at a specific interview from what you know of the role, the job description, and of course your own CV. If you're working with a recruitment consultant, make sure you ask for their advice too – as experts, they'll know which competencies the employer is looking for.

If, for example, you are interviewing for a role where you'll be managing people for the first time, you can expect a question like: ‘Tell me about a time when you had to step in and show leadership in your team’.

This gives you a chance to show that, even if you haven't formally had to demonstrate a particular competency before, you already have the potential to do so.

If you are moving into a role where the ability to cope with significant time pressure is critical, you might be asked, ‘Tell us about a time where you had to juggle lots of conflicting deadlines’. If close team-working or client-facing skills are essential, you might be asked, ‘Tell us about a situation where you had to find a way to work with a colleague who you didn't always get on with’, or ‘Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile to delight a customer’.

## Fast facts

- Competency questions help employers differentiate between similar candidates
- Use competency questions to tell your unique story
- Look at the job description for clues on what may be asked
- Ask your recruitment consultant what competencies the hiring manager is looking for

## How to answer a competency question

Think of your answer to a competency question as a very focused kind of story. Any good story has a character we care about – that’s you. The character is set a challenge or finds themselves in a tricky situation. Then they have to go on a journey and take some actions to find the answer, and usually gain a valuable life lesson in the process. For your big finish, focus on the positive outcome that you helped to achieve, and briefly say what you learned in the process.

To make your story more credible and relatable, add in a few specific details and anecdotal touches (but stay on point – don’t waffle). And don’t be afraid to show yourself in a less than perfect light at some points too: as in any good

Hollywood film, things tend to go worse for our hero before they get better, and seeing how you overcome these challenges – whether internal or external – adds to the power of the story.

### Example answer:

**Q: Tell us about a time when you had to ‘manage up’**

**A:** ‘When I first started my current role, I saw that we had a recurring difficulty in getting new client reports signed off in a timely fashion because they had to be personally approved by a particular director. This individual was perceived as intimidating and hardly ever available, so we were constantly on the backfoot with deadlines.

I did an audit of our existing approval processes, and identified all the potential risks and bottlenecks. It seemed to me that only certain reports really needed such a senior level of sign-off, and empowering other managers to own approvals would help ease the pressure on the system. I was asked to present my proposal to the director which was a bit nerve-wracking, but I put forward the case that possible late delivery of reports to clients was a significant business risk. When I concluded with my new proposed approach, the executive congratulated me on my efforts and said they’d been looking for a way to delegate some of their responsibilities for a long time.

As a result, a modified version of my process was introduced almost immediately, and colleagues have commented how the production process is now much more efficient. I learnt from this experience that if you want to make positive change, it’s important to look beyond individual personalities and build instead a compelling case that everyone can get behind. And if you want to point out a problem, people will listen to you much more if you’ve got an idea for the solution too!’

## Be a STAR storyteller

Another good way to remember how to structure your answer to a competency question is to follow the STAR system:

### • Situation:

Explain the context, your role and the potential challenge you and the organisation were facing.

### • Task:

What specific task were you given responsibility for to help your company meet the challenge?

### • Action:

What steps did you decide to take, and why? How were your actions received by stakeholders and co-workers?

### • Result:

What was the outcome of your actions? What difference did you make? What did you learn?

# Avoid common interview mistakes

“There are great candidates out there who make common interview mistakes such as interrupting the interviewer or speaking negatively about their former employer, and sadly it ends up costing them the job.”







## Top six interview mistakes to avoid

While it's important to know the right thing to do and say at an interview, it's also essential to understand the common interview pitfalls that many unwittingly fall into. Here we share the top six interview mistakes to avoid.

### Don't be apathetic

We've all been there, agreeing to an interview even when you're not overly excited by the job description. However, it's important that you are enthusiastic from the get-go because it will be too late if you decide halfway through the interview that you do want the job after all.

The interviewer will have already picked up on your lack of enthusiasm and it will be extremely difficult to turn the interview around. Put your doubts aside, go in wanting the job and approach the interview in that frame of mind.

It's also important to note that no matter how qualified you are, you still need to display energy and enthusiasm. If you sit there with all the experience in the world but don't convey enthusiasm, then the interviewer won't be interested. Clients have an ego too, they want to feel that the candidate sees the role as a good opportunity and will value it.

### Avoid negative talk

Speaking negatively about your current or previous employer is a major pitfall you will do well to avoid. You may feel negatively about your current workplace, but don't be too honest if that's your reason for leaving.

Sometimes people nail an interview but then end it by saying something negative about their employer. It comes across as unprofessional and we all know there are two sides to every story.

It's also important to avoid flimsy answers to the question 'why are you looking to change jobs?'. For example, 'i got bored' or 'i wasn't progressing' when you've only been in the role for 12 months will set off alarm bells for the interviewer. It's best to construct answers that are honest but still paint you in a positive light. For example, 'i'm looking for a more challenging, varied role as my current role isn't stretching me' or 'i really enjoy being part of a dynamic team and my job doesn't offer that currently'.

### Personal hygiene

We talked earlier in the guide about your physical appearance and finding out the dress code before the interview so you don't look out of step with the company culture when you arrive. But it's equally important to consider your personal cleanliness. For example, if you stopped for a coffee on the way to the interview make sure you have a mint to freshen up. It's also a good idea to avoid smoking prior to the interview.

On the flip side, the overpowering smell of aftershave or perfume can be equally off-putting for interviewers. Sometimes in our eagerness to smell good we may get carried away which can be distracting for the person we're meeting. To be sure, ask a friend to check that you haven't overdone the perfume or cologne prior to your interview.

### Fast facts

- Remember to listen and never talk over the interviewer
- Check your personal hygiene but don't overdo the cologne
- Put your doubts aside and show you're enthusiastic about the job
- Don't speak negatively about your current employer



**“Overfamiliarity is something that really puts me off a candidate. You should always let the interviewer lead the tone of the interview and not behave or speak informally unless the interviewer does so.”**

“There’s nothing worse than getting to the end of an interview and finding the candidate has no questions. Be different and ask imaginative questions, make someone want to hire you over the competition.”

### **Don’t talk too much**

If you’ve spent hours preparing for an interview you’ll be keen to get the answers you’ve prepared across. However, don’t fall into the common trap of not listening to the question carefully. Sometimes people are so desperate to share what they’ve prepared that they give an irrelevant answer to the question. You may have great intentions about what you plan to say in the interview, but don’t force it if it’s not natural.

It’s also important to let the interviewer lead the interview and set the tone. Interviewers find it very off-putting when a candidate jumps the gun and asks questions before they’ve been invited to. It comes across as over-confident. Another big mistake is to interrupt or talk over the top of the interviewer – bite your tongue and wait your turn to speak. You want to prioritise listening and achieve the right balance of confidence and humility. These are the candidates who stand out.

Overfamiliarity is also very off-putting for interviewers. “I don’t like it when a candidate acts like they’re my best friend before they’ve even built rapport with me. If I start to relax and laugh towards the end of the interview then I’m happy for the candidate to do so too. For example, I had one candidate who made a funny joke about selling gravy in a previous role, but it was at the end of the interview so it worked.”

### **Make time to prepare**

Even if you’re attending multiple interviews you need to build time into your schedule to prepare properly. Interviewers find it inexcusable when candidates don’t know about the company and the role. When asked about the company, just reciting information from the website isn’t going to cut it. Interviewers want candidates who will look beyond the surface level facts and delve deeper into current trends and what’s happening in the market.

The best candidates will be able to link market trends back to the business and talk about what they think makes the company interesting and unique. But you can only do this effectively if you’re well prepared.

Another fatal mistake is not reading the job description properly or taking the time to understand the role before going for the interview. Hiring managers spend a lot of time and effort devising job descriptions, so make sure you’ve mapped out how your skills and experience match the role and know your strengths and development areas.

### **Always ask questions**

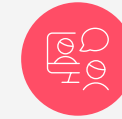
If there’s one way to leave a lasting negative impression it’s to say you don’t have any questions at the end of the interview. Interviewers believe it shows a lack of interest and initiative. Be different and ask imaginative questions, it will help you to stand out from the competition.



**“You want to prioritise listening and achieve the right balance of confidence and humility. These are the candidates who stand out.”**

# Thrive in all conditions

“Whether it’s an online interview with the line manager or an in-person interview with the HR manager, every situation is different. It’s important to be well prepared so you can thrive in all conditions.”



## Making that online interview count

Most of us use video calls as a way to stay in touch with family and friends, so we think of it as a relaxed, social form of communication. However this is not the case when it comes to online interviews – you need to treat them with the same professionalism as an in-person interview.

For example, make sure you dress professionally (and fully), as you never know when you may need to get up during the interview and you don’t want to have your pyjama bottoms on display.

## Prepare your space

You wouldn't expect to attend an interview in a badly lit, noisy room filled with distractions, so why do it for a skype interview? It's much easier for an interviewer to concentrate on you if they can see and hear you clearly, without distractions or interruptions.

Here are top tips from our experts on preparing your interview space:

**Tidy up** – make sure your background is clean, tidy and uncluttered, as interviewers will look at your environment to get clues about who you are. The interviewer doesn't want to see your laundry in the background.

**Light it up** – you won't come across as your best self if your face is in the shadows. Ideally choose a room with a lot of natural light, but if that's not possible, then put a lamp beside your laptop and adjust it until your face is illuminated on the screen.

**Shut it up** – turn off your mobile phone and shut doors and windows to block out background noise. It's also worth telling people in your vicinity that you're being interviewed and you don't want to be interrupted.

Try to avoid having people walking behind you during the interview, as this is an unnecessary distraction that takes the attention away from you.

## Technical checks

Online interviews require extra preparation as you need to ensure all the technology is working. Knowing that you've tested everything in advance will reduce your stress on the day and ensure you don't become easily flustered.

## Here are a few things to bear in mind:

**Ask for a trial** – wherever possible, test the connection with the company beforehand to ensure the visuals and sound are working.

**Find somewhere stable** – prop up your tablet or mobile phone so that you can sit with good posture for the interview as you would in person. Avoid holding your device and ensure your face is in the centre of the picture.

“I had one candidate lie down for an online interview – she completely missed the point that it was still a formal interview!”

**Is there strong wifi?** – Remember this is your responsibility. If you've committed to an interview, then you need to ensure in advance that the connection is strong enough to support a video call. Call a friend to test the connection once you have the interview date.

**Speak slowly** – interviewers need more time to take in your answers over video, so make it easy for them by talking at a slower pace than usual. At the end of every question, because it's difficult to read the body language nuances, always ask 'have i answered your question correctly and do you need more information?'

If you follow these tips for online interviews you will definitely be a cut above the rest.

“Don't assume an online interview will be more casual. You'll need to work even harder than usual, as it's difficult to read people over video.”



## Understand your interviewer

Most companies' recruitment processes involve interviews with both a line manager and a human resources professional. But what's the difference and how do you flex your interview style accordingly?

Generally speaking, an interview with the line manager will focus on the technical aspects of the role – they'll want to know about your previous experience, skills and achievements. Be prepared to talk about how your skills match the job description.

On the other hand, an interview with the HR manager will focus on the company culture and finding out if you are a good cultural fit. This is a good opportunity to show off what you know about the company and how you share its values.

It's important to remember that the HR manager has the ability to halt the interview process. So don't be fooled into under preparing for this interview – make sure you understand what the values and pillars of the company are.

### Fast facts

- Talk to the HR manager about how your values match the company's own values and culture
- Be prepared to discuss your technical skills and experience with the line manager
- Stay confident when faced with unconscious bias
- Find common ground and build rapport with the interviewer





## Overcoming unconscious bias

While companies strive to make the interview process fair and objective, it's an unfortunate reality that interviewers are human and all carry with them some assumptions about different types of people.

This is called 'unconscious bias' and it is the tendency we all have to favour those who look and act like us, as well as those we consider to be charming and attractive. However don't be discouraged, there are many ways to ensure an interviewer doesn't apply their unconscious biases to you.

### Here are a few tips:

**Mirror speech and behaviours** – Knowing that we tend to favour those who act like us, it's a good idea to match the way you speak and behave in an interview to your interviewer. For example, if they speak very formally, then you should do the same.

**Address the bias** – Don't be afraid to mention a particular bias you faced in a previous role and how you overcame it. For example, your age may have led people to overlook you for promotion, so talk about what you did to address this. However, be careful not to insinuate that the interviewer is biased against you.

**Build rapport** – Look for opportunities to form a personal connection with the interviewer. This can often be done when you talk about your hobbies and interests, or when making small talk. If you notice something sparks their interest, then delve deeper into this topic. You can also ask them what they like about working at the company to learn more about their motivations and find a point of potential connection.





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