



Preparing for Job Interviews

Applying for Work in Germany Part Two

Overview

1. Accepting the invitation
2. General preparations
3. Self-Introduction
4. Frequent interview questions
5. Good questions to ask
6. Follow up

Responding to the Invitation



Be polite:

Respond in timely fashion

Thank for the invitation!

Adopt level of formality of invitation

Keep it clear and concise

Check:

All your contact and personal info (and correct or update if needed)

Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar

Confirm:

Date, time and place of interview

Persons present at interview*

Expected preparation*

Questions

You may ask:

Who will be present at the interview?

What you should prepare-if this needs clarification.

If dealing with HR and NOT your future boss and this is not clear and important to you:

Will travelling expenses be reimbursed?

Avoid:

Questions about salary, vacation time, etc

Any questions to which you can find the answer yourself...

Next Step: Research



The Company:

Current Developments

(Some) History

Org. structure and culture

Plans and goals

The People:

Position at company

Professional development

Educational background

The Market:

Opportunities and Challenges

Competitors

Be sure you know:

The Position:

Requirements

Tasks

History

The Team:

Who is on it

What do they do

Current projects

The Fit:

Professional fit: skills
and experience

Personal fit: values and
motivation

Before the Interview



Get your materials ready!

Bring with you:

Your own application materials!

Anything you may need for a presentation or other task you have been asked to prepare.

Your prepared list of questions.

Any other notes you may want or need.

The job ad (as point of reference, optional)

Prepare your Journey!

Be clear on directions and where to go

Get tickets in advance when possible

Plan extra time for contingencies (at least 30 minutes)

Have relevant phone numbers saved and ready*

Arrive on time (meaning five minutes early)

*Again: arrive on time but if a delay can't be avoided, call!

Prepare yourself!

Do what is necessary to clean up (haircut, shave, manicure...)

Get an outfit ready:

Professional and appropriate for your industry

Washed and ironed

Good shoes (avoid sneakers, sandals, hiking boots)

Quality handbag/laptop case/backpack

Conservative on jewelry and makeup

Interview Overview

About 60 minutes total

1. Introductions and Small Talk (5 min)
2. Introduction to the company (5 min)
3. Self-Introduction by Candidate (5 min)
4. Interviewer Questions (20-30 min)
5. Candidate's Questions (5-10 min)
6. Conclusion and Good Byes

Introductions and Small Talk

What to expect:

Interviewer will greet you

Introduce him/herself

Introduce others present

Ask you about your journey/the weather...

This is to break the ice, relieve nervousness and allow you to settle in.

What to do:

Allow yourself to settle in!

Accept a drink of water or coffee when offered.

Verbalise nervousness.

Be open and positive!

Make a good first impression!



Get up for the greeting!

Allow the person of higher status to extend their hand and introduce himself/herself first!

Press hand firmly but don't shake!

Hold for no more than 5 seconds.

Introduce yourself with your first and last name.

Smile and hold eye contact.

Job Interview Body Language

Sit up straight

Avoid crossing arms or legs

Smile

Make eye contact

Watch interview partner's body language

Body Language Phases

1. Matching:

Analysis of others' body language

Symmetry of 50% max.

2. Pacing:

Gradual synchronisation of speech patterns, gestures, facial expressions, posture

3. Rapport:

Near complete symmetry

Synchronisation indicating sympathy and trust

Company Introduction

What to expect:

An introduction to the company by the interviewer.

Probably some information you already know.

Possibly some new information about the position, the team and current developments.

This is to present the company and position to you and give you a chance to ask questions. You may do so now and will also be asked towards the end of the interview.

What to do:

Pay attention. Take an interest.

Make a note of any questions you may have.

Highlight or compliment any aspects you like.

Read between the lines:

What image do they want to present? Does this seem consistent with your impressions?

Self Introduction

What to expect:

Interviewer will ask you an open question such as:

Tell us (something) about yourself.

Could you introduce yourself please?

Could you just tell us about who you are and what interests you in this position?

This is to see if the information from the application matches the impression of you in person and to actually get to know you.

What to do:

Have a very good answer prepared!!

Talk for 3-5 minutes.

Win the interview right here!

Self Introduction

DO:

Tell your story highlighting your strengths!

Make your meeting here today seem a logical (even inevitable) result of your professional development!

Show you have done your research and are a serious candidate.

Let your enthusiasm and motivation show!

DO NOT:

Be unprepared, reluctant or boring!

Narrate your CV.

Talk about irrelevant things or your personal life.

Be a downer.

Carry on forever.



Tell us about yourself!

Interviewer Questions

What to expect:

Questions about your professional development

Questions about your personal development

Questions about your motivation

Questions about your experiences, expertise, skills, knowledge and character

This is to see if you are right for the position. It is a two way conversation not a one way test.

What to do:

Be calm and relaxed.

Be precise but take your time answering.

Be confident in yourself and your abilities (but don't boast).

Be thoroughly prepared!



Frequent Interview Questions

And how to prepare for them!

Basic Categories

Motivations: Why do you want this position? What would your perfect job profile look like? What in particular could you bring to this position? What are your goals/ambitions?

Character Profile: Name your three main weaknesses. What are your greatest strengths? What would your former boss say about you?

Working Style: How do you motivate yourself? Tell me about a time you had to solve a problem with a coworker? When did you encounter a difficult task in the past and how did you deal with it?

Basic Categories

Fit: What interests you in this company? How did you find this position? Do you prefer a more structured or freer working environment? Describe your ideal workplace? What would we have to do to make you leave within the first week?

Values: What are you particularly proud of? How would your friends describe you? What lesson from your work life/educational career has been particularly important to you and why? Where do you see yourself in five years?

Stress Questions: What would you do if you saw an elephant standing in your garden? How am I doing as an interviewer? Sell this pen to me! Switch to a different language.

Prepare this:

Motivations- why do I want this job, how does it fit into my overall career/life plan

Character Profile- three main strengths and weaknesses and how they relate to the job

Qualifications- what are my skills and expertise to do the tasks (example stories)

Working Style- how do I (like to) work, how do I solve problems, what is hard for me to deal with (example stories)

Values- what is important to me in life above and beyond work, what future plans do I have

Candidate Questions

What to expect:

You will be asked if you have any questions.

This really is to answer any questions you have. It is also an important indicator to see how seriously interested and how well informed you are.

What to do:

Ask questions!

Good questions only!

Good Questions to Ask

Questions about the position:

Why is this position currently open?

Why has this position been newly created?

What do you consider the most important aspect of this position?

What will be the main challenges?

Questions about career paths:

What is the onboarding process?

What training and development opportunities do you offer?

What is a typical career path for someone starting in this position?

How long did it take for the last person in this position to be promoted?

More Good Questions to Ask

Questions about the team/department/project:

How big is the department/How many people are on the team?

Is there interdisciplinary cooperation between teams/departments?

What are current goals of the project/department in which this position will be involved?

If there is time, would it be possible to take a look at the department/team office/project space?

Questions about company culture:

What do you enjoy most about working at this company?

How would you describe the leadership style of my direct supervisor?

How would you describe your most successful employees?

Also possible questions (but be careful)

Questions regarding working conditions:

How much travelling does this position involve?

Do you offer home office days/ flexible working hours?

What is the policy on overtime?

Questions about your interview performance:

Is there any feedback you would like to give me on our conversation?

Is there anything I have not yet convinced you of regarding my qualifications?

Interview Conclusion

What to expect:

To be thanked for coming.

Ideally (but not always) a summary and/or feedback regarding the interview.

Information about how the process will continue.

A friendly goodbye and ushering out the door.

This is to let you know what to expect next and to finish off the interview.

What to do:

Thank for the interview.

Remember that it isn't over yet; stay focussed.

Say goodbye and shake hands with *everyone* (remember: smile, eye contact).

After the Interview

What to expect:

Some waiting around.

At this point candidates will be evaluated and the internal decision making process may take a while. If you do not hear back by the expected time, you may follow-up with an email.

What to do:

Reflect on the interview and how it went. Record lessons learned for future interviews.

Send a thank you email.

Continue actively pursuing other jobs and career plans.



**Treat a
telephone or
Skype interview
the same as any
other!**



Dress up

Do your research

Have your materials ready

Mind the background

Phone from working environment