

# Candidate interview guide

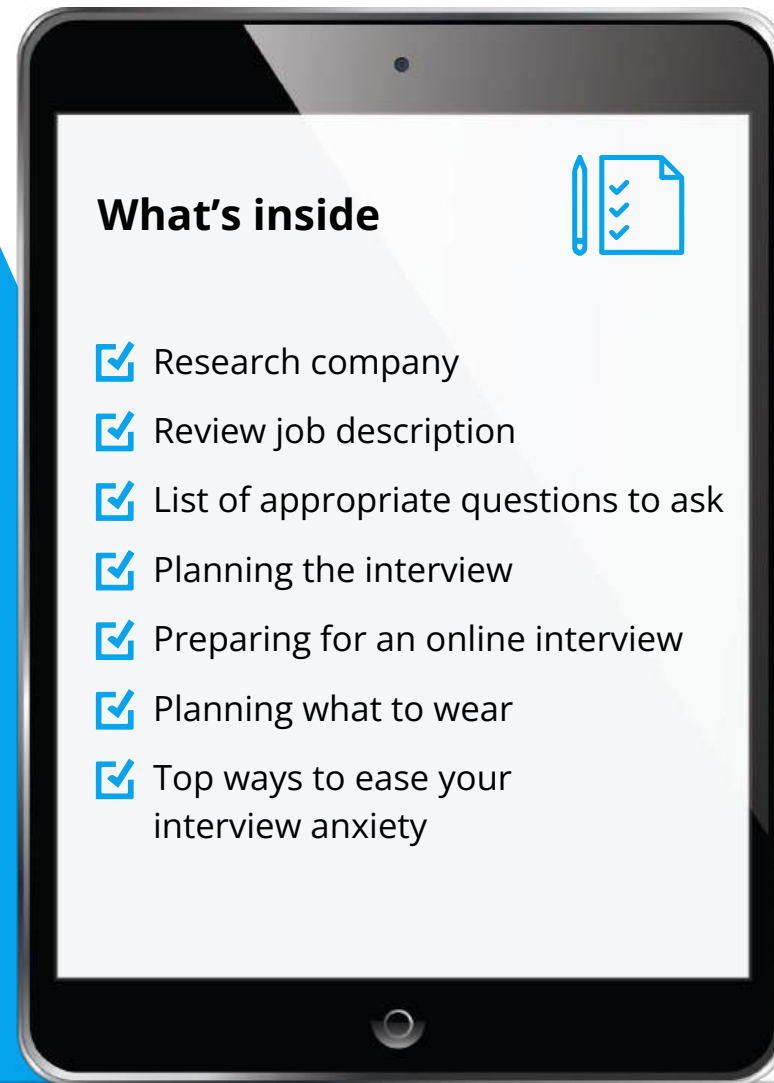






Stage 1

# Prepare



## What's inside



- ☒ Research company
- ☒ Review job description
- ☒ List of appropriate questions to ask
- ☒ Planning the interview
- ☒ Preparing for an online interview
- ☒ Planning what to wear
- ☒ Top ways to ease your interview anxiety

# Research the company

It is crucial to research a company before attending an interview. This will not only help with the interview, but demonstrate your interest, knowledge and preparedness.

Start with these simple steps:

1. **Visit the company's website** – Read up on the company, their mission and values and products and services.
2. **Review their social media presence.** LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can provide lots of updates and insights about the company.
3. **Research recent news and media releases via search engines.** It's good to stay informed on recent company news, developments, product launches, partnerships or any notable achievements.
4. **Explore the company's online reputation.** Look for reviews, ratings and customer testimonials that have been left by customers, employees, stakeholders or industry professionals. This will provide insight into the company's reputation, work environment/culture and any challenges they may be facing.
5. **Research company competitors.** This can help you to understand the competitive landscape, the company's point of difference, market positioning and areas for potential improvement and growth. This could help you to frame suitable questions for the interview, as well.
6. **Explore industry-specific information.** Read industry publications, reports and blogs to gain a broader perspective. This knowledge can help you discuss relevant industry topics during the interview and showcase your understanding.
7. **Use your personal and professional network.** If you know someone who works at the company or has connections within the industry, reach out to them for insights. They may be able to provide valuable information about the company's culture, interview process, or specific expectations.



Tip - Take notes during your research and compile a list of key points to reference during the interview. The more you know about the company, the better equipped you'll be to ask thoughtful questions and align your responses with their values and goals.

# Review job description

Reviewing the job description is essential to understand the role's requirements and here's how you can align your skills and experiences with the position.

## ✓ Read the job description thoroughly

Start by carefully reading the entire job description from start to finish. Pay attention to the responsibilities, qualifications, skills and experience requirements outlined in the description.

## ✓ Analyse the key responsibilities

Identify the main responsibilities and duties and make note of the tasks that are mentioned and emphasised. This is generally indicative of the areas the interviewer is looking to fulfil.

## ✓ Identify required qualifications and skills.

Note down the essential qualifications and skills, as well as any preferred or additional qualifications mentioned. This will help you assess your own qualifications and determine which aspects of your experience and skills you should emphasise during the interview.

## ✓ Match your experience with the requirements

Identify how your previous roles, projects and achievements align with the requirements outlined in the job description. Look for specific examples to demonstrate your expertise in the key areas mentioned.



## Review job description continued...

### ✓ Research unfamiliar terms or concepts

If there are any terms, technologies or concepts mentioned in the job description that you are not familiar with, take the time to research and understand them.

### ✓ Highlight transferable skills

If you lack experience in certain areas, focus on highlighting your transferable skills. Transferable skills are those that can be applied across different roles and industries eg. communication, customer service, time management etc. Identify the skills you possess that can be valuable in the position and emphasise how they can be effectively utilised to succeed in the role.

### ✓ Tailor your answers

During the interview, frame your responses to align with the job description. Use the keywords and phrases mentioned in the job description. This helps to demonstrate that you understand the requirements of the role and have the capabilities to fulfil them.



**Remember** - The job description serves as a roadmap for both the employer and the candidate. By thoroughly reviewing and understanding it, you can better prepare yourself to showcase your qualifications and suitability for the position during the interview.



# Prepare questions before your interview!

It is always important to go into an interview with some pre-determined interview questions you can ask at the end of the interview. A good rule of thumb is to have three or four questions ready.

## Job specific questions

1. What would a typical day or week look like for the role being offered?
2. What are the most immediate projects/tasks that the role requires?
3. What are you hoping the successful candidate will accomplish in their first six months/first year in the role.
4. What are the KPIs or metrics for success to evaluate the performance for this position?
5. What are some challenges in this role?

## Questions about the team

6. Were there any particular skills that stood out in my resume that would assist the team?
7. Can you tell me about the team I would be working with?
8. With what other departments or stakeholders might we work with?

## Questions about the company

9. What are the current goals that the company is focused on and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?

10. How has the company changed over the last few years?

11. What are the company's plans for growth and development?

## Questions about the culture

12. How would you describe the company culture?
13. What does the company look for in employees?
14. How do you typically onboard employees?
15. What do new employees typically find surprising after they start?
16. What is the best part about working for the company in your opinion?
17. What kind of opportunities does the company offer for career growth and personal development?

## General questions

18. What are your thoughts on my suitability for this position? Are there any areas you need clarification on?
19. What are the next steps in the job process?



**Start thinking about the type of questions you might ask in an interview**





## Planning the interview

### Planner

- ✓ Print off a copy of your CV and cover letter to give to the interviewer.
- ✓ Research the nearest parking or public transport schedule in advance.
- ✓ Arrive on time (or slightly early).
- ✓ Review common interview questions and prepare your responses.
- ✓ Practice your 'personal pitch' to ensure that you have a solid response when asked "tell me about yourself".
- ✓ Prepare your questions to ask the interviewer – have 3-4 questions ready as some may have already been covered off in the interview.
- ✓ Bring something to write on and take any notes if appropriate.



### Planning the interview





## Preparing for an online interview

In today's digital world, learning how to effectively navigate the online interview process is essential.

Online interviews are beneficial to both company and candidate in that it can save time and offers greater flexibility than in person interviews. Here are some key ways that you can prepare for a video interview like a professional!

1. Prepare your environment e.g. lighting, background, tidy space etc.
2. Ensure familiarity with the software being used.
3. Have your research handy and any notes you can reference.
4. Consider your body language and camera angles.
6. Relax and be your authentic self.

**Further reading** - Read the full article on



**How to prepare for a video interview like a pro**



# Planning what to wear

It is important to dress appropriately for the interview or industry.

Be sure to do your homework on the company to have more of an idea on what constitutes an appropriate outfit.



## Do's:

- ✓ Choose an outfit that is appropriate for the role that you're applying for.
- ✓ Ensure your hair is neat and tidy.
- ✓ Wear clothes that you look your best in.
- ✓ Dress conservatively/modest.
- ✓ Be careful with colours.
- ✓ Ensure that your clothing best represents your personal brand.
- ✓ Be neat, clean and well put together.



## Don'ts:

- ✗ Wear flip-flops, jeans, short skirts, polo shirts, gym clothes or other casual attire.
- ✗ Wear ripped clothing.
- ✗ Be too flashy.
- ✗ Overdo it with accessories.
- ✗ Overdo it with perfume or cologne.



**Tip:**  
Dress like the person doing the interviewing!

# Top ways to ease your interview anxiety

## Before the interview

- ✔ Prepare, prepare, prepare – do your research, practice your personal pitch and how you're going to respond to traditional interview questions.
- ✔ Know where you're going – research the office location, the travel route and parking/public transport options.
- ✔ Arrive early.
- ✔ Decide on your outfit ahead of time (check out the previous section "what to wear").
- ✔ If it's an online interview, make sure you have access to the technology and are set up.
- ✔ Think twice about too much caffeine if you're trying to avoid last-minute jitters!

## During the interview

- ✔ Focus on your breathing and pause before you speak.
- ✔ Think of the interview like a casual conversation between two friends.
- ✔ Embrace positive self-talk.
- ✔ Accept that your answers might not always be perfect, embrace your response and move on to the next question.



### Remember:

There are other jobs out there. Don't put too much pressure on yourself to get this job. If this job isn't "the one", there will be another opportunity.

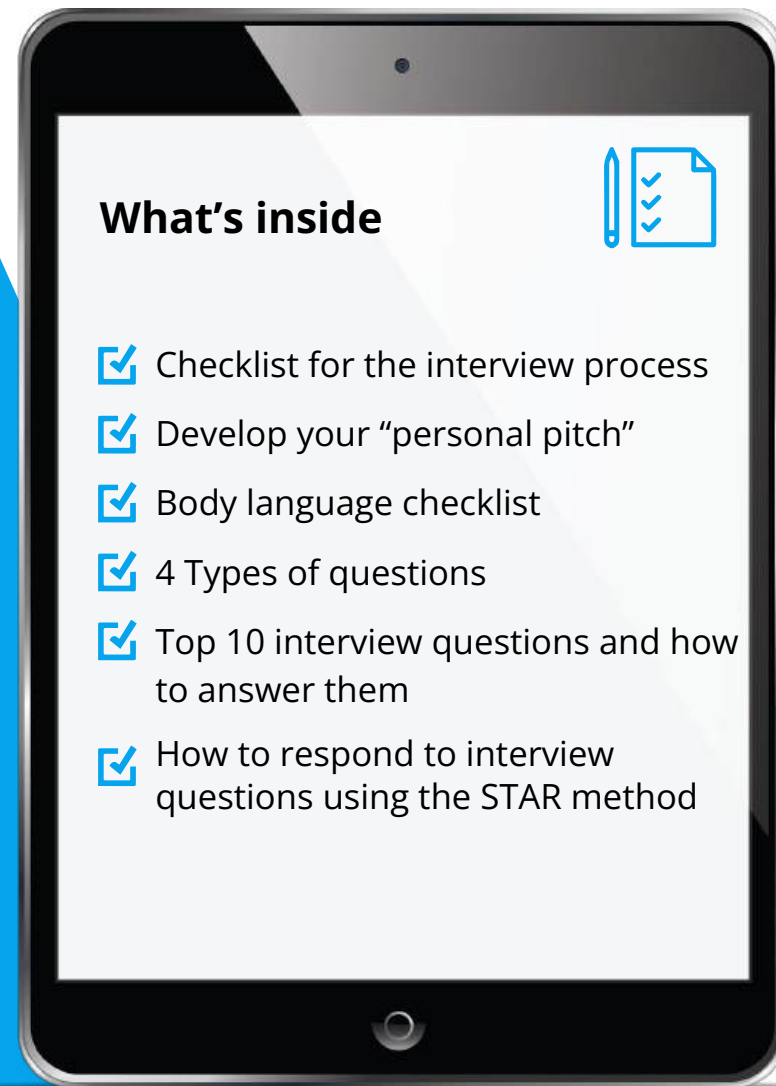






Stage 2

# Interview



# Checklist to nailing the interview process

## Process



### **Prepare**

Be sure to cover off on all points from Stage 1; research the company, review the job description, plan the interview (ie. transportation, arrive on time, dress appropriately).



### **Be curious and ask appropriate questions**

Make sure you reviewed our list of appropriate questions to ask.



### **Never speak negatively about your previous employer(s)**

Be tactile when explaining your desire to move on.



### **Be authentic**

The interviewer wants to get to know the real you. Try to relax, take a few deep breaths and put your best foot forward.



### **Send a follow-up thank you email**

# Develop your “personal pitch”

One of the most common questions for an interviewer to ask in an interview is “tell me about yourself”.

It may even be the first question that you get asked. It sounds like a simple question but often, candidates can find it difficult to summarise their background and experience in just a few sentences which should last no more than 30-90 seconds. It is concise, relevant and to the point.

When you are developing your “personal pitch” include:

1. Short summary of your professional background and experience.
2. Your educational background.
3. How your experience and education align with the job you’re applying for.



**Introduce yourself with your Personal Pitch**



# Body language checklist

There is great power in body language. Unintentional gestures can ultimately make or break an interview.

Body language and nonverbal cues comprise a significant portion of the messages that we convey to others, so it is important to be aware of them.

Whilst your application may have been a standout, the interviewer will also be assessing how you conduct yourself in the interview, how you deliver your responses and how you act.

Read the checklist below with some key body language tips for your interview:

- ☑ Consider your entrance – first impressions last!
- ☑ Check your posture – try to sit up straight.
- ☑ Smile (where possible and appropriate).
- ☑ Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- ☑ Refrain from crossing your arms.
- ☑ Try not to fidget – be mindful of your hands.
- ☑ Offer a strong handshake.
- ☑ Sit correctly – feet on the ground, don't cross legs, don't tap legs as this can come across as nerves etc.
- ☑ Breathe – if you're nervous, a couple of deep breaths can help to calm your nerves.
- ☑ Respond – you can use nonverbal cues to acknowledge but the interview is saying, such as a gentle nod.
- ☑ Exit the room confidently no matter how the interview went.
- ☑ Always thank the interviewer, push in your chair and offer to put a glass or cup away if a beverage was offered.



## Fun fact on non verbal cues!

Research by Psychologist Albert Mehrabians is widely cited when discussing how critical body language and nonverbal communication are in our interactions with others. He pointed to three crucial elements that affect how others see us:



**Spoken words**  
account for 7% of  
how others see us.



**Tone of voice**  
accounts for 38%  
of how others see us.



**Body language**  
accounts for 55%  
of how others see us.



# Change to The 4 type of questions in an interview

You will likely be asked a range of different questions through the interview process. It is important to understand the different types of questions and the best way to answer them.



## Situational

Situational questions assess a candidate's ability to think critically, problem-solve and demonstrate their decision-making skills. Look for logical and thoughtful responses that align with your organisation's values. For example, *"can you provide an example of a time when you had to juggle multiple projects or tasks with competing deadlines? How did you prioritise your tasks and ensure timely completion?"*.



## Behavioural

Interviewers use behavioural questions to assess a candidate's past behaviour and gauge their potential for future success. They will look for specific examples, the actions taken and the results you achieved. For example, *"Tell me about a time when you had to handle a difficult situation at work. How did you resolve it?"*.



## Skill-based

Skill based questions focus on current skills as well as explore the areas an individual would like to develop - this can include both hard and soft skills. For example, *"give an example of a situation where you had to think outside the box to solve a problem"*.



## Cultural

Assessing cultural fit is crucial for long-term employee satisfaction. Interviewers look for candidates who align with an organisation's values, possess a growth mindset and demonstrate the ability to adapt to diverse work environments. An example question might be, *"can you tell me about a time when you felt a strong alignment with a company's culture and values?"*.



**Plan your responses  
to 4 types of questions**

# Top 10 interview questions and how to answer them

Common interview question	Tips on how to answer
Tell me about yourself.	Provide an overview of your professional work experience/background and detail how it aligns with the requirements of the job you're applying for. Cover your skills and achievements to date.
Why do you want to work here?	Talk about your career goals, aspirations and values and how this aligns with the company. You may wish to highlight aspects of the role or the company that appeal to you, such as learning and development opportunities, career growth, workplace culture etc.
What are your strengths and weaknesses?	Talk to your strengths and link them back to the requirements of the job. Be honest about your weaknesses - be sure to explain the work that you're doing to improve in those areas.
Tell me about a time when you overcame a challenge in a past role?	Describe the situation or the challenge. Following on, explain the task that you had to complete to resolve the challenge, what were your actions and the result that was achieved. You may use the _____ to provide a detailed and structured response. (See next section!).
What motivates you in your job?	Explain what motivates you to succeed in your job and in your career. Try to link this back to the goals and values of the company. This may be making a positive impact or working in an industry you're passionate about.

Common interview question	Tips on how to answer
How do you generally handle stress or pressure in a job?	Discuss how you handle high-pressure situations in your job, such as a heavy workload, tight deadlines or significant challenges. Talk about the strategies that you use to navigate stressful times.
What are your salary expectations?	Research industry standards and provide a range that not only you deem satisfactory, but aligns with your experience and the requirements of the job. Providing a range is generally better than a fixed salary.
Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult colleague?	Describe the situation, your involvement, what you did to resolve the issue and the results you achieved. Use the STAR method detailed on Page 20. You should highlight the professional demeanour that you maintained and how you communicated effectively throughout the process.
What career accomplishments make you most proud?	Share the highlights of your career, what you're most proud of and what has fulfilled you. Interviewers not only want to know that you're a good fit for the job in terms of skills, but also that you take pride in your work too.
Why are you leaving your current employer?	Discuss your desire to progress in your career, further develop your skills and gain new learnings and insights from a different company, perhaps in a different industry. Be respectful of your current employer and try to speak positively about them.



**Plan your responses to the top 10 interview questions**



# How to respond to interview questions using the STAR method

## Situation, Task, Action and Result

The STAR method gives structure to your responses to interview questions. It is a format that you can use to tell a story by laying out the:

- S** **Situation:**  
Set the scene – lay out the “situation”. Only include the necessary details.
- T** **Task:**  
Describe the task at hand and what was your responsibility in that situation.
- A** **Action:**  
Explain the particular steps you took to address the situation.
- R** **Result:**  
Share the outcomes and solution achieved through those actions.



Tip: The STAR method can be used to respond to situational and behavioural questions, essentially any question whereby you need to tell a story in order to respond to it. Questions that start with tell me about a time..., give me an example of..., describe a situation whereby you..., have you ever... etc.

## How to respond to the the STAR method continued...

### Example Question:

***"Tell me about a time when you faced a difficult situation at work and how you handled it."***

S

#### Situation

*During my previous job as a project manager at XYZ Company, I was assigned to oversee a critical client project that had a tight deadline and a complex scope. The project involved coordinating multiple teams and stakeholders and it required meticulous planning and execution. One challenge emerged when a key team member unexpectedly resigned in the middle of the project, leaving a critical knowledge gap.*

T

#### Task

*The primary task was to ensure that all project milestones were met within the given timeframe while maintaining high-quality standards. I also needed to manage unexpected challenges and conflicts that arose during the project.*

A

#### Action

*I immediately took action as I recognised the impact that the unexpected resignation would have on the project timeline. Firstly, I assessed the remaining team's skillsets and assigned tasks accordingly to ensure continuity. Then, I initiated an urgent recruitment process to find a suitable replacement. To mitigate the knowledge gap, I organised a series of knowledge transfer sessions between the departing team member and their successor. Additionally, I held regular meetings with the entire team to address any concerns, boost morale and ensure open lines of communication.*

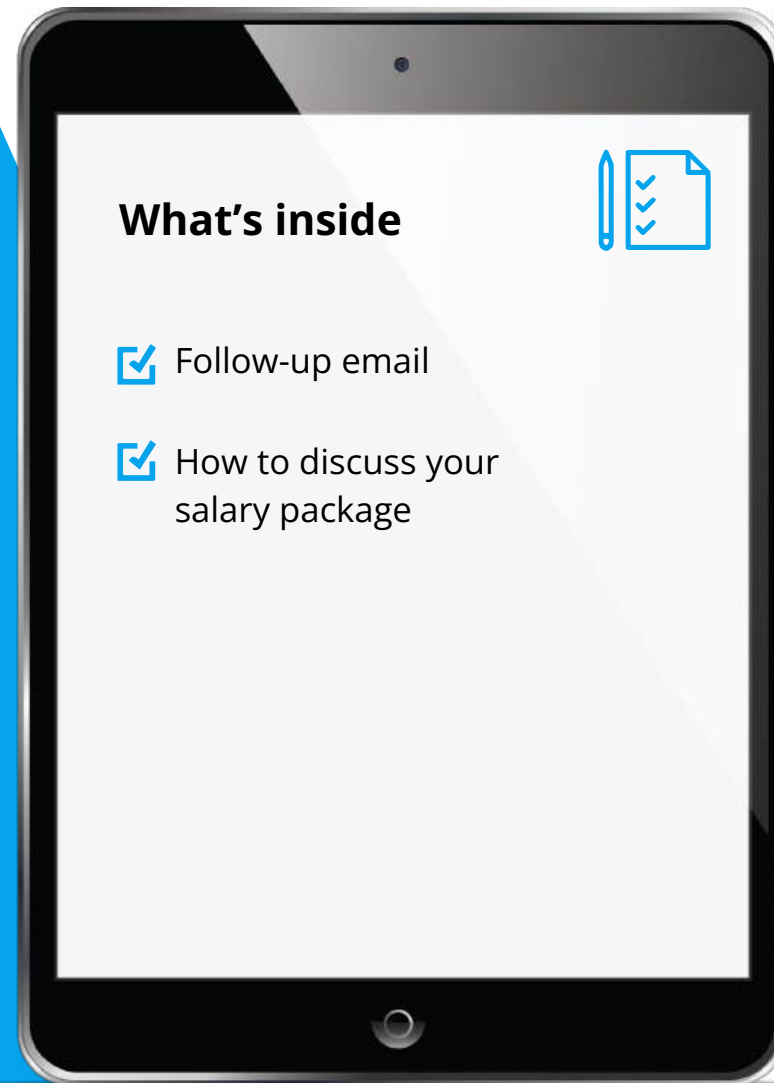
R

#### Result

*As a result of my actions, the project remained on track despite the unexpected setback. The new team member quickly adapted to their role and contributed effectively. We successfully delivered the project on time, meeting all milestones and client expectations. The client expressed their satisfaction with our performance and the project's success boosted team morale and strengthened our reputation within the company. This experience taught me the importance of adaptability, proactive problem-solving, and effective communication in managing challenging situations.*

Stage 3

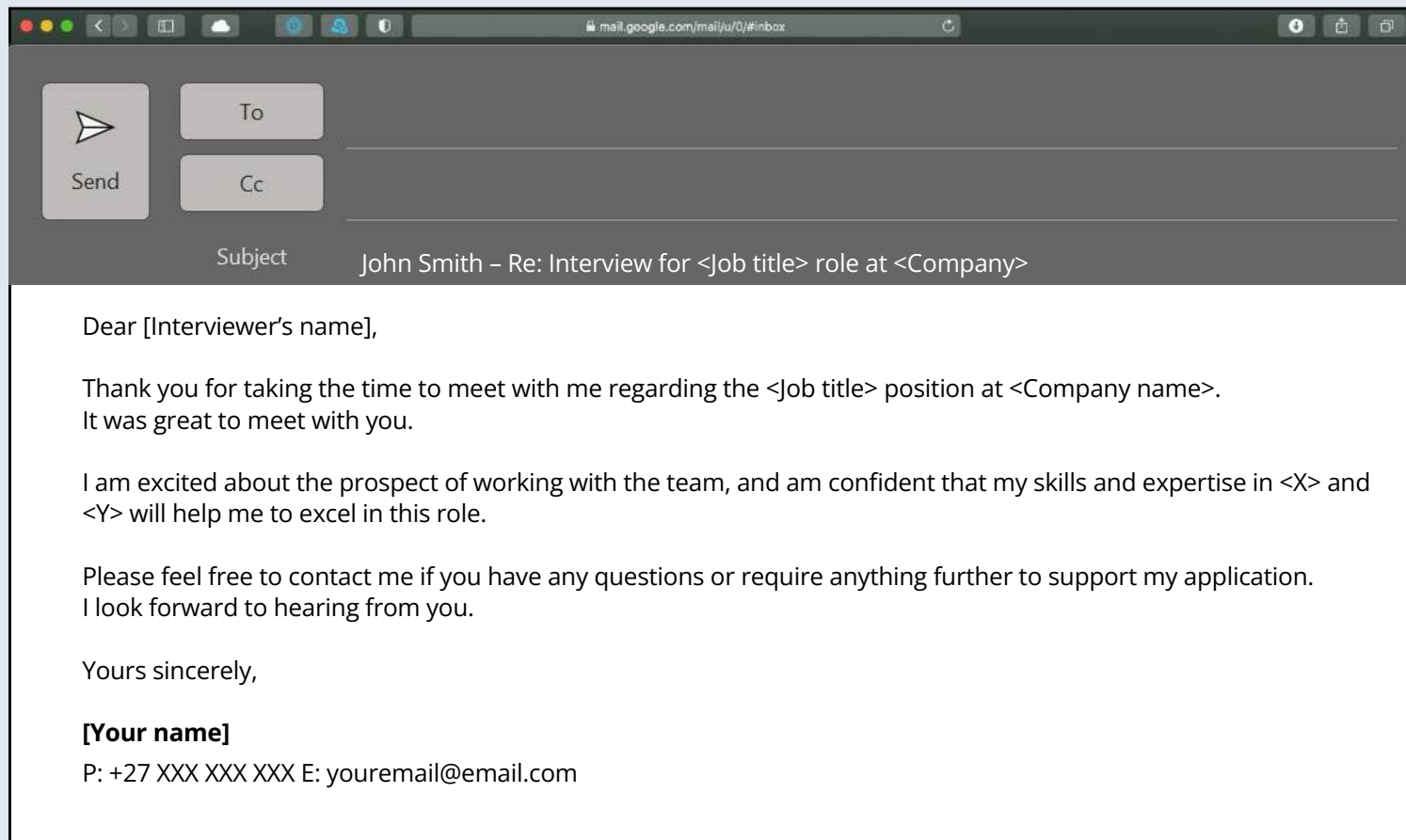
# Follow up



# Follow-up email

After an interview, it is best practice to send a follow-up email or thank you note to the interviewer.

Try to send it within 24 hours of the interview. See example below:



The image shows a screenshot of a Gmail compose window. The browser address bar at the top displays "mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox". The compose interface includes a "Send" button with a paper plane icon, and "To" and "Cc" input fields. The subject line is pre-filled with "John Smith - Re: Interview for <Job title> role at <Company>". The email body contains the following text:

Dear [Interviewer's name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me regarding the <Job title> position at <Company name>.  
It was great to meet with you.

I am excited about the prospect of working with the team, and am confident that my skills and expertise in <X> and <Y> will help me to excel in this role.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require anything further to support my application.  
I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

**[Your name]**  
P: +27 XXX XXX XXX E: youremail@email.com



# How to discuss your salary package

Salary is an important factor when considering a new role. Money is often a difficult topic to discuss, so it is important to discuss it at the right time and have done adequate research prior to the discussion.

Check out our top tips for discussing your salary package:

- ✓ Avoid talking about salary until an offer has been made.
- ✓ Leave room for negotiation – we mentioned earlier that it is best to provide a range rather than a fixed salary, showing that you're flexible and open to negotiation.
- ✓ Get your figures right – knowledge is power. Be sure to do your research on what is a realistic salary for the role based on your skills and experience.
- ✓ Bring forward a strong case. Financial compensation generally reflects the value an employee brings to a business. Your salary should align with skills, experience and prior successes.



## Top tip:

Your recruiter can provide invaluable guidance on salary negotiation. They are up-to-date with current market trends and ensure you're compensated fairly based on your skills and experience.

## Appendix 1 Common questions to ask in an interview

Print out worksheets,  
write a question and  
detail a suitable response.



Questions about the job:

Questions about the team:

Questions about the company:

Questions about the culture :

General questions:

Notes:

## Appendix 2 Planning the interview

### Planner

- ☐ Print off a copy of your CV and cover letter to give to the interviewer.
- ☐ Research the nearest parking or public transport schedule in advance.

Office Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Office or Technology details: \_\_\_\_\_

Train/Bus time: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival time: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Practice your 'personal pitch' to ensure that you have a solid response when asked "tell me about yourself". Personal pitch:

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- ☐ Prepare your questions to ask the interviewer:

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Notes:

## Appendix 3 Writing your personal pitch

**Length:** 60 - 90 seconds to read or up to 200 words.

In your personal pitch, you should ideally include a short summary of your professional background, education, how your experience and education align with the job, skills and achievements.





# Appendix 4 Plan your interview questions to ask

Situational	Behavioural	Skill-based	Cultural
Can you provide an example of a time when you had to juggle multiple projects or tasks with competing deadlines? How did you prioritise your tasks and ensure timely completion?	Tell me about a time when you had to handle a difficult situation at work. How did you resolve it?	Give an example of a time when you solved a problem using critical thinking.	Can you tell me about a time when you felt a strong alignment with a company's culture and values?

Notes:

## Appendix 5 Plan your responses to common interview questions

Tell me about yourself?

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Why do you want to work here?

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What are your strengths and weaknesses?

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Tell me about a time when you overcame a challenge in a past role?

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What motivates you in your job?

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Notes:

## Appendix 5 Plan your responses to common interview questions

How do you generally handle stress or pressure in a job?

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What are your salary expectations?

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Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult colleague?

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What career accomplishments make you most proud?

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Why are you leaving your current employer?

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Notes:

## Appendix 6 Key learnings for your next interview

It's important to learn from every interview, whether successful or unsuccessful. Once you have received relevant feedback, document the key points below.

Learning #1:

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Learning #2:

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Learning #3:

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Learning #4:

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Learning #5:



***DRAKE***  
INTERNATIONAL