

A background image of a smiling woman with long blonde hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light blue shirt, sitting at a desk. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Interview Essentials" is written in large, white, sans-serif font over the lower part of the image.

# Interview Essentials

**Guidance and readiness checklist  
for people with criminal convictions  
preparing for interview.**

**This document is designed to help interviewees with criminal convictions make a great first impression on prospective employers. Use the following checklist to ensure you're thoroughly prepared for interview...**

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**1. Think ABC**

Any Job, Better Job, Career! Spend time to think about which industry you want to get into and what your dream career might be - what qualifications and skills should you gain? Should you volunteer to increase work experience, and might you have to consider starting further down the career ladder to work your way up?

It's important to keep yourself pro-active, earn an honest income and prove your employability. Consider using recruitment agencies to find 'Any Job'. Continue to work your way to a 'Better Job' with better hours, pay and conditions until you achieve that first day at your 'Career Job'.

**2. Keep your CV sharp**

We read hundreds of CVs, working well as an individual or as part of a team just doesn't cut it any more.

- Keep your opening statement short and full of character.
- Starting with the most recent, place employment history above qualifications.
- Avoid highlighting voluntary work as paid employment as it is often preferable to employers.
- Any employment is better than none as it shows you can maintain a placement.
- Avoid spelling mistakes, use a spell checker and ask people like your work coach or a local careers service to proof read for you.

Visit [www.offploy.org](http://www.offploy.org) to download a copy of our CV Template.

**3. Tailor your covering letter**

We regularly interview for positions... candidates who research us, are passionate about our sector and show how they see themselves in our business are most likely to be invited for interview.

A cover letter is not only about you, but you and the employer. Again, get two people to check the spelling and grammar of your cover letter.

Visit [www.offploy.org](http://www.offploy.org) to download an example of a cover letter.

#### 4. Have a disclosure letter ready

Where the above documents are quite standard, writing a disclosure letter explaining your conviction and how your circumstances have changed can be daunting.

Employers may not have interviewed someone so open about convictions before, so be honest and expect they may need to be led by you. A face-to-face discussion is best, given the opportunity, but if this isn't possible or if you feel uncomfortable then send a disclosure letter.

Consider inviting the employer to ask questions and try to not be offended if they ask something personal or use the wrong word. You do not have to disclose 'spent' convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offender's Act. If you are unsure if your convictions are spent call the Nacro Helpline on **0300 123 1999** or email **helpline@nacro.org.uk**

#### 5. Fill out the application form correctly

Take your time on application forms, it is important that all information is neat and correct. Application forms are likely to ask if you have any unspent criminal convictions, we recommend answering with:

*I have enclosed this information in a disclosure letter but welcome the opportunity to discuss this over the phone or face-to-face.*

For digital applications send the company an email asking for the best place to forward a confidential disclosure letter in order to be considered for interview.

**Remember:** Do not disclose anything that is spent if the role does not require it. If you are unsure contact the Nacro Helpline on **0300 123 1999** or email **helpline@nacro.org.uk**

#### 6. Anticipate their interview questions

Here are the most popular interview questions, prepare an answer for each.

- What can you tell me about yourself?
- Can you list your strengths?
- What weaknesses do you have?
- Why should I consider hiring you?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What is your salary expectation?
- What motivates you?
- What makes a good team player?
- Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

## 7. Have at least three questions ready for your interviewer

You are likely to be asked if you have any questions, and this is still part of the interview. Employers often want to see if an interviewee is truly interested in the opportunity and if they have done any research beforehand.

The most common questions people ask are about hours and pay but these questions are not for you, they're for the employer! You can ask this via a call after the interview, before you accept the position.

We suggest the following:

- I have read the company has strong [Family, Moral, Hard-Working] values, How would you expect an employee to conduct themselves on a daily basis to represent to these values?
- I am keen to progress in my career, what development and progression opportunities could I expect if I am successful in starting a position with your organisation?
- As an employer, what do you want your employees to be saying about your people management and working conditions?

The above questions show:

1. That you have researched the business
2. You are ambitious and see this as a long term placement
3. You're keen to be treated with decency and respect

## 8. Dress appropriately

No matter what job you're going for, a shirt and smart shoes will never see you wrong. Jeans may or may not be appropriate... if you are unsure, consider some smart trousers / a skirt.

If you don't have these items of clothing speak with your work coach about their 'Flexible Support Fund' and consider getting yourself a set from retailers or charity shops. **Johnson Cleaners** and **Timpsons** will clean any suit if you are unemployed and going for an interview.

## 9. Hold your head high, be polite

You have nothing to be nervous about, you are eager to work and that puts you head and shoulders above many other candidates.

- Do not sit down until you're invited to do so.
- Say yes to a glass of water (it gives you time to think about answers whilst having a sip and will stop you fidgeting if you hold onto it)
- Don't fidget with a pen or click it during your interview
- Wait until the interviewer has finished speaking before you respond
- Avoiding pointing directly at people
- **DO NOT SWEAR**

Finally, always thank the interviewers for their time regardless of how you think it went.