

Talking points

General background

Often the first question is a request for a summary of your background. People applying for their first job should focus on extracurricular activities, education and qualifications.

It is quite acceptable to repeat major points you have outlined in your CV or cover letter. It's important to show your personality at this point as employers are examining your skills along with how they feel you will fit into their team culture.

If you are involved in volunteer work mention the areas you've contributed to.

Qualifications

A specific question often asked is, "Why do you think you are qualified for this position?" Qualifications, in this context, relates to all qualifications which could make you suitable for the position including educational, employment-related and personal.

In many cases, this may be the question that will win or lose you the job, so your answer needs to be clear and memorable. Search for people on LinkedIn in the team you are applying for, review their experience and expertise and the terms they use to describe their achievements.

Experience

Here is where your research pays off. Discuss your past experience in a way that is relevant to your potential employer, including details of your education, charity and community work.

Reasons for applying

Your answer should describe what you find appealing about the position, how you prepared yourself for a career in the organisation and how you believe your present job equips you for the position in question.

Career objectives

Be ready to discuss your long-term aspirations. Your best approach is one that indicates you have thought about your career in these terms and have taken some action towards realising your ambitions.

“Competency based interview questions are used to identify whether an individual has the aptitudes required for a role.”

Answering difficult interview questions

We've talked about general questions you might encounter and these are somewhat easy to prepare for. You'll need to think on your feet for more difficult questions however, which will test your ability to succeed.

Competency based interview questions are used to identify whether an individual has the aptitudes required for a role. The most objective way to assess how you will perform in the future, is to assess how you have demonstrated competencies in the past.

One of the most common interview techniques used to test for competencies is called the STAR (Situation, Task, Action and Result) technique. Try use the STAR technique to answer questions.

Situation

Firstly describe a situation you were in. For example, a colleague was struggling with performance.

Task

Next tell them what you decided to do. For example, sit down with your colleague to discuss how you could help.

Action

Then describe what you actually did. For example, gave your colleague examples of how you improved your own performance.

Result

Finally, tell them what happened as a result of your actions. For example, performance improved 35 per cent.



Common questions you may be asked:

- Tell me about a situation where you have been part of a group working toward a specific goal. What was your role in the group?
- Describe how you led a team through a difficult project. How did you improve their work?
- On time pressured assignments, how have you made sure that the job is done within budget?

These questions are asked to establish various core competencies relevant to the role, such as teamwork, creativity, innovation, decision making ability, business awareness and conflict resolution.

Presentations

If you're required to give a presentation, which is common in a second-round interview, follow these tips to give you a head start.

Preparing your presentation

Find out who you are going to be presenting to. This will give you a better understanding of what you say and how you pitch your presentation. Find out how many people will be on the panel, their role in the organisation and their expertise.

Getting the right structure

You should always have one clear message that runs through your presentation and focus on three sections: Introduction, development of your findings and summary. Don't let the presentation go on for too long - allocate 10-15% to your introduction and conclusion, with the main focus on the details of the topic.

Presenting

Using PowerPoint or another presentation program will allow you to incorporate visuals to help maintain interest throughout the presentation. Normally, we suggest not giving out notes as it will take the focus from you, however, if the subject is more technical in nature, a copy of the slides can be useful for those wanting to take notes. It's often best to distribute them before the presentation begins.

Always prepare and run through the presentation several times before the interview. If you fail to prepare for your speech, you will mumble the words and have no intonation in your voice. Look out for nervous habits, such as saying 'like' and 'um', this will contribute to losing your audience's attention. A sound structure can automatically set the ground rules for allowing you to tell the audience what you want to say.



Ask your recruiter what systems are used and if they are compatible with your laptop. Your presentation may be perfect but if it can't be accessed you need to be prepared - always bring physical backups or save to the cloud.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Following your interview, remember to give immediate feedback to your recruitment consultant. This needs to include any areas you felt you may have fallen down on - perhaps you have a nagging doubt about a specific answer you gave or forgot to highlight a certain valuable skill or experience.

Your consultant can cover this for you in his or her call to the employer. If you were interviewed directly, send a thank you email, expressing enthusiasm and keenness to join the company. Sent in the evening or the next day, this email can be an important factor in employer's decision-making process.

What to do next

If you've had a successful interview and have been offered a position you should be very pleased. However, it's not the end of the process, you still have much to consider before you accept or decline a job offer.

Don't act before you've had a chance to think, take some time to consider the offer. Give the hiring manager a time frame you can stick to and speak with your recruitment consultant. Once you make your final decision, you should let the hiring manager or your recruiter know as soon as possible.

If you decide to accept the position, remember that realistic negotiations are part of the process, so explore the possibility of any potential movement on salary and benefits. Your recruitment consultant will be able to advise you on the possibility of salary or benefits negotiations. Make sure you read your offer details thoroughly and confirm everything via email so that you have a written record.

Finally, get excited! This is the next step in your career, convey this excitement to the hiring manager to further underline that they have made the right decision.

Interviews are defining moments, and can change the whole direction of your career. It's vital to get them right and you'll need support to get through the application and interview stage. Search for jobs today, or find your local Hays consultant at [hays.cz](https://www.hays.cz).