



NEWLY QUALIFIED - INTERVIEW ADVICE

After extensive research on the topic, including speaking to hundreds of hiring managers and HR professionals, we have compiled into a 3-page doc, the most important factors to consider when entering an interview situation:

The best way to approach any interview is to be well-prepared. Nerves are a part of the process and everyone gets them. As long as they don't stop you from being able to explain your experience well then nerves will not be seen as a bad thing. Below are **4 steps** that will help guide you through your interview process:

Step 1: Speak to your recruitment consultant

They should be able to advise you on what responsibilities the role entails (more than what is on the job spec), the structure of the interview, who you will be meeting and even what approach they take in interviews, the company culture and tips on the right areas to focus on for the particular role.

Step 2: Research the company

Visit the company website. Use Google to find out more about the company online. Look up any recent news about the company. Look up the hiring manager's LinkedIn profile to review their past experience.

Key areas to research:

- Company profile
- Latest published financial statements
- Future plans
- Who are their competitors
- Press releases

It is also very beneficial to use your own network to gain any more valuable insights into the company or more specifically the division for which the job you are applying for is within.

Step 3: Know your CV

This is the most important thing you can do. Make sure you know your CV inside out. Make sure you can answer any questions relating to your previous employment, reasons for leaving jobs, and your experience. If you can relate what you are doing currently to the tasks of the prospective job then this is great, if not then at least your levels of enthusiasm, confidence, and competence in your current role will present you in the best possible light and make you attractive to any employer. Practice out loud, speaking through your experience. Prepare for giving a high level overview and then also a more detailed explanation.

Step 4: Presentation

Give a good first impression. Dress professionally, you usually don't need bring anything unless asked. Arrive on time, or 10 minutes early is fine. If you are late for good reason call someone to apologise and let them know but remember this does happen and it shouldn't be held against you if you have given notice. From the first person you meet at the door to the last person that lets you out, maintain a friendly, mannerly, and, professional approach. A firm handshake, a smile, and good eye contact are the key things to remember. Also remembering people's names is important and can be tough if you feel nervous.



Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Depending on the organisation and who you meet, there will be different interview structures and questions. The most common first round interview setting will contain a member of HR, and a hiring manager. These interviews are a mix of competency questions, run through your CV, and more in-depth technical questions about your experience and transferable skills to the role at hand. Also remember that a job interview is a two-way process and you should have your own questions prepared. Below is a list of **10 commonly asked interview questions** and the best way to approach the answers.

1. Tell me about yourself.

The most common opening question. This should be an overview of what brought you to where you are today. Start from college (what you did and why), then an overview of where you worked, why you chose to train in the firm you did, the role you had, if you have had jobs after your training contract then why you chose them, and finish with why you are interviewing for this job. Keeping in mind all along how this all is beneficial to the role in hand. It should take 2-4 minutes max to explain this. Look for cues from the interviewer to wrap up if you start to ramble on too much. Practice this opening gambit out loud at home.

2. Why should we hire you?

This may seem broad but break it down into 2 parts: Technical: State how your skills transfer to this role. Focus on particular skills. Commitment: Show that you're enthusiastic, driven, and willing to hit the ground running (as a Newly Qualified Accountant often this part is more relevant as you may not have much directly transferable technical experience).

3. Why do you want to work for us?

State what you know about the company, including the industry, culture, and direction it is heading and why this appeals to you. State the value add you can bring to the company, and the value the company can bring you. Always stress you are looking long-term.

4. What are your strengths?

Rephrase this question in your head to 'what are your relevant strengths for this company and particular role?'. Some examples could be analytical thinking, flexibility/adaptability, willingness to take responsibility, working under pressure, dealing with difficult situations/people, or it could be more technical strengths such as certain technological expertise.

5. What are your weaknesses?

The dreaded trick question. If they ask, you better answer. So for practice, think of three weaknesses (educational, lack of experience in a certain area etc.) and now think of a way you are currently addressing each weakness. The key factor is you are already taking steps to address them.

6. Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years' time?

Ambition is a major plus in a candidate from an employer's perspective. But just be careful about coming across as impatient with your progression as this can be a red flag. The processes of hiring and training employees can be costly, so company's want to hire people that are not going to leave quickly. Depending on your experience, for more junior level roles outline how you see your career progressing. For senior roles, highlight how you see the company moving forward and how you can help the company achieve its business goals.

7. Why did you leave your previous position?

Even if it was the worst company ever, you should never criticise an old employer. The answer to this question will vary from person to person but generally people move on after their training contracts in practice so not seeing yourself in practice long term is a perfectly fine answer. Highlight the benefits of practice but if its not for you that is understandable.

8. Explain a gap in your CV.

If you have included employment gaps in your CV then you should be 100% ready to explain them. Maybe you were travelling, maybe you were working on a private project or a family business, or taking care of a family member. Honesty is the best policy here, explain it clearly and the outcome, but don't dwell on it.

9. What Are Your Salary Expectations?

This is a difficult question for most people. You should have an idea of the salary range, but don't want to over-reach or under-sell yourself. Bear in mind the employer will usually know your current or previous salary (this should always be a truthful figure). You need to know what figure is enough for you right now, your value in the current market, and the salary range of the role. The best answer here is to say that the market at the moment is around €XX-XXk (a range of €5k difference, with the min figure being your min expectation) and that is the range you are looking at right now, but of course the most important thing for you is joining the right company and right role for you.

10 You Have Any Questions?

Never say 'no', you should always have at least 5-10 questions prepared beforehand (in case some of them get covered during the course of the interview).

Here is a list of 12 good questions worth asking:

How did this particular role come about?

Can you describe the culture of the company?

What are the first priorities for this position?

What do you see as the main challenges of this position?

What is the structure of the team/division and how does this role fit within it?

What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?

What career progression opportunities are available to the person who is offered this role?

What are the biggest challenges facing the company today?

Where do you think the company is headed in the next 5 years?

What do you like best about working for this company?

Does the company encourage training for employees to further their skillsets?

What are the next steps in the interview process?

The key to interview success is to know your CV inside out, research the company, carefully read the job spec and match your skills and experience with the requirements. Once you have these areas covered well then you are as prepared as you can possibly be. If you are thrown any curve-ball questions you should carefully analyse the question first, and if you don't have the answer well then just admit it, there is no shame in that.