



College of  
Policing

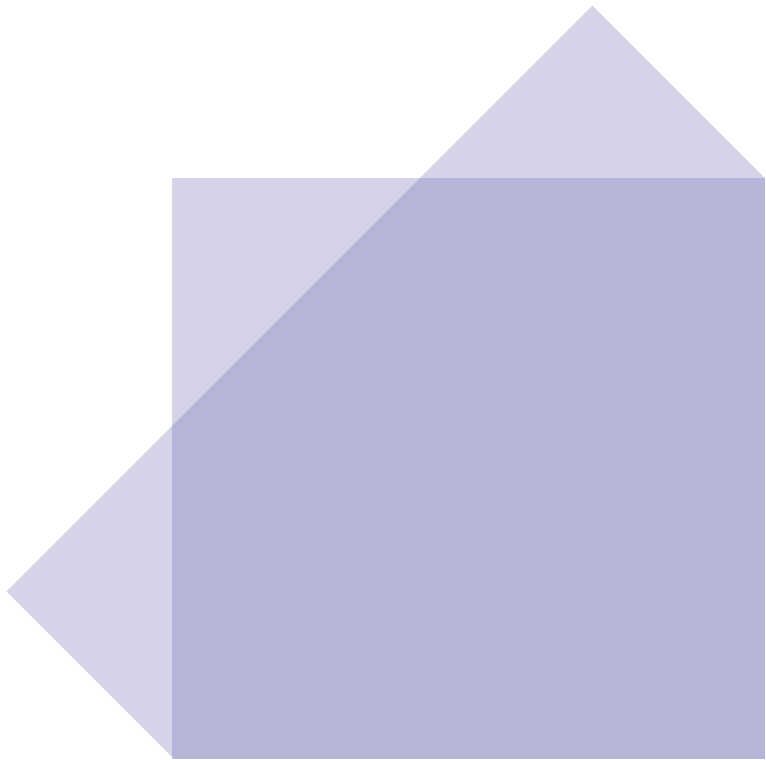
# Interview Success!

## How to excel at an interview

Congratulations! You get the email to say your application has been successful and the next stage involves an interview.

Regardless of the role, there are some things that successful people do at interview – and you're going to be one of those people!

**BetterProfessionals** <sup>TM</sup>  
for **BetterPolicing**



## Mindset

Interviews are a funny sort of conversation. Few people enjoy the prospect of being interviewed – this feeling is entirely normal. You're not alone and it's OK to feel this.

But let's just stop a second! Your application was successful and they want to hear more about you – that's got to be a good thing, right? You've impressed them enough to want to speak to you further. You can do this!

## What are you trying to achieve?

An interview is a way to gather and check information. Interviewers are trying to get two things. Firstly, they want to collect further evidence of your suitability against the requirements (criteria) for the role. Secondly, they want to get a sense of who you are – what you are like as a person.

Your aim is to provide this information convincingly. Making it clear how you meet the demands of the role will leave them in no doubt that they want you.

Common interview myths include the idea that interviewers try to catch you out or put you under pressure to see how you react. This is not what good, trained interviewers do. More often, interviewers need to delve into your motivations, skills, values and behavioural competencies to get the right information to make a positive decision – **they genuinely want you to succeed!** Try to remember this. Here's how to excel at it!

## First things first

If you followed our guidance on preparing and completing your application form, some of the work is already done – let's use it to your advantage.

You will have reviewed the eligibility requirements, values and behavioural competencies for the role. This means you are already familiar with the criteria the interviewers will use. Interviews are more likely to focus on the values and behavioural competencies than eligibility requirements that can be checked out in other ways. They may look at your understanding of the role, organisation and its challenges.

Go back over the requirements/criteria and get them clear in your mind.

## Preparing to make a positive impression

Being successful at interview requires you to provide high-quality answers, but also to create the right impression.

If you were the interviewer, what would you want a good candidate to be like?

Make a list of up to seven words that describe how you want to come across. Next to each word, describe what an interviewer will see or hear that will give them that impression. You may need to practice this a little. Consider what opportunities may arise, or that you can create, to allow you to do this. Make it second nature.

Not all interviews are face-to-face – they can be by telephone or video call. Prepare for this, i.e. by making sure your web connection is strong. While they can't see you, if wearing business dress gets you in the right frame of mind, do it!

## Preparing for questions

You want to leave those interviewing in little doubt, but how can you make sure you are convincing? It involves understanding, motivation, relevance and level.

**Understanding.** Showing an awareness of the challenges, demands and wider context a role sits within helps the interviewers appreciate that you have a realistic understanding of the role and organisation. This requires some effort, even for internal candidates.

Make a list of the challenges that the organisation faces. Next to each, make a note of how you think this may influence the role you have applied for. What will it require of you in that role? It's easy to think of negative things – carefully consider the opportunities too.

This list will help when you are asked questions on what do you think about 'x'? or what do you think it would be like in 'y'?

**Motivation.** You may be asked some questions about what interests you and motivates you about a role? Where do you want to be in five years? What do you hope to achieve in a role? What do you think you can bring as strengths?

These questions are a gift! You can easily prepare for these. It's a great chance to cement that positive impression – and now we're ready for them.

**Relevance.** Your application form is likely to contain evidence and examples relating to the values and behavioural competencies for the role. You whittled this down from a wider list of examples you could have used. Go back to that wider list.

Review your list against the way the values and behavioural competencies are defined. If you can think of more examples, add to your list. Make sure each example gives you as much scope as possible to demonstrate the area you have aligned it to – but don't worry if it doesn't match to all criteria.

Having several relevant examples for each area will give you flexibility to choose an outstanding example for the specific questions. It will allow you to use different examples throughout the interview, showing real breadth and depth.

**Level.** Think about the nature of the role you have applied for. Level is about who you will be required to work/interact with (internally and externally). It is the extent to which the role drives or influences actions and decisions – and at what level that happens. Review your examples and evidence to make sure it is above, at, or as close to the required level and nature of the role as possible.

## Practice, practice, practice,

A top athlete doesn't try to perform for the first time on race day – and neither will you!

Consider who you might ask to help you practice. This is not about 'beating the system' – just making sure you feel confident and know how you might use your examples, come the big day. Successful interviewees are people who can flexibly adapt to whatever is asked.

## On the day

You are the best prepared you can be – this should give you confidence. If you're a little nervous, that's OK. Just accept it as a sign you want this. Take some deep slow breaths!

The panel will give you an introduction to how the interview will run. Take this in, but at the same time relax as much as possible.

Often they will tell you what area of values or behavioural competencies they are interested in. You know these from your preparation, so you know you can focus on this in your answer.

Then there's the questions. These will often ask for a mixture of examples and what you would do. Think about what the question is asking. For example, 'This is about integrity. When have you challenged a colleague's behaviour?'

Choose an example you can think of that does exactly what's asked – i.e., challenging a colleague's behaviour in relation to integrity.

If you need to ask for clarification or the question to be repeated, this is OK.

Giving an outstanding answer! Briefly explain the situation, your role and the issue(s). Next, describe what you did and why – making sure this evidences the competency of interest. This should be the focus of your answer. Finally, tell them what the outcome was and any review.

An interview is a conversation. They will ask you some further probing questions. This is to clarify and seek more information. They are not trying to catch you out – if anything, they are trying to help you enhance your answer.

Less savvy candidates may over-talk an interviewer – but that's not you!

## Keeping positive

As the interview develops, don't try to second-guess how well it is going. You may answer some questions better than others, or find some easier than others. That's normal – don't let it distract you. Treat each question as a new opportunity to impress – keep your positive focus.

At the close you may be asked if you have any questions. This is a final chance to leave a positive impression, so have something in mind.

## Congratulations, you've done it!

### About the College

We're the professional body for everyone who works for the police service in England and Wales. Our purpose is to provide those working in policing with the skills and knowledge necessary to prevent crime, protect the public and secure public trust.

[college.police.uk](http://college.police.uk)



Follow us

[@CollegeofPolice](https://twitter.com/CollegeofPolice) [#betterpolicing](https://twitter.com/CollegeofPolice)