

L A N D

T h a t

J O B *in*

A U S T

R A L I

A

LAND that job in AUSTRALIA
Successful Job-hunting for Migrants



Dr Jim Bright &
Karen Bright

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1		CHAPTER 5	
<i>Welcome aboard</i>	17	<i>Soaring through job-speak</i>	59
A Personal Story		How to read a job ad	59
from India	21	Analysis by example	61
CHAPTER 2		A Personal Story from	
<i>Before you fly</i>	23	Malaysia	65
Don't leave home without...	23	CHAPTER 6	
Employment readiness	25	<i>First class résumés</i>	67
Money matters	26	Fit like a glove	67
Health and motivation	27	Personal details	68
Culture shock	27	Writing your work history	69
A Personal Story from		Selecting referees	72
Russia/Israel	29	Résumé design	74
CHAPTER 3		Australianising your résumé	81
<i>Mapping your job flightpath</i>	31	Example résumés	82
Official assessment	31	A Personal Story from	
The four facets of 'fit'	32	Brazil	101
Finding help	34	CHAPTER 7	
The training track	36	<i>Customs with selection criteria</i>	103
Aiming to satisfy	37	Cover letters	103
A Personal Story from		What to include	104
Hong Kong	42	Example letters	106
CHAPTER 4		Application forms	109
<i>Flight desk information</i>	45	Most common	
Where to look	45	competency questions	110
Migrant support	52	Selection criteria	118
A Personal Story from		A Personal Story from	
Malaysia	57	the Philippines	124

CHAPTER 8

<i>Readying your interview landing gear</i>	127
Dressing for success	127
Preparing for the big day	129
At last—the interview!	135
Answering the questions	141
The standard questions	143
Tests are fun!	148
A Personal Story from England	153

CHAPTER 9

<i>Making network connections</i>	155
It's who you know	155
Card collecting	157
Don't cheat at golf	159
Volunteering	159
Unpaid work experience	160
The A list, etc	162
A Personal Story from India	163

CHAPTER 10

<i>Overcoming job-hunt jetlag</i>	165
Keeping it real	165
Staying in touch	167
Feedback	167
Thankyou letters and emails	169
The strategy rethink	170
A Personal Story from South Africa	172

CHAPTER 11

<i>Passport to the future</i>	175
Employment law and conditions	175

APPENDIX A

<i>Working with the culture</i>	181
A cultural introduction	181
Work and business culture	184

APPENDIX B

<i>Resources Roundup</i>	187
--------------------------	-----

INDEX	194
--------------	-----

CHAPTER 8

Readying your interview landing gear

Many migrants undervalue the importance of job interviews. In previous chapters we covered what employers are looking for in an applicant, identifying your skills, and preparing a winning résumé and cover letter. These are all very important, but only in the context of how you perform in the interview.

Assuming that your application has got you as far as an interview, in this chapter we look at:

- Appearing to suit the job
- Answering the standard—and trickier—questions
- Rehearsing for your interview
- Performing in the interview
- Dealing with assessment tests

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. This means having as much knowledge as possible about the job and company, having excellent interview techniques, and dressing for the part.

It also means being conscious of your previous work culture values and beliefs. If you apply these without first questioning them, your Australian interviewer may interpret your response as inappropriate.

Dressing for success

First impressions count for a lot in interviews, so wearing the appropriate clothes and putting time and effort into your grooming are vital.

If in any doubt, err on the side of caution and choose dress that is a little more formal than your normal style.

‘Appropriate’ means an outfit that complements the job and company. For an office job, a formal suit with conservative accessories would be appropriate, but not a short skirt, leather jacket or faded jeans, or garish or brightly coloured accessories. A man applying for a construction or trade job would typically wear a freshly laundered work shirt and trousers.

If in any doubt, err on the side of caution and choose dress that is a little more formal than your normal style. If a company’s employees have a casual dress policy in-house but wear suits to meet clients, then wearing a suit to your interview is the safer option. If they never wear suits, or a suit is out of place in their workplace, wear something more casual but make sure the overall look is smart.

Smarty pants

For men, dressing smart nearly always means wearing a dark suit, tie, freshly laundered shirt, matching socks and well-polished dark shoes.

Your tie should be conservative but in fashion. No Disney characters, or bright turquoise spots on a pale pink background, and definitely no soup stains. Also leave your gimmicky watch and chunky jewellery at home.

Smart for women is harder to define because there are no clear rules about what is appropriate attire. But still dress to fit the nature of the job and its environment. For example, in a corporate environment, a business suit (with skirt or trousers) is best.

Whatever you choose to wear, always make sure that you are comfortable wearing it. The interview is stressful enough without adding additional stress by wearing something too tight, shoes too high or a colour or style that you are not used to. It's a good idea to try your intended interview outfit on a few days beforehand to make sure that it still fits and that you feel comfortable and confident wearing it.

Fashion follies to avoid:

Short skirt, midriff-showing top or low-cut blouse: Avoid any sexual connotations in your dress, which are more likely to irritate an employer than impress.

Abundant accessories: Showing off your gold and pearls, or large earrings that 'make a statement', are only distractions.

Bright colours: Avoid the temptation to stand out from the crowd by wearing overly bright colours. While they can make a positive statement about your personality, they can also give the impression that you are over-confident or headstrong.

Your hair—length, style and condition—is as crucial for the right image as your dress. Is your hair too long or out of fashion? Visit the hairdresser in the days before the interview.

Men should use a new blade at shaving time to avoid stubble trouble. Keep beards trimmed and neat.

Other tips:

Dyed hair: Make sure your roots aren't showing, and if you have an abnormal colour, such as blue or green, we suggest you dye it to a more natural shade.

Perfume or cologne: Use sparingly; a heavy fragrance can be irritating in enclosed spaces.

Nails: Make sure they are manicured, your hands are clean and, if you use nail polish, choose a conservative colour.

Tattoos: Hide them if you can.

Breath: Don't eat anything too garlicky or spicy 24 hours before an interview. Offensive breath is a definite turn-off. Always make sure that you brush your teeth before your interview so that your breath doesn't smell.

Body odor: Make sure that you wash all over before going to the interview and that underarm deodorant and antiperspirant is used. Apart from

making you smell nice it should also reduce the likelihood of sweating during the interview.



Smart move – Shortly before going into an interview, do a final appearance check in your car, the company bathroom or some other private spot. Men, is your fly done up? Have you missed a button on your shirt? Are your tie and belt buckle straight? Women, is your make-up still in place? Have you acquired a hole or run in your stockings on the way to the interview? (Take a spare pair, just in case.) For both, is your hair still in place? Do you have a speck of lunch stuck between your teeth?

Preparing for the big day

Sports commentator and former Australian cricket captain Richie Benaud said being a team captain was 90 per cent perspiration and 10 per cent inspiration. He meant that a successful captain has to put a lot of effort into the game rather than rely on fate and luck.

The same goes for interviews, and your performance depends on how well you prepare.

Many people aren't used to speaking in formal settings such as interviews. Their voice falters...

An opening note on your English

By nature, interviews don't always allow the interviewer or applicant time to clarify the other person's intentions or meanings. As a migrant, although you may be talking in English, you might not always be 'talking the same language'.

It is crucial that migrants speak clearly in English at interviews and ask for clarification of anything they don't understand. Research shows that it can take only one aspect of your presentation to be less than excellent for interviewers to generalise and conclude that you are a weak candidate.

Do you think you speak clearly in English? Test yourself with native English speakers. Demand to know, in all honesty, how clear you really are.

If you need to develop in this area, face up to the fact and make every effort to converse in English as much as possible. It only gets easier. Try to speak nothing but English at home and encourage family and friends to speak English.

Many English language classes are available in Australia, and probably in your country. They work.

Questions on both sides

Before we get to anticipating the questions that a prospective employer might put to you, let's consider what questions you might want to put to them.

Companies usually send a letter notifying of an interview, but the information it contains varies. They will often give you the name and title of the interviewer and mention any activities planned, such as site visits, multiple

interviews, talks, psychological testing or assessment centre exercises.

If the letter doesn't go into detail, you are completely within your rights to politely request the extra information you need. You might want to ask about:

Dress code—'I understand your company has a smart, casual dress code, and I intend to wear a business suit. Is that appropriate attire for the interview?'

Interviewers—'Can you tell me the name or names of the people conducting the interview and the role or roles they play in the company?'

Length of interview—'I need to book travel tickets home after the interview. Can you give me a rough idea of how long the interview process will take?'

Location—'Can you confirm that the interview is to be held at your premises in Park Street?'

Multiple applications—'As you are aware, I'm also applying for a sales position with your company, and I'm wondering if the interview for this job is to be conducted at the same time or is it being treated as a separate issue?'

Other documents—'Can I present supporting documents at the interview, such as my academic transcript, my portfolio or other examples of my work?'

Psychological testing—'I understand you include psychological testing in your interviews. Do I need to bring any equipment, such as a calculator?'

Now to the kind of questions an interviewer will ask you, which fall into the same four broad categories:

Knowledge: Questions about your knowledge of the job are likely, especially if your level of experience isn't immediately clear. For example, you don't have the university degree that was listed in the advertisement as a requirement. Your preparation would include rehearsing statements that demonstrate you have the required knowledge nonetheless.

Skills: Questions about skills are asked when an interviewer is still to be convinced that you can carry out a particular task. If you haven't acquired a skill, you should give a response that shows you can master it (with training, if relevant).

Abilities: Questions about abilities are to find out how your career has developed. If your work history shows you did the same job in the same setting for a number of years, you may need to demonstrate that you have the flexibility and ability to learn new tasks in a short time.

Attitudes: An interviewer may question your ability to fit in with other people or cope with a certain level of work. Questions on attitude may also be asked when a job has special demands or duties not mentioned in the advertisement. How you react to questions on attitude can be significant. Some interviewers aim to give applicants a tough time to see how they respond to pressure.

If you are worried about being asked that one surprise question in an interview that costs you the job, then relax. This type of questioning is usually restricted to police shows on television (see 'Good cop, bad cop' later in this chapter). But you do get a big head start by anticipating an interviewer's line of questioning and preparing answers.

A note on greetings

Always address the interviewer by using their surname and introducing yourself ‘Hello Mr Brookes, I’m Jessica Trapani, nice to meet you’. This is unless they tell you to call them by their first name which is very common in Australia. Never use Sir or Madam as this is too formal and not used in Australia. If you are being introduced to a panel of interviewers repeat each of their names along with ‘nice to meet you’ after each introduction. In Australia you would normally shake each interviewer’s hand using a firm shake. Just make sure that your palms are not sweaty!

Don’t spare the words

An interviewer greets a job applicant: ‘Good morning, Mr Swali. The weather is terrible today, isn’t it? Did you have any difficulty on your way here?’

Mr Swali: ‘No.’

Interviewer: ‘Did you find somewhere to park your car?’

Mr Swali: ‘No.’

Interviewer: ‘Oh. How did you get here?’

Mr Swali: ‘Bus.’

In this case, Mr Swali’s brief responses are typical of nervous and/or shy behaviour. They would make a bad impression on most interviewers. Interviews are where you sell your wares, and the more talking you do—within reason—the more impressive you can be. It’s not appropriate to show humility, even if this is a desirable quality in your home country.

Mr Swali might have responded, ‘Hello Mr Interviewer, nice to meet you. I had no problem at all. I found out that an express bus goes from the end of my street almost to your front door. The trip took only 20 minutes and I managed to avoid a soaking.’

At interviews or assessment centre exercises, at which you are required to interact with interviewers and perhaps other job applicants, try to talk as much as is reasonably possible. If you are not naturally chatty, warm up by talking to yourself out loud on the way to the interview or to anyone who’s happy to listen.

Speak to be heard

Many people aren’t used to speaking in formal settings such as interviews. Their voice falters or they speak too quietly or quickly. They may also use delaying tactics such as Umm or Ahh when thinking of an answer. You may not be aware of these habits, or you may know from experience that your voice lets you down in such situations.

The best way to overcome any problems is to practise talking aloud to groups of people and to strangers. You may choose to do a public speaking course.

If you have a speech impediment, such as stuttering, mention it in advance of your interview (but not before the appointment is set). That way, the interviewer is not taken by surprise and made to feel uncomfortable.

Speed, pitch and tone

When you get nervous it's often natural to speed up your speaking. Try to avoid this as the quicker you speak the more likely you are to say something without really thinking and in most cases you are just waffling on.

You should pause for a second after each important point that you make so that the interviewer can take note of what you have said.

Keep the tone even and clear but make sure that you vary the pitch of your voice. If you use the same monotonous tone and pitch it's likely to put the interviewer to sleep!

Dress rehearsals

Mock interviews—play acting—are great for developing your technique. You can make mistakes in a safe environment.

Ask a friend or relative to play the interviewer and tell them the type of questions to ask. If they have time, swap roles and take a turn as the interviewer. It will give you insight into how they think.

Many counsellors and employment companies offer training for interviews, where you can practise your skills in the presence of an experienced professional. Undergraduates and recent graduates should ask the university careers centre for this type of assistance (and if it doesn't have it, ask why).

Film yourself

If you have or can borrow a video camera, you can film practice interviews. Alternatively use a webcam. Watching yourself on film can be a painful but invaluable experience.

You may not have noticed in the mirror that, when you turn your head, your hair sticks up at the back like a duck's tail, or that you wave your arms around more than an orchestra conductor when you are talking.

Filming yourself is a chance to see yourself as others see you.

Venue stalking

If the interview is reasonably close to your home or work, consider making a trial trip to the venue, preferably at the same time of day as your interview. You can work out the most efficient method of commuting and how long it takes, in the interests of arriving comfortably ahead of time on the day. That's one less worry on your mind.

Double-check the information you are given about the venue. Sometimes companies don't use their own offices for interviews. Some even use a public venue such as a hotel. Showing up at the wrong place is definitely not a good start.

Résumé review

The day before an interview, (re)memorise the details in your résumé. The years you attended school or university and your academic qualifications will be easy to recall, but claims that you make in competency statements and your work history are more difficult.

You don't want this kind of thing happening:

Interviewer: “How exactly did you save the company from bankruptcy in 1998?”

Applicant: “Ah... um... Where did I say that?”

Pre-interview homework

The day before an interview, spend several hours reviewing every aspect of your approach. This includes:

Your questions: Work out what you want to say at the interview, including specific questions about the job. Prepare questions that don't necessarily relate directly to the role, but to general points about the company and industry, to show your interest in the big picture.

Job and company details: Read every scrap of information you have on the job and company, and memorise as much as possible. Use the information when answering questions to demonstrate what you know.

Outfit and grooming: Double-check that your clothes have no missing buttons, ugly creases in trousers (hang them from the cuffs!) or stains. Make sure your hair and fingernails are neat and tidy.

Money: Check you have enough to cover transport fares or car parking fees, and coins for the parking meter if necessary (and perhaps a cup of coffee after the interview).

Dealing with nerves

On the day of the interview, you are likely to have physical signs of apprehension, such as ‘butterflies in the stomach’, and you may have to cope with a different kind of stress before that.

Two kinds of stress can handicap a job applicant:

Cognitive: Worrying thoughts such as ‘What if I make a mistake?’ or ‘What if I give the wrong impression?’ all the way to ‘What if my pants fall down in the interview?’

Somatic: The bodily sensations brought on by stress, including the butterflies, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, shortness of breath and so on.

In the build-up to an interview, you can use the kind of stress relievers people use in life in general, from jogging to taking a deep breath. But once you get into an interview, it's all inside your head. A few simple techniques can help you keep it together.

Firstly, always remember that the person sitting on the other side of the desk is human too. They've made mistakes and said the wrong thing at times. Prick them with a pin and they bleed (but don't try it).

In fact, they may be feeling as nervous and uncomfortable as you are, especially if they are inexperienced at interviewing. They may be disorganised or unsure of their questions, in which case show patience and courtesy.

There are horror stories, but the vast majority of interviewers are not out to upset or humiliate people. It's too much hard work, and employers want honest, open assessments. Go into an interview with the mindset: ‘This is going to be a pleasant conversation about whether I really fit this job.’

Asking some of the questions you have prepared about the job and com-

pany can ease stress by evening up the relationship and helping the interview to flow. It can help a nervous interviewer relax too.

Remember: 'I'm in charge. No-one is locking me in this room. No-one is saying I'm not free to leave or that I have to answer a question if I don't want to.'

If an interviewer does ask a question you think is offensive or impertinent, don't let it upset you; don't lose your composure. There are many questions that shouldn't be asked and that you don't have to answer—'Do you always leave your legs unshaved?', 'Are you homosexual?', 'Have you ever considered sleeping with your boss?' (See 'Inappropriate questions' later in this chapter.)

Remember that if an interview becomes too unpleasant—it may be the feeling that you have no rapport with the interviewer or interview panel, or that the company is not a place you'd like to work—you can always terminate it. Politely say: 'I'm sorry. I'm going to leave now as I feel that this position is not going to be appropriate for me and I don't want to waste any more of your time. Thank you for taking the time to interview me.'



Smart move – Try not to attach too much importance to an interview. It only adds to your anxiety. Although you are doing everything you can to make it a success, think of it as just another meeting with other people—something you do nearly every day of your life. Also keep in mind that, if you don't fit the job, you'd be unhappy doing it, so not being offered it would be a good outcome.

Changing an appointment

In the case of a clash of appointments (lucky you!), work out which interview is the least important or least promising and try to reschedule it for another time or day.

When asking a company to choose another time for your interview, avoid mentioning that you have a clash of appointments. Use an approach such as, 'For personal reasons, I am unable to attend an interview on that day, but I'm keen to attend on any other day of your choice.'

Letters requesting an interview should be put in your job file after you note in your diary the date and time they arrived. File the letters at the front, where you should file all current ongoing correspondence, so you can check immediately if your diary shows an appointment clash.

Has the interview started yet?

Don't assume that the interview starts only when you sit down in front of the interviewer.

A woman who had completed her teacher training degree was offered an interview at a nearby school. Even the headmaster at the school dressed casually, and the students referred to the teachers by their first names. There were few rules.

Despite the unusual approach, the school had a very good reputation, and the woman was keen to impress.

When she arrived, the headmaster said, 'We'll just pop up to the staff room

to grab a cup of tea so you can meet a few members of the staff, and then we can go to my office.’ In the staff room, teachers came and went, and were duly introduced. Time ticked by.

After about 30 minutes, the woman realised that the interview had started from the moment the headmaster greeted her. This was his idea of an interview.

This can be a trap to fall into. You can be lulled into forgetting where you are and why you are there. You can say things you didn’t plan on saying or give out negative information about yourself.

The minute you first talk to a company on the phone is when your interview starts. Walking through the door for the interview is an extension of the process. Every move you make may be used to assess you and needs to be a smart move.

Respect the receptionist

Many job applicants make the mistake of keeping their polite conversation and sense of respect for the boss alone. They ignore the fact that other people in the workplace may have input.

Never patronise or underestimate the administrative staff in an office because you feel they are beneath you. Many management people listen closely to what their assistants and colleagues have to say about visitors. Be careful to treat everyone you come across with equal respect.

Also, it is inappropriate to ask anyone on the staff for inside information about a company, job or interviewer. The interviewer is likely to hear about it. You are a stranger among people who are friends and colleagues, and, rather than being concerned about your interests, they are more likely to be on the lookout for any personality quirks or indications of attitude they can report to the boss.

At last—the interview!

Following the interview script

Interviews usually follow a fairly standard script, resembling this:

1. You arrive at the workplace, tell the receptionist that you have come for an interview and are asked to wait in a reception area. During this ‘holding period’, be wary of what you say to anyone. The company may have planted someone to interview you on the sly. Sit upright, with a pleasant, natural expression, and don’t fidget—it indicates anxiety.

2. You are invited into the interview room and the interviewer begins the conversation with an ‘icebreaker’ to put you at your ease. For example, you may be asked about how you found the commute to the workplace. This is not the time to mention any difficulties you had—say, the train running late. Be positive, bright and even flattering. Always let the interviewer finish asking their question before answering.

3. You are offered a glass of water or a cup of coffee. Unless you are dying of thirst, we recommend that you decline refreshment. It’s a distraction, and you don’t want to risk spilling it.

4. The interviewer starts a more specific line of questioning usually relating to your background. That's your professional background—not irrelevant family history or connections. You may be asked to talk briefly about your life in recent months. This is not the time for brutal honesty. Avoid anything along the lines of: 'Well, I've just arrived in Australia and I can't get a job. . .'

Your responses—having been prepared in advance—should be positive, brief and reflect your résumé. For example: 'My qualifications include a degree and a masters in education, both from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which is equivalent to a similar qualification obtained from the University of Sydney. I have over 10 years, professional experience teaching English, economics and public affairs. During this time, I completed a number of specialty education courses in my own time. I then became the Civic Education Coordinator for the Chen Technical Institute, which was my position before coming to Australia. I want to draw on my experience and move into a similar position here, which led me to apply for this job.'

5. The interviewer asks you about your personal background. The trick is to demonstrate that you have interests beyond work, but they don't intrude on your professional life. You might say something like: 'On the social front, I've always been keen on team games. When I lived in Hong Kong, I played in the local volleyball league. I've joined a volleyball team here in Melbourne, which I play for on weekends.'

6. You are asked questions specific to the statements in your résumé. We recommend you take a copy of your résumé to the interview, to glance at it if required. But memorise as much as possible.

7. You are asked about any unexplained or unusual circumstances in your résumé, such as gaps in employment history. Don't be the least bit surprised if these points are questioned, and be ready with prepared responses. The interviewer might say something like: 'You left Hong Secondary School in 1995 and then started your last position in 1997. Can I ask you why you left the school and what you were doing in 1996?' Explain briefly, but don't dwell on negative issues.

8. If appropriate, you are asked about your overseas qualifications or experience. 'Your degree is from India. You don't have any local qualifications do you?' Acknowledge the concern and turn it into a positive. In this case, you might say: 'That is correct. I have a Masters in Computer Science. In Australia it's equivalent to a Bachelor degree in Computer Science, and I'm eligible for membership of the Australian Computer Society.'

If an interviewer seems to be concerned about a particular issue, such as your lack of local experience or that you are over-qualified, it's better to clarify the concerns by asking them directly about them. 'So are you concerned that my international experience won't be relevant to the position?' or 'You seem a little concerned that my work experience may not be relevant' or 'Do you mean that you think there could be communication problems?'

After acknowledging these concerns, give examples and facts that will minimise them. Reassert the relevance of your overseas experience or qualifications in an Australian context, and stress your ability to learn and adapt to any differences.

9. The interviewer asks technical questions. These are often framed in terms of how you have approached situations in the past (this is the so-called behavioural part of the interview). Check out the sample questions later in this chapter. Instead of a conspicuously behavioural question, you might get a hypothetical one such as ‘What are you likely to do if . . .’ Turn it into a behavioural question by saying something like: ‘I had a situation like that in my last job and I . . .’ Such a response demonstrates the depth of your experience in the field.

10. You are asked if you have any questions about the job or company. Have a number of sensible, rehearsed questions ready, based on your extensive research. Even if you feel you know everything about the job, have a couple of questions up your sleeve to show that you are interested and motivated.

11. The interviewer asks about your availability and gives details such as salary and conditions. Terms of employment are usually the last topic on an interview agenda because they want to find out if you are suitable for the job before committing to giving you more details.

At the end of the interview always thank the interviewer(s) for taking the time to interview you even if it hasn’t gone very well.

A good reference for CALD job hunters is the book *Finding Common Ground: Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies for Jobseekers*, by Catherine O’Grady and Mark Millen (National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University).

Hidden tests

Interviewers use a range of techniques to sniff out information about you—techniques that can be disguised or invisible. For example, they fiddle with a pen or stare into space, appearing to have lost interest in you. The temptation is to think you have already been discarded as a candidate, but it could be that the interviewer is testing or trying to unsettle you.

Interviewers can ask deliberately provocative questions, especially if the job you want involves dealing with pressure or aggressive people. They don’t really care about the answers; they want to see how you react.

The cardinal rule is: keep your cool. This is not the time to start an argument. You can challenge a point or issue, but do it politely.

No kidding

Although you don’t want to be so serious that you come across as humourless, cracking jokes in an interview is a bit like farting at a funeral. It can seem very out of place.

If an interviewer tosses a joke into the meeting, laugh politely (however unfunny you think it is, and especially if you don’t understand the joke). Equally, don’t overplay a joke by laughing loud and long, falling off your chair, etc.

Watch your body language

The way you move, sit, use your arms or change facial expression are powerful social clues about your state of mind. They are known in the em-

ployment trade as non-verbal cues.

Everyone is able to read body language as a natural skill, and with a little self-awareness and rehearsal, you can make sure you give a good impression and avoid the classic mistakes.

Non-verbal cues have a large bearing on the impression you make, so study these tips:

- Shake hands firmly. As part of the all-important first impression, it needs to be carried off in a confident manner. Dry your hands before an interview (but never during) to make sure they are not sweaty and betraying your nerves.
- If you tend to carry your briefcase or other equipment in your right hand, make a mental note to enter with it in your left. That way your right hand will be free when the time comes to shake hands.
- Don't slouch in the chair. Indicate your high energy level by sitting upright and leaning slightly forward. Leaning back sloppily, rocking back on two chair legs or draping your arms along the armrests can make you look cocky and too relaxed. Folding your arms and tucking your hands under them can betray a lack of confidence.
- Don't fiddle with anything.
- Make eye contact. It shows that you are listening and interested, and also acts as a signal in exchanging speaking turns. Don't start a staring match, but don't avoid the interviewer's eyes, especially after being asked a difficult question.

Minimal eye contact (and, if they could see, a narrowing of the pupils) can indicate you are either not interested in what is going on or are feeling actively hostile. Closing your eyes while thinking about an answer can make you look slow and sleepy. Raising your eyes to the ceiling in response to a question can indicate contempt. Maintaining eye contact throughout a question and your response can seem like hostility.



Smart move – Look over the interviewer's shoulder while composing an answer. It gives the impression you are receiving inspiration and preparing a top answer in your usual way.

- If you have a panel of interviewers, make natural eye contact with each of them. Be sure to look at the person talking to you or asking questions, but when responding let your eyes roam to a number of the interviewers' eyes.

In many cases, a panel has a dominant person who does most of the talking and attempts to lock you in an eye-contact battle, forcing you to ignore the other panelists. You need to demonstrate to the other panelists that you are aware of their presence, and eye contact is the easiest way. You might use a rhythmical pattern, starting with the person on the left, moving to the middle person, on to the right, then back to the left, and so on.

Make eye contact with ALL of the panel. In particular, do not ignore female panelists in favour of male ones.

- Keep an interested expression on your face throughout the interview.

Some people don't realise they have an unfortunate natural expression that implies boredom or hostility. Avoid a down-turned mouth or the slightly wide-eyed, raised-eyebrow look.

Practice your 'natural' expression in front of a mirror. Imagine yourself being praised and put on a suitable expression—hey, that's a smirk! The grateful and interested look is the one to strive for, but don't overdo it.

- In any interview, you need to give physical feedback indicating that you are listening and understand what is being said. The indicators are:
 - Maintaining eye contact
 - Nodding to represent understanding or agreement
 - Non-word vocalisations: uh uh, mm, hmm, aha, etc
 - Short phrases: yes, yeah, right, certainly, I see, etc
 - Using some of the key words from an interviewer's question in the framing of your answer

Panel interviews

Panels typically consist of a cross-section of employees including one or two from the area you are applying to work in. There may be a human resources department (HR) person, who knows all about the company's interviewing policies. There may be an employee from a totally different area, to ensure all candidates get a fair hearing.

Many people dread panel interviews, fearing they will be outsmarted or outwitted by three or four brains against one. In fact, research into panel interviews has shown that, on average, they are fairer on candidates than one-to-one interviews. Panel interviews are less likely to discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age and sexuality, and are not so damaging to your chances if one person takes a dislike to you for some reason. The people on panels have to justify their views to their colleagues, which tends to moderate them and subdue any prejudices.

Good cop, bad cop

Under the good cop, bad cop scenario, one interviewer asks gentle, soft questions to settle you down and reassure you, and a second interviewer—usually somewhat rude and aggressive—tosses in the occasional 'curly' or tricky question.

Remember that the good cop is not necessarily your friend and may be trying to get you to drop your guard and forget to concentrate on your answers.

For example, the good cop says something like: 'You must have encountered problems with your accent. I have a friend with the same problem.' You think the interviewer is on your side and reply: 'Yes, Australians don't seem to understand me and I find their accent hard to understand.' You feel you have confided a reasonable piece of information to a friendly acquaintance, but you have in fact put your foot in your mouth by revealing a negative about yourself.

When a bad cop cuts in with a nasty question, don't play the game. Stay cool. Maintain your composure and a pleasant expression. It shows them that

people being a bit difficult doesn't bother you. You are too professional to take it personally.

Remember that the bad cop is filling their role for professional reasons too.

Telephone interviews

Your initial interview could be on the telephone, which can be a blessing or a curse.

The advantages:

- You don't have to travel to the venue.
- You don't have to dress up and worry about your appearance and body language.
- You can refer to your notes and documents when answering questions.
- You don't have a bunch of strangers staring at you.

The disadvantages:

- You may not be able to hear or be heard clearly.
- The call can come at an inconvenient time or when you are not mentally prepared. Within reason, try not to be forced into this. You want, and have a right, to be at your best.
- You can't use body language to give a good impression, but must rely on verbal communication skills. Interviewers tend to be more skeptical about your responses because they can't see every aspect of them.
- It's more difficult to make a full, positive personal impact.
- Interviewers may not listen as intently and may allow themselves to be distracted because they know you can't see them.
- The interviewer's feedback is more limited too. It's harder to judge how your answers are being received so you can respond accordingly.

Take a phone interview as seriously as any other kind of interview. Be thoroughly prepared in advance of when you think it will come so you can always be on the ball.

Mobile phone interviews are becoming increasingly popular. As it's very difficult to be clearly understood, even if your first language is English, we suggest asking the interviewer to call you back on a land line. And make sure that it's in a quiet place with no interruptions or eavesdroppers.



Smart move – Never take a 'call waiting' during an interview, even if the interviewer suggests you do. No matter how brief the second call, the interviewer is left hanging on the line, very likely thinking negative thoughts about being subjected to an interruption and delay.

Video links

Employers are starting to use video link interviews, mainly for senior executives but sometimes for lower positions. Apply the same rules as you would for a face-to-face interview. Remember that the camera is always on you, and you may not know who else is watching at the other end. Don't let your demeanour slip.

Answering the questions

A well-prepared interviewer goes in knowing the type of answers they want to hear. A well-prepared candidate goes in knowing what they do and do not want to say.

Now it's time to review the most common interview questions and find out how best to answer them.

Listen up

The first step is to listen to the questions properly. You might wonder what else you are supposed to do, but interviews can be overwhelming, especially with a panel, and it can be difficult to understand exactly what is being asked.

Don't respond to individual words and start formulating an answer before you have heard all of the question. After listening to the entire question, it can help to take a steady breath while you think about your answer. If you need a little more time to think of an answer don't be afraid to say something like 'Good question – let me think about that one'.

Never interrupt someone when they are talking even if this is the norm in your own culture. This is generally considered rude in Australia.

If you don't understand the question or forget part of it, don't wrestle in silence or guess. Politely and promptly ask for it to be repeated.

Challenging the premise

Job interviewers (like politicians) are fond of posing a question in the form of a statement that includes an invitation to agree, disagree or otherwise comment on the statement.

Interviewer: 'Most overseas degrees and qualifications are an unknown quantity. Would you agree?'

You have been invited to agree with something you probably need to challenge. A trap has been set with 'Would you agree?' Simply saying yes might indicate that you are introverted or lack the courage of your opinions.

One positive response: 'In my experience, a lot of overseas qualifications are recognised in Australia. In the cases where there are differences, most migrants are very happy to bridge any gaps by obtaining the relevant qualifications.'

But don't challenge the premise in a negative or confrontational way, such as: 'That's very wrong to say. I don't agree with that at all.'



Smart move – Using the phrase 'in my experience' lightens having to challenge a premise. It's a sneaky way of allowing an interviewer's view to remain valid at the same time as you are disagreeing with it. It also reinforces the perception that you have the ability to learn from experience.

Reordering a question

Several issues may be grouped in one question. Pay attention to the order of the topics with a mind to reordering if necessary for a more positive reply.

Interviewer: 'What are your strongest and weakest skills, and which ones need developing?'

A negative response would be: 'I'm strongest working with numbers, and my writing skills, if not perfect, show promise. Unfortunately, other people are probably more skilled at manipulating graphics programs than me. I try though.'

But the answer can become a whole new, positive proposition if you reorder to suit yourself and slip the negative that the question demands in between two positives: 'My writing skills are developing and showing promise and, despite my efforts, I'm relatively unskilled at using graphics programs. That said, I'm strongest working with numbers.'

Try to start and finish answers on a positive note.

Baited traps

Cunning interviewers often ask a question or series of questions that seems totally harmless, but traps you into agreeing with something negative about yourself.

Interviewer: 'Can you give examples of taking the initiative to organise social gatherings, such as drinks on a Friday, to improve your team's morale?'

Reply: 'Yes. I took the responsibility to organise a drinks night in both of my last positions, and they were extremely popular.'

Interviewer: 'This organisation has a high percentage of working mothers who can't attend many social events in the evening. Don't you think holding a regular drinks evening would tend to exclude these employees from the group?'

Umm... You're stuck! The interviewer has inferred that you may not be sensitive enough to the needs of others. If you try to distance yourself from your first answer, it looks as though you are willing to say anything to impress. If you try to defend yourself by explaining that you weren't working with many mothers, you're saying you lack an aspect of experience relevant to the new job—and it's showing already.

The solution is to cover both sides of the story. 'I've been responsible for setting up social gatherings at my last two jobs, and the trick has always been a balancing act to ensure that we organise activities everybody feels comfortable doing. We had regular Friday drinks as well as morning teas at work to ensure everyone felt included.'

Clearly, you are an angel.

Led up the garden path

The interviewer may deliberately mislead you with questions that 'lead you up the garden path'. They want to see how quickly you realise the ploy or how far they can push you in a certain direction.

Interviewer: 'Do you think you would enjoy working in our Sydney office?' (The company has offices in Sydney and Perth, and you are applying to work in Perth. Beware. It seems you are being led into saying you would rather work in Sydney.)

A positive response: 'I am keen to make a positive contribution to this company. I had assumed that would be primarily in Perth, which would be fine. However, I would be fully prepared to work in the Sydney office

if required.’

A negative response: ‘Yes please! I see this job as my ticket to big things in your head office, where the action is really centred.’

Supplementary bait question: ‘Is that something you have considered?’

Positive response: ‘In researching the company, I realised that the Sydney office is an important part of the operation, and several people from the Perth office have spent some time there. That made me realise it would at least be a possibility.’

The real killer question (about motivation) revealed: ‘We are looking for someone to work long-term in the Perth office. Do you think that, given what you have said, you would be happy staying here in Perth?’ This line of questioning could be to sort out applicants with the wrong ambitions, or to make you squirm and see how you react under pressure.

Retrieving ugly situations

So you’ve said something extremely stupid in an interview. You need to try to retrieve the situation, and even turn it into a positive.

Acknowledge your error and ask for an opportunity to clarify your remarks.

If the interview has disintegrated into an argument or become hostile for some reason, a non-judgmental remark along the lines of ‘Can we start again? I think we’re becoming stuck on this point’ can ease both you and the interviewer off the hook.

Acknowledge your error and ask for an opportunity to clarify your remarks.

Put the problem behind you, and don’t spend the rest of the interview apologising for a slip. It only keeps the issue in the forefront of the interviewer’s mind, and groveling is never impressive. And the perceived ability to recover from and move on from an awkward situation is a strong positive in itself.

The standard questions

Interviewers use a series of standard questions to get the information they need. Here are the most common ones, with suggested responses.

1. ‘Can you tell us about yourself?’

Designed as an icebreaker. Keep your remarks positive, succinct and relevant. For example: ‘I’m an energetic person and strive continually to improve my skills. I recently completed a course in graphic arts, which I think would complement the duties required for this job.’

Disastrous response: ‘Of course. I come from a well-respected family of doctors. My uncle is a leading pediatrician. . . .’

2. ‘Why did you leave your job in 1998 and can you describe your relationship with your former boss?’

Even if you left your last job for a negative reason (such as being bored stiff), respond positively with something like: ‘I enjoyed working at the com-

pany, but felt a move was necessary to expand my experience. I had a reasonable rapport with my former boss and generally we worked well together.’

Disastrous response: ‘I had to leave because my boss was a total swine.’

3. ‘Can you tell me what you know about this company and what we do?’

Ninety-nine per cent of the time, an interviewer includes this question, so be sure to do your homework on the company. The information you give MUST be correct. Don’t guess what you don’t know. A positive response could start like this: ‘I first heard of your company a year ago when I was still in Indonesia and I was immediately interested in the fact that you. . .’

Disastrous response: ‘Actually, I don’t know a lot about your company. What exactly do you do?’

This is no time for modesty. Nor should you spend 10 minutes expressing positive details about yourself.

4. ‘We want to find out about your strong points. Can you give me a three-minute advertisement promoting your skills and indicating why we should hire you?’

This is no time for modesty. Nor should you spend 10 minutes expressing positive details about yourself.

In A.A. Milne’s wonderful children’s books about Winnie the Pooh, Pooh Bear asks Tigger (a tiger) ‘What is a Tigger?’ Tigger quickly replies: ‘A wonderful thing’s a Tigger.’

Take Tigger’s lead. Start your personal ad with something like: ‘I am enthusiastic and energetic. I have eight years experience working in the industry. After initial training, I was promoted to. . .’

Disastrous response: ‘Three minutes isn’t long enough for me to tell you everything you need to know. Do you have an hour to spare?’

5. ‘What are your weaknesses?’

Instead of taking the interviewer’s lead and handing over negatives, turn them into positives: ‘My weakness is my loyalty to the company. I’ve been known to be at work at midnight on a Saturday to make sure an order is completed in time, even if it could have waited until the following week.’

Disastrous response: ‘I work hard, but it hasn’t been recognised by past employers.’

A variation on this question could be ‘What is your biggest mistake’.

Another is to ask the opposite of this ‘What are your strengths’ or the variation of it, ‘What was your greatest work achievement.’

6. ‘What were you doing between February 1995 and March 1997?’

The recruiter has picked up on a gap in your career history, and you need to explain. A recent study indicates that interviewers take a negative view of any reason for a gap other than full-time academic study.

Explain the gap factually, but briefly, and move on to a more positive subject. Say something like: ‘I felt my career was not moving ahead at (the place of employment), so I took six months off to consider my options for

the future.’

Disastrous response: ‘I was sick and tired of being bossed around, so I took two years off on unemployment benefits.’

7. ‘What do you do in your spare time?’

Bear in mind that the interviewer might not share your passion for, say, golf or gambling. They might loathe them. Don’t talk at length about sports or any subject you would normally avoid at a polite dinner party: politics, religion, drugs, sex.

The question has been asked to find out if you are a well-adjusted individual. Say something like: ‘I play a number of sports, including golf, and on the first weekend of every month I work with a team of volunteers doing projects for the community.’

Listen for the implications and answer according to the employer’s agenda rather than your own.

Of course, it must all be true. You could be asked for more detail.

Disastrous response: ‘When I’m not at the office, you can find me at the racetrack.’

8. ‘What was the last book you read?’

If your résumé has a section about the books you read, visiting art galleries, favourite films and so on, you may well be questioned about it. Did you list Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* as your favourite book merely for effect, without having read it or barely being able to remember it?

Even if your résumé doesn’t include this section, you may still be asked similar questions, especially about your reading habits. The interviewer really wants to know if you like to be intellectually engaged, and what you read says a lot about your character.

Disastrous response: ‘I haven’t read a book in years, but there was a good joke on the back of the breakfast cereal box this morning.’

NOTE: Always be clear about what you are expressing as fact and what is an opinion. In the great majority of cases, you will be giving personal opinions. ‘In my experience/view/opinion...’, ‘I have generally found that...’, etc. You don’t want to seem too opinionated or overbearing.



Smart move – Prepare to answer the favourite book (or film) question even if you haven’t mentioned such matters in your résumé. If you think your favourite book won’t make the grade, choose one more suitable—one you have read and like. If you don’t feel comfortable going down that path, be vague but positive: ‘I read to relax. I like detective novels that still challenge my thinking to a degree.’

Other standard questions you need to think about are:

What do you want to get out of a new job?

Where do you want to be in five years? How about 10 years?

What word would you use to describe yourself?

Why should we hire you?

Behavioural questions

Interviewers want to find out how you are likely to behave in certain situations. The questions are usually framed in terms of past events, because you are more likely to talk truthfully about a real situation than a hypothetical one. Although hypothetical questions are still quite common in Australia.

Behavioural questions are slanted to address different attributes:

Achievement: ‘Have you experienced any barriers to your career and, if so, how did you deal with them?’

Commitment: ‘Have you ever taken on extra unpaid tasks to ensure the company’s goals were met?’

Confidence: ‘Have you been in a situation where you realised the rest of the group was tackling a problem inefficiently? What did you do?’

Initiative: ‘Have you ever noticed a work process that had room for improvement? What did you do about it?’

Leadership: ‘Can you tell me about a time when co-workers placed their confidence and faith in your judgment?’

Team player: ‘Have you ever worked in a team that was not functioning properly? How did you feel and what did you do?’

Tenacity: ‘Have you ever had a work project rejected, even though you knew it was a winner? What did you do?’

Numbers game

Be prepared for a test of your skill with numbers.

Interviewer: ‘If a product that used to attract a sales tax of 22 per cent and retailed for \$134.20 now costs \$125 as a result of the 10 per cent GST charge, has the GST been applied correctly?’

Answer: ‘The cost of the product before tax is \$110 because 22 per cent of \$110 is \$24.20. Therefore, when the GST is added, the product should now cost \$121, rather than \$125. This result means the GST has not been applied appropriately.’

Inappropriate questions

Some interviewers ask inappropriate questions that may even be illegal. You need to know how to deal with them.

- Relationships

‘Are you going to marry in the near future?’

The tempting answer is: ‘Are you going to drop dead any time soon?’ But grin and bear it. Answer, ‘I have no plans to marry in the foreseeable future.’ Even if you do marry, you can say you didn’t foresee it at that stage of your life.

For legal and ethical reasons, interviewers shouldn’t ask this question, but they are tempted to do so to find out if you are likely to leave in the near future or shift focus.

- Children

‘Are you planning a family?’

Again, grin and bear it. If you are in your early 20s, answer: ‘I haven’t considered having children, and I doubt I’ll start a family for a long time yet.’

(A long time usually means years, but it can easily mean months.)

If in your late 20s: ‘Children aren’t a consideration for me. My career remains my first priority.’ (You don’t indicate how long your career is to remain your top priority.)

If in your 30s or 40s: ‘I’m extremely serious about pursuing my career to the best of my ability, and having a family is not an issue for me.’ (The hidden meaning is that you know you can work and raise children, but this is not an issue for you, even if parenting is an issue for the interviewer.)

If in your 50s or above: Be flattered! Go home and invite your partner to a candlelit dinner for two.

- Race/ethnicity/migrant status

‘Will you be returning to your homeland in the future?’

Tempting answer: ‘And will you be returning to your cage in the zoo?’

But get out that grin again. Answer: ‘I do not foresee me returning to (wherever) in the future. I’ve made a strong commitment to live and prosper in Australia.’

With a question along these lines, you need to consider what the unstated or implied concerns are. Most commonly for migrants, they are a lack of local experience and Australian qualifications, or poor communication skills. Acknowledge these concerns if valid. Provide evidence and facts as reassurance, stressing the relevancy of your overseas experience, skills and qualifications by putting them in an Australian context. Also stress your adaptability, flexibility and willingness to learn.

Another way to handle these types of questions is to mention any Australian training or experience that would give you a basic understanding of working there, such as employment pathway programs or volunteering.

Put yourself in the employer’s position and think about what is relevant in terms of the position. Your four-week onsite project management experience in Paris, or your PhD in the psychodynamics of split personality, is probably of little interest to the boss of a small Australian business. Sometimes expressions of experience can intimidate an interviewer.

While a phrase such as ‘In Paris I...’ might sound impressive among friends, in interviews it’s smarter to use terms along the lines of ‘In the past...’ or ‘In a previous job...’. Why go out of the way to emphasise that your experience isn’t local, thereby distancing the interviewer from it?

In many cases, these types of questions are implied rather than asked directly. Listen for the implications and answer according to the employer’s agenda rather than your own.

- ‘Any questions?’

Near the end of an interview, you will probably be asked if you have any further questions. Have a couple prepared, or make a mental note during the interview of points to clarify, to maintain your alert, interested demeanour.

A few intelligent questions about the position and company are bound to impress. You can ask about details in the job advertisement that weren’t covered in the interview. ‘Can you give me a few details about the interstate travel that was mentioned in the advertisement, such as how often I would be interstate and for how long?’ This type of question indicates the depth of your

thought about what the position entails.

You can ask questions that show you can read between the lines. ‘You mentioned that the Melbourne office doesn’t have a technical officer. Does this mean I can expect to work out of the Melbourne office from time to time, or does it have separate arrangements?’ Picking up on a subtle point like this also means you have been listening intently.

If you still need to ask about pay and conditions, do so. But don’t make it your first question of this concluding session. You don’t want it to seem like your first priority.

Rather than asking specifically—‘What is the salary, and can I take 10-minute breaks every hour?’—ask more broadly: ‘Can you give me an idea of what sort of package you are proposing?’

Tests are fun!

The thought of having to take psychological and other assessment tests probably isn’t a pleasant one. You feel they are likely to have intrusive questions that reveal confidential information about you. Because of the often strange nature of the questions, you might not even be sure about what you are revealing. The questions can seem impertinent or irrelevant to the position.

Approach all types of tests as a fun exercise. That’s the key. Seeing them as something to suffer only gives the impression that you have little confidence and something to hide.

It may help to know that the psychological tests used to assess job applicants are based on positive scorecards. That is, you can only win, and not lose, points.

Take an unemotional approach to personality tests. It is acceptable to ask how the questions will relate to the employment, or are expected to be an accurate indicator of how well you would do in the job.

Personality tests are, in fact, excellent indicators of candidate performance levels.

Much research has been done on the subject and there is high-quality independent evidence that well-constructed personality tests are a useful tool.

Big Five theory

The Big Five theory is based on the fact that five broad areas of personality exist and that each of these areas reflect many different facets of personality. These five areas are:

Agreeableness: Trust, compliance and modesty are signs of agreeableness, or how well you get along with other people.

Conscientiousness: Competence, achievement and self-discipline are the qualities of conscientious people.

Extroversion: Warmth, assertiveness and excitement-seeking are examples of extrovert behaviour. Broadly speaking, being an extrovert is about enjoying getting on with other people.

Neuroticism: Anxiety, depression and self-consciousness fall under this

heading. Neuroticism involves the degree to which you are nervous, restless/fidgety and self-critical.

Openness to experience: Fantasy, ideas and values are in this category. Creatures of habit who like everything ‘just so’, or have the ‘this is how it has always been done’ attitude, are not open to experience.

Aptitude tests

If you get a personality test, you often get an aptitude test too. Unlike personality tests, aptitude tests are normally timed (a controversial issue in the recruiting industry). One publisher of aptitude tests argues that employers shouldn’t be looking for people who can make snap decisions, but people who are prepared to mull over problems to reach reasoned answers.

Numerical reasoning: These tests involve your ability to manipulate numbers, spotting patterns and progressions. Often presented as examples from everyday life.

Example 1

Mr Savin goes to the shop and buys an apple for \$1, a drill bit for \$12.30, a tin of paint for \$18 and a pair of handcuffs for \$21. He hands over two \$50 notes. What amount is Mr Savin given in change?

A) \$47.30 B) \$47.70 C) \$51.30 D) \$51.70

Did you answer B? Well done!

Example 2

Which number completes the sequence?

5 12 26 47

A) 75 B) 54 C) 61 D) 68

The answer is A because the second number is the first plus 7, then the increase is 14 (7×2), then 21 (7×3), so the next addition is 28.

Numerical reasoning tests are used for all sorts of jobs. In retail and customer service roles, employers look for basic arithmetic skills—adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing and a few others, like percentages. Those in more senior positions are expected to have reasonably strong numerical reasoning.

Verbal reasoning: Verbal reasoning tests assess your ability to understand written and sometimes spoken English. They go beyond mere comprehension of the words in the text by focusing on your ability to infer and deduce conclusions and meanings from a set of complex statements. You can also be asked to work out the relationship between different words.

If you are a non-native English speaker, a verbal reasoning test in English is almost certain to underestimate your true skills. Depending on the assessment’s purpose, such a test may constitute discrimination and be illegal. If you are asked to complete a test that requires a very high level of English language ability, it is fair to question the use of the test, or at least alert them to the fact you are a non-native English language speaker. In most cases psychometric tests are not controlled for cultural variations.

Example 1

Foal is to Horse as Kitten is to _____.

A) Tiger B) Mare C) Cat D) Puppy

Yes, it's C. A foal is a baby horse and a kitten is a baby cat.

Example 2

Which word completes the first word and starts the last word to produce two new words?

Horse(____)maker

- A) fly B) box C) hair D) shoe

The answer is D (horseshoe and shoemaker).

Example 3

Which of these statements correctly concludes the sentence:

Whenever Jim sails his boat, he rows his dinghy from the shore to the boat. Jim is rowing his dinghy now, therefore . . .

- A) Jim is going sailing.
- B) Jim has been sailing.
- C) Jim's dinghy is easy to row.
- D) None of the above.

The answer is D. Read the initial statement carefully and it is clear that Jim rowing his dinghy doesn't necessarily mean he is going sailing.














Smart move – Verbal reasoning tests apply to jobs that require the understanding of complex communications quickly and accurately. If tests have shown that you have aptitude in this area, take particular note of ads for jobs where understanding customers' explanations or arguments written in reports and the like may be required (whether it's stated in the ad or not). Follow up, of course, by making your especially relevant aptitude obvious in the interview.

Abstract reasoning: This relates to your ability to manipulate shapes and symbols and spot patterns among elements that have no conventional meaning or prior associations.

Numerically, you use mental arithmetic every time you pay cash to buy something. Verbally, you encounter the same or similar words on a daily basis. But, with abstract reasoning tests, the symbols can't be manipulated in the same ready way. For this reason, many employment experts believe abstract tests are a 'purer' measure of ability.

Shown here are examples of the symbols commonly encountered in abstract reasoning tests. You need to decide which symbol completes the pattern.

			A) 
			B) 
			C) 

The answer is A—because each shape appears only once in each position.

Top test tips

Before the test:

1. Ask in advance how long the test session lasts so you have a better idea of what you are dealing with.
2. Have a good sleep the night before.
3. Take a pen and pencil, and even stationery. It should be supplied, but they may withhold it to test your initiative.
4. Go to the toilet just before entering the test room.

In the test room:

1. Read the instructions very carefully.
2. Check all options before deciding in multiple-choice questions.
3. Answer personality questions as honestly as possible.
4. Go back and check that you have answered all the questions.

DON'TS:

- Don't have a late night or drink alcohol before sitting any form of psychological test.
- Don't take medication that can make you drowsy. If you do have to take medication, inform the tester in advance in writing.
- Don't be late. A little early is best.
- Don't plump for your first-choice answer without checking the other options.
- Don't worry if you still have questions to answer when the time is up. This is not unusual.

Group tests

Assessment centre exercises, usually done in the company of other applicants, have become popular because they overcome a number of the issues relating to psychological tests, such as their relevance to the workplace.

A typical exercise involves group problem-solving and possibly role-playing. Groups of usually seven or eight people are monitored by as many as seven or eight observers (two or three is the norm). Exercises can last several hours and typically involve business-related scenarios in which a series of decisions is required to reach a solution.

For example, each member of a team is given the role of an area manager in an imaginary company. They are on a committee to appoint two members of staff. Given a candidate's résumé, they must push the person's merits in a group discussion. The scenario may be spiced up with the occasional injection of a negative piece of gossip about someone.

They look for who talks the most, interrupts and is interrupted; whose ideas are accepted by the group and whose are rejected.

In a group exercise like this, which doesn't include a leader, the observers watch to see who tries to organise the group by suggesting ways to decide between the candidates. They look for who talks the most, interrupts and is

interrupted; whose ideas are accepted by the group and whose are rejected. They also get to see whose preferred candidates are accepted for the imaginary jobs.

It is claimed that assessment centre exercises can quantify qualities such as leadership, assertiveness, group skills, listening skills, persuasiveness and others. It is not unreasonable to assume that such exercises tend to favour people prepared to speak out. Make sure you have your say, without dominating the proceedings.

One approach is to say little or nothing for the first half of the exercise while you listen to all the arguments, with the intention of suddenly piping up with the brilliant solution to all the group's problems. It's impressive, but if you don't manage to be singularly brilliant on cue (or before someone else is), you miss out.

Most assessment centre exercises take from a half to a full day. Some residential centres run assessments over two, three or more days. During longer tests, treat the entire exercise as an interview, including coffee and lunch breaks. Never let your guard down.

A PERSONAL Story from ENGLAND

Ed Nicholls

Ed Nicholls found the job he wanted within four weeks of arriving in Australia. He had a number of factors in his favour, and admits that the ‘lucky country’ lived up to its name for him.

Ed, 31, grew up in Winchester, England, gained a university degree in business economics and started his career with a corporate events company. His work included finding venues, which led to him accepting a job offer from a hotel chain. He moved on to the Conrad Hotel in London, dealing with large companies that had contracts with the hotel for client accommodation and functions.

After Ed and his girlfriend visited Australia for the rugby World Cup (important general knowledge: England beat Australia in the final), they decided to move to Sydney. A company agreed to sponsor his partner, which made getting visas comparatively easy.

“I thought the smart thing would be to get a job in Australia while I was still in London,” he says, “but I soon learned that it was regarded as quite difficult to do. I had one interview in London but was unsuccessful.”

Still, Ed could do his homework. He turned to the web and hotel and hospitality organisations to check out what Sydney had to offer in five-star hotels. While visiting for the World Cup, he had managed to have a brief chat with the general manager of the Shangri-La Hotel, sited at Circular Quay, between the Harbour Bridge and Opera House.

After arriving in May 2004, he immediately contacted recruitment agencies and went for interviews. “I found them fairly easy to get because I had a visa.”

The timing was good—there was a lull in employment in the hospitality industry (not least because many young Australians were working overseas, particularly where he had just come from). And because Australia wanted hospitality people, his experience in

the field earned points for his visa.

Ed had an interview at the Shangri-La; they said they liked him but had no suitable position available. Then someone resigned a few weeks later and he got a call. He is still there as Director of Business Development, finding corporate clients who take out annual contracts for the hotel's services.

While being new to the territory has its disadvantages in a sales role, it can also be perceived as an advantage.

While being new to the territory has its disadvantages in a sales role, it can also be perceived as an advantage. "I wanted to get out and about and establish new relationships. I think the company appreciated someone fresh coming in," says Ed.

"To an extent, it was easier here. In London, you ring up a potential client and unless you have a relationship already, they probably won't give you the time of day. In Australia it's, 'Yeah, okay, I'll give you 10 or 15 minutes' and they don't mind you coming in. People's personalities are more open, I suppose. Sales is such a numbers game—you have to ring so many people to get an appointment—but I've found it quite easy here and now feel confident."

The Shangri-La is expanding globally and it tries to progress people's careers through the company. "That's what I was looking for from London—a long-term career."

He laughs at the irony of so many Australians going to the United Kingdom to earn pounds while British people flock to Australia for the way of life. "I earn a lot less here, but the way of life is so much better. Most people I know work hard—long hours—but they know how to relax at weekends. The living is good."