

# Interview Basics

31 OCTOBER 2014

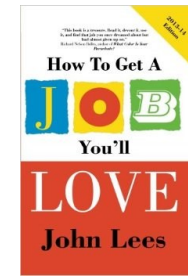


# Plan for 2015

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## Alternating Choosing a direction - Job hunting

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|-------------------------|--|--------|
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Career Hot Buttons                           | 16 Jan |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Finding Opportunities in Cambridge           | 23 Jan |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Understanding Ourselves – House of Knowledge | 30 Jan |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Planning and Process of Job Hunting          | 6 Feb  |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | General Discussion                           | 13 Feb |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Speculative Applications                     | 20 Feb |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Choosing a Sector                            | 27 Feb |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Getting the most out of LinkedIn             | 6 Mar  |
| ◦ Choosing a direction: | Building a Skills Inventory                  | 13 Mar |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Making Contacts to Find a Job                | 20 Mar |
| ◦ Job hunting:          | Interview Top Tips                           | 27 Mar |



Choosing a Direction based on John Lees  
“How to get a job you’ll love”  
[johnleescareers.com](http://johnleescareers.com)

We will break for Easter on Good Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April

# Agenda

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Before the interview

Arrive well

Selling yourself

Ask questions

Do's and Don'ts

Examples of common mistakes

# Before the interview

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## Learn about the company

- Read the website, especially the about us section
- Google them and look for news stories

## Know your CV

- This is your specialist subject and you need to know it, including any figures
- Think about what examples you will use for each skill in your CV

## Reread the job description

- List out the skills they are looking for
- Google any terms you don't understand
- Try and anticipate possible questions and prepare answers and examples
- Think about the questions you want to ask them

Know who is interviewing you and write it down with their contact number

# Arrive Well

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## Arrive early

- Know where you are going
- Don't be late

## Wear a suit or smart clothes

- If in doubt dress smarter
- Helps you feel more confident

## Start building rapport straight away

- Chat with the receptionist – they may ask for the receptionist's opinions
- Chat to anyone you meet and ask questions

## If they offer accept a drink, even if you don't want it

- It can give a useful pause before replying to a difficult question

## Have a good handshake

- Not a bone crusher or soft one, just a firm quick handshake with a smile

# Selling Yourself

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Be as open as possible

- The way you sit and speak should project confidence and calmness
- The more open you are, the better rapport you will build and people hire people, not skills

Try and mirror your interviewer's body language

- If they are in shirt sleeves, take your jacket off when you sit down, sit how they sit etc

Focus on achievements

- Include facts and figures from your CV
- Use positive stories where you achieved something

Explain what you can do for the company

- Show how your skills will help in the role

You need to be positive and sell yourself

- No one will do it for you
- Don't be embarrassed

Don't forget - answer the question!

# Use STAR answers

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## **S**ituation

- Set the scene, don't leap into the middle of the story
- Can be a chance to point out you have worked in the area

## **T**ask

- What you were asked or needed to do, it can also help to explain why you were asked

## **A**ctions

- What you did, be careful here to be clear about what you personally did, rather than the team
- Try to include specific details as these make it more interesting and real

## **R**esult

- Probably the most important part, and easy to skip over
- Try wherever possible to include numbers (but you need to learn and remember them accurately)

# Ask Questions

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Interview is a two way process

- You need to find out about them too
- People like to talk so ask open questions
- If you get them talking it gives you a breather and time to collect yourself

Asking good questions shows that you are interested

Ask the right questions of the right people

- Don't ask HR technical questions as you'll fluster them!
- Equally don't ask technical managers about Org structures; ask HR.

If asked "is there anything you would like to ask?" always ask something

- Safe topics are on Org structure - Team sizes - Future plans - Company culture/ Social schemes
- Can show an interest in the interviewer – eg "what do you most like about working here?"
- Should also ask about the next steps in the process



# Dos and Don'ts

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## Do:

- Try and relax and be confident - smile
- Use examples to illustrate points you are making
- If you're running late call ahead to let them know- make sure you have contact details with you

## Don't:

- Get defensive - you'll get asked difficult questions or questions you think are pointless but don't clam up, deal with them
- Give monosyllabic answers
- Be late- if you are, make a point of apologising and have a good reason
- Don't get lost

# Common Mistakes Examples

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Not showing genuine enthusiasm for the company and their products/services

- “This is such an interesting company”

Not showing genuine enthusiasm for the job

- “I really want this job”

Assuming that the interviewer is familiar with your background and your work

- Your CV got you the interview, don’t assume the interviewer has studied it

Not asking [smart] questions

- Some candidates don’t ask even a single question – do they really want the job?

Being desperate

- Trying to get a job is like trying to get a date, and desperation is positively repelling

# Common Mistakes Examples

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The biggest mistake that I have seen made both myself and by other people is **treating the interview like a test of intelligence rather than a question of "Do I want to work with this person?"** Some example manifestations:

Arrogance in any form

Being close-minded about what you want to work on

- being more interested in only working on what you think is cool than in building a successful company/product
- This a big one -- engineers tend to be more concerned with the unique skillset they have, and companies tend to be concerned with the pragmatic skillset they need.

Brushing off questions as not important / something you'd look up

Being overly negative about your current employer or peers

Arguing with your interviewer.

- Even if you're right, arguing is usually not a great way to collaborate. And you're usually not right.

Not being enthusiastic about the company and the product.

- This includes at a minimum doing your research on what it is and does, but also having given thought to where it's going and how'd you contribute.

Not having questions to ask.

- I recommend asking the same question to multiple interviewers; it's always good to hear multiple perspectives.

# Common Mistakes Examples

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## Not preparing for the interview

- Most of these specific foul-ups lead back to that (Assuming that the major gaffes here are nerves rather than attitude)

## Monosyllabic answers/resisting talking about you.

- This is especially common with people who are new to being interviewed.
- You need to tell me about how you think you're going to be a good fit.

## Not having any (good) questions.

- At LEAST ask something about what you'll actually be doing and who you'll be doing it with.
- Job postings very rarely give a sense of what an actual day in the job will feel like.

## Not being familiar with the company.

- This is way more common than it ought to be.
- There's an internet for a reason, folks.

## Misfiring on the dress code (usually in the direction of being too casual).

- Yep, that still matters.

# Common Mistakes Examples

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## Weak handshake.

- Most won't reject you outright for a bad handshake, but it doesn't do you any favours.
- They're simple to learn, and prove that you're deliberate and thoughtful about how you present yourself.

## Interrupting the interviewer.

### Directing answers to 'the important person' rather than whoever asked you the question.

- I interview in panels a lot, and don't always mention that I'm the direct supervisor for the position being hired. If you don't ask, you're in trouble.
- If you don't ask AND you direct all your answers to the man/the older person in the room, you're toast.

## Making a statement the interviewer has to correct.

- If you don't know, ask, don't tell.

## Making jokes.

- High risk, low reward, even for the ones that land.
- Especially avoid self-deprecating jokes, or jokes that are designed to 'bro out' with the panel.
- I'm interviewing potential employees, not potential friends. We can joke around later.

# The Interviewer

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The interviewer is not there to fail the applicant

- The interviewer is there to ask questions and test the applicant

Imagine that the person across from you does not know you at all

- It is your job to make them like you and make them be your friend during the interview

The interviewer is just another human

- Your job is to take each question as if the interviewer is asking your help in something
- So be polite and expressive to the degree possible

The interviewer really wants to find someone to do the job

- They do not want to have to go through the process again!