

Robert—  
—Walters



# Interview guide

Helping you land the perfect role



# Contents

## 03 Welcome

## 04 Prepare to be the best you

How to prepare

Research

Review your CV and the job description

Questions to ask the interviewer

## 06 Hints and tips for a successful interview

How to avoid pitfalls and sell yourself

Know your interview questions

Avoid common interview mistakes

## 10 Online interviews

## 11 Closing the interview

After the interview

## 12 Contact Us





# Welcome to Robert Walters

Established in London in 1985, Robert Walters is one of the world's leading global specialist professional recruitment consultancies. Robert Walters Japan started its operation in 2000 in Tokyo, and later expanded to Osaka in 2007, and our consultants possess a wealth of recruitment experience.

We specialise in permanent and contract recruitment across a wide range of professional disciplines and also offer advisory solutions.

## The interview guide

How you present and market yourself at interview is crucial in determining whether or not you secure the job you want. The purpose of this guide is to provide you with best practice advice as well as hints and tips on undertaking a successful interview.



# Prepare to be the best you

**“We see it all the time – great candidates being passed over because they didn’t prepare for an interview properly. Even if you don’t have the full skill set you can still land the job by being well prepared and enthusiastic.”**



## **How to prepare**

The importance of preparation cannot be overstated. In addition to boosting your confidence, it will help present yourself in the best way and demonstrate to the interviewer that you’re serious about the job.

Interviewers frequently test a candidate’s preparation to see how enthusiastic they are about the role and the company. Thorough preparation demonstrates to them that you’re serious about the job.

For a fairly straightforward interview you should allow half a day’s preparation time, but for more senior roles which will require you to go deeper, it’s best to allocate a full day.

## Research

Before your interview, ensure that you know the following:

- The exact time and location of the interview, route, transport options, parking and how long it will take to get there.
- The interviewer's correct title and pronunciation of their full name.
- Specific facts about the company – its history, financial position, mission, markets, competitors, latest news, products and services.
- Visit the company's website, blog and social channels. Read the annual report, chairman's statement and latest press releases.
- Refresh your memory about facts and figures of your present or former employer as you will be expected to provide details about where you previously worked.
- Find out the dress code before the interview. First impressions really do count with six in ten managers saying an interviewee's dress sense has a big impact on their employability.
- Be ready for the small talk - it's a good idea to think ahead to some likely topics that might come up.

## For online interviews:

- Confirm the communication platform through which the interview will take place and check whether you have access on your personal device.
- Find the ideal camera position and lighting so that your face is clearly visible in the frame. Keep your background plain and clean to avoid distractions.
- Anticipate that technical issues could occur such as weak connectivity and test your equipment well in advance.

## Review your CV and the job description

- Review your CV and ensure you are equipped to answer questions on the details you have supplied.
- Be ready to use pertinent examples from your career or personal life to demonstrate your skills and competencies.
- Review the job description and the core competencies of the role. Examine your suitability and prepare specific examples.
- Do a mock interview with a friend or your recruiter.

## Questions to ask the interviewer

Remember that an interview is a two-way process. The interviewer will be trying to determine whether you are the right person for the role and, likewise, you should take the opportunity to determine whether the potential employer will provide the career development and challenge that you seek. Devise your questions to demonstrate your preparation and insight. Look for things where you can make a link to the role you are applying to.

### Some questions you might ask include:

- Why has the position become available?
- How does the position fit into the structure of the organisation?
- What plans does the organisation have for future development?
- What motivated you to join the organisation?
- I have read that you have just launched x. What will that mean for the growth of this role?

**“I always start by asking people to explain what our business does. This deceptively simple question floors lots of people – it's amazing how many interviewees struggle with it, perhaps because they're attending several interviews in a row and haven't made the time to do much research.**

**But if you don't come across as having a firm grasp of the company and why it's hiring, the interviewer can only conclude that you're not really that bothered about the job.”**



# Hints and tips for a successful interview

During the interview, your strengths and areas for development will be assessed. In addition, specific personal characteristics will be examined, such as attitude, aptitude, stability and motivation.



## How to avoid pitfalls and sell yourself

### Make a strong start:

- Make sure you project a friendly, confident, professional air as soon as you leave the house – your interviewer could be in the same bus, train, company building, or coffee bar queue as you.
- Arrive around 5 minutes early (especially if it's a domestic company) but not any earlier than 10 minutes before the agreed interview time. Late arrival for an interview is inexcusable.
- Treat everyone you meet as your interviewer – the receptionist, the people you share a lift with, or those who you meet when walking through to your meeting room.
- Greet the interviewer and thank them for their time.
- Follow the interviewer's lead, let them set the tone of the interview.
- Wait until you are offered a chair before sitting.
- Be as charismatic as possible; it is very important that you demonstrate your interpersonal skills during the interview.

### For online interviews:

- Dress the same way as you would for a professional face-to-face interview.
- Ensure a good posture and lean forward toward the camera to increase eye contact.

### Market yourself:

- Describe your accomplishments and how they apply to the prospective role in a clear, concise way.
- Always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on an opportunity. It is better to be in a position where you can choose from a number of offers – rather than only one.
- Avoid enquiring about salary, holidays and bonuses at the initial interview unless you are positive that the interviewer wants to hire you. You should however, know your market value and expect to specify your required salary or salary range. If you have any questions about salary, holidays or bonuses, ask your consultant instead.

### Understand your interviewer:

- Talk to the HR manager about how your values match the company's own values and culture.
- Be prepared to discuss your technical skills and experience with the line manager.

### Know your interview questions

Interviewers are relying more and more on competency questions to help them differentiate between competing candidates. Competency questions are a useful way for employers to distinguish if you're a good fit for their organisation, and to differentiate between different candidates with

similar levels of skill and experience.

You will be required to give specific examples of past situations or exercises that demonstrate your competence in particular areas. You will need to give thoughtful answers, recalling as much detail as possible, ensuring that you make it relevant to the position you are interviewing for.

### Tips when interviewing in Japanese:

- Make sure you show proper etiquette when the interviewer walks in the room by standing up, taking a slight bow and greeting them (e.g. ohayo gozaimasu or konnichiwa).
- If the interviewer gets their business card out to give you, make sure to receive it with two hands and say "choudai itashimasu." It is not necessary to share your business card with them as an interviewee since you are not representing a company.
- After receiving a business card from the interviewer (if they share one with you), put it face up on the table on top of your business case.
- Ensure you use proper *keigo* (honorifics) and not casual Japanese, as this will showcase you have a high command of the language to be considered even though you might not be a native speaker.



**“It’s important that you stand to greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, eye contact and a smile. Remember not to sit until you’re offered a seat. They may initiate some small talk to put you at ease, so use this opportunity to demonstrate your interpersonal skills.”**

**Examples of competency-based questions:**

- Give me an example of when you had to work to an important deadline.
  - a. How manageable were your timescales?
  - b. What did you do to ensure that the deadline was met?
  - c. How would you organise your activities differently next time?
- Describe the last time you missed a deadline.
  - a. Why did this happen?
  - b. How responsible were you for this?
  - c. What did you do to try to overcome this problem?
- Give me an example of when you had to support others in a team.
  - a. Why did they need support?
  - b. What did you do to support them?
  - c. How did that change things?

- Describe an occasion when you had difficulties working with a team.
  - a. What caused the problems?
  - b. How did you respond?
  - c. What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time you were able to anticipate a problem.
  - a. How did you know the problem was likely to occur?
  - b. What did you do?
  - c. How effective was your action?
- Give me a recent example of when you have experienced a setback.
  - a. Describe the situation.
  - b. How did you react to the problem?

**You also need to be prepared to answer more traditional interview questions such as:**

- Why did you choose your particular career path/field?
- What kind of role are you seeking?
- Why would you like to work for this organisation?
- What interests you about our product/service?
- What do you think determines a person's progress in a good company?
- What do you want to be doing in your career five years from now?
- When was your last salary review?
- What style of management gets the best from you?
- What have you learned from some of the jobs you have held?
- Which job did you enjoy the most and why?
- What have you done that shows initiative in your career?

- What are your major weaknesses and what are your strengths?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What are your hobbies?
- What does 'teamwork' mean to you?

**Avoid common interview mistakes**

- Remember to listen and never talk over the interviewer.
- Put your doubts aside and show you're enthusiastic about the job.
- Don't speak negatively about your current employer.

**Be a STAR storyteller**

A good way to remember how to structure your answer to a competency question is to follow the STAR system:

**• Situation:**

Explain the context, your role and the potential challenge you and the organisation were facing.

**• Task:**

What specific task were you given responsibility for to help your company meet the challenge?


**• Action:**

What steps did you decide to take, and why? How were your actions received by stakeholders and co-workers?

**• Result:**

What was the outcome of your actions? What difference did you make? What did you learn?





“A job interview is a two-way communication to probe for cultural and team fit. No matter which side of the table you sit, you should be asking questions that are important to you without fear.”

Salil Jha  
(Author and poet)

## Online interviews

An online interview is an interview conducted online via a computer, smartphone or tablet. Many companies have adopted online interviews as a normal part of their interview process since the start of the pandemic. The content, mannerisms and basic flow are largely the same as face-to-face interviews, but there are some unique points to consider that can have a significant impact on the quality of the interview.

### Things to check before an online interview:

- Check you are able smoothly access the website/application where the interview will be held.
- Check the quality of your internet connection and your mic, camera and sound are working properly.
- Check the positioning and lighting of your camera to ensure your face is clearly visible with a plain background.
- Dress as you would for a professional face-to-face interview.
- Practice maintaining good posture and eye contact.





## Closing the interview

- If you are interested in the position, enquire about the next interview stage. If the interviewer offers the position to you and you want it, accept on the spot. If you wish for some time to think it over, be courteous and tactful in asking for that time. Set a definite date on which you can provide an answer.
- Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made nor a specific salary discussed. The interviewer will probably want to consult colleagues or interview other candidates before making a decision.
- If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. From time to time an interviewer may intend to discourage you in order to test your reaction.
- Thank the interviewer for the time spent with you.

### After the interview

Lastly, and most importantly, call your consultant as soon as you can after the interview with your feedback. The consultant will want to speak with you before the interviewer calls. If you are asked back for a second interview, be prepared to answer further questions about both yourself and your CV. Upon successful completion of the interview process, your consultant will guide you through the job offer stage and negotiate the offer between you and the employer.





# Contact us

## Robert Walters Japan

---

### Tokyo

Shibuya Minami Tokyu Bldg. 14F  
3-12-18 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo  
150-0002

T : +81 (0)3 4570 1500  
E : [info@robertwalters.co.jp](mailto:info@robertwalters.co.jp)

---

### Osaka

15F North Gate Building Office Tower  
3-1-3 Umeda, Kita-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka  
530-0001

T : +81 (0)6 4560 3100  
E : [info@robertwalters.co.jp](mailto:info@robertwalters.co.jp)



# Robert— —Walters

Africa | Australia | Belgium | Brazil | Canada | Chile | Mainland China | France | Germany | Hong Kong | India | Indonesia | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Malaysia | Mexico | Netherlands |  
New Zealand | Philippines | Portugal | Singapore | South Korea | Spain | Switzerland | Taiwan | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom | United States | Vietnam.