



# INTERVIEWS THAT IMPRESS

LEAVE THE HIRING MANAGER IMPRESSED BY UNDERSTANDING  
WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF YOU AND HOW TO RESPOND TO IT



# WHY DID WE CREATE THIS EBOOK?

## HOLLY HOBBS



‘I am passionate about making information about alternative routes to university & college more accessible to students.’

Holly finished her A-levels in May 2021 and was struggling to land herself an apprenticeship. After several attempts and many rejections later, she finally landed herself a role at a global tech firm! This apprenticeship changed her life & she wouldn't be where she is today, without it. Over all her applications she was able to develop a bank of interview Q's & A's that eventually landed her the apprenticeship. This eBook is an overview of this.

# THE PURPOSE OF THIS EBOOK IS TO..



Provide you with some examples interview questions.



Provide you with some example interview answers.



Provide you with some example questions to ask at an interview.



Provide you with an insight on the different types of interview.



Provide you with some tips for each type of interview.



Illustrate some examples of how to leverage situations from school/college if you don't have a job.

# HOW TO USE THIS EBOOK EFFECTIVELY.

## ONE

**Understand some of the types of interview questioning you could be asked.**

When you have an insight into what the hiring manager is looking for, you'll be able to tailor your answers specifically.

## TWO

**Schedule time to read through each question & answer.**

It's important you digest this e-book thoroughly.

## THREE

**Take inspiration from each answer to formulate your own.**

Write down your answer to each question or use them as inspiration to answer other questions not included in this e-book.

## FOUR

**Practice your answers aloud.**

This is so you can start to build confidence in preparation for the interview.

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# TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

## Strengths

A personal style of interview. For the hiring manager to gain a genuine insight into your personality to determine whether you would be a good fit for the company and the team.

## Motivations

A hiring manager may ask about future career plans or what motivates you as an individual. It is a chance to showcase what you are enthusiastic about and the impact you could drive as a result.

## Values

This explores how and why you behave the way you do in certain situations. The hiring manager can then relate this back to the organisations core values.

## Behaviours

This gives you the opportunity to speak about how you have handled challenging situations, illustrating how you would do so in the future. Hiring managers use this to assess your character.

## Situational

This is useful for you to showcase your approach to certain situations and how you would handle them in the workplace. It is good to use an example of a similar situation that you handled previously.

## Competency

This gives the hiring manager an opportunity to determine whether you have the skills, knowledge and behaviors to operate successfully within the role or not.

# TIPS FOR EACH TYPE

## Strengths

Always align your core values/strengths back to the organisation. List your strengths and how they can be related to the organisation before the interview. Keep your answers professional.

## Motivations

Link this to the values of the company. You could also research what career progression looks like at the organisation and describe how you would like to progress in your role.

## Values

Implicitly and explicitly relate this back to the company's core values and integrate your own values too.

## Behaviours

Relate your behaviors in line with the organisations culture and values. For example, you could research the company's leadership behaviors and relate this to your answer.

## Situational

Keep the organisation's values in mind when describing how you would handle/have handled a situation.

## Competency

Think about the role you are applying for and what skills you would need to demonstrate in the role. Relate your answers to these.

# GENERAL TIPS TO APPLY TO YOUR INTERVIEW ANSWERS

1	<p><b>BE YOURSELF</b></p> <p>Hiring managers want to see your true, authentic self to decide whether you'd be a good fit into the team or not. Show your personality &amp; enjoy the experience!</p>
2	<p><b>ANY EXPERIENCE IS RELEVANT</b></p> <p>Don't worry if you haven't had a part time job or paid work experience, anything is valid. You can use experiences from school/college from helping out at events to group projects you worked on. Employers are not expecting you to have prior knowledge within the industry either!</p>
3	<p><b>BACK UP EXPERIENCES WITH RESULTS</b></p> <p>For example, instead of just saying that you noticed a better way to do something and suggested it to your manager/teacher, go that step further and explained the impact that the alternative way had.</p>
4	<p><b>SHOW THAT YOU FIT THE COMPANY</b></p> <p>Relate your answers back to the company. For example, if a question asks about your strengths, explain them, back it up with the relevant work experience &amp; then show how this fits in with the company. You're already showing them that you're a right fit!</p>
5	<p><b>AUDIT YOUR ANSWERS WITH THE INTERVIEW CHECKLIST</b></p> <p>Complete the checklist on page 4 to ensure that your answers are showcasing a wide range of skills, experiences and research of the company.</p>

# INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Envision yourself as the hiring manager - what are they looking for?

Populate this checklist for each interview you do. As you practise your answers, yourself/others can tick off the boxes. This will help you understand what you need to add to create answers that impress.

Presentation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Confidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Smartly dressed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clear & well lit (for virtual assessments)
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Skills for the role	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Soft skills	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication
<input type="checkbox"/>	Problem solving
<input type="checkbox"/>	Time management
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Company Values	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Situations	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer service
<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional
<input type="checkbox"/>	Polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dealt with conflict

Personality traits	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive attitude
<input type="checkbox"/>	Growth mindset
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Research	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Notes	

# QUESTION 1:

## "Tell me about yourself"

My name is Holly and from the age of 3 years old I attended a dance school where I learnt various styles of dance and participated in competitions held in central London where I **performed in large group dance routines**.

In my free time I prioritise my health and fitness by going to the **gym around 3 times a week**. I also love trying out new restaurants with my friends and doing some retail therapy!

I am someone who is always striving for **self-improvement**, which I can give you a visual representation of (*I then proceeded to struggle in picking up all my self-development books that I read- I had them next to me ready. This is something myself and the hiring manager laughed about and I was able to create a lasting impression through something that not a lot of others would've done*).

I am also a very organised individual. I use a **planner to organise my daily tasks** to ensure I am taking small steps towards my goals and purpose each day. I have numerous **whiteboards within my bedroom** and one massive one right here (*I adjusted my laptop so my whiteboard was behind me on the camera and the hiring manager could see what I was describing, he found this very amusing and states "you could be known as the whiteboard fanatic at \*Company\* then!" - another thing he remembered me for*).

- You can use this question to show your personality and create a lasting impression on the hiring manager.
- Consider the company's core values when answering this question.
- Remember to be authentic, the hiring manager simply wants to learn about you.
- Be prepared for the hiring manager to ask you questions on what you have spoken about within each answer.

# QUESTION 2:

## "Why \*company\*?"

### Retail example:

\*Company\* is a diverse company where there is always room for improvement and career progression on their \_\_\_\_ programme which, as an ambitious individual, motivates and excites me to become a part of the \*company\* family! \*Company\* promotes healthier living for customers and it was the first retailer in the UK to offer children free fruit in their stores. This is very important to me as someone who prioritises their health and goes to the gym regularly. I also remember eating the free fruit as a child and would be proud to work for a company that has a positive impact on children's health. \*Company\* has also removed sweets and chocolates from its checkouts across all their stores in relation to this, having a positive impact on adults' health too.

### Corporate company example:

\*Company\* is a very inclusive organisation. This is shown not only within their diverse range of employees, for example the Chief accessibility officer \*name\* is deaf, but the customers and external stakeholders too. \*Company\* supports students, helping them feel included into lessons. By implementing their technology, deaf students can read information at the same time as their peers are hearing it. Additionally, the organisation has an autism hiring programme and supports refugees and members of the host community by providing them with future ready digital skills.

- Find interesting and unique facts about the company that resonate with you.
- Message current apprentices on LinkedIn for pointers on relevant things you could research into.
- Consider how your current and planned practice coincide with the company.

# QUESTION 3:

## "Why our apprenticeship scheme?"

I started working at the company when I was 16, and completely fell in love with the fast-paced nature of the retailer. I saw how my colleagues and managers impacted the business through numerous aspects such as diversity and inclusion, and I quickly realised that I wanted to pursue a career within the stores of the retailer.

I applied for this role as I am a quick learner, I love a challenge and am aware that at \*company name\* no day is the same! I love to inspire people to be the best version of themselves and as a self-motivated individual with a positive attitude it's a dream of mine to lead a large team of colleagues and motivate them to serve customers to the best of their ability.

I have fantastic organisational skills after studying and working part-time therefore I would thrive in a role which enables me to study and have hands-on experience altogether.

- Tell the hiring manager a story. People buy into stories.
- If you have not worked at the company previously, like I had, you could speak about a similar job role/sector you have worked in or relatable traits from school/college that you wanted to develop.
- Always keep in mind the company's core values when answering this question.
- It is important to reference the study side of the apprenticeship here and not only the job role.

# QUESTION 4:

**"What skills do you think are needed in order to operate successfully within a retail business?"**

**Communication skills.** It's important retail workers can speak clearly and effectively as colleague and customer safety is extremely important. It's also important to ensure a consistent returning customer rate.

**Attention to detail.** This is a skill that is required not only within the large projects but the 'smaller' everyday tasks to ensure the customers get the best service possible. For example, from giving the customer the correct change to visual merchandising.

**Dependability.** Customers and work colleagues need to be able to rely on you as demands are never at the same level everyday.

**Resilience.** Due to the fact that demands are never at the same level everyday, resilience is needed as times can get hard due to increased demands from customers and colleagues.

**Cultural awareness & inclusivity.** Being able to build rapport and relationships with people from all walks of life is extremely important to ensure colleagues and customers feel valued and supported within the business.

**Professionalism.** Respecting the contribution of each colleague and maintaining a professional image at all times.

- Research the companies core values. This will play a major part in your answer. However, it's important that you include some of your own opinion too.
- Don't just list out the skills, elaborate on them and explain why they are needed in order to operate successfully.
- You could develop on your answer by explaining how one of the skills is something that you are currently working on.
- You could also include specific examples, explaining how a skill may be useful in a particular situation.

# QUESTION 5:

## "What challenges do you think you'll face as an apprentice?"

Focusing on all day lectures. I struggle to focus for long periods of time, however I never let it hold me back and get in the way of my learning and development.

To overcome this, I make sure I have my camera on if the lecture is virtual so that I experience a sense of accountability. I am also open and honest about how I struggle to focus to those that can support me.

These practices enable me to work to the best of my ability and achieve the qualifications I need, just like I have previously done in my GCSE's and Alevels.

- When answering this question, be honest and make sure you are positive about the challenge and suggest how you will embrace it and get through it. You could possibly discuss mechanisms you have used in the past that helped you get through challenging times.
- When messaging current apprentices at the company on LinkedIn, ask them what challenges they face daily or have faced within their apprenticeship to get some idea on relevance.

# QUESTION 6:

**"What key skills could you bring to \*company\*?"**

Empathy. When it comes to communicating with customers and colleagues I always put myself in the customer's shoes and ask how I would feel in their situation. This ensures that I internalise their thoughts and circumstances in order to provide the best solution.

Tailoring an answer to the job sector/description (e.g., marketing):

I have taken a look at the company's social media accounts and after growing an account to over X followers and reaching X amount of people each month, I would bring my innovative and creative thinking skills to the team to propose \*content creation strategies\* in order to grow the account to align with the core value of X.

- Research the company's core values and what they look for/expect out of each employee. Also research the key skills needed within the job sector.
- Look through the job description and consider what skills your manager would expect of you to operate successfully in the role.
- Consider what makes you stand out from other candidates - what skills could you bring that are different and would help to innovate and create impact for the business?

# QUESTION 7:

**"Describe a time when you pushed for something in a group although it was unpopular with others"**

As part of my Dragons' Den project at secondary school, I had to push for a product idea which was unpopular with the majority but I strongly believed would meet the objective of making the most profit. Despite this, I took time to carefully listen to each team member's proposal.

However, after listening I continued to feel my product idea was going to achieve the most profit as it was targeted towards the ideal customer.

To support my proposal I presented a list of reasons why I believed it was to be a winning product and addressed any concerns that the team had.

At the end we had an anonymous vote and my product idea came out with the most votes.

When the project came to an end and we had sold all our products, it was announced our team had won Dragons' Den as we made the most profit!

- Don't overthink your answer. You can use an example from school/college here. I used an example of a Dragons' Den project I did in year 9 of secondary school (you don't have to state when the project was).
- Consider how you explain your approach to the situation and integrate the company's values within this.

# QUESTION 8:

**"Describe a time when you have used your judgement or expertise to find a different way to do something. What did you do specifically?"**

When working in retail I recognised it was important for us as a store to try and raise as many donations as possible for our local food bank, especially around the COVID-19 pandemic.

I noticed that we were not getting a lot of donations and realised that this was because the donation point was not visible to customers.

Therefore, I spoke to my store manager and voiced my concerns, asking if the donation point could be moved into a visible spot. My store manager took my comments onboard and the donation point was moved into a more convenient and visible spot.

As a result our donations increased and we were able to make a greater impact towards our external stakeholders.

- When answering these types of questions always demonstrate the impact that your judgement/expertise had.

# QUESTION 9:

**"Tell me about a time when you were not able to complete a task or project as planned - what did you do?"**

In GCSE art we had multiple projects that had numerous deadlines. We once had a project running beside an extra task and I ended up completing the extra task just after the deadline.

As soon as I realised I was struggling to complete them both side by side I immediately went and voiced my concerns to my teacher.

I asked her if it was possible for me to have more time to complete the extra task with the proposal that I would attend every 'art club' after school until it was complete.

Fortunately the teacher accepted and allowed me to hand in the extra task after the deadline as per our agreement.

- Again, here you can speak about a time at school/college if you have no part-time work experience.
- Take into consideration the company's core values and find an example of where you demonstrated it within your practice (honesty, accountability etc).

# QUESTION 10:

**"Describe a time you learned from a mistake. What mistake? How did you deal with it? What would you do differently next time?"**

When I turned 17 I began to learn how to drive and within a few months I took my driving test. Unfortunately I failed this test due to two things, which taught me some important life lessons.

The first was that the mistake occurred towards the end of my test as I became complacent and relaxed.

This taught me to always stay focused in exam settings and to not look back until I finish.

The second was to not rush into serious things just because I want the gratification now!

Upon reflection, I questioned whether I was really ready for the test. As a result of my mishaps, I now approach situations with more caution and patience than I did previously.

- Be honest here and use a mistake that taught you lessons and contributed to who you are and how you show up today.

# QUESTION 11:

**"Describe a time when you have displayed a quality, such as empathy / resilience / confidence?"**

Whilst I worked in retail there were many customers of the older generation. Although we were very busy, I would always engage in conversation with them as I realised that I might have been the only person that they spoke to that day.

After a while, I built a rapport with the same customers and they would always engage in conversation with me as I showed them empathy.

As a result, I received an appraisal from my store manager for always putting the customer first.

- You can use any situation within your life, you don't have to base it off professional experiences if you do not have any.
- Describe what the situation taught you and what reaction you got from approaching the situation with one of the above traits.

# QUESTION 12:

**"How do you organise and plan major projects?"**

I used \*project management method\* (agile, waterfall etc..) within a project I ran which was about \_\_\_\_\_. I ensure each member of the team is clear on the desired outcome, their role and what is expected of them throughout the project.

To do this, I set up a rhythm of meetings with the team (e.g., weekly) to check in with progress, provide updates and address any concerns/queries.

- Consider ways you can integrate practiced methods within the workplace (e.g., agile project management, motivational techniques).
- Relate what you are saying to an example you have experienced.
- The hiring manager is not expecting you to have all the answers here nor are they expecting you to have run a massive project. You can use an example from projects at school/college.

# QUESTION 13:

## "What makes you a good team member?"

I am approachable and friendly and can communicate at all levels. I am not only dedicated to customers but my team as within my retail job, I would come in at short notice to support the team when they were understaffed and struggling.

Also, when I realised certain duties within the team were not popular I would offer my assistance to ensure all tasks were complete.

I use my positive mindset to uplift the team by making them laugh and smile. I am a fantastic listener who makes colleagues and customers feel heard and valued, this led me to getting numerous thank you cards from the management team.

I use my initiative as I strive to see constant room for improvement from a customer and colleague perspective. As well as recognising my own contributions, I take pride in congratulating my peers and colleagues too.

- Keep in mind that the hiring manager is interested on what you would be like to work with.
- You can also discuss some personal aspects which could initiate personal conversations and would help you learn more about the hiring manager, building an interpersonal relationship.

# QUESTION 14:

**"What would you do when you have been given a task to complete by your manager but a customer is interrupting you and wanting to have a conversation?"**

I would always prioritise the customer. An example of this was when I worked in retail and a customer with learning disabilities would regularly enter the store and speak to me. I would always take the time out of my day to speak to him and make his voice feel heard. By prioritising the customer I would spend the remainder of my time focused on the tasks set by my manager so I could get it all done. This was recognised by my colleagues as I received numerous appraisals from the management team.

- Describe how you would put the customer first but afterwards ensure that you focus to complete all the tasks set by your manager.
- Consider the company's core values - how do they wish for you to treat their customers? Think about the type of customer that is related to the role you're applying to rather than the supermarket customer in your last job etc..

# QUESTION 15:

## "What is your greatest weakness?"

One of my weaknesses is public speaking and delivering presentations in front of people.

To improve on this weakness, I threw myself into the deep end and applied for a head girl position at my sixth-form where I had to deliver a filmed speech in front of a teacher to be shown to the rest of the school.

This opportunity took me out of my comfort zone. Although I was not successful in becoming head girl, it was a great experience and I was able to note improvements I needed to make from watching the recording. One example was to take breaks regularly and to speak slower.

- Don't be afraid to be honest here. Make sure you speak about something that you are working on.

# QUESTION 16:

## "How would you deal with an upset customer?"

I would ask the customer politely to explain their problem to me to make sure that I am the correct person to deal with their issue and if not, I can get the right person to assist them to ensure I am not wasting their time in the long run. If I can assist them then I would reassure them that I intend to help them in the most efficient way possible.

Whilst working in retail at the checkouts I often dealt with upset customers in particular, under-age customers trying to purchase alcohol in groups. Unfortunately, there were multiple occurrences where students were in large groups and not everyone had their ID with them to purchase alcohol. As a result, due to company policy, I was not permitted to sell the alcohol without everyone having their own ID.

Consequently, these customers were not happy and would sometimes get very distraught. I handled this situation by listening to the customers frustrations, apologising to them and taking the time to explain exactly why I could not sell them the alcohol so that the mistake was less likely to happen again.

This seemed to be effective as by approaching the situation with empathy the customer recognised that this was not a situation within my control and we were able to finish the transaction calmly.

- You could begin by briefly explaining your approach and then providing an example of a real life situation to support this.

# QUESTION 17:

**"Describe a time when you had to take a risk in order to get something done."**

Whilst I was in sixth form, when struggling with Psychology, I felt that I was not supported by my teacher (who was also our Head of Year). Despite asking for extra support from the teacher, the support was not forthcoming.

When I reflected on the situation, I realised that it was nothing for me to take personally but an issue with how busy the teacher was. She was not only our psychology teacher, but a sociology teacher and the head of sixth form.

My peers around me also felt the lack of support and so I decided that in order to get the support we need, I would need to come up with a solution to the problem so I arranged a meeting with the head teacher to propose a new structure of the sixth form which was to have a head of year 12 and a head of year 13 so that each years could get their own dedicated support system. The head teacher thought this was a brilliant idea and when I came back into the next year of sixth form the structure had changed and the support increased!

- Use a scenario when although you took a risk, you successfully got the task done. You could explain how you weighed up taking the risk with not taking it to show how you make calculated/strategic decisions.

# QUESTION 18:

## "Describe a time when you experienced an undesirable outcome you had to rectify"

Whilst completing a dragons den project at school, we were put into groups of 5 where we were responsible for everything ranging from creating the product, setting the prices and then creating the stall to sell the product. As a result we allocated different people in the team to own a specific element of the project.

Unfortunately when nearing the end of the project, we did a check in and realised that some members of the team were not completing the task to the standard at which we agreed on at the start.

To rectify this, myself and another member of the team pulled them aside and asked if there were any issues that we could support on. We also reinstated the expectation we set at the beginning explaining how we would check in during the next session.

After confirming there were no issues we then checked in at the next session and noticed there had been no further progress since our discussion. As the completion deadline was nearing, the remaining team members rallied round to support the team members who were not fulfilling their obligations.

In a debriefing session with the teachers, we discussed everyone's accountabilities and how we had managed the completion of the project. Despite this, our product went on to win the Dragons Den competition and made the most profit.

- Keep the company's values in mind.

# MORE INTERVIEW QUESTION EXAMPLES

## STRENGTHS

What do you do in your spare time?  
What's an achievement you're really proud of?  
How do you keep to deadlines?  
What would a successful day at work look like to you?

## MOTIVATIONS

What energises/motivates you?  
What are your career goals for the next 5 years?  
Describe a time when you stayed motivated whilst doing repetitive work.  
How do you define success professionally?

## VALUES

Describe a time when you showed compassion to a customer/colleague.  
Tell me about a time when you have contributed to a team's' success.  
Tell me about a time when you've made a mistake and had to correct it.  
How do you react to a situation where a colleague isn't maintaining quality?

## BEHAVIOURS

Tell me about a time when you took lead on a project.  
Describe a time when you've worked well in a team.  
Describe a time when you've worked well under pressure.  
Tell me about a time when you had to do something you weren't familiar with.  
How did you handle it?

## SITUATIONAL

Tell me about a time when you failed.  
How did you deal with it?  
Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with someone you didn't get along with. How did you handle the situation?  
Describe how you have previously handled a time when you had a heavy workload.

## COMPETANCY

Tell me about a big decision you have recently made. How did you approach it?  
How do you maintain good working relationships with colleagues?  
Describe a time when you solved a problem creatively.

# EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK AT INTERVIEW

What do you like best about working at \_\_\_\_?

What are some of the challenges you would expect a person in this role to face?

How would you measure my success within this role?

Which part of this position has the steepest learning curve and what could I do in order to get up to speed quickly?

What opportunities will I have to learn and grow?

# QUESTIONS I WILL ASK AT THE INTERVIEW

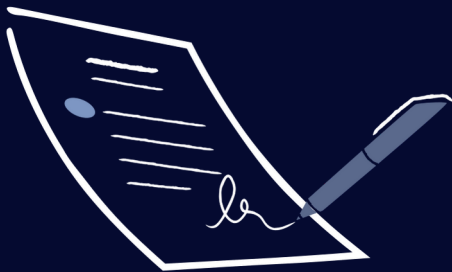
Fill this out

A light blue rounded rectangular box with a subtle gradient and a slight drop shadow, intended for writing the first question.A dark blue rounded rectangular box with a subtle gradient and a slight drop shadow, intended for writing the second question.A dark blue rounded rectangular box with a subtle gradient and a slight drop shadow, intended for writing the third question.





# THANKS FOR READING

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