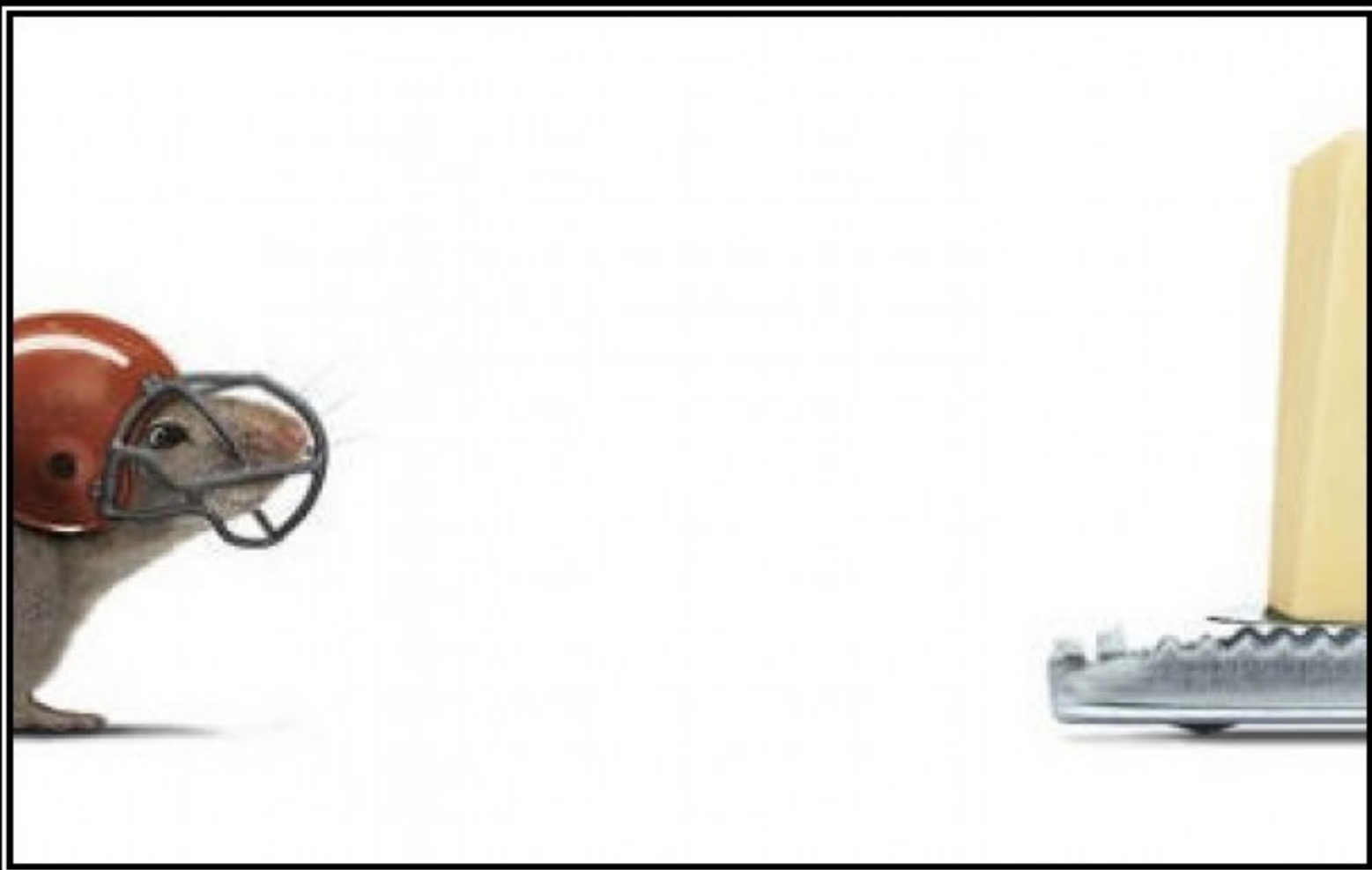




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PREPARATION

“By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail.”
Benjamin Franklin



You!!!

- Could you **do** the Job - now and in the future?
- How **interested** are you in the job and organisation?
- How would you **“fit”** in with the Research group/Department/organisation?
- What **can** you do? – technical (subject knowledge) and non – technical knowledge and skills
- **How** do you do it? – how you apply your skills/behaviours at work



Academic Interviews - Preparation

- **The institution, the department, the research group**
 - Current projects / recent history
 - Output & outcomes: What has been delivered and its impact, By whom: read online profiles of prospective colleagues
 - Collaborations: within the institution and/or with external organisations
- **Publications:** knowledge of process and issues
- **Funding:** knowledge of sources, process and issues
- **Teaching:** Course content / possibly view online overview if not detailed syllabus, Your own teaching style, teaching philosophy?
- **Administration:** Awareness/knowledge of committees, possible admin roles. Talk to current tutors? What might a new person do? Current opportunities to observe/help out? Use of electronic media e.g. Moodle/Blackboard. Your experience: developed, updated?
- **Broader issues in HE**

Think about what you could contribute, opportunities for intra- and inter-disciplinary collaborations



Preparation – The Organisation

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What makes us different from our competitors?



- What do you know about what we do?
- Give me 3 interesting facts you found out about our organisation
- What other companies have you applied to?



Academic Interviews: preferred format for postdoc positions.....

Typically:

- ‘**Short presentation** on research 10-15 minutes followed by interview of about 35 minutes’
- ‘Panel interview (30 mins) - including **10 min formal presentation** of their work to date followed by questions’
- ‘Small panel interview, usually includes being asked to give a 10 minute **presentation of current research work**, *with emphasis on aspects relevant to the postdoc project.*’
- ‘May also visit research group, individual interview with PI, meet with postdocs and PhD students for a discussion’

Source: 2011 UCL Survey of recruiting academics



Preferred format of questions - Academia

- ‘We use the same questions...obvious things about background to research, why they want the job, strengths and weaknesses, prioritisation, motivation, and then ones ***specific to the post.***’
- ‘All are asked the same questions....own research plans - own teaching ambitions / interests - why we should appoint you - ***how your work might connect with work of current staff***’
- ‘All candidates are asked the same questions. Examples are ‘*teaching philosophy*’...your plans for your future work, what ***quality*** do you bring to the department, what ***collaborations in the department/the university*** could you imagine’.
- ‘All candidates asked where they would like their career to be **in 5 years** (looking for ambition and realism); ***handling differences with colleagues*** (no single right answer but giving genuine examples really helps)’
 - Source: 2011 UCL Survey of recruiting academics



Structure of an interview

- Introduction
- Settling in questions
- Main body of interview
- Your questions





Sample Interview Questions: Research

- Who are the key researchers in your field and how does your work compare to theirs?
- How have you managed your research?
- Tell me about your publication record. How would you judge this achievement and what are your future plans?
- What does “making an impact with your research” mean to you?
- How much creative input have you had in the design and / or execution of your project?
- If you haven't adhered to your research plans at any point, what did you learn?
- What aspects of your research abilities require further development?
- If, after this postdoctoral position, you were awarded your own funding what would you like to research and why?
- How would your appointment benefit us in regards to our future performance in the Research Excellence Framework?



Sample questions: Teaching and Mentoring

- If you were given complete freedom to put on any course you liked, what would it be? How would you teach it and why?
- What classes have you taught?
- How does your research inform your teaching?
- In your opinion, how do you get the best out of a research student? Can you give me an example?
- How would you supervise a postgraduate researcher?
- Teaching is important but in your view, should a department give it as much of a priority as research?
- What do you feel are the key skills of an effective lecturer? How do you evaluate your teaching effectiveness?
- What are the current issues around teaching, learning and assessment in Higher Education?



Types of questions

Strength based questions -

- Are you a good listener?
- What energises you?
- How do you handle working with someone you do not like?
- Do you prefer detail or the bigger picture?
- What makes you less likely to succeed?
- What gets done on your “to do” list – what never gets done?
- What is your biggest weakness?
- Do you prefer starting or finishing a task?





Types of questions



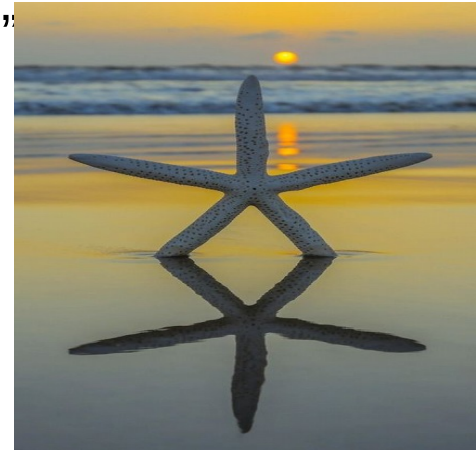
Competency based questions -

- Tell me about a time when you have had to use your initiative
- Give me an example of when you have had to solve a complex problem
- Describe a time when you have had to communicate a difficult message
- Describe a challenging project, activity or event which you have planned and taken through to its conclusion



Structure your answers – Remember the STAR format

- **SITUATION:** “I was part of the organising committee for the departmental summer ball ”
- **TASK:** “To produce marketing materials to publicise the event....”
- **ACTION:** “ I produced a marketing plan, allocated roles in the team”
- **RESULT** – “The material was instantly recognised by students and numbers at the event were up by 50% on last year....”





Questions to ask the Interviewer

So what can you ask?

- What do they enjoy about working for the company?
- What are the opportunities for progression?
- What are the next stages?
- Anything that isn't clear from the job description that you would like to know



Things to avoid:

- Questions you could have easily found answers to
- Questions about pay or conditions of service

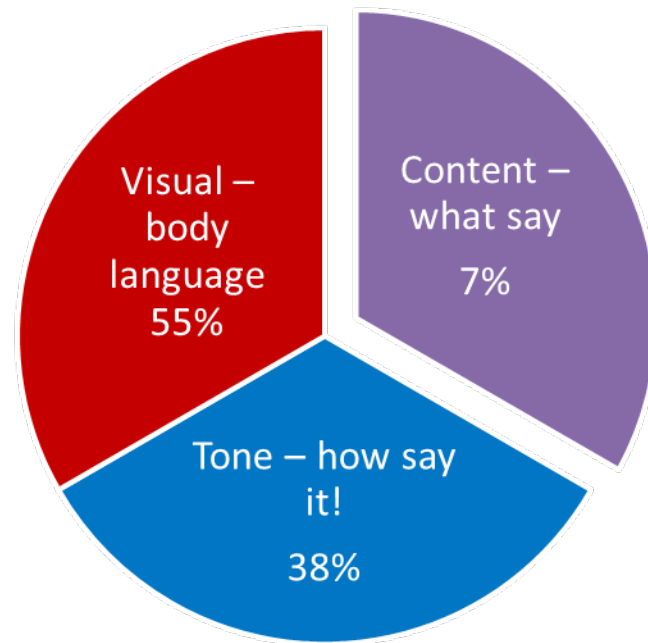


- Getting to interview means they believe you have potential to succeed
- Most people are nervous – use the **nerve to help you perform well**
- Find out about the **interview format** in advance
- **Re-read** through your application
- Plan where to go for the interview and arrive early
- Ensure you have a contact name and a number to call in case you are running late
- Take a bottle of water, notepad, documents etc
- Follow up?
- Get feedback after the interview if possible





First impressions do count.....Albert Mehrabian





Body Language – top 7 tips

- Engaged posture
- Calm and relaxed manner
- Hand gestures
- Mirror interviewer
- Eye contact – with everyone
- Firm handshake
- Smile





Tactics

- Give yourself **thinking time**
 - Repeat, comment, “Can I have a minute?”
- Think of the “**punchline**” before you talk
- Seek **clarification**
 - “Are you looking for an example of...?”
 - “Would you like any more detail on..?”
- Ask for **feedback**
 - “Is this example useful?”
- When in a hole, **stop digging**
 - “Sorry, I’ve got a bit lost. May I start again/ Could you repeat the question?”



Further information

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/jobapplications/>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips>

Target jobs directory / online employer insights

<http://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/interview-techniques>

<http://www.pwc.co.uk/careers/elearn>

Interview confidence

Glassdoor – search for possible interview questions

Interview Stream – free practice site for video interviews

Expert job interview tips on Youtube

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/exeter/resources/videos/interviews/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CareercakeTV>



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