



## Interview tips

1. It is important to remember that the interviewer is undertaking an investigation into your conduct. Each interviewer has their own style. Some are conversational and appear friendly. Whilst it is important to be polite and courteous in an interview, you should remain alert and not be seduced into saying things you don't mean by the non threatening style of the interviewer. They are not your friend and ultimately it is the words that you use that will be recorded as evidence. Similarly, some interviewers can be aggressive in style. Again, you should not fall into the trap of losing your temper and saying something that you may later regret.
2. It is natural to be nervous before an interview. You should keep your routine as normal as possible in the lead up to the interview. Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview and arrive early. Do some exercise the morning or evening before the interview and go to bed at your normal time. Avoid drinking too much coffee or other stimulants before the interview. Take deep breaths if you feel you are becoming nervous. Go over the facts in your own mind before the interview and give some thought to how you are going to answer obvious questions. Preparation is often the key to these matters. Remember that questions usually take the form of "When, what, how, why", ie when did something happen, what actually happened or how did it happen and why did it happen. In this case, one of the issues may be how many complaints were received and you should give consideration to your recollection of each and every complaint, whether formal or informal.
3. At the outset of the interview, make sure you are comfortable in your chair and have a glass of water handy if you need to take a drink. The interview may take several hours so you may need to ask for a comfort break from time to time or to stretch your legs.
4. The interviewer may ask you questions which are open in nature (eg, please tell us about the complaints you received?) or leading (you received a complaint on X date, didn't you?). If a leading question is asked, you should be careful that you understand what is being asked before you respond. It is often the case that the interviewer will ask some introductory background questions to assist in making you feel comfortable before getting down to serious questioning.
5. Whilst a chronological sequence is usually adopted in questioning, it is also common for an interviewer to come back to an incident later in the interview to see if your answer the second time is the same as the first time.
6. You should make sure that you listen to the question asked – THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT – and answer the question that you are asked. Don't try to guess what the interviewer is getting at – just answer the question. You don't need to confine yourself to yes or no answers but nor should you ramble on – just answer the question as best you can and don't try to anticipate what is coming next or where the interviewer is going with their questioning.
7. Be honest with your answers. Also, don't try to gild the lily or embroider an answer and avoid speculating about the facts of an incident or the motivations of any person involved including yourself. Stick to the facts and what you know.
8. If your only knowledge about a particular matter comes from someone else or a document and you don't have first hand knowledge, then ensure that you say so in answering a question.
9. If you don't understand a question, say so. Ask for it to be repeated if you don't follow it. Don't try to be smart about what you say. You should proceed on the basis that the interviewer has an open mind and you can give as detailed an answer as you would like to give. If you feel you are being cut short and you think the matter is important, then you should politely say that you would like to answer the question in your own way and would like to complete your answer.
10. Stay calm and try not to get angry or emotional. However, it is natural to become emotional in these sorts of matters. If you need time for a break, you should ask for it. If you feel you are becoming tired and inattentive, also ask for a break to refresh yourself.

11. If you feel caught by surprise by a question, ask for some time to consider your answer. This is better than giving a spontaneous response which is not complete or properly considered and which you may later regret. The time allowed for this purpose may vary. If you feel you can give an answer later in the interview, then do so (preferably after a break to consider). If not, then say that whilst you can't remember the matter at this point, you will consider it and may provide a supplementary written answer (this should usually be done within a day or 2 of the interview).
12. Similarly, if you can't remember an incident that is put to you in the interview, then say that you have no recollection of it at this point but will consider the matter and provide a further answer separately if you have some memory on reflection. Similarly, if your memory is hazy on a particular matter, then say that you have limited recollection. To the extent you have thought about the matter before the interview, then certainly provide the best answer you can, noting your limited recollection. The danger is that anything other than a denial may be treated as a concession that the particular incident may have happened and you just can't recall it.
13. If you are shown and asked to comment on documents you have not seen before or for some time, then again resist the temptation to give a spontaneous answer unless you are confident in the answer you give. You can say that you have not seen the document before or for some time and would like some time to consider it. Similarly, if you cannot answer a question without referring to a document then say so. It is common to say that you have limited independent recollection of a matter and would like to refer to a particular document to refresh your memory.
14. The interview should only be about the facts of particular incidents and your reasons for certain actions or inactions on your part. It is not a disciplinary interview and you are not required to explain why a particular penalty should or should not be imposed on you. That may come later.
15. Try to resist the temptation to become defensive in your manner of answering or become an advocate of your own case. It is most important to answer the questions you are asked. If you feel that there are questions which should have been asked then you should enquire about this at the end of the interview or, preferably put it in writing after the interview and once you have been able to reflect on the interview.
16. Remember that, whilst these are important matters, you will go home at the end of the day and life will go on. Put the interview into context and remember that you can only do your best. Not everything you say in an interview is likely to be perfect (that is why you should follow up in writing after the interview or ask for another interview to make additions if necessary). That is human nature and you will not improve matters by becoming overly anxious before or after the interview.