



English for
Job Interviews

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ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

TEACHER BOOK

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HOW TO USE THIS

This teacher book accompanies a student workbook. You can download the workbook freely from www.blog.tjtaylor.net/job-interviews

We designed the workbook for intermediate to lower advanced level students (**B2 and C1** on the European scale) but can be used by lower intermediate levels with guidance from a teacher.

The workbook can be used as self-study, but was originally created to be used in class with a teacher. Each of its 5 parts has a lesson plan, which can be expanded or changed as preferred.

Each part takes approximately **90 minutes** with the discussion exercises and role-plays described below, or 20-40 minutes in self-study.

We've avoided giving lists of phrases or words to memorise and parrot back. Instead, the workbook focuses on helping the students reflect on the best responses and create a more personal reply, which they can then write down and review.

For the open questions, the questions are asked first and then the 'answers' in the form of notes or tips are given on a following page.

ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Part 1

First Impressions & Common Questions

Teacher Notes:

1. Brainstorm with the students on what they would do to prepare themselves for an interview. Make sure they give you all the things on the list below - if they can't come up with them all, give them pointers (page 7 of the teacher book). After the exercise get the students to turn to page 5 in their books. (10 minutes)
2. Ask the students if any of the things on the list differ from what they would normally do, get them to give you their reasons if there are any differences. (5 minutes)
3. Dress code/first impressions - split the students into pairs and give each pair pictures of people dressed in different ways (culturally appropriate, not provided). Have them decide who they would short list for the following jobs: office assistant, shop assistant, salesman/woman, nanny, bartender, office manager, giving their reasons why. (10 minutes)
4. Have the students discuss as a group the impressions they get from each picture and see if they can agree on one person for each job. (5 minutes)
5. Go through the dress code for men and women with the students – try and elicit as many things as you can! (page 8 in the teacher book, page 6 student book) Discuss if this holds true for their country. (10 minutes)
6. Obviously, the biggest difference in preparing for an interview is that it will be in English. Ask the students to try and think of all the most common questions they are asked in interview situations. Write up as many questions as they can give you, then ask them in pairs to work together to make answers to the questions. Give the students a few minutes per question to answer, then go through as a group getting everyone's answers and deciding together which are the best ones and why.
Correct their use of English as appropriate, and don't forget to congratulate them on their hard work! If they haven't come up with all the questions on the list, make them aware of them, and ask them to repeat the exercise of answering in pairs. (Page 7 in student book and page 9 in the teacher book) (30 minutes)

Before the Day of The Interview

- Find out as much as you can about the company. You can do this by looking online and checking their social media. The same for the post you are applying for – try to find out as much as you can before you go to the interview so that you know what will be expected of you and you can start thinking of how you can tailor your abilities to those required for the position.
- It is useful to know how long the company has been established, what it does, how many staff work there, and the turnover of the company in some cases, plus company ethics on internal promotion etc..
- Go to the company to see how to get there, how long it takes to get there so you can plan how much time you need to arrive in time, and so that you can see if it is an area, building etc. That you would like to work in. While you are there, you may also be able to see some of the existing staff coming in and out which could give you a good indication of how to dress for the interview.
- Plan your interview clothes. You should always be dressed more smartly than you would normally be. If you haven't had an interview for a long time and you have an interview suit, make sure it is clean and ironed and that it fits you well! As first impressions count for so much, at least you can look good which will make you feel better about yourself and give you extra confidence.
- Practice commonly asked interview questions and answers. How would you answer in your own language? This is your opportunity to practice selling yourself. Practice out loud and preferably with a friend or teacher to make sure your answers are in good English.
- Make sure you plan at least one hour for the interview plus travelling time when asking for time off work!
- Go to bed early and get a good night's sleep.

How to Dress for the Interview

For an office job it is important that you dress soberly and professionally.

FOR MEN:

- A dark suit, either dark blue or dark grey normally, but black is also becoming more acceptable.
- A light shirt, either white or a pale colour, and a plain tie is usually best, or with a slight pattern to it, but no Donald Duck ties!
- Dark shoes and dark socks. Make sure if you have any tattoos that they are covered, and try to limit jewellery to a watch and a ring.

FOR WOMEN:

- A suit is best, or skirt suit, and the jacket and skirt should match. A plain blouse should be worn with it. Dresses can be worn to interviews, but the style should be as classic as possible.
- Shoes should not be too high or too low. Hair should be tied back or very well groomed, and it's best to wear a little make-up and not too much jewellery.

Don't forget that no perfume or aftershave is better than too much!

Commonly Asked Questions

- *Tell me about yourself.*

Don't launch into a long diatribe about yourself! Think of pertinent points - that you enjoy being with people, that you enjoy a challenge, that you love researching things, resolving problems (give a couple of examples) perhaps a sport which you enjoy, try to steer clear of things like "I love being with my children" especially if you are a woman, or anything very personal.

- *Why do you want this job?*

Try to answer, matching your capabilities to the good points of the post.

- *What do you know about the company?*

This is a question which applicants for a job often cannot answer very well. Someone who is prepared with an answer will make a much better impression than someone who has no idea, however, keep your answer as brief and complimentary to the company as possible.

- *How would your best friend describe you? What would they say your weak points are, and what would they say your strengths are?*

This seems like a really easy question, and yet it isn't. Try to think about your faults, list them and then try to turn them into positive things. List your good points and then try to pick the ones which are really like you – be honest, don't go over the top, but pick two or three good points and also an example of them. It can be more difficult than you think to choose suitable attributes – try to make them fit the job skills you are applying for.

- *What makes you think you are the right candidate for the job?*

This can be a difficult question to answer – consider all your attributes, your previous experience – is it relevant to the post? Try not to repeat what you have already said.

- *Why are you leaving your current job?*

Whatever you say, don't be derogatory about your current employer. Something like "I don't feel challenged enough at the moment" may be perfect. It also depends on the job you are applying for!

- *Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?*

This is also difficult to answer, and will depend on the type of job you have applied for. You risk losing the job if you seem too ambitious, however, you may equally lose the job if you don't appear ambitious enough.

- *What would you do if..?*

Take your time and think carefully. Don't forget to use the correct grammatical construction e.g. "I think I would ask the client to take a seat in an office and then I would call the manager to ask for his/her opinion on how to proceed."

ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Part 2

Difficult Questions

Teacher Notes:

1. You will need to prepare the classroom so that you have enough chairs for everyone, and a couple of desks to one side of the room. Put the chairs so that they face each other in three quarters of a square - do as well as you can depending on the space you have.
2. Ask the students to sit down and make themselves comfortable, then, once you have their attention, ask them to stand up and sit down again. Ask them to look at each other and note how they are sitting. Can they make any general comments about how they are sitting, or personal comments about the other students – whether they feel comfortable, shy, bored etc. from the posture of the others.

Discuss with the students the differences they have seen and ask them to comment on how the differing postures appear to them, ask the student they are talking about if the observations made about them were true.

Now, ask the students to stand up and shake hands with the student next to them. Ask for feedback, what was the handshake like? Is it essential to have a good handshake and what is one? Is it essential to shake hands in an interview?

Bring up the subject of facial expressions, ask them to “look interested”, to “look as though you are listening” to “look as though you are making a considered reply (i.e. thinking)”. You can all have a lot of fun as you all look at each other’s facial expressions, however remember to point out that their facial expressions will count for a lot in an interview situation. There are 2 main areas the students should work on - eyes and smile. (15 minutes)

Key learning point: thinking positively is essential. Believing in one’s own capabilities is easily transmitted to an interviewer, if the students really do believe in themselves. Otherwise it can be very difficult to achieve this impression. So, have the students think about a good point about themselves and then in pairs, have them tell each other what their good point is.

3. Ask the students to write a list of 10 things which are good about themselves (in general, not work related necessarily) and 5 things which are not good about themselves (page 11 student book, page 15 in the teacher book). They may need a lot of help, so if they are becoming stuck, ask them to think about the qualities that their best friend sees in them. (10 minutes)
4. Once they have their lists, elicit from the students the most common good points and put them up on the board. It will be unusual for anyone to have many qualities which are completely different from someone else. Point out to the students that they all have roughly the same good points. What does this mean?
Obviously, if they are all going to the same job interview and the interviewer asks them about their qualities and one after another they reel off the same things, the interviewer will find it difficult to make a distinction between the interviewees.
Have the students write down an example of when they have displayed the quality they claim to possess, either within or without a work related role, however, given the situation they are

in, so much the better if it can be work related. (Page 12 in the student book, page 16 in the teacher book) (5 minutes)

5. Have the students read out their examples, praise them for good examples and ask them to think again if their examples are weak. Remind them that these examples could be the difference between getting a job and not getting one!
6. Next, have them read out their bad points, again, it is likely that many of these will be similar. Write them up on the board, then, as a class, have the students change the bad points into qualities. You will need to explain some of the words I have given as examples probably. Have them write down the changes from bad to good points – in simplistic English or in the more formal style so that they can take them away and learn them. (Page 12 student book, page 16 teacher book) (15 minutes)

E.g. "I find it difficult to concentrate on more than one job at a time."

Becomes

"I try to dedicate myself fully to the job in hand, to make sure it is done to the best of my ability."

7. Once you have gone through the differences and got the students really thinking about how to change bad points into good ones, have them think of questions they would like to ask in an interview situation. You can have them work in pairs for this, then have them report back to the class.
Have the other students judge whether the questions are good questions or not, but as a guideline, here (page 17 student book and page 23 teacher book) are some which should and should not be asked at first interview stage. (page 13 student book, page 17 teacher book)(10 minutes)
8. Give out the role-play cards (page 18-20 teacher book), it may be better to choose two of the more confident students first. One student is the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. Ask the interviewee to leave the room for a moment, while the interviewer explains his role to the other students. Check yourself that the interviewee knows his role. The interviewee should knock and enter, the interviewer should stand, shake hands and invite the interviewee to sit, and sit down himself.
The other students are to observe, write down points without saying anything, the way that the interviewee stands, sits, speaks and what they say.
Feedback at the end of the role play is essential and should be given first by the interviewee, then by the interviewer, and then by the observers. (25 minutes)
9. Get them to bear in mind all the points which you have covered in the lesson today, if you have time, go through all the roles, the only differences being the interviewees. See what the students have learnt and get them to correct themselves.

Praise them for their input and ask them to consider all the points covered, and to practice as homework there is a written guide to some of the points covered in today's lesson. (Page 14-16 student book) (5 minutes, or any remaining time)

Write 10 good points about yourself here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

Write 5 bad points about yourself here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Write the times when you showed your good qualities here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

Change the bad things about yourself into good things and write them here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Write 8 questions you could ask in a first interview here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____

Write 8 questions you should not ask in a first interview here:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____

Role-play 1

To cut out:

Student A

You work for your father at the moment, but there has been a big family rift and you know you can't continue to work there indefinitely. There were some problems with the takings in the till, your father blames you, but you refuse to see the error you made by taking extra wages every week. It was only because on this occasion you took a lot more to take your boyfriend/girlfriend to a fancy restaurant that he noticed the difference.

You know that you are perfect for this job, because you currently work in your father's small shop and have most of the same duties as for this position. The deciding factor for you is money. You want to earn at least €50,000 per year. Currently you earn €40,000 for more or less the same work.

Student B

You are interviewing a person who is perfect for the position you have, at least on paper. You have 3 more people to see and have seen one person who was really nice and would work well in the team, but doesn't have much experience. There is something about this interviewee which you are not sure about.

The job includes:

having responsibility for opening and closing the store

stock taking twice per month

ordering new stock as necessary

liaising with suppliers

bookkeeping

banking the daily intake

serving customers

heading a team of 3 staff.

The salary is €42,000 p.a. However, you are the boss, so you can decide to change the salary.

Role-play 2

To cut out:

Student A

You are interviewing a person who was told about the job by one of your employees – they are best friends. You don't really trust your employee because certain things have gone missing from the store. You are not 100% sure that it was Janet who stole these things, but you feel that maybe having her friend at work will encourage her to steal more. The interviewee doesn't have much experience, but seems nice.

The job includes:

having responsibility for opening and closing the store
stock taking twice per month
ordering new stock as necessary
liaising with suppliers
bookkeeping
banking the daily intake
serving customers
heading a team of 3 staff.

Student B

Your best friend Janet told you that there was a job going in the shop where she works. You have worked in a shop before, serving customers, and you quite like it. At the moment you haven't got a job. Janet told you that the job was just serving customers, like her, and that it was really easy to increase your income by stealing the odd things from the shop and selling them on. You have a lot of debts at the moment because you haven't been working for a while, but you don't know if morally you could steal from your employer. The interviewer seems nice, and the job seems really good...

Role-play 3

To cut out:

Student A

You are the Manager of a large chain store. You can't take the pressure of dealing with lots of problems on a daily basis, so when you saw the advert for this job, you thought it might be a good way of having the same type of responsibilities but without the stress. You don't mind doing administrative work, but you don't want to serve customers – it's too demeaning for someone of your position. Try not to let the interviewer know this, you will change your job to suit you once you have it!

Student B

You have an interviewee who is a Manager of a large chain store. Although this person has all the necessary qualifications, and more, you are concerned that there is something wrong. Why does this person want to take a more menial job? Also, this interviewee doesn't seem to have very good interpersonal skills, they will need these skills for serving the customers and heading the team.

The job includes:

having responsibility for opening and closing the store
stock taking twice per month
ordering new stock as necessary
liaising with suppliers
bookkeeping
banking the daily intake
serving customers
heading a team of 3 staff.

The salary is €42,000 p.a. However, you are the boss, so you can decide to change the salary.

The job starts on Monday preferably, but you could wait for the right person and do the job yourself. You offer training of 1 week, plus outside courses during the year as they come up in staff management, computer skills and a fashion show per year to keep your clothing up to date and to help when talking to suppliers about what the shop needs. You do have a spare car which you could give as an incentive to the new shop manager, but you would prefer not to, at least, not immediately. There is the possibility of 12 months maternity, sick pay and 25 days holiday.

Some Pointers on Body Language and Interview Techniques

Body language

Someone who is slouching in their chair is not giving a positive signal to the interviewer – they are likely bored and possibly quite self-opinionated.

Someone who is sitting with both his arms and legs crossed is unwilling to give any information away about themselves, and either does not have a great deal of self-esteem, or is likely to be a very defensive and probably a reactionary person.

Someone who has one arm over the back of his chair is open, however, is not very serious and does not listen well. He is probably over reacting as he has decided he should look as natural as possible.

Someone who has their hands folded in their lap and both feet on the floor is the person who will take in most if they are in an interview situation, and who will make the best impression. This posture is one of the most relaxed and receptive.

The handshake

A good handshake is essential. It can make or break an interview.

A good handshake is firm but not too hard, and lasts roughly 20 seconds. You should shake hands on meeting and on leaving.

Facial expressions

If your eyes are alert and bright, and look directly into the interviewer's eyes, you will be much more effective than if you do not make eye contact or your eyes are always downcast.

Staring is not considered polite by British people, so you need to remember to blink and look away from the interviewer from time to time! The eyes are a gateway to the soul, you need to project yourself as confident and capable without being confrontational.

Smiling is an essential tool in an interview situation, and it is worth practicing smiling beforehand. As an interview can be a very stressful situation, it is worth noting that a smile can easily become a grimace! Practice smiling with the other students.

Turning Our Bad Points into Good Points

“I find it difficult to concentrate on more than one job at a time.”

A solution could be: I try to dedicate myself fully to the job in hand, to make sure it is done to the best of my ability.

“I don’t like taking orders from people.”

A solution could be: I am able to organise my work and prioritise well without needing to be told.

“I like talking to people too much, I am a chatterbox!”

A solution could be: I am a good communicator, I find that people will automatically refer to me for advice and help.

“I don’t like hard work!”

A solution could be: I am good at delegating work and cutting through red tape to make sure the minimum amount of time and energy is used to finish a project.

“I don’t like working with people.”

A solution could be: I prefer to work alone so that I can concentrate more fully on the work I need to do.

“I don’t like working alone.”

A solution could be: I am a good team player!

“I find it difficult to meet deadlines.”

A solution could be: I prefer working at my own pace to make sure I don’t miss any important parts of the job.

What to Ask and What Not to Ask in an Interview

Things which should NOT be asked at the first interview:

- How much is the pay?
- How many holidays would I get?
- Do I get sick pay?
- Would I get a company car/telephone/credit card?
- How long is the maternity/paternity leave?
- When do I start?

Things which CAN be asked at the first interview:

- When are you looking to have someone start?
- What are the hours of the job?
- Are those hours Monday to Friday, or are staff expected to work Saturdays?
- Is this a full time position?
- Is this a permanent job?
- May I see where I would be working if I were successful?
- Who would I be working for?
- Do you offer any training, and how long is it for?
- Is there a career path?

TALKING ABOUT MONEY SHOULD BE AVOIDED UNTIL THE SECOND INTERVIEW

If money is asked about in the first interview, the interviewee is interested mainly in the money, which is not necessarily the main point in the employer's eyes.

If a person is suitable for the job and shows sufficient interest in their surroundings and what the job entails, the salary may well be influenced by these factors. However if a candidate speaks mainly about money, it shows that this is their main concern, and that they are probably not the right person for the job since money is their only real motivation.



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ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Part 3

Fillers & Unprepared Questions

Teacher Notes:

- 1 Brainstorm with the students on what makes them nervous when they first meet someone; being assessed physically, and mentally probably! Ask them to think of the type of questions they find difficult to answer when they first meet someone, especially a person who only speaks English. Put these points up on the board. Go through each point carefully, have these things already been discussed in this seminar to date and what were the answers? (10 minutes)
- 2 Remind them that in an interview situation, knowing the type of questions an interviewer may ask and knowing their CVs is essential to making a good impression. This means practising the answers to probable questions as much as possible before an interview is invaluable, however, what if an interviewer asks something you haven't prepared for?
In the students' own language, they know the different facial expressions and noises which indicate to the listener that they are thinking, but are these 1) good expressions and 2) do they "translate" well? Elicit some and discuss with the students.
e.g. Bau!!
Eh !!
Stroking the chin (meaning nice)
(5 minutes)
- 3 If a student answers something similar to 'boh' what impression will this give? Obviously not a particularly good one, especially since this is not a positive noise and is not one which is familiar to an English speaker. Small talk and time fillers are needed. Ask the students if they can think of any time fillers and write them up on the board, for the students to copy into the space provided. (Page 21 student book, page 29 teacher book)

If they are finding this difficult, give them some examples, such as:

- That's a good question, I'll have to think about it for a second...
- Well, I hadn't considered it from that point of view, however,...
- Hum, I'm not sure what I would do, but I think I would probably...
- Er, I suppose that in a case like that I would ...
- To tell the truth I hadn't considered something like this, but given the circumstances, I would probably...
- I'm sorry, could you repeat the question, please?
- Sorry, could you clarify what you mean, I'm not sure that I understand what you are looking for...
- Well, it would depend on the situation, of course, but quite probably I would...

These are obviously fillers to a question which has been asked about a specific point, and the students haven't given a specific reply. If the students can learn some of these by heart, they

will find that they can come out with them whilst they are thinking of something specific to reply. (10 minutes)

But what about answers to things such as:

- Why are you leaving your current post?
- Do you think it is essential to have guided training?
- If you were faced with the situation in which your boss was not available and you had an emergency, for example, all the computers went down and you needed information from the computer for the clients in front of you, what would you do?
- What would you do if you were the last person to leave the building and you had forgotten to take the key with you – everyone else has gone home and you are left alone with an empty building..?

Ask the students to try and formulate an answer for each of these questions, time them.
(page 22-23 student book, page 30-31 teacher book)

Suggested answers:

Well, there are a lot of reasons, personal ones and professional ones. The main reason though, is that I feel I cannot grow anymore in my job and I'm looking for a new challenge. It would be great to have some new training for example, a new way of approaching problems...

Erm, well, guided training. No, I suppose that training does not have to be guided necessarily, but I do think that some training at the start would be useful, just to make sure that the job was being done the way the company wanted it to be done.

I'm not sure, I'd have to be in that situation to be able to give you an honest reply but, I think I would...

Hum, yes, well, if that situation happened, I don't know, I don't think it would happen because I take a lot of care when I am left in charge of important things like locking up... I think I would telephone my boss, or the relevant key-holder.

As we can see, sometimes just repeating the question will give us time to think, while also letting the interviewer know that we have understood and are really thinking about the question.

Noises such as "um" "er" "well" "hum" and "good question" give extra thinking time too. (25 minutes)

- 4 Take the role play cards and have each student take a candidate role (page 32-33 in teacher book). You are the interviewer. Interview the students one at a time and explain to the students that they must listen very carefully to the others when they are being interviewed in case they have problems answering, and see how well they managed to cope with difficult questions. (30 minutes)

- 5 Thank the students for their participation. Go over any particularly difficult areas with them, if any of the students had great difficulty in answering your questions, for example. Tell them to practice the fillers they have learnt in this section, because they will definitely be useful in the future! (5 minutes)

Exercise 1: Time Fillers

Write below any time fillers you or the other students have suggested:

Exercise 2: Difficult Questions

Answer the following questions:

1. Why are you leaving your current position?

2. Do you think it is essential to have guided training?

3. Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

4. If you were faced with an emergency situation and your boss was not available (for example, all the computers crashed and you needed information from the computer for the clients in front of you), what would you do?

5. What would you do if you were the last person to leave the building and you had forgotten to take the key with you – everyone else has gone home and you are left alone in an empty building?

Role-play

To cut out:

Teacher's role

You are interviewing candidates for the position of Administrative Clerk to the Personnel Manager. You need someone who is capable of filing, typing, answering the telephone, note taking, preparing reports and dealing with minor personnel problems. It is essential that the person who takes this job is good at communicating with all types of people and can work under pressure and to deadlines. This may sometimes mean working overtime. The job has quite a low salary, but has good prospects and the opportunity to learn a lot about Human Resources. It is based in the city centre. You need to really feel comfortable with the person you decide to call back for second interview. Ask any questions you feel necessary to make sure the candidate you are interviewing is really suitable.

Student roles

You are an Administrative Clerk at the moment, but you don't really like your job because you are part of a big team and you don't get on very well with most of the other staff. You would prefer to work on your own, or for someone who can show you more interesting things than you have learnt so far. You want a post with more responsibility and more jobs to do, where you will feel really useful. You also want a pay rise, because you have been earning the same money for 2 years now and think it is time that your true worth is recognised. You want a job which is 9-5 and has good benefits.

You are 3 months pregnant and need a permanent job so that you can claim maternity leave. You will take anything, although you are an experienced Banking Clerk. You were made redundant when the bank closed down the branch you were working in, 2 months ago. The most important thing for you is the maternity leave and a reasonable salary.

You are a housewife and you are bored. You want some excitement in your life and all the women's magazines keep saying that a woman without a career isn't really a woman. You think it might be fun to try working in an office. You can't type very well, but you are quite good at keeping things in order and deal with all the household duties required of a woman with a husband and 4 children to look after. Your children are now all at secondary school, so they don't need you very much at all.

You are just leaving school, and don't want to go to university. You need some money to go travelling with. You think it would be useful to get some office experience before you go, and you want to earn as much money as possible. You can type, but not very fast, and you're sure you can learn the other things very quickly because you're young. You like people a lot and really enjoy chatting.

You are a middle-aged man, who has had a career in sales. You left your last job (or rather, they fired you) because you seem to have lost your touch – you can't sell things anymore. You saw this job advertised, and think it seems like an easy option to make some money. You know you are overqualified, but you need a steady income. You are feeling depressed and demotivated but you know you must try not to let this show.

You have been working as a receptionist for 1 year and are not challenged by your job anymore. You know how to keep a smile on your face all day, file, answer the telephone, type and keep a demanding boss happy. You are tired of working shifts and want a more normal working day. You need an increase in your salary, because this job is in the city centre, and you need to move closer to the city in order to be able to work in town.

ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Part 4

Recruitment Agencies

Teacher Notes:

1. Introduce today's topic, the use of job agencies.
2. Ask the students if they have ever used job agencies before. Do they know what to expect from an agency? Do they know what their rights are? Explain that in many cases, an agency will advertise one job when they actually have many which are very similar, and so it is worthwhile writing their covering letters to explain more what they are looking for, rather than what the agency is advertising. This is also the case with CVs. (5 minutes)
3. Have the students think about going for an interview at an agency. Write the following questions on the board:
 - Is it the same as going to a company for an interview?
 - Should you wear the same type of clothes?
 - Should you take a copy of your CV?
 - Should you be prepared to speak in English?
 - Should you be prepared to take a typing test?

The answer is yes to the above questions, but get the students talking about them and the reasons for their answers. (10 minutes)

4. Ask the students to turn to the text about agencies (page 28-31 student book, teacher book pages 36-39) and when they have finished reading it discuss the importance of each area. Is it what the student expected? Is it the same as in their own country? (30 minutes)
5. Role-play. Hand out the agency role-play cards (Teacher book pages 40-42) for the students to act out. Give the students time to read the role-play cards and prepare themselves. They are to be performed one at a time with the other students observing, encourage the watchers to take notes. After each role-play give the 'actors' feedback, the other students should give feedback as well. (40 minutes)
6. Feedback – praise students on good work and input. (5 minutes)
7. **Homework:** Ask the students to dress appropriately for an interview for the following class, if possible, and to review all the points which have been discussed to date, in order to have an interview next time they come.
Give them a copy of the role plays from the following section 5 (pages 49-54 of the teacher book) so they can study their roles beforehand, and be as realistic as possible. Make sure that the interviewers from this session are the interviewees for the next session to make it as fair as possible.

Reading – Job Agencies

Agencies

You may find that there is an agency which specialises in the area of work you want. This is more likely to give you the results you want than a general agency, and will ask you questions which are much more pertinent to the job you are looking for than a general agency.

You should be interviewed by a smart looking person, away from the hustle and bustle of the main office. If this is not the case, you should consider how much attention the agent is paying to you, and how seriously they are taking their job.

If you are kept waiting for more than 20 minutes without a very good reason, consider carefully whether this is the agency for you.

You can use as many agencies as you wish, and you don't have to tell the agency that you are with other agencies too. If they do ask you or they tell you that you may not see other agencies, tell them politely that you are looking for a job, and the first agency which comes up with what you are looking for will be the agency you will use in the future, but for now you need a lot of exposure and as many opportunities as possible.

Remember though, that it is often worthwhile to work with only one agency to start with, so that you avoid having your CV sent 6 times to the same job, which may have a negative effect, and also, you will reduce the number of telephone calls you have to answer with keen agents telling you about jobs you are not really interested in.

Timing

An interview in an agency is more likely to be flexible than a company interview, so you can decide on times which are more suitable for you to fit in with your working day.

Arriving in time is essential, and being smart and prepared is also a prerequisite. You should allow at least 1 hour for the interview. Make sure you tell the agent the times and days you are available for interview, and also when they may telephone you.

Do not leave a work telephone number unless the people where you work know you are looking for another job, or you have given in your notice.

Objective

Having seen an advertisement from any one particular agency, we assume that that job exists. Quite possibly, however, this is not the case.

Recruitment agents will invariably try to convince candidates to go for interviews for which they are unsuitable, therefore it is worth knowing exactly what type of job you are looking for beforehand.

Money

Recruitment agencies are paid when they match a company and a candidate successfully. The Agency is paid by the company, not the candidate.

This means that some agencies will not be particularly scrupulous when they try to match candidates and companies. They will have permanent and temporary and part time and full time work on their books - decide before going to the agency what you will settle for.

We saw before that salary should not be spoken about in a first interview. This is not the case at an agency interview.

It is good to have a salary range for the agency to work with, but make sure that the amount you give as your lowest salary is slightly higher than you need, as invariably you will be put forward for jobs which have a lower salary.

Honesty

You can be much more direct and honest in an agency interview than in a company interview. If you don't like working with other people and are much more of a loner, you may say so, as the agent will then try to word your 'failings' in a better light, and they have lots of experience in doing so.

If you only want to work in a particular field, be explicit about it, otherwise you may find yourself with interviews for things you have no interest in.

CV

Quite often your CV will be re-written or changed slightly by the agency. Make sure you know if this is the case, and ask for a copy of the CV if the agency gets you an interview. You need to know what the company interviewer knows about you!

Silence

In some cases, you will not hear from the agency for what seems like an eternity. This can be for several reasons.

- The type of job you are looking for is very specific and the agency has nothing available for you at the moment.
- The salary you have asked for is too high for the jobs that the agency has available.
- You did not come across well at interview and they do not want to use you unless it is as a last resort.

Ring the agency after a couple of weeks to find out why. They will usually be fairly truthful.

Interview

You will probably find that you are telephoned about many different vacancies. You will be told that you have an interview on such a day and at such a time – if you are not available, the job description is not what you are looking for, or the salary is not enough (you can ask the agent about the salary), you are not obliged to go to the interview, and indeed may be wasting your time.

If you haven't had many interviews and are currently unemployed, it is worth going just for the experience.

The agent will give you the name of the interviewer, the company, the address, and should be able to give you clear instructions on how to get there, and possibly how long it will take. They will give you the job title, a description of the job and the salary range.

If you want to, you can ask how many other candidates the agency has put forward, to give you an idea of the competition.

Remember though, that unless the company is working with only one agency, it is possible that the 10 candidates your agency is putting forward can be multiplied by 10!

Post Interview

Contact the agency and tell them what you thought about the job. If there were any doubts you had, they may be able to clarify them for you, or after they speak to the company about you.

Notice

Never give in your notice at work until you have a signed copy of the contract for the new job in your hands. Do not take an agent's word that the job is yours until you have the contract.

Accept no excuses - they can fax you a copy if it is an urgent start. The only exception to this is if you have lots of money and you don't need to work for another 6-12 months!

Starting the new job

A phone call to say thank you to the agent who found you the job is really important as the agent should be the first person you contact when you need another job.

If you were really impressed with the service, send a small bunch of flowers. This will ensure you get tip top service next time round!

Role-play 1

To cut out:

A

You are interviewing someone who wants a job. The CV and covering letter were very vague and you are not sure what type of work they want. You have a job on your books which you need to fill urgently, it is data input for a large pharmaceutical company and you hope you can persuade this candidate to do the job for you.

It is to start on Monday and will pay €5 per hour. The working week is 09.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday. Your client needs at least 3 weeks work done.

This candidate said they had a degree in pharmacy so it should be just the type of thing they want. If you think they don't want the job, explain that once they are in the company, it will be much easier to get another job there.

This candidate is just about your last chance – make sure they take the job. If absolutely necessary, you can put the salary up to €5.50.

B

You are interviewing for a job through an agency and you are quite nervous because you don't know what to expect.

You sent your CV which states that you have recently got your degree in Pharmacy, and you really want to start your career off right. You are very happy because the person on the telephone told you they had something just right for you.

So far you have been waiting for 20 minutes for the agent to get off the phone, and you are not very happy. You haven't got much money at the moment and your parents have told you to go out and get a job as fast as possible to help out a bit with the bills. You know that you are well qualified but lack experience, you hope that this job is the start you are looking for.

The minimum wage you would expect is €5 per hour for a temporary job.

Role-play 2

To cut out:

A

You are interviewing someone who wants a job in Finance. The CV and covering letter were good, and you have lots of different positions which might be suitable for this candidate. You have some temporary work with a record company, helping out with the stock taking, a temporary job as an Assistant Management Accountant for a toy firm, while the current lady who holds the post is away pregnant, a permanent job as a Junior Accountant for a school, a permanent job as a Bookkeeper for a local ice-cream shop.

The temporary stock taking work is in the town centre, pays €8 per hour and is for at least 3 months. There is the bonus of being able to have a discount of 50% while working in the store.

The maternity leave Assistant Management Accountant could possibly become a permanent job if the lady on maternity leave doesn't come back to work. The hourly rate would be €9 per hour, and the salary would be €25,000 per year.

The Junior Accountant is for a secondary school, outside the town, with bad public transport. The job would be working with a 55 year old Accountant who doesn't like computers and does everything by hand. The salary would be €18,000 per year.

The Bookkeeper post would be €20,000 per year, plus all the ice-cream that you can eat! The person would be working alone and responsible for all the accounts for this busy little shop. The right candidate may be asked to help serving customers in cases of emergency!

B

You are going for an interview at an agency which has lots of jobs advertised. You have got some experience from working on temporary accounting projects, over the last year and a half, but you don't feel confident enough to work completely on your own, although this is what you would eventually like to do.

You really want the security of having a permanent job, where you can learn. You want to earn €20,000 per year really, but you can be a little bit flexible. You don't have a car, you enjoy listening to music, eating pasta and ice-cream and have a collection of cuddly toys at home.

Role-play 3

To cut out:

A

You are interviewing someone who sent in their CV as a bi-lingual secretary. You know that they have a lot of experience in secretarial work, but you are not sure about their knowledge of English.

Your client needs someone who can speak fluently on the telephone, write reports and e-mails and take messages. The job is for 6 months, but the contract will be renewed if the candidate is good enough.

The monthly salary is between €1,000 and €1,800 according to experience. The client can only interview candidates between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m..

B

You are a secretary and you speak English as your second language. You spent 3 months in New York as a waitress 4 years ago.

You want a permanent job, and you won't accept less than €2,000 per month. You can use a typewriter, but you aren't sure about using computers. You have been working as a secretary for 3 years.

You are available for interview with the client only after 7 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays.

ENGLISH FOR JOB INTERVIEWS

Part 5

Role Plays

Teacher Notes:

1. Organise the classroom so that you have a small table with two chairs either side of it, and the other chairs for the students and yourself as far away from the table as possible, but facing it so that you can observe the role plays easily.
2. Tell them that the purpose of the class today is to put into practice all the interview techniques they have learnt from the sessions to date.
Make sure the students who are not involved in the role plays directly have a clean copy of their observation sheets. They are to note down anything they see or hear which is either very good, or which could be improved, including grammatical mistakes, and inappropriate use of language. They should give the interviewee a mark between 1 and 10, to denote whether they would be called back for second interview or not. (page 35-38 student book, teacher book pages 45-48) (5 minutes)
3. Allow 10 minutes per interview and 5 minutes for feedback for each pair. Make sure that each student has had the opportunity to be the interviewee during the course of the role plays.
4. Give overall feedback to the students about their progress and what you think of their interviewing techniques, offer to help them with their CVs at a later date (after the class) if they still feel that they are not as good as they would like them to be.
5. Thank them for coming and hand out feedback sheets (not provided). Make sure that you collect them all in ASAP. (5 minutes, longer if possible)

OBSERVATION SHEET

Student name: _____

Dress Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Handshake Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Posture Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Eye Contact Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Smile Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Use of English Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Grammatical Mistakes Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Overall Impression

OBSERVATION SHEET

Student name: _____

Dress Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Handshake Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Posture Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Eye Contact Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Smile Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Use of English Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Grammatical Mistakes Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Overall Impression

OBSERVATION SHEET

Student name: _____

Dress Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Handshake Comments: _____

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Posture Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Eye Contact Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Smile Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Use of English Comments: _____

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Grammatical Mistakes Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Overall Impression

OBSERVATION SHEET

Student name: _____

Dress Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Handshake Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Posture Comments: _____

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Eye Contact Comments: _____

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Smile Comments: _____

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Use of English Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Grammatical Mistakes Comments: _____

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Overall Impression

Role-plays

You are interviewing a candidate for the position of Sales Manager in an international company.

The requirements of the job are:

Excellent interpersonal skills

Previous history in sales, with excellent sales record

Ability to work to tight deadlines

Ability to speak English, as most of the meetings are in English

To be very good with figures

To be able to hold meetings

To set and reach sales targets

To have a degree in marketing, sales or commerce

To have a clean driving licence

The hours are Monday to Friday, 09.00 to 19.00, plus every other Saturday morning 09.00 to 13.00. There is a company car (Ford Focus), a company mobile (iPhone), an ongoing training programme, a clear career path - in maximum 2 years' time, the successful candidate will become Sales Director, private health care, 30 days holiday per year, and base salary in the range of €70,000 plus excellent commission rates on reaching objectives. The job is to start 2 weeks from today, with an in-house training scheme. They will be paid monthly with the bonus being paid in the second month.

You need to discover the candidate's weaknesses – ask directly what they are.

You need proof of the excellent sales record – where did the candidate work, how long for and why did they leave, or are they leaving?

Ask them to give you an example of a particularly difficult sales target which they have reached, and how they did it.

Ask them if they would be willing to fly to the US for meetings on a bi-monthly basis.

Ask them why they have their degree in marketing, sales or commerce.

Ask them where they see themselves 5 years from now.

Ask them what they enjoy doing in their spare time. You enjoy reading, history and rugby. Ask them if they share your interests.

Ask them what they think their greatest asset is and why.

Ask the interviewee if they have any questions about the job.

Thank the interviewee for coming and tell them you will be in touch soon.

You are interviewing for the position of Sales Manager in an international company.

The requirements of the job are:

Excellent interpersonal skills

Previous history in sales, with excellent sales record

Ability to work to tight deadlines

Ability to speak English, as most of the meetings are in English

To be very good with figures

To be able to hold meetings

To set and reach sales targets

To have a degree

You want to know the hours of the job, because it is very important to you to get home early in the evening. You don't mind working early in the morning, but you want to get home to see your young son. Weekends are very important to you too, since you want to spend time with your family. You took out a big mortgage on your house, so you need a salary of at least €50,000.

You have worked for a company which sells computer software called INBITS for 2 years. You used to reach the sales targets in the first year, but it has become much more difficult since the birth of your son, but there was one occasion this year when you doubled the sales objective by convincing one client to buy double the number of computers they really needed, and by speaking to the Manager of another company about their computer needs and convincing them to upgrade all their software.

You don't like your boss and you can see that there is no career for you because your boss doesn't like you either, as you refused to sleep with him/her. You want to leave your job as soon as possible, but you should give 1 month's notice. You think you may have a problem with references because of the situation with your boss.

You had an accident in your car a couple of weeks ago and you are going to court for damages in 2 weeks' time. It was your fault - you had been drinking and driving.

You took your degree in marketing because it seemed like the easiest option when you left school. You took your degree in England, and got a very low grade, you liked studying in England because it didn't feel like studying – everyone watched lots of TV and went to the pub all the time!

You enjoy cycling, spending time with your family and going to the cinema.

You are interviewing a candidate for the position of Receptionist in an international hotel.

The requirements for this job are:

- To greet and deal with clients from around the world
- To speak English on the telephone and face to face with clients
- To take payments from clients
- To send reports to Head Office in the US
- To give information about the town and the hotel
- To arrange conference timetables
- Ad hoc duties as required.

The hours are in 3 shifts:

Week 1: 9 am to 6 pm Week 2: 6 pm to 2 am Week 3: 2 am to 9 am

The salary is negotiable.

There are 20 days holiday per annum

There is a uniform which must be worn

The successful candidate will have a school leaving certificate.

Ask the candidate how good their English is.

Ask the candidate if they would be willing to work the shifts.

Ask the candidate about their transport situation – can they get to work easily?

Ask the candidate why they are leaving their current job.

You want to know if the candidate can give you a written reference now.

You want to know the results of the maths. exam when they left school.

Ask the candidate why they want to be a receptionist.

Ask the candidate if there are any questions they would like to ask.

Thank them for coming and tell them you will be in touch soon.

You are interviewing for the position of Receptionist in an international hotel.

The requirements for this job are:

To greet and deal with clients from around the world
To speak English on the telephone and face to face with clients
To take payments from clients
To send reports to Head Office in the US
To give information about the town and the hotel
To arrange conference timetables
Ad hoc duties as required.

The hours are in 3 shifts:

Week 1: 9 am to 6 pm Week 2: 6 pm to 2 am Week 3: 2 am to 9 am

The salary is negotiable.

There are 20 days holiday per annum

There is a uniform which must be worn

The successful candidate will have a school leaving certificate.

You left school when you were 15 because you didn't like it, especially maths - it was your worst subject. You studied at night school to become an actor/actress, but you couldn't get a job. You decided to go to college when you were 25 to study to be secretary, because you didn't like being a shop assistant, and that was the only job you could get. You went to Manchester on holiday 2 years ago, and met your boyfriend/girlfriend there. Now you both live in your country. He/she speaks your first language, but not very well.

You were a secretary for a small company for 3 years, but you have decided to leave for personal reasons - your boss is not kind to you and makes you work long hours. He/she has told you that you look fat and don't work hard enough, and since you heard them say that they hated all the people who come from your country on the telephone to a friend, you had a big argument and called your boss a racist pig. He/she fired you. It's true that you don't like hard work, but you are very good at looking as though you work hard.

You think that being a receptionist is similar to being a secretary, and as you can't be an actor/actress, yet, you need to have a job. You secretly hope that if you work in an International Hotel you will meet a film director who will offer you a job as an actor/actress.

Your boyfriend/girlfriend works in an office from 9 am to 6 pm and they said they would drive you to work if you get this job.

You are interviewing for a Restaurant Manager.

You need someone to:

Order and control the bar stock

Work out timetables for the bar and restaurant staff

Undertake inventories

Undertake quality control

Serve customers at the bar

Serve customers in the restaurant

Keep customers happy and resolve any problems they may have.

The hours are 10.30 am to 3 pm, and 6 pm to 11.30 pm Tuesday to Sunday.

The monthly salary is €2,000 plus tips, plus accommodation.

The successful candidate will have bar experience and waiting experience of approximately 3 years.

Ask the candidate about their experience, especially in quality control.

Ask the candidate why they feel they are the right person for this job.

Ask the candidate how they would resolve the problem of a customer having a hair in his/her soup.

Ask the candidate how they would deal with having all 4 waiting staff off sick.

Ask the candidate what they would do if the wine a customer ordered was not good.

If the candidate does not ask, tell them it is a live-in job and what the hours of work are.

Ask the candidate if they have any questions and thank them for coming.

Tell them you will contact them soon.

You are going to be interviewed for a Restaurant Manager.

The requirements are to:

Order and control the bar stock

Work out timetables for the bar and restaurant staff

Undertake inventories

Undertake quality control

Serve customers at the bar

Serve customers in the restaurant

Keep customers happy and resolve any problems they may have.

Have bar experience and waiting experience of approximately 3 years.

You have been working in a busy Irish bar in Rome for the past year. You have your certificate in cocktail making and you have been helping out a lot while the Bar Manager was off sick for 2 months. You worked in a restaurant in Cardiff for 6 months while you were studying Economics at the University of Cardiff because you won an Erasmus scholarship. You have done various cookery courses in Wales and in your own country.

You are 26 years old and live with your boyfriend/girlfriend, who can't afford to pay the rent if you don't live with them anymore.

You enjoy going to the cinema, watching Formula 1 racing, eating out in different restaurants and inventing recipes.

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[**www.blog.tjtaylor.net**](http://www.blog.tjtaylor.net)

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