

Business English 360 – Tips for your First Job Interview (Part 1)

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Discussion Questions

1. Think about your own experiences. What achievements or activities from your school life do you think demonstrate positive qualities that might impress an interviewer?
2. What do you think is more important to employers: related job experience or relevant skills and ability?
3. Are there certain types of activities or interests that you should *not* talk about in an interview?

Vocabulary

Transition: to change from one place or situation to another. "It was difficult to transition to my new role as regional manager."

Aspect: a distinct feature or element. "Because I'm not good at maths, accounting was the most difficult aspect of business for me to learn."

Tension: emotional stress or strain. "During my presentation, I felt great tension because everyone was looking at me."

Wrack your brain: an idiom meaning to think very hard about something or to try and remember something. "I know that happened a long time ago, but you've got to wrack your brain and try and remember what happened."

Delegate: to assign a task or job to someone. "Because Carl was so busy, he had to delegate much of my work to the junior engineers."

Initiative (collocation: to take the initiative): readiness to begin things without direction or instruction. "Jonah usually takes the initiative on new projects, while his co-workers are content to follow his lead."

Hone them down: to define or summarize. "We need to hone down the all the job applicants and select the best to come in for an interview."

Fair game: appropriate or acceptable to be used in a certain situation. "In a brainstorming session every idea is fair game; there is no right or wrong answer."

Trait: a characteristic or feature of personality. "Self-confidence is one of the most important traits for a salesperson."

Academics: college or university courses and studies. "Brad excelled in academics and received the Chancellor's Award for highest grade point average."

Semester: one period or term in the school year. "I decided to take only three courses in the winter semester."

Juggling act: a situation in which one must handle many different activities or responsibilities. "Raising three kids and working two jobs was quite a juggling act, but Rachel managed it well."

Transcript

Hello and welcome to www.BusinessEnglish360.com. I'm Tim Simmons and today we're kicking off a new podcast called Business English 360. This is where we will explore skills that are crucial to your success. Let's call them soft skills. We're not talking about how to use a spreadsheet here... this is about how to approach situations, problems, and people.

Appropriately enough, we're doing this first round of shows on another kind of first: your first *job interview*. We're going to have a look at four key skills, including conveying enthusiasm, doing your research before the interview, and answering those particularly difficult questions. But we're going to start this series with one of the biggest questions: How do I show that I'm right for the job when I have little or no work experience? What am I supposed to talk about?

This is actually applicable beyond first job interviews. Perhaps you're changing careers or **transitioning** into a new **aspect** of business. But the question remains: How do I relate what I have done to what they want?

So, where do we begin? It begins with preparation. It doesn't matter how much, or how little, experience you have. It all starts with preparation. Don't wait until you walk into that room to consider good answers to questions that you know are coming. Your brain is already quite busy just coping with the **tension** of the situation. So sit down with pen and paper well before the interview and decide what you're going to talk about. You need to make a list of your experiences, accomplishments, and achievements. Remind yourself of those specific successes so you don't have to **wrack your brain** in the middle of the interview.

Now, a big part of your preparation involves matching those experiences and accomplishments with the job's required skills and responsibilities. To do that, you first need to read the job description very carefully. What exactly are they looking for? List the *qualities*. We're talking about things like organization, leadership, **delegating**, time management, taking **initiative**. These are the **traits** or abilities that you're going to prove you have. Also look *beyond* the job description. What *other* qualities do you think they need? Make a note of them and then **hone them down** to three or five you can easily reference in an interview.

Once you understand the kind of person they're looking for, find things in your experience that demonstrates those qualities. If you were the captain of your tennis team for example, you've got a perfect match with leadership abilities. Almost everything is **fair game** here. Think about sports, **academics**, student politics, hobbies, or any other activity you've taken part in. When you're thinking about academic experience, think about group work, presentations, major projects, and so on. Not just good grades. You want to show them *how* you got those good grades. Remember, abilities are lasting. If you show examples of taking initiative in your computer club, employers will assume that you can carry that characteristic into your work life. Don't worry that your experience is not in exactly the same context as the prospective job. You're showing that you have *transferable* skills.

Now that you've matched specific experiences with the skills and requirements of the job, you've got lots to talk about in the interview. Notice there that I said *specific* experiences. That's very important. Not general, but *specific*. You need to talk about the *situation, what you did* in that situation, and the final *result*. Don't say, "I was very busy and had to manage my time well." Instead, say, "In my last **semester** I was enrolled in 5 courses and one independent study project, and I played basketball. It was quite a **juggling act**, but I still managed an A average." You see? *Specific*.

Great stuff. Turns out you have more to talk about than you thought you did. Remember: prepare beforehand, match your experiences with the required skills and responsibilities, and be very specific.

Want to test yourself? Have a look at our website. You'll find a quiz to check your understanding, as well as a complete transcript of today's show. And don't forget to tune in next week, when we look at how to show enthusiasm and professionalism. You don't want to miss that one... Until then, this is Tim Simmons from BusinessEnglish360.com.



Review

1. According to Tim, why is preparation so important?
 - A. Because interviews are stressful.
 - B. Because you have no idea what the interviewer will ask.
 - C. Because most interviewers will ask you how you prepared.
 - D. Because you need to show off your knowledge.

2. What should you be looking for when you read the job description?
 - A. Responsibilities and opportunities for promotion
 - B. Compensation and benefits
 - C. Company culture that matches your personality
 - D. Required skills and responsibilities

3. Which of the following are the types of soft skills or abilities that might be required in a job? (Select all that apply)
 - A. Time management
 - B. Typing
 - C. Leadership
 - D. Accounting
 - E. Organization
 - F. Musical ability
 - G. A second language
 - H. Teamwork

4. Which of the following are good activities or accomplishments to mention in a job interview? (Select all that apply)
 - A. Playing basketball on your university team
 - B. Playing soccer with your friends
 - C. Running the school's lost and found service
 - D. Updating your Facebook page
 - E. Working as a tutor
 - F. Working with a tutor
 - G. Volunteering to help single mothers
 - H. Playing violin in an orchestra

5. Tim uses a common business word that indicates a change from one thing or situation to another. Rearrange the letters below to make this word...
GRAININOITSNT

6. What three aspects of being specific does Tim talk about?
 - A. The situation, the people in the situation, how the people interacted
 - B. What you did, why you did it, when you did it
 - C. The situation, what you did, the result
 - D. The circumstances, the problem, the outcome

Review Answers

1. According to Tim, why is preparation so important?
A Because interviews are stressful.
2. What should you be looking for when you read the job description?
D Required skills and responsibilities
3. Which of the following are the types of soft skills or abilities that might be required in a job? (Select all that apply)
A. Time management
B. Leadership
C. Organization
D. Teamwork
4. Which of the following are good activities or accomplishments to mention in a job interview? (Select all that apply)
A. playing basketball on your university team
C. running the school's lost and found service
E. working as a tutor
G. volunteering to help single mothers
H. playing violin in an orchestra
5. Tim uses a common business word that indicates a change from one thing or situation to another. Rewrite the letters to make this word:
Transitioning
6. What three aspects of being specific does Tim talk about?
C the situation, what you did, the result *