Interviews for apprenticeship positions

"I generally receive about 150 applications for one vacant apprenticeship position. 120 applications are discarded straight away and only 30 receive closer scrutiny to bring the number down even further. We eventually end up with five applicants for the apprenticeship position, the five I believe are the best fit. I invite them in for an interview and generally this brings the total down to three applicants, whom we invite to do a pre-vocational traineeship. Out of these three, we eventually select one for a full apprenticeship. So, it's pretty brutal." ***Daniel Fuchs****, automobile diagnostician*

You have been called in for an interview? This is a major achievement!

You managed to make it further than many other candidates. This is an important step towards obtaining an apprenticeship position. Even if it makes you a bit nervous.

"Don't get yourself worked up into a panic. You need to feel self-confident and believe that you can do this." ***Amanda***

You now need to prepare for the interview. Being well-prepared, you'll also be more confident. What does the apprenticeship trainer expect from you?

"First impressions definitely matter. How does the person present him- or herself? How are they dressed? I need to feel that they want to work for us. And I need to feel that they have prepared for the interview. If an applicant arrives and has never heard of strengths and weaknesses and needs about half an hour to think about the question, then this doesn't make a good impression." ***Esther Schüpbach****, VET manager*

How do you want to present yourself during the interview? What do you want to say? How do you want to say it?

"Remain calm, even if it's not easy. Everyone is nervous. Think about your strengths and weaknesses. Everyone always asks this question. Also consider why you chose this occupation, this particular company. That's another question they're all going to ask. And always maintain eye contact." ***Simone***

Practice for the interview

Who do you want to practice for the interview with?

Your mother? Your father? An acquaintance?
Most adults know what happens in an interview since everyone has gone through the process at least once in their lives. You can benefit from their experience.
The person you practice with also needs to prepare. You should provide the documents that they will need:

- the application file that you have sent to the company
- Documents about the occupation and the company
- A list of questions that may be asked during the interview

"Tell the truth. This is important. Do not be intimidated. You have been invited to the interview. This is a major step." ***Céline***

How do you want to practice for the interview?

- The two of you should practice two or three days before the actual interview.
- Give yourself the time you need. It may take an hour before everything goes smoothly.
- Also have your interviewing partner ask you difficult questions.
- Talk with your interviewing partner. Ask them how you should dress, how you should present yourself.
- Ask your interviewing partner if he or she can give you any advice on dealing with nervousness.

Keep in mind that you will be interviewed by a person who wants to get to know you and who wants to find out if you will fit in with the team and the company.

"The best applicant is not always the one who got the best grades in school. The best applicant may be the one who made the most effort, who left a good impression, who showed enthusiasm, the one who is most considerate and fits in with the team that's already there. In this team, the applicant will be just a piece of the puzzle. However, we need to feel that the person is that one missing piece of the puzzle, the one we still needed." ***Daniel Fuchs****, automobile diagnostician*

Questions that will be asked at interviews

Don't just answer questions with a "Yes" or "No." If you want to emphasize that you can work well in a team, then talk about your day-to-day activities, for example about your experiences as a boyscout or girlscout, as part of a sports team or as a member of a youth organization. When you talk about specific examples from your personal life, the interviewer will be able to get to know you better.

Questions often asked at the start of the interview

- How did you hear about this occupation?
- How did you go about choosing an occupation?
- What steps did you take in deciding on this occupation?
- Have you done a pre-vocational traineeship?
- Have you attended any information events?
- Have you received support? Has anyone helped you?

Questions related to the company

- Why did you choose our company?
- What does our company do?
- Why do you believe you'd fit in?

Questions about the occupation

- Why did you choose this occupation?
- Did you look into any alternatives?
- Why do you like this occupation better than the others?
- Why are you suited for this occupation?
- If you're going to do an apprenticeship: Do you know what to expect?
- If you were to describe the perfect apprenticeship: What would it be like?
- Have you prepared well for vocational school?
- In order to work as a ..... (name of occupation), you need to be fit/communicative/precise/have good manual skills/have good language skills, etc. (see factsheet about occupation). Do you have these qualities?

Questions about the person

- Tell me about your best friend. What does he or she think about you?
- What skills are you proud of?
- What are you good at?
- What do you feel confident doing?
- Would you consider yourself as someone who is always alert and eager to learn?
- If I were to ask your girlfriend about your weak points, what would she say?
- Name three of your weaknesses.
- How do you deal with your weaknesses? What do you learn from them?
- What do you think about your grades? Are you happy with them?
- You took the aptitude test: Are you happy with the result? What was the hardest part? What was the easiest part?
- Do you speak any other languages?
- What role do you play in your class?
- Do you have any special skills? Which ones? How did you acquire these skills?

Questions about the person's background

- What is your lifestyle? Who do you live with?
- Do you have any brothers and sisters? Are they older or younger? What do they do? Have they also undergone training for a specific occupation?
- What does your mother do? How about your father?
- Who does the chores in the household?
- Do you help with the household chores? What chores are you good at?
- Who do you turn to when you have a problem?
- Do you want to have a family of your own one day?
- Are you thinking about a professional career? How would you envision that career?

Asking questions at the end of the interview

It is always a good idea to ask a question at the end of the interview. Try to think of such questions early, while you're still preparing for the interview.

- Do you have any other questions about the company?
- Before the interview, think about what you would like to know about the apprenticeship. Write these questions down and ask them at the end of the interview.
- If you have no further questions, you can always ask for a rough estimate of when a decision will be made.
- Emphasise the fact that you are interested in an apprenticeship and that you would like to do a pre-vocational traineeship in order to get to know the company better.