



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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FOR YOUR FIRST  
JOB INTERVIEW

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## ABOUT THE SHAPE YOUR FUTURE PROJECT

“Shape Your Future” is a 2 year Erasmus+ project focussed on giving people from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance at education and social inclusion. The project is designed for young people aged between 14 and 35 seeking employment or learning opportunities. “Shape Your Future” is developed in partnership with youth organisations from Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Poland and Romania, with a budget of 250,000 Euros and is financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships.

The “Shape Your Future” project was developed by identifying the needs and opportunities of young people in the labour market. There is a common need to create a space for young people and youth workers where they can find opportunities for professional and personal development. The objectives of the project are aimed at the social inclusion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, integration into the labour market, facilitating access to education and innovation programs as well as developing entrepreneurial skills.

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The information included in this booklet was compiled during the Shape Your Future Job Shadowing mobility in Dublin, Ireland hosted by HESL.



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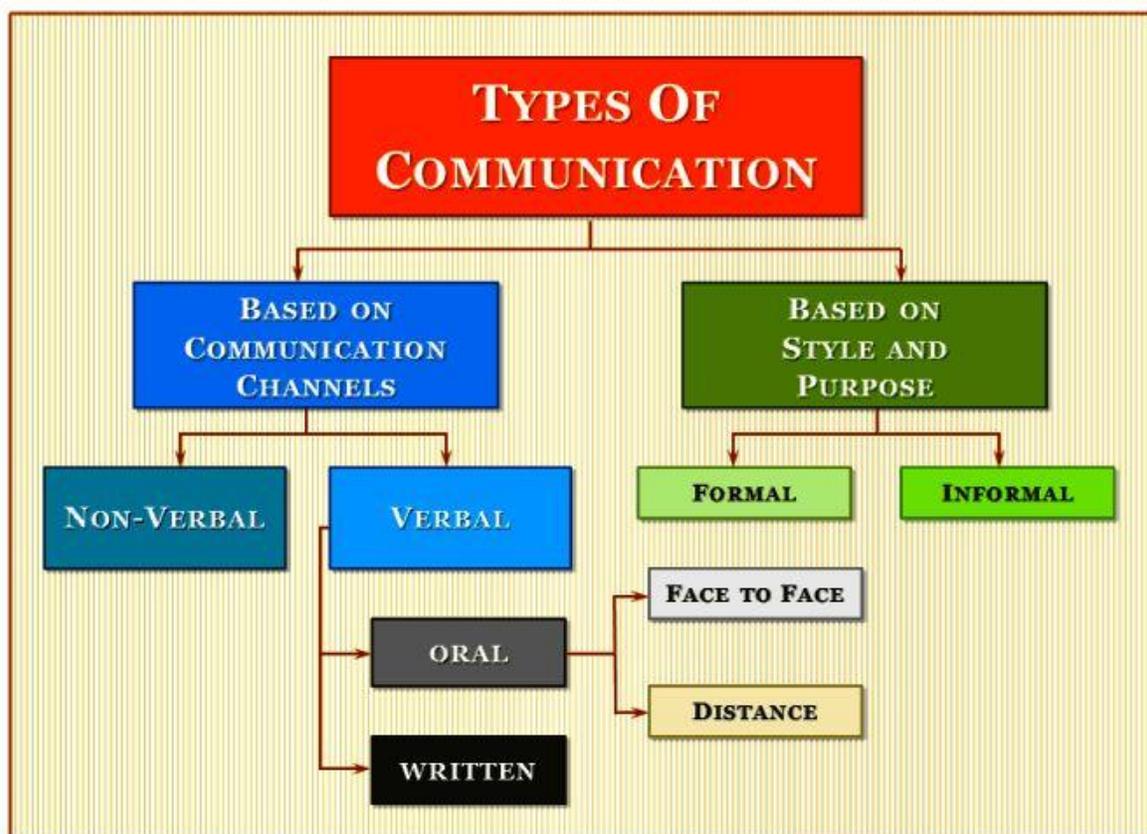
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## COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

Communication is the basis of our existence. Each time we make an action in our daily life we are sending a message to those who are around us. That is why we need to be aware of all the skills that are involved in effective communication and how to improve them properly. We hope you find in this guidebook the tools to be a successful writer, speaker and listener for the job environment. Firstly, let's discuss the different types of communication.



Apart from the categories above mentioned in the chart, we also wanted to highlight two categories: active and passive communicator.

## ACTIVE. THE PERSON WHO PRODUCES A MESSAGE

VERBAL	NON VERBAL
Effective speaking	Gestures
Assertiveness	Body Posture
Giving credit to others	Eye contact
Speaking with confidence	Body language
Being friendly and respectful	Clothing
Appropriate language	Facial expression
Speed/ pace	Proximity / Distance
Intonation	Appearance

## PASSIVE: A PERSON WHO RECEIVES A MESSAGE

Active listening
Critical thinking
Respect

## ESSENTIAL OBSTACLES IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- **Cultural issues** (language and meaning of some signs) how we create sense of identity, placing values, morals within our world view
- **Perceptual barriers** (the differences in opinion and varied perceptions between people give rise to a need for effective communication)
- **Gender barriers** (accepting and understanding how we tick, how we want to communicate)
- **Emotional barriers** (expressing, validating and understanding our emotion) (personal attacks, belittling, disappearing, being defensive)
- **Physical barriers** (how we use space to increase opportunity to connect, talk, laugh and maintain proximity) + hierarchy in the organisation forbids team members from effective interaction with each other
- **Time barriers** (being present, communicate their worth through your time)
- **Covid-19 barriers** (covering face may disturb the impression and cause misunderstandings) (It is also more difficult the usage of non-verbal language via the internet so we need to practice to improve that part).

## JOB INTERVIEW:

**Verbal / Written skills (see page 13 to know *How to Prepare your CV*).** Those are related to the job application. Here is when the written skills are most important. Create an appealing CV resumé, because this is the first impression that the company is going to have about us. It is also important to create a LinkedIn profile with all your information, and to manage your online presence effectively.

**Verbal/Oral skills.** Essential skills that we need to train for a job interview. The most important are the following:

- Effective speaking. You produce a message clearly and precisely, with accuracy and appropriate language. It is important to organise your ideas before the interview so you are conscious of your strengths and weaknesses and to prepare a speech with each part of the information required.
- Assertiveness.
- Speaking with confidence.
- Being friendly and respectful.
- Speed / pace. When it comes to selling an idea of success and confidence, the use of words is very important. We need to speak fluently but also calmly.
- Intonation. The use of different tones of voice may help you to maintain your interviewers interested in what you are telling them.

**Non-verbal skills.** During the job interview, it is necessary to use some gestures and have a determined body posture and facial expression. It is also important to make eye contact with all the people in the room. First impressions are essential, so make sure you wear appropriate clothes. Depending on the country you are in, the interviewer is going to behave in different ways. You have to be aware of different cultural backgrounds.

## Why are all these skills required for a successful job interview?

The interviewers will:

- Test a person's ability to make decisions and communicate those decisions to others.
- Determine if a candidate will be able to effectively handle unsatisfied customers in an empathetic manner.
- See if a potential employee will be able to successfully represent your brand and positively spread awareness of your brand.
- Find out if someone will be able to work well within a team.

## SUMMARY: MAIN PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW DURING A JOB INTERVIEW (7 Cs)

1. **Clarity:** make sure the goal of your message reaches clearly to your audience. Keep your message simple and easy to understand.
2. **Conciseness:** be short and to the point. Avoid repetition and unnecessary words. Include only relevant information.
3. **Concreteness:** ensure that all the important details and facts are mentioned but that nothing deters from the focus of your message.
4. **Correctness:** communication should be accurate. There should not be any grammatical, factual, technical or any other errors.
5. **Completeness:** convey all facts required by the receivers. Do not leave any scope for assumptions or vagueness.
6. **Considerations:** take the listeners into consideration: their viewpoints, background, values, level of expertise, etc.
7. **Courtesy:** approach the listeners in a friendly and courteous manner. Avoid the use of passive/aggressive tones while communicating. Be open and honest.

## WORKPLACE

Once you have passed every stage of the job interview, you will have to maintain your good image in the workplace. That is why you have to take into account the following skills:

**Verbal / Written skills:** Communication that relies on grammar, punctuation and word choice. The main written skills for this field are clarity, conciseness, the appropriate selection of vocabulary and the correct use of different grammatical structures and punctuation.

**Verbal / Oral skills:** Workers who can convey information clearly and effectively are highly valued by employers. Some examples of oral skills that are useful for this environment are the following:

- Assertiveness.
- Conveying messages concisely.
- Speaking and listening calmly even in the most stressful situations. It is important to control your emotions to avoid misunderstandings and confrontations.
- Requesting and giving feedback is a great way to improve group skills.
- Stating your needs, expectations or feelings without criticising or blaming.
- Asking for clarification when needed. Some instructions may be vague, so request for a more detailed explanation if needed.
- Paraphrasing to show understanding. If you repeat some of the information given to you it will demonstrate that you are paying attention to the meeting or the speech.

**Non-verbal skills:** We can send a message to others using actions instead of words. It is also helpful to show attitudes and intentions to your partners, clients and team workers through these skills. Here are some examples of situations in which we use non-verbal skills:

- Maintaining proper eye contact to show attention.

- Being mindful of personal appearance.
- Standing or sitting with an appropriate posture in order to enhance the message.
- Expressing kindness and professionalism by giving a respectful attitude.
- Displaying polite facial expressions.
- Using hand gestures to express a feeling.
- Paying attention to body language.

## REMOTE WORK, TIPS AND SKILLS FOR THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

- Share the materials that will be presented before the meeting.
- Prepare and organise all the handouts that you will show before the session.
- Make a schedule with the outline of your presentation.
- The most popular software used for video interviewing at present is Skype or Zoom. These are free and easy to download and use. The employer will advise you about what to use
- Check your camera and microphone connection (technical review) and revise it frequently to be sure that your workers are able to understand you.
- Be aware of having proper internet access in the place you are working.
- Maintain your image even if you are working from home.
- Keep always your camera on to show interest when a team worker is talking.
- Find a background that will not distract your team workers.
- Frame yourself. Keep a correct distance from your webcam.
- Find a calm place to work.
- Hold the attention of your audience, keeping them interested when you are presenting an idea.
- Do not forget to thank the audience after the presentation, remember that these are rough times for everybody.

\*Multimedia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JqmSbwmj0>

## HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- **General:**

- Diagnose your strengths and weaknesses and be aware of the skills you have and you need to develop.
- Practice your skills in various situations.
- Volunteer to present and participate in activities whenever you can.
- Practice job interviews at home. Ask someone close to you for support to rehearse, record yourself or talk in front of a mirror to be conscious about your non-verbal skills.

- **Verbal improvement:**

- Put your ideas in order before speaking.
- Increase your vocabulary, to have more tools when having a conversation.
- Be an active listener.
- Be aware of your tone of voice when you are having an informal conversation.

- **Non-Verbal improvement:**

- Watch and learn from the body language of others.
- Try to make eye contact in every conversation with your listeners.
- Express emotions in conversations or presentations using facial looks.

- **Writing improvement:**

- Develop your skills by creating a blog or writing a diary.
- Write a hypothetical CV as a candidate for a specific company.
- Take the time to analyse everything you wrote. Find your mistakes and fix them before sending the information. Be aware so you do not repeat yourself. (Accurate grammar and punctuation)
- Try to use active voice tense in your letters. It is typically more accessible and easier to follow for readers than passive voice.
- Define your goal before writing.
- Avoid using facts as distractors of the main idea.
- Make use of outlines to organise your ideas.

## INTERVIEW SKILLS

A job interview is a meeting which consists of a conversation between a job applicant and a member who is representing a company or organisation. It is conducted to decide whether the applicant should be hired.

## INTERVIEW TYPES

There are several different types of interview, whereas the most common one is the one-to-one in-person, you can find yourself in different situations:

- **Video:** These interviews are generally held during a screening process and will take place via FaceTime, Skype or even YouTube. It is becoming more common for graduate roles due to the effects of the pandemic.
- **Telephone:** This consists of an initial call made by an interviewer. It is normally used to get a first impression of you. If you are successful, then you may end up in a one-to-one, in-person or video interview.
- **In-person interview:** This is the interview type you normally think of when applying for a job. This kind of interview is usually done in the workplace, but sometimes it can be done over lunch.
- **Panel:** This is the same as the In-person interview except there will be 2+ people interviewing you.
- **Group:** This one involves several candidates being interviewed simultaneously. You will be one of several people involved and the process may involve role-playing, written exams and presentations.

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

### 1. Recommended Communication Skills:

- Writing skills (for the CV, emails, cover letter, reference request, filling in application forms).
- Verbal skills (when calling the employer).

### 2. Get Your Interview Outfit Ready

Never underestimate the importance of looking good. Dressing formally is almost always your best bet. Make sure to dry-clean your suit and to iron your shirt. By the way, shine your shoes! Get a haircut if you need it and men should be clean shaven or have their facial hair trimmed.

Looking good isn't only important to cause a good impression, it also boosts your confidence and makes you feel good.

### 3. Plan Your Route

Being late is one of the worst things you can do in an interview setting yet it happens surprisingly often. You may have never been to the location you are being interviewed in, so you can underestimate the time it will take you to arrive there. Check Google Maps or any other navigation program and plan your route to give yourself ample time to arrive. A good rule of thumb is to plan your arrival so you're 30 minutes early. However, you should not arrive at the office more than 10 to 5 minutes earlier, as you may cause some disturbances if you arrive too early.

### 4. Improve Your Internet Presence

You can always assume that the company will do a background check on you, so it is a good idea to check if your social networks accounts are either private or (if they are public) give a good image about yourself.

Creating a LinkedIn account may be helpful to advertise yourself and gain exposure as well as to increase your chances of employment. It gives you the opportunity to present

your personal information, education, recommendations and connections. It demonstrates credibility in your field and highlights your achievements.

## 5. Overcoming Anxiety

When you are asked to attend a job interview, you may start panicking instead of being joyous. Do not worry, it is natural, you just need to follow some advice!

Typical interview fears include feeling underqualified or overqualified, being late, making a poor impression, not knowing the answer to a question and lack of preparation.

### Relaxation Techniques:

If you feel the nerves building up pre-interview, use one of the following techniques to stay calm:

- Listen to Music: Listen to your comfort playlist, focus on the music and let go of your fears.
- Visualisation: When rehearsing your answers, visualise yourself answering each one accurately and with confidence.
- Breathing: Slowly breathe in and hold each breath for seven seconds before slowly breathing out.

### More About Interview Anxiety Here:

<https://www.socialtalent.com/blog/recruitment/job-interview-tips-infographic-2>

## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CV

### Curriculum Vitae (CV) Preparation

A CV is a one page document in which you list all your experience and education, awards, certificates, projects and other relevant information.

Carefully revise everything to ensure you know precisely what is being asked of you. This process will also help you come up with some questions to ask at the end of the interview. It is advised to put all these papers in a folder and to bring it with you as to give an image of an organized and prepared person.

If you cannot decide on the CV format you can search on different websites and computer programs, like Microsoft Word templates.

Here are some websites where you can write your CV:

<https://zety.com/cv-maker>

[https://www.canva.com/es\\_es/crear/curriculum-vitae/](https://www.canva.com/es_es/crear/curriculum-vitae/)

### Tips On How To Write The Perfect CV

Employers do not spend too much time reading your CV, it usually takes them less than a couple of minutes to decide whether the person is worth interviewing or not.

#### 1. Be Relevant And Visual

The key to a great CV is helping you to stand out. You sell the best image of yourself, however you should also only write relevant information for the job.

Look at the job description, and make sure that it is clear why you will be able to perform in that role. Use bolds, italics, underlines, and capitalization to draw attention to the important details.

## **2. Mind Your Language**

Avoid vague expressions such as: passionate, hard working and team player. It depends on the type of job you do, but use descriptive words that mean something. Use synonyms instead of repeating the same adjective/noun.

## **3. Pay Attention To Detail and Be Accurate**

After you have written your CV it is recommended for you to go doing another task, and after you have taken it off of your mind, come back to it and look for any grammatical mistakes. You can also ask for a friend to help you.

## **4. Keep It Short**

Be concise and do not be afraid to omit some experience if it is not relevant to that role. People talk about the traditional two-page limit, but it depends on the sector and the position you are going for.

## **5. Make Sure It Reflects You**

Making it look professional is important. You can use appealing colours and fonts but try to be consistent.

## **6. Do not Be Afraid To Include Personal Information**

You should not go on about your friends or your pets, but you can include your hobbies, usually team sports show you can cooperate well with your peers. Hobbies can also show you are able to consistently dedicate your time to certain activities.

## **7. It is Not Always Mandatory to Include A Photo**

They can be problematic because you can be judged on how you look rather than the quality of your application. The employer will normally request a photo if it is necessary.

## WHAT RESEARCH SHOULD YOU DO ON A COMPANY BEFORE AN INTERVIEW?

The first place you should visit is the company's website. It is not only helpful to learn more about what the company does, but you will also get a sense of the values and style of the organisation. Other things to look for are the following:

- Company's product and services
- The Company Annual Report
- News about the field.
- The main challenges
- A Google News search to find recent articles about the company.
- Keywords to use during your interview and demonstrate knowledge about the field in which they are specialised.

## INTERVIEW HINTS & TIPS

### In Person Job Interview

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic it is important to follow the health protocols, sanitise your hands, keep the social distance and wear your mask. Not following these rules, besides being a risk to public health, will give a bad impression about yourself. Remember that wearing a mask limits the listener's ability to perceive your expressions, so you may want to use your hands and/or body to compensate for that. Remember to speak more clearly and louder than usual.

### Preparation

Check once or twice that you have everything you need ready, you may want to make a list so you do not forget anything. Here is an example:

- Your CV, cover letter and any professional certificates or educational qualifications you have (this is especially relevant for graduates).
- ID (can be a driving licence or passport).
- Information about the person you need to meet when you arrive.

- Pen and paper.
- A copy of the job description.
- Phone, but keep it switched off (it may distract you and looks unprofessional).
- A bottle of water (in case you are not offered a drink during the session).

## What To Wear

\*Check the *Get Your Outfit Ready* section (page 13) for more details about what to wear.

## Conduct A Mock Interview

It is recommended that you practice for your interview, there are several ways you can do this. Go to page 8 for further information.

## Practice Your Questions

While there are potentially hundreds of questions you may be asked, the majority of companies will ask similar questions. We do not guarantee that all of the following questions will be asked, but here are some examples that may be asked.

### 1. Can You Tell Me About Yourself?

Take this opportunity to describe your achievements and skills to date. A good strategy is to try the Past-Present-Future formula which basically means:

- **Present:** Start by telling the interviewer what you're doing at the moment.
- **Past:** Then move on to your previous roles. Mention the skills and achievements picked up that relate to the current role.
- **Future:** Finally, outline why you are excited at the prospect of working for the company.

The key here is to be relaxed and do not be afraid to tell relevant stories and anecdotes.

## **2. Why Do You Want To Work At [Company Name]?**

As this is a predictable question, the interviewer will expect you to be well prepared.

To really impress the interviewer, mention some aspect of the organisation that it prides itself on. Again, there is a fairly simple strategy you can use:

- **Show Enthusiasm.**
- **Combine Personal Experiences & Skills With The Job.**
- **Look to Connect the Role with Your Career Path..**

\*Check the *What research should you do on a company before an interview?* section (page 15).

## **3. Where Do You See Yourself in 5/10/20 Years?**

It is important to remember that hiring someone is an investment for an organisation and they only want candidates likely to stick around. When answering this question, you need to show that you are ambitious and are prepared to seek out your career goals with this company. Overall, you need to let the recruiter know that you've set realistic career goals, have motivation and the job opening aligns with your ambitions and growth.

## **4. What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses? (Self evaluation)**

### **Strengths:**

If you look at the job description, you will see what the organisation is seeking and should be able to tailor an answer using your real strengths. It is important to be specific; for example, say 'relationship building' instead of 'teamwork'. You must follow up your initial answer with examples of how you have used these strengths in a work setting.

### **Weaknesses:**

The main point of this question is to see how self-aware and honest you are. An old trick is to disguise a strength as a weakness, avoid using this strategy as it is very common and unuseful.

It is a much better idea to mention a genuine weakness, and how you are managing to improve. For instance, you may acknowledge that you lack self-confidence when addressing large numbers of people and state that you are remedying the situation by practicing presentations. Do not say you have no weaknesses as this is a lie and makes you come across as arrogant.

### **5. What Do You Do For Fun?**

Employers want to know that they are hiring a well-rounded individual capable of interacting with others. Be sensible with your answers.

### **6. What Is Your Greatest Achievement To Date?**

Proving that you have a track record of success will be appealing to the interviewers. The STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is useful to answer these types of questions. Use it to tell the story of your achievement:

- **Situation:** I was the captain of my football team.
- **Task:** I was asked to boost the team's confidence.
- **Action:** I organised bonding activities and prepared a pre match motivational speech.
- **Result:** We communicated better on the field and we were able to get promoted.

### **7. What Is Your Ideal Job?**

The main reason for this question is to see how motivated you really are and whether or not you will be happy working at the company. The best answer is one with references to certain elements of the role you are currently applying for.

### **8. How Do You Handle Pressure?**

The last thing an employer wants is someone who falls apart at the first sign of pressure. Always look for an answer that shows how you dealt with a stressful situation.

Do not be afraid to share how you deal with stress, it is also helpful to use the STAR method to answer this question.

### **9. What Are Your Expectations Regarding Salary?**

Sometimes a job application will have a section asking you for your salary expectations. Otherwise, you may be asked the question during one of the interviews. First and foremost, you should do research and find out the average salary from similar jobs and for people with your level of experience. You should also consider the culture in which you are planning to work.

### **10. Unusual Questions**

Some interviewers will throw a curveball and ask you an odd question. This is usually done to see if the interviewee is good on their feet at coming with answers to unexpected questions.

You may be asked some psychological questions to see your personality type. Take your time to respond and look to stall. In this case, coming up with an answer that aligns with your strengths and skills is a great way to impress.

### **11. Do You Have Any Questions For Us?**

This is a very important question, as it allows you to both get answers to some questions you may have, and also to impress the interviewer with your knowledge on the job. Some questions you can ask are the following:

- Are there skills missing in your current team that you're hoping a new employee possesses?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the individual hired for the job?
- Are there any examples of projects I would be involved in?

## ONLINE JOB INTERVIEW

In the current Covid-19 situation, it is likely that you will have to do a web based job interview, if you have been successful with a job application. This can seem quite challenging if you have never done a web interview before, but if you prepare well for it, an on-line interview can be just as effective as an in-person interview.

To get more specific advice about online meetings go to the *Remote work, tips and skills for the covid-19 context* (page 7)

## DURING THE JOB INTERVIEW

- Ask the interviewer (the right) questions.
- Examples of questions to ask the interviewer:
  - Who will I report to?
  - Are there other teams/sectors that I will interact with?
  - What are the next steps in this process?
  - What are typical career paths within the company?
  - What do the interviewers enjoy about working in the company?
  - What are some development opportunities in the company?
  - What are some recent company developments (new products, recent acquisitions etc.)?
- Be specific about your personal experience and use examples.
- Use the STAR method mentioned above
  - If you don't have professional experiences, don't be afraid to talk about personal experiences; e.g. Sports, volunteer experience , or academics, and so on...
- Don't speak too quickly.
  - Being nervous can make you speak faster than you should, we normally use between 130 to 150 words per minute. You can type a short story (of about 300 words) and read it out loud using a timer to see how long it

takes. You should aim to finish in two minutes, after a few tries, you will develop an ear for correct speed.

- Speak clearly about your experiences, make pauses to organize your thoughts.
- Make sure you are actively listening.
  - In social situations with friends or family, confidence makes us speak a lot. In an interview, however, candidates should make an effort to listen carefully to the question and explanation without adding in comments or interrupting.

Improving your listening skills can help you identify facts to use at a later moment to show you can remember and apply facts and critical information in the conversation. It may also help to nod every once in a while and repeat the question back before answering.
- Be honest about yourself.
  - Being honest in an interview means being honest about your qualifications, your experience, and your skill set. If you mention that you have advanced Excel skills in your interview, for example, if you're not at an intermediate level, there is a very good chance you'll be found out.
- Avoid certain questions that may be seen as rude for the interviewers, for example the following topics:
  - Salary (particularly in a first round interview). Questions about salary can wait until there is a job offer on the table.
  - Holidays.
  - Sick leave or similar policies as this will sound alarm bells for the interviewers.

## THE END OF THE INTERVIEW AND THE FOLLOW UP

- Mention something you noticed about their company (with excitement).
- Ask about when the decision will be made.
- Make yourself available for further information.
- Add anything that you have forgotten during the interview.
- Mention their names again when you say goodbye.
- On the way out, ask if you need to tell someone outside that you finished or call the next candidate, do not rush out of the door, and close the door (gently) behind you.
- Write a follow-up email, thanking them for the opportunity (within 1 to 2 hours afterwards).

### SHORT FOLLOW-UP THANK YOU EMAIL EXAMPLE

In the first paragraph, mention the specific job title and thank your interviewer.

In the second paragraph, note the company's name as well as a conversation point and/or goal that seemed important to the person you spoke with. Connect that point to your experience and interests.

In the final paragraph, invite them to ask you any additional questions and close by saying you're looking forward to hearing back from them.

Subject line: Thank you for your time

*Dear [Interviewer's name],*

*\_Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about the Marketing Coordinator role. It was great to meet with you and learn more about the position.*

*\_I'm very excited about the opportunity to join [Company name], and I am particularly interested in the details you shared about the upcoming launch of the brand campaign. I'm enthusiastic about the prospect of taking on some of the project management and bringing my experience in successfully coordinating cross-functional initiatives to this role.*

*\_After our conversation, I'm confident that my background in marketing and my interest in brand growth will enable me to fulfil the job requirements effectively and support the vision of [Company name]. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any further information or samples of my work. I look forward to hearing from you.*

*\_Yours sincerely,*

*[Your name]*

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*E: youremail@email.com*



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