

PGR Tips on preparing for interviews

If you are coming to the end of your doctorate you may be in the middle of applying for jobs (otherwise, hang onto this issue of PGR Tips until you do!). If you have [tailored your CV](#) well and written good applications you will hopefully be invited for [interview](#). It is key that you thoroughly [prepare](#) for this. For a start, being prepared generally helps you feel less nervous. It allows you to give more informed answers and promote your skills and experience more effectively. Use our [Researcher Development Framework tool](#) to assess your skills. Find out how other [researchers](#) have used it. Don't get too hung up on [what you are going to wear](#) or on difficult [questions](#) (although it is good to prepare for these).

Do your research

Research the structure of the company or institution you are applying to, their mission statement, who their competitors are. Get in touch with people in the company, institution or sector to ask informed questions. For a position in academia, read papers of the group you are applying to. If you can find out who will interview you it will help you remember their names and give you an idea of their background knowledge.

Gain experience in being interviewed

Doing well in job interviews is a skill which improves with practice, so if your careers service offers mock interviews this is really worth doing. You can also gain experience in communicating your key skills by attending a [GRADschool](#) or the [Leadership in action](#) course. Otherwise consider doing a mock interview with friends. Having it filmed shows you how you come across and what you can improve.

Prepare for common questions

It pays to think through in advance how you would answer some more common [questions](#).

Prepare yourself for dealing with questions you don't readily know the answer to

Interviewers are generally more interested in how you answer rather than the detail of your reply. They want to see how well you think on your feet. So even if a question flummoxes you, stay calm. It is fine to ask for a moment to think or to ask them to repeat the question.

Think of examples and evidence

Think of examples and evidence to back up any assertions you make. Be clear about what your role was in the situation you give as an example when asked to evidence particular skills or experience. Use phrases like 'my particular role was...' rather than 'we'.

Ask questions

Asking (the right) questions shows you are interested. Don't ask questions your research into the job could have answered. Rather, let that research inform your questions. Ask questions throughout, rather than wait till the end of the interview.

Put yourself in the shoes of the prospective employer

There is a vacancy which your prospective employer needs to fill. They will sincerely hope that one of the people they interview will meet their requirements. Assume that for the duration of your interview they are hoping it will be you.

Be personable

The people who are interviewing you are looking for a colleague. First impressions count, so be on time, look presentable, make eye contact, listen attentively and be pleasant.