

Discover me

The first step in choosing your first job is understanding the shift from personal to professional, which is required in the world of work. This section aims to help you discover your strengths, skills and shares real stories from working graduates at their first jobs. We also hear from HR representatives about the importance of knowing your company culture, and more practical advice for surviving the workplace from graduate experts.



Know yourself. At no time is this more important than when you go for a job interview. Your CV has all the information about your qualifications and what skills you will bring to the position; it's in your job interview that you get to talk about what you could not include in your résumé.

And interviewers can ask some curve ball questions that get to the heart of who you really are. It is these questions you need to be able to answer, because they are where a sharp interviewer is able to separate the wheat from the chaff.

To really to grips with your strengths, values and interests, complete a few aptitude and strengths finder tests. You can find them online or go to a careers counsellor, psychometrist or psychologist. It is a worthwhile investment.

Competition for jobs is fierce, and employers probe to find out what you are truly passionate about, and whether that innate interest fits the company. They need to know they are hiring the best person for the job. And once your CV has got you through the door, these left-field questions allow you to really shine.

Being able to answer these "softer" questions allows you the opportunity to demonstrate your self-awareness and emotional intelligence. All off-CV questions, no matter how odd, are designed to reveal how you see yourself and what is important to you. If you're asked whether you would rather be respected or feared, for example, the interviewer is sounding out how you play in a team.

As with all your other preparation, the trick is to practise for these questions too – with



Seven ways to immediately get noticed at work

Everyone wants recognition, but how do you go about getting it?

- 1 Do more than what's expected of you - take initiative
- 2 Help your colleagues succeed, and be a team player
- 3 Build rapport, everywhere
- 4 Be a silent influencer
- 5 Constructive conflict only
- 6 Don't get caught up in internal politics
- 7 Be yourself

a friend or family member; in the mirror or with a web cam until you nail the facial expressions and body language. Often, smart people think they can cruise through the supposedly easy interview questions. We know you're smart – you're a graduate – but don't make that mistake.

Know who you are, what sort of person you are, what you bring to the table. Prepare a brief personal branding statement that describes yourself and what value you will add to the company. Highlight what makes you exceptional and unique, and how it applies to the job. And then get ready for the quirky questions.

Favourite left field questions

- Tell me your story: This question is asking you about your journey in life.
- If I phoned up the person closest to you, what would they say irritated

them about you: You are being asked about your weaknesses. One tactic is to present a personal weakness as a professional strength. For example, you're not obsessive, you're meticulous.

- What is your claim to fame: Another opportunity to go off CV, describe some of your life experiences and why these make you an asset.
- If you had a magic wand and could have any job in the world, what would it be: Be sure to answer with something similar to the job for which you're applying.
- What would you do in a zombie apocalypse: How do you think on your feet and react under pressure?
- Why are you here today: If you are here to be of benefit to the job or company, you get big points for being a team player.
- What's your favourite Monopoly property and why: A choice question in

financial jobs, it ascertains how you think about risks and rewards.

- Tell me about when you failed: Did you recognise your responsibility and learn from it? This question looks at your resilience, creativity and humility.
- Who did you want to be when you were eight: what's your biggest dream in life? Questions like these are designed to find out whether the interviewer can connect to the real person behind the CV.

But, the question to end all questions probably goes to Elon Musk, who likes to ask riddles to test how clever you are: "You are standing on the surface of the Earth. You walk one mile south, one mile west, and one mile north. You end up exactly where you started. Where are you?" The easy answer is at the North Pole, but it's not the only one.

When people identify their talents and develop them into strengths, they are more productive, perform better, and are more engaged.

Identify your talents at www.gallupstrengthscenter.com

References

Llopis, P. 2013. *6 Ways To Immediately Get Noticed At Work Without Self-Promotion*. Forbes Leadership: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/glennllopis/2013/10/14/6-ways-to-immediately-get-noticed-at-work-without-self-promotion/#540ada197fdb>