

F FACTOR

WOMEN IN TECH

GUIDE TO CV PREP & NAILING INTERVIEWS

Conducting successful interviews takes more than just researching interview questions on Google. No matter how confident you are, winging it is not a smart strategy when approaching what could be one of your most important life events - ie. your career.

This guide is designed to help you prepare well and conduct all your interviews for the best outcomes possible.



RULES OF THUMB

- Make sure your CV isn't too long, 2 pages is ideal. Don't kill the reader with unnecessary detail. Your aim is to "hook" them to want to meet you. Only include succinct descriptions of each role and only relevant roles. Your Saturday at the bakery while you were at school doesn't need to be there.
- A profile photo isn't necessary on your CV, it can be distracting and what you look like isn't relevant to your ability to do the job.
- Remember this document is representing you without you being there. Make sure it does you justice! Highlight your skills, accomplishments and strengths. Don't be too modest or underplay yourself.
- List your jobs in reverse order. Current/most recent first, then work backwards.
- Have someone proofread your CV for typos or grammatical mistakes before sending it. They never go down well.
- Prepare a cover letter which is short and to the point. It should simply introduce your CV and application. Don't be tempted to go into long explanations or repeat content from your CV. And always personalise it. No "to whom it may concern"s. Find out who is hiring and address the cover letter to them. If this isn't available, start with something like "Hi there" but be sure to clearly reference the correct job title and company name. Recruiters generally dislike applications that look like spam.
- Keep a record of where your CV has gone so you are prepared when they contact you. And if they don't get back to you in a few days, you can follow up.

Example cover letter



If you can make a version of your CV where you can include this as the first page and edit for the company, contact and role each time you submit it, that is ideal as you often only have an option to attach one document for your CV and not for an additional cover letter.

Alternatively, paste the body of your email into any space they give you for additional information.

Date

APPLICATION FOR SOFTWARE ENGINEER AT FATHM.IO

Hi Alex

I'm excited to apply for this role with Fathm.io and I'm including my CV for consideration. I'm available on 4 weeks notice from my current employer but I can be available for an interview with a couple of days notice.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions and I hope to hear from you soon regarding next steps.

Kind regards

Kris Kaur
+61 400 123 456
kkaur@email.com

PREPARATION IS KEY

You only get one chance to make a great impression and if this turns out to be your dream job. No matter how good you are at 'flying by the seat of your pants' in other circumstances, you can't afford to risk 'winging it' and making avoidable mistakes. Do your prep' and you will give yourself the best chance at a successful outcome.

Whether you end up wanting the job or not, what you do want, regardless, is to have choices. Aim to leave interviewers feeling keen to progress your application.

- Before you attend, read through and become familiar the company website, their products/services and the job description
- Take care to read the job description and pull out key requirements in experience, skills and behaviours, then consider how you will articulate your demonstration of these during interviews. Practice doing this and use real and specific examples to back these up. If you take time to think through examples of where you have demonstrated behaviours, gained skills or experience etc, you'll be able to readily draw on these in the discussion, which makes your interviewer's job easier by providing them with evidence. It will also make the interview discussion flow better, rather than the interviewer having to ask lots of questions to find evidence of what they're looking for in you
- Prepare some sensible questions! Consider what you need to know to be able to make a decision about whether this is the right job for you. Avoid unnecessary, simplistic questions like perks or holiday shutdown dates. Consider what you really need to know about the job, company, people etc. For example, you may want to ask about the role parameters, responsibility areas or team make-up so that you can clearly understand the expectations and environment. Or asking about the product strategy, plans for the team, how they measure success, processes etc. These are all good questions.

Prepare for questions

Interviewers often use some form of the "STAR" technique when interviewing so it's worth being prepared:

- Situation: they will ask you to describe the situation of the example, setting the scene
- Task: they will try to find out what the expectations or outcomes were of what you were doing
- Action: they want to know what actions you took, what did you do?
- Result: they want to know how the result measured against the expectation and what did you learn?

Here are a few examples of evidence based questions that you can practice with:



"Can you tell me about the last project you worked on where you felt really stretched? What was it? What did you learn?"



*"When was the last time you really struggled with a code problem?
What was it?
What did you do?"*



"What's your biggest achievement so far? Tell me more about that."



*"When was the last time something you were working on went off-track or failed? Tell me about that.
What did you do?
What would you do differently if you went back?
What did you learn?"*

THE INTERVIEW

Remember that interviews are a two-way street, an opportunity for you and the interviewer to evaluate each other as a employee/employer choice. If they are well prepared too they will recognise that good candidates often have choices and so they'll be aiming to give all candidates a great experience.

It's so important for you to balance between both giving them what they need, and getting what you need from the meeting.

- Start interviews by breaking the ice - a little light-hearted small talk goes a long way! Perhaps ask the interviewer/s how many Zoom meetings they've had so far that day! This just helps everyone get comfortable.
- If they don't mention it, it may be worthwhile asking if your interviewer/s have a hard stop at the expected end time and let them know if you do (or not), just so there's no scramble towards the end which can be tricky to navigate for everyone.
- Throughout the interview, try and keep the conversation two-way, rather than simply them asking you questions and you answering. Aim to ask questions off the back of theirs, eg. Them: "how many people are in your team?" You: "5 including me, how many are there in the team I'd be joining?"
- If when it comes to the part of the interview where they ask for your questions, you find they've answered all the ones you had prepared, just tell them that, there's no need to make some up. However, you could also ask a couple of extra's, like "what do you think would be the main challenges for me in the first say 3-6 months?" or "in terms of my suitability, is there anything specific you might have concerns about?"
- Lastly, if you're keen, make sure you leave them with no doubt of your interest and ask them when you can expect to hear from them.

RULES OF THUMB

One of the biggest complaints from candidates is lack of communication from companies through the recruitment process. It is important to get timely and thorough feedback. We recommend being proactive to make sure you give and receive communication and feedback.

- When your interview is finished, ask your interviewer/s what the next steps are and, in particular, when you should expect to hear from them. You can also ask who your point of contact is if you have any follow up questions
- If you're interviewing through a recruitment agency, be sure to call them as soon as possible after your interview to give them your detailed feedback and ask them for a commitment as to when you will hear back from them on next steps and/or feedback. If you have other interviews taking place, let the consultant know (you don't have to disclose details of the jobs or companies) so they can manage things with this one your behalf
- Always keep an accurate record of jobs you have applied for, contacts and dates
- If you do not hear back from a company/agency by the time they advised you they would communicate with you by, follow up with them directly
- Whether successful or not, always ask for detailed feedback - this will help you understand and be clear on what you are doing well at and not so well

EXAMPLE FOLLOW-UP EMAIL COMM'S

Company follow up

Hi {Name}

I attended interview for the role of {Role_Title} on {Date} with {Interviewer/s_Name/s} and as yet have not received news or feedback.

I recognise these processes take time, however I'd be grateful if you could advise me where my application is up to with {Company_Name} as I need to manage this in conjunction with other interviews.

Thanks in advance and looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Kris Kaur
+61 400 123 456 / kkaur@email.com

Harvard Business Review

Agency follow up

Hi {Name}

I attended interview for the role of {Role_Title} on {Date} with {Interviewer/s_Name/s} at {Company_Name} and as yet have not received news or feedback.

I was advised I'd have heard from you by now and as I need to manage my other interviews, I'd be grateful if you could follow up with {Company_Name} to get an update for me.

Thanks in advance and looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards

Kris Kaur
+61 400 123 456 / kkaur@email.com

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GOOD LUCK!

The F Factor is a community group for women in tech in and is part of Project F
Learn more about Project F at www.projectf.com.au

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