Interview Preparation

It is great to know your application has been successful, and the employer wants to meet you for an interview. Now you need to make sure you are as prepared as possible for it - which means thinking about some of the questions you are likely to be asked in advance, and getting very clear in your mind why you are right for the job.

There are always a few tricky questions in the interview. Try to prepare for these by reading through this questions, and practice your answers.

Preparing for difficult interview questions

1. Research the company, the industry and the competition.
   It is crucial that you know as much as possible about what the position involves before the interview. Make sure you are very familiar with the person specification, as the interview panel will almost certainly use this as a guide in their questioning. If you are applying for a job in a particular sphere of work, it is a good idea to find out as much as you can about the field. Find out what makes this particular hospital/home different from others, and whether those differences will have an impact on your work.

2. Prepare your 60-second personal statement -- your answer to the Tell me about yourself" question.
   It’s one of the most frequently asked questions in an interview: Tell me about yourself. Your response to this request will set the tone for the rest of the interview. For some, this is the most challenging question to answer, as they wonder what the interviewer really wants to know and what information they should include. Eleanor dreaded this question. When it was the first one asked at her interview, she fumbled her way through a vague answer, not focusing on what she could bring to the job.
   "I'm happily married and originally from Denver," she began. "My husband was transferred here three months ago, and I've been getting us settled in our new home. I'm now ready to go back to work. I've worked in a variety of jobs, usually customer service-related. I'm looking for a company that offers growth opportunities." The interview went downhill after that. She had started with personal information and gave the interviewer reason to doubt whether she was an employee who would stay for very long. X She's married, and when her husband gets transferred that means she has to leave; she did it once and can do it again. X She has some work experience with customers but didn’t emphasize what she did. X She is looking to grow. What about the job she is applying for? Will she stay content for long?

   The secret to successfully responding to this free-form request is to focus, script and practice. You cannot afford to wing this answer, as it will affect the rest of the interview. Begin to think about what you want the interviewer to know about you.

Focus
   List five strengths you have that are pertinent to this job (experiences, traits, skills etc.)
   What do you want the interviewer to know about you when you leave?
   Eleanor is strong in communications and connecting with people. She has a strong background and proven success with customer relationships. Her real strength is her follow-through. She prides herself on her reputation for meeting deadlines.

Scripting
   Prepare a script that includes the information you want to convey. Begin by talking about past experiences and proven success:
   "I have been in the customer service industry for the past five years. My most recent experience has been handling incoming calls in the high tech industry. One reason I particularly enjoy this business, and the challenges that go along with it, is the opportunity to
connect with people. In my last job, I formed some significant customer relationships resulting in a 30 percent increase in sales in a matter of months."

Next, mention your strengths and abilities: "My real strength is my attention to detail. I pride myself on my reputation for following through and meeting deadlines. When I commit to doing something, I make sure it gets done, and on time."

Conclude with a statement about your current situation: "What I am looking for now is a company that values customer relations, where I can join a strong team and have a positive impact on customer retention and sales."

Practice
Practice with your script until you feel confident about what you want to emphasize in your statement. Your script should help you stay on track, but you shouldn't memorize it -- you don't want to sound stiff and rehearsed. It should sound natural and conversational. Even if you are not asked this type of question to begin the interview, this preparation will help you focus on what you have to offer. You will also find that you can use the information in this exercise to assist you in answering other questions.

3. Prepare answers to common interview questions:

- **Why are you looking for a new job?**
  The most important thing to keep in mind when faced with this tricky interview question is never slate your previous employer. As tempting as this may be or as much as the job interviewer pry’s, never ever bad mouth a previous employer. Although you may have valid reason to want to leave, it never looks professional when Job Seekers blame their employers for having to look for a new job. You are entitled to your opinion but remember to use tact and always be respectful. Try to answer this difficult job interview question with a positive statement such as seeking greater job satisfaction, career advancement or the desire to apply your skills to a new industry.

- **Name a challenge you have had to overcome in your career and how did you so?**
  The reason why interviewers ask this tricky job interview question is to directly assess how well you manage with adversity. By asking such a question, the interviewer is not so concerned with what the problem was, but more so how you managed to overcome this problem. To answer this difficult question, again hold back on getting too excited over your troubles. Highlight a situation that was challenging but not colossally damaging to your career. An example of an answer to this question would be; managing a difficult staff member and the innovative ways you implemented in order to remedy the situation. Again you don't want to confess that you make regular mistakes when facing challenges. Rather attempt to display your proactive stance in order to avoid such situations.

- **What are your weaknesses?**
  We all have character defects and areas of our jobs that are weaker than others. While this is true to every worker, no one likes to admit to their imperfections. When an interviewer asks this difficult question, there are specific ways to answer. Never admit to weaknesses that will hinder you from performing your core role. Rather try to specify a defect that is a weakness but almost favours or benefits the company directly, should they hire you. An example of such a weakness is being a hard worker, honest, polite, co-operative, Problem solving - using your initiative to identify solutions, Enthusiasm - employers like someone positive, Quick learner - so you can take on new tasks, Determination - shows you are focused on achieving goals, Flexibility - doing a variety of tasks to achieve a common goal.

- **What are your strengths?**
  *What the interviewer really wants to know: They want to know if you can do the job.* Know your strengths, and mention ones that are relevant to the job you’re being interviewed for. It’s important to quote examples of when you used the skills; it’s not enough to just say you have the skills. Typical strengths employers look for are: Communication - the ability to get on with a wide range of people, Team working - the ability to be an effective team leader or team member, IT skills - most jobs these days need some IT skills Good attitude - hard worker, honest, polite, co-operative, Problem solving - using your initiative to identify solutions, Enthusiasm - employers like someone positive, Quick learner - so you can take on new tasks, Determination - shows you are focused on achieving goals, Flexibility - doing a variety of tasks to achieve a common goal.

- **Why should we hire you?**
  While no one likes to advertise where their weaknesses lie, society has also taught us to be modest and humble. When asked this difficult job interview question, the most important thing to remember is to sell yourself as best you can. When approached with such a question, this is your opportunity to blow your trumpet loud and clear. The pre job interview preparation will come in handy now, as you will need to be on your toes when answering such a tricky question. Highlight relevant accomplishments and abilities you possess that are specific to the interviewer’s requirements. Be sure to assess the details of the job ad prior to your interview in order to answer this difficult question.
- Why do you want to work for the COMPANY?

This question is about the Company, Make sure the interviewer knows that you have visited their website and done your homework before attending the interview. \textit{What the interviewer really wants to know:} Do you know what we do? Why have you chosen to apply to this company? This is also the time to pay them compliments! \textit{Good answer:} “Smith’s is a respected firm with a reputation for high quality work, and I’d like to be part of that success. The quality of my work is important to me, so I feel I’d be at the right place. I’ve also heard you invest in your staff by training and developing them.”

- What are your salary expectations?

Money matters are bound to come up during a job interview. One of the most difficult questions to answer during a job interview is what salary package you are looking to receive. Prior to your job interview research salary surveys so that you have a clear indication of what the industry standard is. Market related salaries are a good basis to motivate your salary requirements with. The more flexible you are and open to negotiations you are the better. Don’t forget to take into account fringe benefits that may be offered to you. While fringe benefits may not be tangible funds, they do contribute significantly to your total cost to company.

- What are your goals?

\textit{What the interviewer really wants to know:} How ambitious are you? This is your chance to show how enthusiastic you are to get on. However, you should avoid sounding too aggressive and over-ambitious: “I want to become managing director in three”. Also avoid sounding unenthusiastic and passive: “I'm not sure - I'll see how it goes”. To avoid this, you could talk in terms of short-term and long-term goals. Remember you are at the interview for that particular job - so your short-term goal should be to get that job for the time being. Then you can start talking about moving on higher. \textit{Good answer} “My immediate aim is to get a “quote the job you apply for” position, then to work through NVQs levels to become a Team leader or manager.”

- Questions about Teamwork

\textit{Typical questions:} What makes a good team? What makes a good team member? What makes a good team leader? \textit{What the interviewer really wants to know:} Can you operate effectively in a team? Employers value team-working very highly. They want to know you can work effectively in a team, whatever your role within it. \textit{Good answer:} “A good team needs to have clear objectives and goals, and procedures to work towards these. Each person needs to be clear what their role is, and what is expected of them. There needs to be openness and trust, and clear communication.”

\section*{Other questions to expect and prepare}

- What do you like best about your position? What do you like least?
- What has been your most significant achievement
- How would your last boss and colleagues describe you?
- What is most important to you in a job?
- What kinds of managers to you like the most/like to work with?
- How do you stay current in your practice? (study days/training etc)
- What does it mean to support your unit manager? How should conflict with your unit manager be handled?
- How could you improve staff motivation?
- What does it mean to you to deliver QUALITY CARE
- Why do you want to come and work in the UK? (if you are from a different country)
- What do you want from your next career move
- What areas/specialty(ies) are you interested in working in? What do you enjoy about it?
- Why would you like to work at this hospital/with this service?
- Where do you see yourself in five years time? Why?
- What are your strengths? What are you really good at?
- What are your major weaknesses? What have you done to improve them
- Would previous colleagues recommend you? What do you think they would say?
- How do you keep yourself up-to-date?
- How do you deal with stress?
- What research have you looked at recently and how would you apply this to your practice?
- What does teamwork mean to you?
- What does accountability mean to you?
- "Tell me about an occasion when you were in an emergency situation; what happened; what was the outcome?"
- Also be aware of questions related to cultural safety this is an important issue for many employers, e.g. “what does cultural safety mean to you?” “How do you reflect cultural safety in your practice?”
Additional research for overseas candidates

If you are joining the company from another country, please have a look at the websites that we recommend below as these are vital to you when you are considering a move to the UK.

Any person who interviews you will be interested in what you know about nursing in the UK. This encompasses the notions of 'Clinical Governance' and the meaning of words such as 'Accountability', 'Autonomy' and 'Advocacy' as they pertain to your role as a nurse. If you understand the concepts mentioned above thoroughly, as well as being well versed in your particular speciality - you will enter your interview with more confidence and will give yourself a greater chance of success.

- www.nursing-standard.co.uk - this is the Royal College of Nursing Website and discusses the role of a nurse in the UK as well as a lot of other helpful information.
- www.doh.gov.uk - the Department of Health website and is very useful.
- www.nmc-uk.org - the Nursing and Midwifery Council website.

Clinical Governance

This is an integral part of the drive to make nursing in the UK more patient focused. The aim of clinical governance is to ensure, improve and demonstrate the quality of clinical care. The term covers tasks that staff have been carrying out for many years - such as managing complaints, reviewing how well we treat and care for our patients, and developing policies and procedures to lessen the risk of errors and misunderstandings.

The Government introduced the term 'clinical governance' in January 1998. The idea is to improve the nursing care, making it more systematic, more open and more inclusive, involving our patients and the local community.

A quality organisation will ensure and expect you to understand that;

- quality improvement processes (eg clinical audit) are in place and integrated with the quality programme for the organisation as a whole, leadership skills are developed at clinical team level,
- evidence-based practice is in day-to-day use with the infrastructure to support it,
- good practice, ideas and innovations (which have been evaluated) are systematically disseminated within and outside the organisation, clinical risk reduction programmes of a high standard are in place, adverse events are detected, and openly investigated; and the lessons learned promptly applied,
- lessons for clinical practice are systematically learned from complaints made by patients, problems of poor clinical performance are recognised at an early stage and dealt with to prevent harm to patients,
- all professional development programmes reflect the principles of clinical governance, the quality of data collected to monitor clinical care is itself of a high standard.
- There is increasing emphasis on reducing and managing "risks" within the hospital ensuring that, when weaknesses are identified lessons are learned, actions are taken and improvements implemented.

Best of luck - and remember the more prepared you are, the more confident you should feel on the day. And the higher your chances of getting the job