

How to Ace the Interview, by the Harvard extension school, Part 1

https://youtu.be/DHDrj0_bMQ0?si=YfEnDY8mJQiNLNi-

These points summarise parts of the video.

To prepare for an interview, you have to research 3 areas. The first is yourself, your qualifications, what you can bring to the table (this expression is a bit idiomatic).

Then you need to research what the position is. You need to research about the employer. You need to know who the CEO is, the products and services, the competitors. And finally the industry. (With internet, it should be fairly easy to find such information.)

You must prepare a series of relevant stories about yourself. Use the “show and tell” method, to demonstrate the information in the stories.

You must practice. Lock yourself in a room with a mirror and practice answering questions. You are not an actor, and it is not a script, but you need to hear yourself giving answers out loud.

(ChatGPT and the other tools are very supportive, but not always very objective. They are sycophantic. A sycophant is some who always flatters you. You can address this by including more requests in the prompt. The more detailed the prompts are, normally the more precise the AI answers are.)

If possible try to set up a mock interview with a career counsellor.

Arrive on time. She suggests get to the vicinity about 30 minutes early, and to the reception about 10 minutes early.

Once you meet the interviewer, first impressions are very important. People assess others in seven seconds. The interviewer will be “sizing you up” (i.e. measuring you), getting an impression of who you are. You need to have good eye-contact, a strong handshake, and be “up-beat” (i.e. positive, energetic, sharp).

You want to be authentic (to be “true”) and genuine (the opposite of “fake”), but most people want to “turn the volume up” a little bit: i.e. be a little bit more energetic and outgoing than you are perhaps normally.

Here are 15 of the most distinct or idiomatic words and expressions from the text, along with three synonyms for each (compiled by Gemini, 16 June 2026):

- **Freelance** : Independent, self-employed, contract
- **Sycophantic** : Fawning, obsequious, flattering
- **Up-beat** : Optimistic, cheerful, buoyant
- **Authentic** : Genuine, bona fide, legitimate
- **Genuine** : Sincere, authentic, earnest
- **Vicinity** : Proximity, neighborhood, locality
- **Sizing you up** : Assessing, evaluating, appraising

- **Bring to the table** : Contribute, offer, provide
- **Turn the volume up** : Amplify, heighten, intensify
- **Counsellor** : Advisor, consultant, guide
- **Objective** : Impartial, unbiased, neutral
- **Assess** : Evaluate, gauge, estimate
- **Idiomatic** : Colloquial, vernacular, natural
- **Demonstrate** : Illustrate, display, manifest
- **Supportive** : Encouraging, helpful, reassuring

Here are 10 gap-filling sentences based on the vocabulary from the list, with the correct answers provided in a separate key below **(compiled by Gemini, 16 June 2026)**:

This activity is available online here: learnhip.com/gapfill/exercise.php?w=2779fda0

1. It is important to remain _____ about your job prospects, even when the market is tough.
2. During the first few minutes of the interview, the recruiter was clearly _____ the candidate to see if she could handle the project.
3. Before the interview, make sure to arrive in the _____ of the company early.
4. Instead of just listing your skills on a CV, you need to _____ them by sharing specific examples of your past achievements.
5. She decided to leave her corporate job to work as a _____ consultant, allowing her to choose her own clients and hours.
6. A good mentor should be completely _____, offering honest feedback rather than just telling you what you want to hear.
7. If you want to impress the hiring panel, you need to highlight the unique perspective and skills you can _____.
8. Interviewers can usually tell if a candidate is being _____ or if they are just playing a part to get the job.
9. He found the careers library to be incredibly _____, as it provided all the sample questions he needed to prepare.
10. If you have difficulties in deciding what type of job to apply, ask for help from a student _____.

Answer Key

1. up-beat, 2. sizing up, 3. vicinity, 4. demonstrate, 5. freelance, 6. objective, 7 bring to the table, 8. Authentic, 9. Supportive, 10. counsellor

