

Top 10 interview tips from 6 consultants

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Many of you will be busy preparing for that important next job. Your next step will be to think about and prepare for upcoming job interviews. Regardless of the stage of training that you are at, it's important to revisit and brush up on those interview skills. In this post, we asked six consultants to give us their top 10 job interview tips.

We have also published a blog post on [the job interview process](#) with some tips on how to dress for an interview, how to answer interview questions (whether these are clinical or behavioural-based), and the importance of non-verbal communication.

Here are the top 10 job interview tips from six medical consultants we've spoken to.

Tip 1. Do your research before the job interview

"A medical student would not walk into a viva without practicing all the various types of cases that she or he could possibly get. It would also be unwise for a medical student not to find out what was on the exam in previous years.

In the same way, you must research and practice your interview techniques so they are polished and ready for the day of your job interview.

- Find out what was asked in interviews from previous years.
- Get a collaboration of friends and set up a mini-interview panel with your peers and 'grill' each other.
- Record your answers and play them back, so you know what you did well and what you can improve upon.

Answer the question, the whole question, and nothing but the question

- Questions often have multiple parts. Be sure to answer all parts and create a holistic response.
- Don't answer the question you practiced for, answer the question that the interviewer asks of you. If you didn't hear the question properly, be sure to ask the interviewer to repeat it. Take a breath and think about the question first before starting your answer.
- Don't make things up. If you don't know something, that is OK, but it would be worse to try to lie your way through an interview.

Tip 2. Posture

- The way you hold yourself and present yourself is really important. Get one of your friends to take notes or a photo of you while you are responding to the questions and think about what this says about you."

Paul Hamor, Respiratory Physician and Network Director Basic Physician Training

Sydney NSW

Tip 3. Practice your answers

"In theory, there is an infinite number of questions that you can be asked in an interview. In practice, you know you're likely to be asked a variation of some of the following questions:

- Who are you and why are you the best person for the job?
- Tell us about a time when you had conflict with someone? (E.g. peer, nurse or senior)
- Tell us a bit about the research you've undertaken, or quality improvement project that you've been involved in?
- Tell us about your teaching experience?
- Where and what would you like to be doing in five years' time?

You'll also be asked a clinical question, which aims to identify whether you are a safe practitioner or not.

If you don't practice your answers to these questions you're setting yourself up to disappoint. None of us, particularly in medicine, are well-versed at [presenting ourselves in interviews](#). I'd suggest sitting down with these five questions and brainstorming dot-point answers for each. In private, try putting them into sentences to give short, succinct, informative answers. Then, recruit a trusted friend, relative or partner to ask you these questions. Practice giving answers as well as asking for feedback.

Breathe and listen

Finally, and most importantly, take a deep, calming breath in and out, and discard your rehearsed answers. When you're in the interview you'll need to really *listen* to the questions you're asked. Your practice will support you to give good answers to the questions you get asked, not just the ones you rehearsed for.

On the day, take a few moments before walking in to get your head in the right place. You are a serious, credible doctor who has the right skills for the job and would be an asset to the service. Don't be flippant or make jokes. Make it easy for someone who doesn't know you to trust you with the care of their family member."

Chris Elliot, Consultant Paediatrician and Conjoint Lecturer, School of Women's & Children's Health

Sydney NSW

Tip 4. Take the job interview process seriously

"Practicing out loud is one of the most important things you could do. Also, answering the question in a measured, succinct and reflective manner creates the best impression possible.

I would also add, take [the interview process](#) seriously. Don't rush or be late. Make sure you have all necessary and requested paperwork ready to give to administration."

Nhi Nguyen, Senior Staff Specialist Department of Intensive Care Medicine at Nepean Hospital and Clinical Advisor Intensive Care NSW, Agency for Clinical Innovation

Sydney NSW

Tip 5. Bring a good question

"Treat the clinical question like it is a viva. Take a minute to think about and organise your answer into 'headings' in your mind.

You will usually be asked, "Do you have any questions?" Have a good one that shows you are serious and have prepared for the interview."

Bruce Way, Senior Emergency Consultant and Co-director of Prevocational Education and Training

Sydney NSW

Tip 6. Fake it till you make it

"My tip is to ask a friend to film you on your phone or tablet answering one or two questions. Especially a question you haven't considered before. On playback you will be able to see how you come across and eliminate any habitual responses or mannerisms.

Common responses are: saying "um" too much, bad posture, nervous facial and hand movements.

You want to appear as calm and unfazed as possible even if you don't feel like this on the inside. But if you are asked a question on a topic you have a passion for, then show your enthusiasm!"

Kerrie Jones, Senior Emergency Consultant and Senior Lecturer in Emergency Medicine, Flinders University

Darwin NT

Tip 7. Be specific in your answers

"I would suggest that doing your homework about a hospital or region is really important. You should know something specific about the site you are applying for and be able to speak about the benefits that working there can offer. We really like to hear why you have chosen to apply to this specific site, and what we can offer that you are really excited about."

Lauren Cone, General Practitioner and Senior Lecturer in Medicine

Tamworth NSW

Tip 8. Plan your travel

"Check the venue and plan how to get there. Allow yourself enough travel time. Check the venue address to make sure you've got it right and don't turn up to the wrong hospital."

Tip 9. Prepare your referees

"Tell your referees which jobs you are interviewing for and send them the latest copy of your CV because this makes it much easier for them to talk about your skills and attributes when they get that call."

Tip 10. Dress to impress

"Dress like your favourite, sharply-dressed consultant."

Chris Elliot, Consultant Paediatrician

Sydney NSW

Postscript

This blog post was originally published on Sunday, 14 August 2016. These job interview tips remain relevant today.

Related Blogs

- [The job interview process](#)
- [Obtaining that next job](#)

Related Podcasts

- [Job interview preparation](#)

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