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MAXWELL STEPHENS GUIDES

FOR CANDIDATES

# I've Got the Job!



Practical interview advice covering preparation, first impressions, answering questions with real examples, and what to do afterwards.

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# I've Got the Job!


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# 01
# Introduction

Interviews can feel daunting, especially when it is a role you really want. You secure an interview for a job that excites you, and the nerves start to build. That is completely normal.

An interview is your opportunity to show your experience, personality and suitability for the role. It is also your chance to learn more about the organisation and the team you could be joining.

Good preparation makes a real difference. Taking time to understand the role, research the organisation and reflect on your own experience will help you approach the conversation with more confidence and clarity. An interview is not simply a list of questions to get through. It is a chance to show how your skills, achievements and way of working match what the employer needs.

This guide sets out practical advice and simple steps to help you present yourself professionally, explain your experience clearly and walk in with confidence. With the right preparation and mindset, you give yourself the best possible chance of making a strong impression and moving one step closer to the role.

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# The best interviews are prepared, not lucky.



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# 02
# Preparing for the Interview

Most of the work that decides an interview happens before you arrive: how you present yourself, the mindset you bring and what you know about the organisation.

## Dress Appropriately

Presenting yourself professionally matters. Choose clothing that suits the role and the organisation. For most interviews that means business attire such as a suit or, at minimum, smart and professional clothing.

Avoid anything overly casual or distracting.

## Pay Attention to Personal Presentation

Make sure your clothes are clean and well pressed, your hair is tidy and your shoes are polished. Taking care over your appearance helps you feel prepared, and it means you make a strong first impression the moment you arrive.

## Approach the Interview with a Positive Mindset

Feeling nervous is natural, but remember that the interview panel wants the conversation to go well. Their aim is to understand your experience and decide whether you are a good fit for the role. They are not trying to catch you out.

Stay calm, listen carefully to each question and take your time when you answer.

## Research the Organisation

You will often be asked what you know about the organisation. Preparing in advance shows genuine interest and demonstrates that you are taking the opportunity seriously. Start with the organisation's own website and recent announcements, then look further afield. Key areas to research include:

- The services or products the organisation provides
- Its size and number of employees
- Its history and background
- Recent news, developments or major projects

For more senior roles, it is also worth reviewing:

- Recent financial performance
- The organisational structure and any recent changes to it
- Company initiatives, culture and policies, such as training and diversity

Preparing in this way will help you talk confidently about the organisation and show real interest in the opportunity.

# 03

# Getting to the Interview

## Plan Your Route

Know exactly how you will get to the interview location. Check the route in advance and allow enough time for the journey. If you can, familiarise yourself with it beforehand, particularly if you are driving or travelling somewhere new.

Always plan for delays. If you are travelling by train or bus, consider catching an earlier service. If you are driving, allow extra time for traffic and for finding somewhere to park.

## Arrive Early

Aim to arrive **10 to 15 minutes** before your scheduled interview time. This gives you time to settle in, collect your thoughts and prepare yourself before the interview begins.

Use those minutes to look over your CV or application briefly and remind yourself of the key points you want to make. Arriving calm and prepared helps you start the interview with confidence.

**INTERVIEWING BY VIDEO?**

The same principles apply online. Test your camera, microphone and connection in advance, choose a quiet space with a tidy background, and join a few minutes early so you are settled when the interviewer arrives.

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# Show what you've done, not what you can do.

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# 04
# While You're Waiting

The interview often starts before you are called in. How you use the waiting time can affect how composed you feel, and how others see you.

## Be Ready When You Are Called

You may have a coat, bag or other belongings with you. Keep them organised and within reach while you wait, so you can stand up and walk into the interview smoothly without rushing or feeling flustered.

## Accept a Drink If Offered

You will often be offered a drink before the interview. Water, tea or coffee are all perfectly acceptable. If you are feeling nervous, water is usually the best choice, as it is easier to manage and will keep you refreshed.

## Choose Where You Sit Carefully

If possible, sit where you can see the entrance and remain visible to reception staff. That way you are easy to find when the interviewer comes to collect you, and you avoid being caught off guard.

## Make a Positive First Impression

Be polite and professional with everyone you meet before the interview, including reception staff. Employers value these early impressions, and some will ask colleagues how candidates came across while they were waiting.

## Wear Your Visitor Pass Correctly

If you are given a visitor pass, make sure it is clearly visible. Wearing it properly shows that you are comfortable following company procedures and that you pay attention to small details.

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# The panel wants you to succeed.



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# 05
# Those First Moments

First impressions form quickly. The way you greet the panel and settle into the room sets the tone for the conversation that follows.

### The Greeting

When you are welcomed into the interview room, you may be offered a handshake. It can feel like a small formality, but first impressions often begin here. If a handshake is offered, make it confident and firm, and introduce yourself clearly.

### Eye Contact

Maintain good eye contact when you meet the interview panel. Acknowledge each person and offer a polite smile as you are introduced. This helps build rapport and shows confidence.

### Taking Your Seat

Wait until the interviewers are seated, or until you are invited to sit down, before you take your seat. Small details like this reflect professionalism and good manners.

> *"Confidence in an interview is mostly preparation you can see.*

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# First impressions start at reception.

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# 06
# The Questions and Your Answers

This is the heart of the interview. How you listen and how you structure your answers matter as much as the experience you describe.

## Listen Carefully

Interviews usually involve a number of questions, and some may be detailed or have several parts. Listen carefully and take a moment to understand what is being asked before you answer. If anything is unclear, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for clarification.

## Answer Clearly and to the Point

When people are nervous, they tend to talk for longer than they need to. Keep your answers focused and relevant to the question. Once you feel you have answered it fully, it is fine to stop and let the interviewer move on.

## Allow Time for Note-Taking

Interviewers often take notes while you speak, which can create short pauses in the conversation. Try not to fill these silences. Giving the panel time to write means your answers are recorded properly.

## Show How You Approach Problems

You may be asked how you would deal with a particular challenge or situation. Take a moment to think before you respond. A considered approach to problem-solving leaves a strong impression.

## Use Examples from Your Experience

Real examples are far more persuasive than general statements. Rather than simply saying what you can do, describe situations where you have done it. Set out the context, the actions you took and the results that followed.

> **CONTEXT, ACTION, RESULT**
>
> Prepare four or five examples before the interview using this simple structure. Most competency-based questions can be answered well with one of them, and having them ready stops you reaching for vague generalisations.

## Be Honest in Your Answers

Honesty is essential. It can be tempting to exaggerate certain experiences or skills, but it is always better to be clear and truthful about your background and capabilities.

# 07
# Talking About Yourself

Some questions are less about your technical experience and more about who you are.

## Be Aware of Your Development Areas

If you are asked about weaknesses or areas for improvement, be honest and constructive. Employers are looking for self-awareness, not perfection.

Choose a genuine area you are working on and explain it clearly, rather than offering a generic or overly polished answer.

Then focus on what you are doing to improve. That might mean seeking feedback, gaining more experience or making small changes to your approach. Showing that you are actively working on your development demonstrates professionalism, accountability and a willingness to grow.

## Mention Relevant Activities Outside Work

Most questions will focus on your professional experience, but activities outside work can highlight useful transferable skills. These might include sport, volunteering or involvement in community and social activities.

Such experiences can demonstrate qualities like teamwork, commitment and initiative. When you mention them, briefly link what you have learned back to the role, so the interviewer can see how those skills would add value at work.

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# Honesty outlasts a polished answer.



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# 08
# Closing the Interview

## Prepare a Few Questions

Towards the end of the interview you will usually be invited to ask questions. This is an important opportunity to show your interest in the role and the organisation, so prepare a few in advance. They might cover:

- The responsibilities of the role and what success would look like
- The team you would be working with
- The next steps in the recruitment process

## Thank the Interview Panel

As the interview comes to an end, thank the panel for their time. Offer a polite handshake if appropriate, keep a positive manner and leave the room professionally. First and last impressions both count.

> *"The interview ends when you leave the building, not when the questions stop.*

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# Self-awareness beats perfection.

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# 09

# After the Interview

Once the interview is over, take a moment to reflect on how it went. You have presented your experience, your skills and your suitability for the role.

The next step is simply to wait for the outcome. This can take a little time while the organisation completes its decision-making process, so try not to read too much into a short silence.

Where appropriate, send a short follow-up email thanking the interviewer for the opportunity and confirming your continued interest in the role. It helps reinforce the positive impression you made. If you applied through a recruitment consultant, share your thoughts with them promptly too, as they can pass on your interest and any points you want to clarify.

- ✓ Researched the organisation and, for senior roles, its finances, structure and culture
- ✓ Clothes ready and route planned, with time allowed for delays
- ✓ Four or five real examples prepared, with context, action and result
- ✓ An honest development area ready, with what you are doing about it
- ✓ A few questions prepared for the end of the interview
- ✓ A short thank-you email ready to send afterwards

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# Silence while they write is fine.



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# 10
# Final Thoughts

Remember that you were invited to interview because the employer already believes you could be a strong fit for the role. Approach the process with confidence, stay prepared and focus on communicating your experience clearly.

With the right preparation and mindset, an interview becomes an opportunity to show exactly why you are the right person for the position. If you would like advice on your next move in Facilities Management, call Maxwell Stephens on 0207 118 4848 or email info@maxwellstephens.com.

THE EVIDENCE

# What the Data Says

What UK data shows about how employers interview and how competitive getting to interview has become.

**90%**

90% of UK organisations use some form of selection interview; 52% use competency-based interviews.

Source: CIPD, Resourcing and talent planning report 2024

**0.42**

Structured interviews have the highest mean validity of common selection methods (.42) in the Sackett et al. meta-analytic update.

Source: Sackett et al., Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2023

**77%**

77% of UK candidates say it's harder to get an interview than a year ago.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

**16%**

UK applications submitted are up 16% and interviews needed to land a single role are up 18%, Totaljobs found in 2026.

Source: Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026

**92%**

92% of the 497 FM vacancies Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026 showed a salary figure, giving candidates pay clarity up front.

Source: Maxwell Stephens analysis of 497 advertised vacancies, May 2023 – September 2026

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

CASE STUDY

# See It in Practice

## Head of Facilities for The Royal College of Psychiatrists

The Royal College of Psychiatrists asked Maxwell Stephens to recruit a Head of Facilities with operational FM expertise and experience of events and membership organisations. We screened candidates for qualifications, experience and cultural fit, shortlisted against the client's own person specification and carried out in-depth behavioural assessments. Shortlisted candidates received thorough interview preparation, including insight into the client's expectations and the key responsibilities of the role, and guidance on presenting their experience and achievements. The appointed Head of Facilities went on to strengthen the College's premises management, sustainability, health and safety and contract management.

It shows how preparing candidates to present real experience against what the employer actually needs, the approach this guide sets out, helps the right person succeed at interview.

**Read the full case study** · **Browse all case studies**

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FROM THE BLOG

### Related Reading

- How to Prepare for a Facilities Management Interview
- Competency-Based Questions Explained
- Why to Send a Thank-You Email After an Interview

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### Continue Reading

- **Facilities Management Career Guide**
- **How to Build Trust as an FM Leader**
- **Emotional Intelligence in Facilities Management Leadership**

**Browse the Insights library**

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