

# Managing your job application process

Helpful advice on every aspect  
of the job interview process.



# Contents

Foreword	05	5. Presenting the best version of you at interview	28
<hr/>		Things to Remember & Avoid at Interview	29
1. Introduction	06	<hr/>	
2. Creating a CV to get you noticed	08	6. Types of interviews	30
Top tips on creating your CV	10	Biographical Interviews	31
<hr/>		Competency Interview	32
3. Sending out your CV	18	Motivational Assessment	33
Initial Telephone Screening Call	19	Assessment Centres	34
The Purpose of a Telephone Interview	20	Group Assessment	34
Telephone Interview Checklist	22	Aptitude, Intelligence & Skill Assessments	37
<hr/>		Multi Mini Station Interviews	37
4. Preparing for the face-to-face interview	24	Presentations	38
Understand the Process	24	Video Interviews	39
Changing the Date for your Appointment	24	<hr/>	
Research & Resources	24	7. Accepting offers and handling rejections	44
Personal Presentation	26	If you are Offered a Job	44
Following Instructions	26	Right To Work in the UK	46
Interview Preparation Checklist	27	Rejecting an Offer	46



# Foreword

**Welcome to Marmion Recruitment.**  
**At Marmion, ethical and professional recruitment is at the heart of our service.**  
**We have a philosophy we apply to everything we do when we represent our candidates in their search for a new role ‘do the right thing’.**

Our focus is to find you the right role with the right employer which will provide you with the career opportunities within your most productive working environment. You can expect Marmion to go above and beyond what you expect. As well as collaborating with you to find a career satisfying job, we also want to provide you with practical advice on managing the end-to-end recruitment journey which should ensure that you achieve a successful outcome.

Securing the right role is a complex operation. Careful planning and thought at each stage of the journey to success will influence the eventual outcome, which is why we have produced this very comprehensive guide. Based on our own 30+ years of recruitment industry experience this practical guide provides advice and suggestions for specific areas of the application process. Those who have used it have found it very insightful and beneficial in helping them achieve their goals.

This booklet will help you to prepare and present the best version of yourself allowing you to describe and represent your skills and experience effectively to potential employers, be it through written, verbal, or face-to-face interactions, either independently or with Marmion. We also give you some hints and tips on video interviews.

Do not forget that part of our comprehensive service to you is to support and advise you, so if you are unsure about any section of the guide or you would like some additional advice, then do not hesitate to speak to your designated consultant or other team members at Marmion. It is in everyone’s interest that you are given access to job opportunities, so we are all committed to sharing our expertise so you can succeed.

Thank you for choosing Marmion. You are a valued stakeholder, and we wish you much success in the future.

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**Janet McGlaughlin FIRP**  
**Managing Director, Marmion**

# 1. Introduction

**A company needs an effective workforce to enable it to function and grow. When it seeks additional or replacement staff its response to your application will reflect the level of effort you have put into your application.**

**If you really want to shine throughout the course of a job application, it is critical that you prepare for every part of the submission process; you are being measured by potential employers from the minute your CV lands in their inbox.**

Sending a CV is the first phase of the selection process, and the recruiter will assess the validity of your application in several ways:

- By ensuring that you have accurately responded to any specific instructions regarding the initial expression of interest phase
- By noting how you respond to their invitation to attend an interview
- By observing the manner in which you walk onto their premises or prepare for the video meeting
- By how you handle yourself during the interview and assessment process
- By the way in which you deal with an offer of employment or rejection.

We have known companies retract a job offer after their chosen candidate showed very little excitement or interest once the offer was made. Not only that, but they also then went on to offer it to the person who had been rejected because they had accepted defeat graciously.

If you are being interviewed through a third party such as a recruitment company, do not be under any illusion that your preparation is not as important.

A key part of the recruitment consultant's job is to make an assessment on behalf of their client. The number of candidates who have presented themselves to us looking as though they have just fallen out of bed and with no knowledge of what they have applied for is not unheard of.

A professional recruitment consultant is paid to provide the best talent to its hiring business so it should come as no surprise that he/she will disregard anyone who looks only vaguely interested.

Over the following chapters we are going to give you advice on every aspect of the job interview process. Whether you are searching for that next career opportunity independently or with a recruitment consultancy, this insight will hopefully enable you to be better prepared and therefore more confident about putting yourself forward for that next role.



## 2. Creating a CV to get you noticed

**Many job seekers who have been out of work for some time will send their CV to as many companies as possible in the hope that someone will pick it up and invite them to interview.**

**Unfortunately, that approach is a bit like playing the lottery, and the chances of receiving an invitation to an interview or getting any interest at all will be very slim. The reality is that, as this approach is taken by so many anxious applicants, it is likely that recruiters who are already overwhelmed and bombarded with CVs will not even open the email. Where that may change is when the talent pool is limited, but it's still important that the CV is relevant.**

Candidates who come to us, having done this multiple CV distribution with no success, are already very disheartened and starting to lack confidence in their ability to find work. We take time to reassure them it is not that they are unemployable, but rather they have probably applied for the wrong jobs, especially if they've sent a generic CV for a vast range of differing roles.

Our advice is to fight the temptation to send your CV everywhere. Do not send your CV unless you have first read the advertised job description carefully and then matched it with the contents of your CV.



# Here are Marmion's top tips on creating a CV that will get you noticed.



## Design & Layout

Think of your CV as a window into what you can offer the business. This is not always about specific experience and hard skills, but about what can be transferable and useful to the company you've applied to. The main principle for design and layout is that less is often more. Having a clear structure, will ensure you remain focused on the information you want to include. Keep things simple, but informative. A neat and structured layout means that the reader (and potential employer) will not be distracted by unnecessary graphics and will instead focus on the content describing you and your experience.

If you are applying for a role in which design is a key component of the job, even then, be careful.

Design is very subjective, so we'd recommend that you do not go for the shock factor, unless you are applying to a company known to adopt that type of approach. Check their website and get a feel for their style.

Consider advertisements and websites you have seen and thought "great graphics, lots of words, but what is it trying to sell?" Busy and overly complicated websites are notoriously difficult to navigate and the same applies to CVs.

If you are going to include a picture of yourself, do not add one of you on holiday with a mojito and a cigarette. Incidentally, this applies to any medium through which you are trying to promote yourself in business. It looks bad and unprofessional. In fact, any personal picture depicting you outside of a work situation should be avoided. Keep it professional, simple and remember to smile.



## Personal Details

When it comes to the content of your CV, think of it as a biography or an account of who you are. Include your personal details and what you have achieved in respect of education and employment to date. In terms of personal information, you are not required to include your date of birth, marital status, or nationality (although you must have the right to work in the country you are applying to work in).

Take care not to include contact details such as a current work telephone number and work email address. It may seem obvious, but if a recruiter uses them to contact you regarding an interview during work time and your employer is unaware of your decision to look elsewhere, you only have yourself to blame if the office atmosphere turns chilly. Do not forget to review your email address. Would you respond to an applicant who has an email address such as `lusciouslinda69@blahblah.com`? Hiring managers can discount applicants because of preconceived impressions.



## Educational History

Information regarding your educational history should be sensible and relevant. If you are educated to degree level and this is not a vocational or professional role you've applied for, you need only to include the name of the degree and classification.

However, if you are applying for a specialist role and you know that the company specialises in an area you have focused on within the degree, then include that information as these details will reassure potential employers that you know what you are applying for.

If you are applying for your first job, you should list the qualifications gained in secondary and higher education with subjects and the grades achieved. For those applying for jobs with several years of work experience, providing the basic information is usually enough, e.g., 10 GCSEs at A\*- C level and 3 A levels ABC.



## Employment History

As the CV provides a potential employer with an insight into how beneficial a candidate will be for their company, you must be able to demonstrate your ability and aptitude to succeed in the role if offered.

To assess your suitability based on work or academic criteria, it is ideal to provide at least five years of employment history and/or education. If you have a longer career history, focus on your most recent roles, as the details you can provide about them within your CV will probably provide your next potential employer with the most applicable information about you.

If you are applying for a position in a completely different field, you need to ensure, by using the most appropriate descriptive words, that the recruiter can appreciate how the skills/ experience you've described in your CV can be transferred into the vacant position, in other words "transferable skills".



## Dates & Reasons for Leaving

Always make sure you include dates saying when you began and finished all the roles you have included in your CV. Recruiters need to understand your employment timeline and why (if any) there are gaps in your history. Always start with your current or most recent role and work your way back. Also check the dates are correct on profiles like LinkedIn.

This information is even more important for jobs within a regulated environment or where strict governance exists, as security will be uppermost in a recruiter's mind for these more sensitive areas. You may also be required to undergo strict vetting procedures so you should remember and record employment dates as a matter of course. The reasons for leaving your more recent roles should also be explained as potential employers will need to know anyway.

Sometimes applicants cannot help if they are forced to seek employment more frequently than others especially if they've been employed by companies who have failed through no fault of their own. In such cases provide a brief explanation. Clearly there will be instances where you may not wish to provide sensitive information in a written format but be prepared with a suitable answer if asked should you reach the interview stage.



## Job-specific Training Courses

Information about job specific training you have received during your employment may be helpful additions to your CV, especially if that training can also be applied to the role you have applied for. If your employer has paid for a course and has within the contract a clause stating that should you leave within a specific time frame you are required to reimburse, then your new employer may be happy to cover that cost. Ensure you know how much and address it at the appropriate time.

However, avoid including details of training you have had that is not likely to be relevant to the new role you are seeking. If you have limited work experience, some training can demonstrate you have some general skills needed for particular roles. For example, trained deep sea divers are in a life and death environment so need to be highly disciplined and detail orientated, and these are also especially important competencies for any risk and compliance role. It is an extreme example, but nevertheless a critical point. In the absence of hard evidence or experience in your CV or application, such training then becomes more relevant as it shows you have the correct mindset.



## Industry Specific Qualifications

If you have taken the time to sit exams relevant to your chosen industry sector then these should definitely be included, as well as when these qualifications were obtained. The same applies to memberships of professional industry registers as this will help to validate the reason your application is relevant within the field in which you have applied to work.

Where professional memberships and licenses are needed make sure these are up to date and you are able to provide certificates.



## Length of a CV

We have all been taught to stick to a CV of no more than two pages. However, as an employer who has, for the past 27 years, acted on behalf of clients, we are happy to go to three pages – especially if it is an interesting CV.

Remember, the more we know about our candidate before we meet him or her, the more prepared we can be for the face-to-face interview. But we would rather know about a person's achievements in a job than read about their hobbies and extra-curricular activities, so be prepared to cut that information out no matter how interesting you think it might be. On the other hand, sending a one or two paragraph CV is not good enough either. We will take the time to respond by advising that you need to provide more information in order to be considered.

We are fairly indifferent when it comes to covering letters. They are usually an excuse to recycle the same generic CV and to add additional information to get noticed using a different method.

Doing that negates everything we have advised. Remember recruiters are usually working to very tight deadlines and will not spend time reading lots of different application documents. Your CV is your promotional mailer so a short polite letter will do no harm, but it is your CV that the recruiter will be most interested in.



## Formatting a CV

There is a format to creating a CV and although it can be amended to suit each application, it must contain essential information about you. How much you include in each section should be tailored toward the role for which you have applied, and if you must sacrifice key details such as hobbies and interests then do so.

You have one chance to impress so do not waste the opportunity by using valuable space on irrelevant and poorly drafted copy. Remember, the more effort you make at this stage, the more likely you are to open the door into that next role.



## Appropriate Wording

Words used to describe your history throughout your CV are crucial. Many companies use “parsing” to filter CVs so make sure you include key words; the hint about which words will be found in the advertisement. Make sure if you can apply them, you have included them in the body of the CV and the more you use, the greater the chance that your CV will be selected.

Furthermore, when you do your research about the company, check its website for a careers page where you may find a more detailed job description, which will also help you use the most appropriate words. Do not assume that the person who will read your CV knows a lot about the role you are applying for as he/she could be screening CVs on behalf of the business unit seeking additional staff members.

Always carry out a spell check once you have completed your CV, but do not assume that if your document is not highlighting words, there are no errors. Read the document and be very critical; in fact, if you can enlist someone else to proofread your CV then do. Poor spelling and grammar will mark your application down.

HR departments for large organisations will process large volumes of applications for a wide variety of roles. They cannot be expected to know everything about each job they are working on, so make it easier for them by doing some research before you apply.

Hence the reason it is so important that you choose your wording carefully as it will give your CV a stronger chance of reaching the next stage.

Unfortunately, not all third-party recruiters acting on your behalf have the ability or the time to amend your CV according to the job description given to them by their clients. It is all too easy for them to send as many CVs as possible in the hope that one might get picked up for consideration.

At Marmion, we strongly believe that such a policy is a complete waste of time and represents poor practice and poor value for money for clients.





## Personal Statements

Where you place your personal statement is entirely up to you. Some put it at the very beginning of the document as a form of introduction and others at the end as a summary. Our advice is to make sure it is relevant and not too long.

When writing it, think of your personal statement as an 'elevator pitch'. Imagine you are in an elevator, and you have just a few seconds to sell yourself. Not so easy, but possible. Before writing your statement, refer to the job description and consider what does the company really need? Your statement could describe what you can bring to the role in ideally no more than 100 words.



## Promoting Yourself Throughout your CV

There is a useful expression in coaching or mentoring people and that is "It's not what you say, but how you say it that matters." The same can be said of how you describe within your CV what you do and what you can offer a potential employer.

Waffle and irrelevant data will result in either an exceedingly long and boring or a short and uninformative biography, which recruiters will no doubt consign to wherever they put details of candidates they consider to be irrelevant.

### Marmion's approach to handling CVs

As CVs are an integral part of the application process, Marmion will always provide our candidates with details about the client company and the role we believe is suitable for them to consider. Once we have consent to act on their behalf and present their CV for consideration, we will, if necessary, amend the information contained within the biography in order to ensure that the hiring manager can easily determine the relevance of the application.



## Referees

Before you provide the names of referees, ensure you have asked their permission. If you have included a current employer, make a note on your CV that references can only be obtained if a job offer has been made in writing.

Unless we have permission from our applicants, Marmion will never apply to referees for references.



## Hobbies & Interests

Unless they come from first-time job seekers, detailing hobbies and interests in a CV is something that most recruiters ignore. They can take up valuable space which shouldn't be wasted. Although, if your hobby and interests relate to the role and sector you are applying for then make sure the narrative is relevant and concise.

It is also worth noting that whilst recruiters are required to be objective, often if they read you are interested in an activity that they believe is not to their own personal taste then there is a risk you might be deselected on that basis.



# 3. Sending out your CV

**Once you have applied all that effort into creating the best possible representation of your abilities through a fantastic CV, you now need to make a note of where you plan to send it.**

If you are forwarding your CV to a number of companies, create a record of which ones you've sent them too. Most people now have smart phones and if you add google notes and sheets you can create a spreadsheet to include essential details about where you have sent your CV including company name, point of contact and their job title, address, email address, job title and date you sent it.

If you have not heard back within four weeks, it is worth a follow-up call even if it is just to delete it from the sheet (although hold onto the details as it may come in useful if you want to make a speculative approach later). You might also be able to use the call as an opportunity to learn how your CV was received and, if declined, find out why. It's not always possible to get that information, but more and more companies are offering feedback.

We always ask for feedback on all our candidates, whether they've been invited to interview or not, so this is something we will provide. As a reflective business we believe it's important to learn from previous experience and where appropriate change or improve moving forward!

## Initial Telephone Screening Call

**Many recruitment consultancies now conduct an initial telephone interview with candidates, and if they are acting on behalf of a hiring client it is unlikely you will have to undergo a second telephone interview before you get to the face-to-face stage of the assessment process with the potential employer.**

If you are applying independently for roles, bear in mind that a lot more companies are using telephone interviews as an initial screening tool, so it is wise to prepare in advance just in case you happen to get that call. Talking of calls, check your personal message to ensure it is warm, concise, and professional.

If you get a call from a recruiter and you are not prepared, stall for some extra time. Suggest that you are in an area with poor reception and arrange to call back at a given time. Make sure you stick to the arranged time because if you are late or forget, it will go against you before you have even started.

Ideally, you want to use a landline to make the return call as any breakdown in reception during the tele-interview can really affect how applicants present themselves and can be detrimental in moving to the next phase of the assessment process.

Importantly, before you return the call, look at your spreadsheet or log of where you have applied to, and then prepare for the call. Use the time to do a little research on the company so that it is fresh in your mind. Check your CV to remind yourself of what you have written about yourself as you might be asked to clarify some details.

Try not to be nervous. Most people who conduct telephone interviews will be used to a degree of nervousness from applicants and so will make an allowance for this.



## The purpose of the telephone interview is to:

- Check that you are genuinely interested in the job so make sure that you are enthusiastic and, if asked, make sure you know why you have applied for the job but try not to get too carried away.
- Find out your current status in terms of availability – if you are unemployed and have been for a while let them know you are keen to start work, and if you are on a set notice period ensure you know what that is.
- Assess your ability to communicate over the phone if the role requires it. You will be evaluated on your pitch (tone), pace (speed) and how clearly you speak. If you have a cold and it is likely to affect your voice, ensure that you let the interviewer know and have a glass of water at hand.
- Clarify details contained in your CV – again make sure you have it to hand as you may be questioned over dates, specifics about your role and reasons for wanting to leave.
- Determine core competencies. These are typical behaviours or how you would normally respond to certain situations such as how would you deal with a difficult problem You may be required to provide an example of when you've experienced that as evidence of your ability to effectively handle challenging situations without negatively affecting the outcome.



If you are nervous before the call, prepare your environment and remove any distractions. The interviewer will not want to hear the dog barking or the TV in the background, and it will also put you off your stride. Do not smoke or have a drink during the call and, regarding the content of the call, do not discuss the remuneration package. Presumably, there will be an indication of the salary level in the advert, so leave that to a later stage.

Strangely, it is good to smile as you talk as this has the effect of changing your tone, making you sound much more friendly and confident. That will only strengthen your application.

At the close of the call, you may be advised there and then if you are being progressed to the next stage, but if not remember to thank the interviewer for their call. Do ask them questions about what will happen next such as when you can expect to hear the outcome. If possible, get a direct contact number so that you can chase up your application if you have not heard within the agreed time frame and, of course, ask how you did.

It is unlikely at this juncture that you will get any constructive feedback, but if you do not ask, you will kick yourself later, and the interviewer may think you are not really interested. If you are due to go on holiday, let the interviewer know. If they decide to ask you to a face-to-face interview, they will work around your dates.

Finally, log the date of the call. If you have not heard back within the agreed time frame either call or send an email politely asking for an update and feedback. There is nothing worse than waiting for weeks and weeks after an interview, be it a telephone or face-to-face interview and hearing nothing.

If you are not successful and, whilst it may be hard to accept especially if you are struggling to secure a role, do thank the interviewer for the opportunity and for any feedback which might help for future applications, as you just never know.

Remember, your application may be reviewed at a later date and how you respond to a negative response will be recalled.

## Here is a checklist for **telephone interviews:**

- Keep a log of the companies you have applied to
- Check your voicemail message to ensure it is clear and concise and check regularly for messages
- Regularly check your emails in case the invitation is sent to your inbox
- Respond within 24 hours of the invitation
- Make sure that you have good reception to take the call so stall if necessary (not too long)
- Prepare the environment to avoid distractions
- Do not smoke or take a drink during the call (unless you have a cold)
- Smile through the call and stand if this makes you more comfortable
- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity
- Ask about the next stage
- Advise the interviewer if you are going on holiday
- Follow up if you have not heard within the agreed time frame
- When you receive notification that you have been accepted for an interview respond within 24 hours.



# 4. Preparing for face-to-face interviews

## Take Time to Understand the Process

Remember if you fail to prepare then you must be prepared to fail. Once you've received confirmation that you have been invited to attend a face-to-face interview, ensure you read the letter or email thoroughly. It will usually provide full instructions and details on where you need to go, when you need to get there, who will interview you and the format of the interview or assessment day. If it's a video call, ensure that the preparation is still as rigorous.

## Changing the Date for Your Appointment

If for any reason you cannot attend on the date or time allocated let the recruiter know immediately. Be friendly and polite (initial impressions count) and make sure you have a valid reason such as needing to arrange to take time off work, holidays abroad, hospital appointments and so on.

If you have been selected it means they want you to attend so they will try to accommodate you. Although if it is an assessment centre interview and a larger group of applicants attending at the same time, it will be more difficult to rearrange, so you may have to prioritise and decide just how important this interview is to you. Having said that if they really like your application, they will probably ask you to attend an interview instead.

## Suggested Research and Resources

Researching your potential employer is critical. We have been recruiting on behalf of client companies for a long time and we are still amazed at how little some applicants know about the company they are applying to work for.

An immediate research resource is of course the internet. If you cannot access the internet at home or work (be careful if at work), go to the local library, job centre, or ask someone who can provide access.

It is almost unheard of for any company not to have a website, and if not ring through to the company and ask if they have any information available such as an annual report. If there is nothing available, check out some of their competitor sites, LinkedIn company page, Facebook, Instagram page, Companies house, Glassdoor, etc., at least you will get a good idea of what it is they do.

You will always be considered more favourably if you have taken time to learn more about the business and job role. On that note, if it is a new category of job role for you, type in a google search of the job title and you will get access to lots of job descriptions. Prospects.ac.uk is a great source

This will enable you to form some idea of the type of things you might be expected to do, and if asked about the role and responsibilities at least you can provide informed answers.

On the back of your research, make sure to create some questions for you to ask at interview. You will be expected to ask something and not doing so will not look good. Even if during the interview the potential employers answers the questions you have considered, having a list you can refer to will let them know you have prepared. Remember this is a two-way interview, you will want to leave being informed about the company so that if you are offered the position you can decide to accept based on the information you have been provided with from the interviewer.

If you are applying through a recruitment consultancy, they should have met with their hiring manager, so the consultant will be able to provide you with a lot more information about the company and give you a comprehensive job description to help you prepare. Having said that, many consultancies now operate on an automated system so that support is not guaranteed.

## Personal Presentation

Once you have covered off the where, when, who and how for the interview, you need to consider your personal presentation. The reality is that impressions are made quickly and so the more effort you have made in terms of your overall presentation the better your reception will be. It is not about being the best looking it is about understanding that if you turn up looking like you have been dragged through a hedge you will not create a good impression.

Prepare for your interview in the same way as you would prepare to meet a stranger you want to impress and do not leave the preparation to the last minute.

Use common sense and base your choices on the industry sector you've applied to work for. High tech companies like a less formal approach, professional organisations prefer formal attire, and if you really are not sure then ask someone to help you. Sometimes company websites have pictures of their employees, and you can possibly gauge the dress code from there.

## Following Instructions


Following instructions regarding your interview is key at this stage, so if you are asked to bring any documents ensure you do. Bring the original and, if possible, a photocopy of all documents asked for. If for any reason you cannot bring them, say for example, your passport is being renewed, let the company know when you are expecting it to be returned. Failure to comply with instructions will mark you down.

Presentations which form part of the assessment process should be created in both soft and hard copy. If for any reason technology lets you down, having a back-up will work in your favour. If the presentation has been allotted a specific time i.e., 10 minutes, then make sure you can deliver it comfortably in 10 minutes.

### Practice helps!

## Interview preparation checklist

- Respond to your invitation within 24 hours.
- If you have valid reasons for rearranging, advise immediately.
- Check the location of the interview and resolve any potential problems in terms of access and getting there.
- Research the company as much as possible and prepare a list of questions to ask at the interview.
- Consider your personal presentation and do not leave it to the last minute. Check the mirror before you meet the interviewer.
- Ensure you have all the necessary documentation if requested and bring a photocopy just in case.
- If you are making a presentation, practice and make sure you can deliver it within the time allocated.
- Have something to eat before your interview. It will avoid stomach rumbling during the interview.
- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview. Better to be early than late.



**And remember this interview is as much about you interviewing the company to determine if you want to work for it**

# 5. Presenting the best version of you at interview

**From the moment you arrive at the interview centre, you are being assessed. If you are late and you do not have a strong enough excuse, then you could well have failed before you even started.**

That is of course not going to happen, because you will arrive in plenty of time to ensure that, if necessary, you can freshen up before the interview. And, if you are nervous, a good tip to calm things down is to discreetly take time to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. It really does help.

Try to remember you have been invited to an interview because all the indicators presented regarding your suitability so far have been good, and the interviewer is hoping you are the one. So, remain focused on that.

Make sure you are polite and friendly to the receptionist or the person sent to greet you. They are often asked for their opinion of you, especially if it is a small company. This may be the first assessment to determine how well and how quickly you relate to and build rapport with others. While waiting, make sure you turn off your mobile phone.

The pandemic has changed how we greet each other. You will probably shake hands with your interviewer, but do not be offended if they do not offer. If you are not invited to shake hands, then no other candidate will be invited to do so either.

Once you have settled into your chair remove anything that might cause you to be distracted – your phone is already switched off, of course – and rest your hands on your lap. Your body language is now being monitored and is an important factor in how you will be perceived.

When it comes to body language, there are some actions you can take and some you should avoid to demonstrate that you are interested and fully engaged.

## You Should Avoid:

- **Slouching** – it looks as if you do not really care. Sitting upright demonstrates you are interested and fully engaged.
- **Playing with your hair or face** – this is not uncommon people who are nervous, but it should be avoided as it gives the impression that the candidate is bored and disinterested
- **Overusing your hands to express yourself** – clearly some movement helps to make a point, but overuse is distracting
- **Unnecessary movement** – If you know you have a habit of jiggling your legs, tapping your feet or fingers when nervous, be aware of it during your interview. Placing your hands relaxed and palms slightly upright on your lap will not only indicate you are open and honest, but will ensure you do not tap fingers etc. Plant your feet firmly in front of you, doing so will keep you upright and will also help you not to jiggle about. Your nervous movements could be interpreted as boredom or impatience and controlling your body makes you look focused.

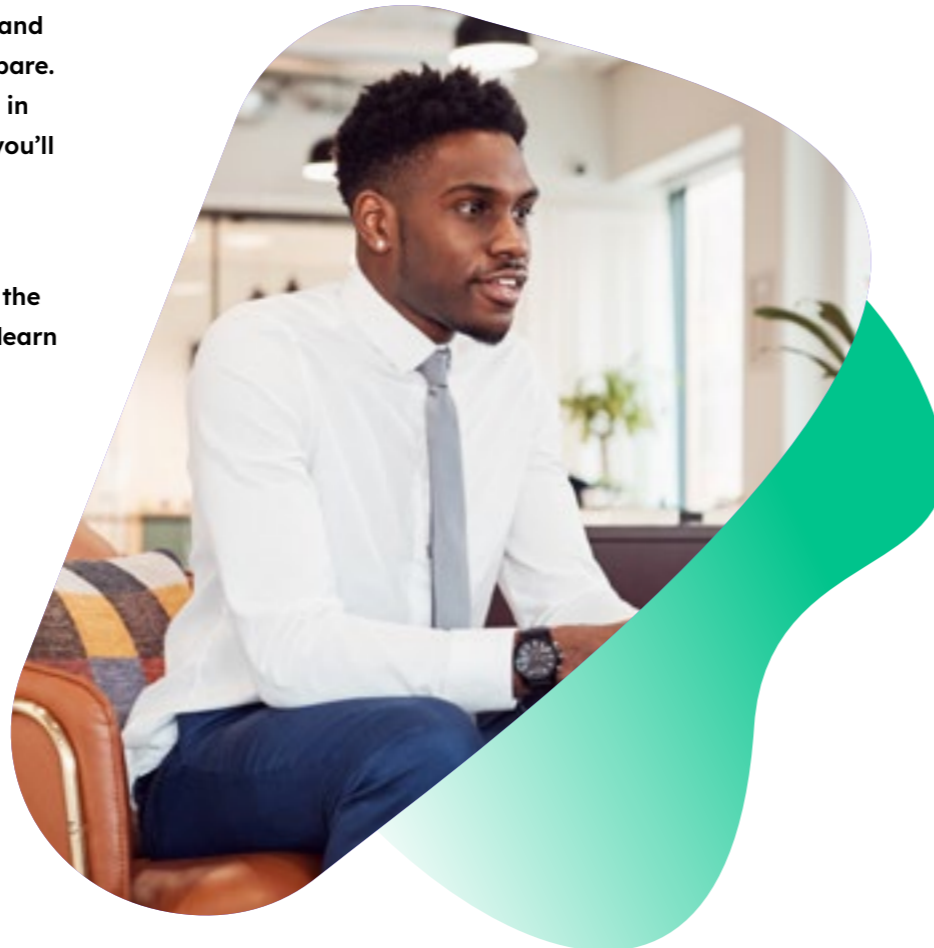
## Do Remember To:

- **Smile** – this is a good starting point so when seated make sure you smile at each member of the panel. I guarantee they will smile back, and it helps to break the ice
- **Maintain eye contact** – clearly, if asked a question by a member of the panel, maintain eye contact, but a good tip is to also look at the rest of the team. It will ensure that you have engaged with everyone, they will all focus on your answers and importantly it demonstrates your confidence
- **Mirror your interviewer's body language** – a very quick way to build rapport and good relations is to copy the posture and some of the gestures of your interviewer. If he or she moves towards you or nods, then you should too but appropriately and moderately to avoid it looking too obvious

# 6. Type of interview

Interviews vary in style so be prepared for a selection process which could involve any or all of the following. Your invitation will hopefully confirm the structure of the interview or assessment programme, and you should have plenty of time to prepare. We'd always recommend that you ask in advance for information about what you'll be expected to do/bring and present.

Over the next few pages is an insight into what you might expect and what the interviewers/assessors are hoping to learn about you.



## Biographical Interview

This is about getting to know as much as possible about your background and history, and the questions will be designed to ensure that, at the end, the interviewer will have enough relevant information to make an informed decision regarding your suitability for the role. Your CV and application form combined, function as a road map of your career and education to date, so make sure that the dates on both documents match and that you know what is in there.

You will be asked questions on the content you have provided, and they will want you to offer evidence that you have done and achieved everything you have specified. If you have several versions of your CV, ensure you know which one the interviewer is working from. This is especially important if you are moving onto an entirely new career path, as you must be able to promote your transferable skills and experience.

If you have moved job on a regular basis, make sure you have compelling reasons for having done so. All gaps in your career should also be explainable. Try to keep things as positive as possible and if you left due to personal reasons, then say that an opportunity to develop yourself further was just too good an opportunity to miss. What you will need to do is to reassure the interviewer that you are reliable and, that if offered the job, you plan to stay.

If you are planning to take a job for the sake of it, please do not. It is so disruptive for a business, and you may have stood in the way of someone who really wanted it. There are other ways of assessing whether or not a job role is right for you, such as temping or seeking an interim role.



## Competency Interview

This is usually carried out by two people; one will ask the questions and the other will record your responses. The point of this exercise is to gauge your natural instinct/ability when performing certain aspects of the job you've applied for efficiently and successfully.

You will be given scenarios and then asked to reflect on situations you have experienced. You should describe the situation, how you dealt with it and finally what was the eventual outcome. Having read the job description, you should be able to identify and relate to some of the skills and experience required.

Consider how you can provide evidence that you have engaged in similar activities elsewhere and ensure you have positive outcomes (positive outcomes may also include where change has occurred as a result of the experience). If the question is vague or you are not sure what it is they want, ask them to explain.

We use the anagram STAR as a good way of working your way through an example or evidence of your experience.

## 1 Situation

Describe what the situation was, why was action required

## 2 Task

What you needed to do to complete

## 3 Action

What you and/or others did to complete the task

## 4 Result

Result the outcome and what impact it had on the original situation

## Motivational Assessment

You must know why you have applied for the role and what you hope to get out of it, and of equal importance what you will give back. Some companies will use a motivational questionnaire for you to complete and then go over the report with you. This is more common in roles that are sales related, target oriented or where you are required to work alone and relatively unsupervised.

Ensure you know what you are getting into before you apply. The interviewer will want to know you are highly self-motivated to succeed and can be relied on to achieve the required outcomes.



## Assessment Centres

Recruiters are employing increasingly sophisticated recruitment and assessment tools, and techniques. Assessment centres are generally used for graduate and volume recruitment campaigns designed according to the needs of the industry, culture of the company, number of recruits needed and specifics of the job. However, more employers are seeing the benefits of introducing this type of approach to make more informed decisions about potential employees.

In order to provide an applicant time to prepare, it would be unusual not to include advice in advance of the format of the assessment centre. Once you receive your invitation and confirmation that this will be the route to selection, carry out an online search ([www.glassdoor.co.uk](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk) or similar) and look for any information on the recruitment processes the company employs.

There are an amazingly high number of chat rooms that have been created on the back of the experiences of former applicants who may have attended assessment days delivered by the company you are applying to. The topics discussed in these chat rooms cover everything connected with the evaluation process, and it can provide some useful advice on what you could expect.

However, be warned that if advice given on these sites mentions specific questions, do not assume that the questions that person was asked will be the same as those you will be asked. You will also get some negative comments, especially if the person providing feedback was not offered a job so, read between the lines, remembering that their experience does not necessarily mean you will experience the same.

## Group Assessment

These are designed to observe how well candidates respond to and behave in time limited scenarios. The situation may not necessarily be business related but will usually have a focus on solving a problem, completing a task, discussing a general topic, or debating a work-related problem.

At the end of the assessment the group will be expected to have reached a conclusion or answer or to summarise back to the assessors. Throughout the session, the group will be monitored by assessors who will seek out the predetermined behaviours and skillsets of existing successful employees of the company. The purpose of the exercise is not always to achieve the right answer, but to decide who, based on their performance during the assessment, will best fit the organisation.

## Behaviours in Group Assessments

Each candidate will be observed for any of the following positive behaviours:

- How well the scenario has been interpreted
- Effective communication with the team
- Confidence in presenting a logical argument
- Team working
- Commercial awareness
- Listening skills
- Manners
- Genuine interest in others and respect of the opinions of others
- Leadership
- Rapport building
- Contribution to the team
- Problem solving
- Focus

They will also be on the lookout for negative traits:

- Talking too much and over other team members
- Talking too little and not contributing to the exercise
- Insensitivity to others in the team and trying to dominate or overpower others
- Losing focus and drifting off topic

This type of interview process can be a bit nerve wracking especially as you are expected to perform in front of your peer group. It is a little like speaking a foreign language for the first time to a native speaker.

You know it will not be perfect at first, and there is the fear that you might make a fool of yourself. However, the person you speak to will not be expecting perfection, they will be impressed that you are attempting it.

Your assessors will take the same stance and will be pleased to observe a positive and can-do attitude, which will act in your favour. Just be the best version of yourself and understand that you and the other group members are all in the same boat.

## **Aptitude, Intelligence, & Skill Assessments**

Employers will want to ensure that where it is essential for employees to have a certain level of intelligence, knowledge of a pertinent subject, and relevant skillsets, applicants can be assessed during the initial evaluation stages.

Many of these tests can be delivered online and can therefore be completed prior to the assessment day. But if there is a concern that the test might be compromised, they will be included as part of the assessment day. All are timed and everyone will complete the same test, and as every applicant will be required to achieve the required pass mark it removes the risk of any discrimination or favouritism.

There are thousands of tests available so it would be impossible to go through them all. However, as the tests are a financial investment for a company in identifying high calibre candidates (graduate, professional and management level roles) take it for granted that if you have reached the assessment stage, you will be able to do them. It is possible to access sample papers online, and it is always good to practice where possible in advance.

## **Multi Mini Station Interviews**

This type of interview exposes applicants to a wide range of scenarios, which provides an unbiased insight into their non-cognitive qualities such as ethics, empathy, team working, communication, rapport building and maturity. A lot of universities use them for admission to highly sought-after courses such as medicine, dentistry, law, or accounting.

The advantage of MMIs for an employer is that it is possible to assess a large group of candidates within a very short space of time. Think of it as speed dating for employers. You will probably have four minutes to shine for each interview so make sure you are on best form, as the more people you impress at each station the more likely it is that you will progress.

It sounds a bit brutal, especially if you are feeling a little under the weather, but all the applicants on the day will undergo the same process and no allowance will be made. Remember, if you go to a station and the person on the other side is rude or unfriendly to you, he or she will act the same way to everyone else. These people are often actors employed to play a character, so no matter what you try to do to gain their favour, they will not respond any differently to you, so do not take it personally.



## Presentation

**As well as an interview, candidates may well be asked to give a presentation. If asked to present, it usually means that this is a requirement of the role, and you will be expected to deliver an engaging and meaningful presentation on a pre-chosen subject to a panel of assessors.**

If a presentation is part of the selection process, then make sure you:

- Stick to the subject – ensure there is a structure to your presentation i.e., an introduction, clear sections on the subject you are presenting and a summary. Limit the number of slides and make sure you know the sequence of the slides, as ideally you will want to look at the panel rather than the slides as you deliver them.
- Conduct a dry run - test the presentation on someone to ensure they understand what it is you are trying to say, and make sure they are prepared to really critique it. Ensure there is a clear message and keep it as simple as possible. Clearly if it is a highly technical role, you will be with people who share your knowledge, but keep it to the point. If necessary, do a redraft.

- Do not overrun the time allotted - if you have been told 10 minutes, then make sure you can deliver it comfortably in 10 minutes. Bring a soft and hard copy of your presentation. If for any reason technology lets you down or you are not allowed to access the company's network, having a back-up will work in your favour. It also means you have something to leave behind as a reminder of you, which means you will not easily be forgotten when the time comes to reflect on all applicants for the selection team.

One of the best ways of determining if people are likely to understand what you are trying to say in your presentation is to get someone to listen to you. If someone understands you even though they may have no prior knowledge of the subject, you are more likely to engage the interest of the interview panel – some of whom may also not know anything about the subject.



## Video Interviews

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, more employers are opting for remote interviewing processes, namely telephone or video interviews and both are equally important in terms of preparation. Often after either of these two phases, you will be invited to visit the office, but be prepared for a job offer without meeting your new employer.

Video interviews may be your first or second opportunity to impress a potential employer. Sometimes the video is recorded for use after the initial assessment of a large number of candidates so that the recruiter and their colleagues can watch the interview again rather than just relying on notes.

This format has some challenges - the main ones being network connectivity problems and time delays meaning that there may be some uncomfortable pauses during the conversation whilst the video catches up on real time.

Not everyone is comfortable on camera, and this may put some candidates at a disadvantage. However, with proper preparation these issues can be overcome.

**The first thing to understand is what format the remote interview follow:**

**Is it recorded?**

This is a much less personal experience as you will not be speaking to a real person. You will be presented with pre-recorded or even written questions on screen, and then you will have to record your answer on video, often to a time limit. In most cases you are given a number of attempts so don't panic if the first one doesn't go to plan.

This helps employers who have lots of candidates, as they can simply watch your answers later at a time that suits them. However, it can be awkward if you are not used to recording yourself. This makes practice even more important. On the plus side, you will be able to do the interview at a time of your choosing up to a set deadline.

**Is it live?**

This is a similar experience to a regular face-to-face interview. You will speak to the interviewer in real-time over a video connection using any of the following, Teams, Zoom, Facetime, WhatsApp, or Google Hangouts.

Live videos enable employers to hold the traditional interview without the need for the candidate to travel to their office, meaning they can recruit from anywhere in world.

Whilst it is a relatively new concept for most people, aim to treat the conversation as you would any interview at the employer's offices. Based on the success this format has had during the pandemic it is likely these methods will continue in the future, so it is good to prepare and practise.

Irrespective of the format it is important that you prepare and one of the essential things to consider is your location.

Make sure that wherever you choose, you have good connectivity – If not networked you can go to your laptop's settings, and it will show you how strong your connection is.

**Use a quiet location** where you won't be disturbed by noises and people. You need to be alone as if others are in the room, they may inadvertently put you off your stride by trying to help you. We really don't recommend a car park, especially if it is on the premises of your current employer.

**Make sure the room you choose is tidy** and use a clean and simple background so that the recruiter focuses on you. Zoom and Teams have a filter function. If you have a pet, ensure it stays out of sight and hearing.

**Lighting is important** as you need to be seen. Face out towards a window or have a light facing you rather than behind. To ensure you do not get a shadow either use natural light from a window or put a lamp in front of the camera and adjust the distance to get the best result. It will not be a great interview if you can't be properly seen.

**Close any apps on your device that might play notification sounds** and switch your phone to silent to guarantee you will not be distracted. Also, if there are other occupants in the area let them know you are about to start the interview, so they do not interrupt.

**Dress appropriately.** Not only will you look as if you have made the effort, but it will also give you confidence. You may be at home, but it is still a job interview, so it is important to give a professional first impression. You should wear the same outfit you would have chosen for a face-to-face meeting. It is worth having a look at your potential employer's website to see how existing staff dress. Also, think about how your clothes will look on screen and avoid busy patterns and stripes and make sure to avoid t-shirts, hoodies or any clothing you might wear outside of work.

As covered earlier, **use positive body language**, and follow the same advice as you would if you were in the same room as your interviewers.

**Avoid slouching, moving too much or touching your face.** Instead, employers will be looking for you to make good eye contact, smile, listen and take an interest in what they are saying.

To help you do this, your camera should be at eye level, and you should look into it rather than at the screen, which is not always easy to do. Put your device in a secure place so that it does not move around. Do a trial run to find the best lighting and position.

Avoid holding a pen which clicks and rocking too much in your chair as you may appear nervous if you unconsciously click your pen or rock too much.

**Pace your responses.** For pre-recorded interviews, try to imagine you are speaking to a real person, maintaining your enthusiasm and positive body language. This can be harder to do when you are simply recording your answers. However, the advantage is that you have more time to practice the key elements of what you want to say to impress.

When nervous it is not uncommon to rush answers or what you are trying to say but do remember that the employer wants to hear your answers and both of you are working your way through this.

**Speak clearly** and just be careful not to interrupt your interviewer as this is more easily done with the slight delay over the internet than during a face-to-face meeting. If it feels a bit uncomfortable, smile and ask if they are happy with what you have said.





### **Prepare your Device & Network**

As we have seen, preparation is key so a few days before the interview you should test the computer, camera, and any software that you have been asked to use. Make sure the picture is clear and the sound quality is good. It is also worth checking your internet connection.

On the day of the video interview, ensure everything is fully charged or plugged in as you do not want the battery to run down. It may seem obvious, but you would be surprised how easy it is to forget. You do not want to be still sorting things out as the interview starts, so switch everything on at least half an hour before the interview and sign into any software that you will need.

Log onto the meeting early so that you make a good impression as being late in this situation is never a good thing.

If during your meeting there are technical challenges especially with sound, let the interviewer know. Do not persist as you will not put on your best performance. Remember your interviewer wants you to do well, and this is a problem easily fixed. They will be happy to end the call and redial.

For pre-recorded video interviews, check beforehand whether you're allowed to stop and restart in case of technical issues.

### **The Future of Video Interviews**

Video interviews are set to be the new norm, and everyone is learning. Remember, you will not be the only applicant employers will interview in this way and, in the same way that the more you would have prepared for a face-to-face interview the more likely you would have succeeded, the more you prepare for a video interview the more likely you will succeed.

### **The Evolution of Interviews**

Finally, the selection process has evolved considerably and as employers evaluate choosing candidates for graduate, management and professional roles, do not be surprised if the process of securing that next job takes a little longer and requires greater effort from both you and the employing company.

If it is worth having, it is worth working hard for. So, use every means available to you to understand the assessment process, follow instructions, prepare as much of what you have learned about what will be required of you on the day, practise your questions and techniques, and remember the interview and evaluation process is as much about you deciding whether or not you want to work for the company, so prepare questions which will enable you to make an informed decision and get involved throughout.

# 7. Accepting offers and handling rejections

After all that effort the only thing you want to receive is an offer of employment, but the reality is there is a chance you will be advised that 'on this occasion you have been unsuccessful'. It is a terrible outcome but handling it correctly might result in an eventual offer.

If you receive a rejection, send an email thanking the company for taking the time to consider your application and ask if they have any helpful advice on how you can improve your overall application.

You may not get an immediate response and sadly not all companies will respond, but more and more are prepared to do so. Always thank them for any feedback given and, if you really want to work for the company tell them the reason.

More importantly do not allow rejection to drag you down. The more effort you put into something the more likely a positive outcome, so keep going.

### **If you are offered a job, well done.**

You'll feel great as will the person who offers you a job, so make sure that when you get confirmation you continue to demonstrate just as much enthusiasm as you have done so far and respond within 24 hours of the offer.

You will be required to send written confirmation and provide contact details for referees. Ensure that if you are using your current employer as a reference that you have advised them in advance that you are leaving and adhere to the appropriate level of notice. Email addresses and phone numbers of referees help to speed up the process.

Leaving a place of employment is not always easy especially if you have a good relationship with colleagues and your bosses or are an integral member of the business. It can come as a bit of a shock to an employer particularly if they have not had any indication of your intention to look elsewhere.

Where possible leave on the best terms because you never know when you might need their help again or when your paths will cross in the future. Working notice periods helps an employer with their resource planning and you should consider this as you plan to leave.



## Right to Work in the UK

All companies are required to check that you have a right to work in the UK so will need sight of, and a copy of your current passport or other supporting documentation. The more regulation or where there are higher levels of governance a company or organisation must adhere to, the more stringent the vetting process is, so do not be surprised if you are asked for more information than usual.

And remember, the final offer is always dependent on a company completing satisfactory vetting processes. If there is anything that might be highlighted during the vetting stages which could affect the offer, let your future employer know in advance.

It will ensure that decisions regarding your employability are dealt with sooner rather than later and will potentially save you a lot of hassle and heart ache if for any reason the job offer has to be rescinded. Often honesty pays and as long as the situation is manageable and the fact that you have exercised integrity, most problems can be overcome.

## Rejecting an Offer

The interview and assessment process is a two-way decision-making opportunity, and if following everything you have been through, you decide you do not wish to work for the company, it is always best to deselect yourself as soon as possible.

Give another candidate a chance. However, it may be that the decision to reject an offer cannot be made until the last minute. Whenever it is, do it right and remember you may revisit job opportunities with the company in the future.

There is nothing worse for a company or a recruitment consultancy that has been acting on your behalf to make an offer only to never hear from the candidate or to agree to a start date on which the candidate fails to arrive.

**If you do decide to use Marmion to secure your next role we will work with you to ensure that you get the best out of our service and, of course, achieve the ultimate goal, securing your next job.**

**We hope the information in this guide has been of help to you as you look to start on the career ladder or take that next step.**







Happy Job Hunting!

Contact us on 0113 332 0678

Or visit: [wearemarmion.com](http://wearemarmion.com)