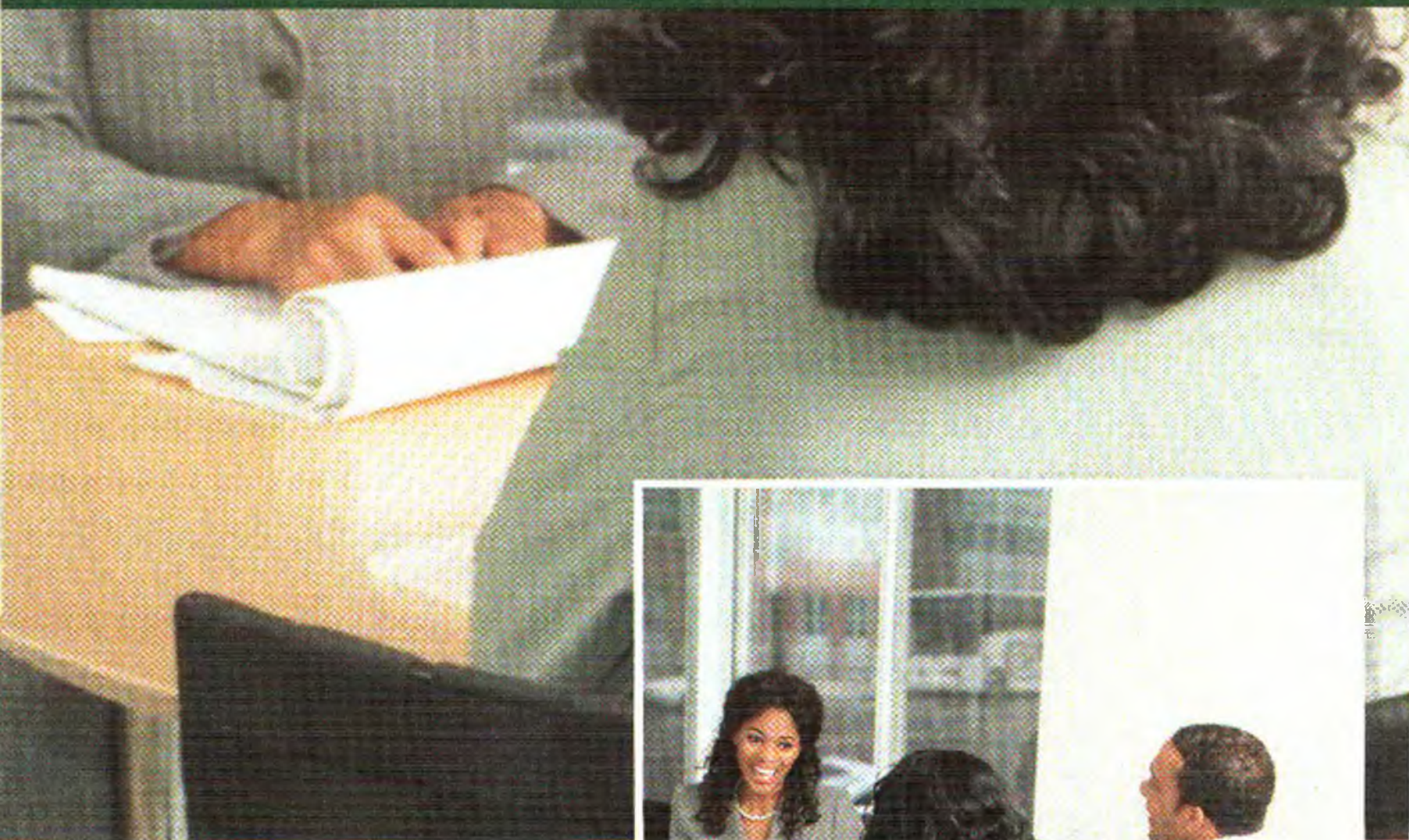


UNIT 4

Successful interviews

- Preparing for the interview
- Making a positive first impression
- Dealing effectively with interview questions
- Talking about yourself
- Avoiding common mistakes
- Proving you've done your research
- Demonstrating you've got what it takes



Preparing for the interview

Congratulations! If you have been invited to an interview, you have passed a significant test. Your CV and cover letter have made a strong first impression. You have been selected in front of your rivals, and made it to the short list.

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. The other candidates may have similar qualifications, skills and experience. The interview is your opportunity to prove you are the best candidate for the job. Ensuring you are well-prepared will help you to reduce stress, increase your confidence and improve your chances of being offered the job.

1 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Have you ever been interviewed for a job in English? How did it go?
- 2 How do you feel about going for an interview?
- 3 How can you prepare for an interview?

b In pairs, discuss the following tips for preparing for an interview. Which ones do you think are more important? Which ones would you do first?

- Try to predict the questions you are likely to be asked during the interview.
- Do some research into the company you are applying for a job with.
- Find out exactly what the job involves.
- Analyse your skills and experience and identify areas where they match the job requirements and the company needs.
- Rehearse the interview.
- Decide what you're going to wear.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview.

Making a positive first impression

Before you arrive

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. People start forming their impression of you immediately, looking at the outside and making assumptions about the inside. It is your responsibility to ensure that you send out the right message about who you are, through your physical appearance, your clothes and your body language.



- 2 a** Imagine you met somebody new today. After a few minutes talking to you, what might they say about you, for example how successful or wealthy you are, your level of education, or your professionalism?
- b** In pairs, discuss what you can do to create a positive first impression with an interviewer. Think about the following points.
- your appearance
 - body language
 - how to 'break the ice' with the interviewer
- c** In pairs, discuss the following interview tips. Write *do* or *don't* next to each tip.
- 1 Arrive ten minutes early.
 - 2 Speak English with a friend before the interview.
 - 3 Bring a close friend or relative with you for support.
 - 4 Take a copy of your CV and examples of your work with you.
 - 5 Learn some impressive words and phrases to use in the interview.
 - 6 Memorise long answers to questions that you anticipate being asked.
- d** ▶ 4.1 Silvia Carnali has been invited for an interview at the communications agency, Futerra. Before her interview she meets Nina, a human resources manager, for some interview preparation tips. Listen to the conversation and write Nina's opinion (*do/don't*) next to the tips (1–6) in Exercise 2c. Do you agree with Nina? What tips does Nina mention that are not included in the list above?

Small talk

The outcome of an interview can be decided in the first five minutes. From the moment you arrive for an interview you are being assessed. Even before the interview itself begins you will be communicating a message about who you are. In order to create a positive impression, it's important that from the moment you arrive what you say is clear, confident and enthusiastic.

- 3 a** ▶ 4.2 Listen to extracts from the beginning of Silvia's interview at Futerra and Alex Mencken's interview at a London theatre. Answer the following questions.

- 1 Why is Mr Lewis late for the interview?
- 2 What does Silvia read while she's waiting?
- 3 What useful information does Silvia get from the receptionist?
- 4 How does Silvia create a positive first impression with Mr Lewis?
- 5 What do Alex and Karl chat about before the interview?
- 6 How does Alex create a positive first impression with Karl?



b In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Silvia is very polite to the receptionist. Why is this important?
- 2 What does Silvia ask the receptionist? How could this help her application?
- 3 Alex mentions that a friend of his who works at the theatre suggested he applied for the job. Do you think this was a good idea?

c ▶ 4.2 Match the conversation openings (1–8) to the responses (a–h). Listen to the extracts again and check your answers.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 I'm afraid Mr Lewis is in a meeting at the moment. | a No, no trouble at all. |
| 2 Can I get you anything while you wait? | b No, thank you, I'm fine. |
| 3 I'm sorry I'm late. Our meeting overran a bit. | c I know. It's awful, isn't it? |
| 4 How are you? | d Thank you. It's nice to meet you too. |
| 5 It's nice to meet you at last. | e You were highly recommended to me by a friend. |
| 6 Did you have any trouble finding us? | f I'm very well, thank you. |
| 7 I can't believe the weather at the moment! | g That's quite all right. |
| 8 How did you find out about us? | h That's okay. I was just admiring the office. |

d In pairs, practise the small talk in Exercise 3c.

e Look at the following examples of interview small talk. Match the beginnings (1–10) to the endings (a–j). Would you say these to the receptionist (R), the interviewer (I) or both (B)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Do you think I could have _____ | a I got caught in the rain. _____ |
| 2 Do you have a company brochure _____ | b your toilet to freshen up? _____ |
| 3 I'm very sorry I'm late. | c a glass of water while I'm waiting? <u>R</u> |
| 4 Do you think I could use _____ | d I was planning to be here over an hour ago, but my train was cancelled. _____ |
| 5 I was just admiring your office. | e I could have a look at while I'm waiting? _____ |
| 6 Are there many other candidates _____ | f Is it always this busy? _____ |
| 7 I had terrible problems parking here. | g It all looks very modern. Is it new? _____ |
| 8 I'm afraid I'm not feeling very well. | h Do you have many people working elsewhere? _____ |
| 9 The office is smaller than I expected. | i Could I sit down for a few minutes? _____ |
| 10 Is there somewhere I could leave my umbrella? | j scheduled for interviews today? _____ |

f Having some small talk helps to build a positive rapport with the interviewer. In the UK the weather and transport problems are very common and appropriate small talk topics. In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 What small talk topics are commonly discussed in your country?
- 2 Are there any things you would avoid talking about?

g In pairs, role play arriving at an interview and making small talk with the receptionist.

Student A, you are the candidate. Try to get some useful information from the receptionist which you can use later in your interview.

Student B, you are the receptionist.

Swap roles and practise again.

Body language

Much of the impact you create at an interview is based on your body language, and getting this right is essential. The way you walk, sit and act may influence your interviewer’s opinion of you as much as what you actually say.

4 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 How could your body language let you down in an interview?
- 2 How can you avoid these problems?

b ▶ 4.3 Listen to five people speaking about body language and bad first impressions in interviews. Write the extract number (1–5) next to the problem it mentions. Then match each problem (a–e) to the advice on how to avoid it (A–E).

Problem	Advice
a Trembling voice ____	A Make eye contact, but remember not to stare.
b Sweating <u>1</u>	B Politely decline tea or coffee.
c Bad posture ____	C Breathe slowly and deeply.
d Shaking hands ____	D Sit up straight and lean forward when speaking.
e No eye contact ____	E Make sure you know in advance how to find the interview venue.

c What tips on body language would you give someone being interviewed for a job in your country?

Dealing effectively with interview questions

Responding to questions at an interview is your opportunity to give evidence of your skills and experience, prove you know what the job entails, and demonstrate that you are the best person for the job.

5 a In pairs, discuss the following questions.

- 1 What questions might you expect to be asked in any job interview?
- 2 What advice would you give somebody about dealing with interview questions?

b Look at the following common interview questions. Write the type of question (a–c) next to each question (1–12).

- a Questions that require you to talk about yourself, your ambitions, your personality, your hobbies and interests
- b Questions that require you to prove you have researched the job and company you have applied for work with
- c Questions that require you to demonstrate you have the skills and experience required for the job

- 1 Can you tell us something about yourself? a
- 2 What experience do you have that is relevant for this position? ____
- 3 What did you learn during your time at university? ____
- 4 What do you see as your strengths? ____
- 5 What do you think about our website? ____
- 6 What attracted you to the position? ____
- 7 How would your colleagues describe you? ____
- 8 What sorts of projects did you work on in your last position? ____
- 9 What university did you attend and why did you choose it? ____
- 10 How do you typically approach new projects? ____
- 11 What do you know about our company? ____
- 12 Where do you see yourself in five years’ time? ____

- c** In pairs, try to think of some more questions for each category (a–c). Which questions would you welcome in an interview? Which questions would you not like to be asked?
- d** In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the questions in Exercises 5b and 5c. Which questions are easiest to answer? Which are the most difficult?
- e** ▶ 4.4 Listen to three extracts from an interview. Which three questions in Exercise 5b is the candidate responding to?
- f** ▶ 4.4 Listen again and, in pairs, discuss how each answer could be improved.
- g** Match the advice on how to answer questions (1–5) to the practical tips (a–e). What were the specific problems with the three extracts in Exercise 5e?

1 Be clear and explicit	a If you personally did something, say 'I did' rather than 'we did' or 'it was'.
2 Be audible	b Most lies or exaggerations get discovered and suggest bad judgment on your part.
3 Be concise	c Do not assume interviewers know what your previous job involved, even if they work in the same organisation. It is also important not to use jargon or acronyms that the interviewer might not be familiar with.
4 Be truthful	d Don't talk for too long, or drift away from the point. Be alert to any signs from the interviewer of boredom, loss of concentration, or signals that you are talking too much. However, also ensure that you say enough.
5 Focus on action you have taken	e Answers that can't be heard demonstrate poor interpersonal and communicative skills.

- h** Look at the first interview extract from Exercise 5e. Rewrite the candidate's answer and improve it by:

- deleting any sections which drift away from the point;
- trying to make the remaining sentences more dynamic.

Well, I've never really thought about it. I suppose I'd like to be married with kids, perhaps. My sister's got three kids, and they're really great. I'd also like to be doing a job I enjoy. There's nothing worse than being stuck in a boring job where you have the same routine every day. It'd be a job with lots of responsibility, but I suppose not too much. I wouldn't want to get stressed. If I was lucky enough to get this job, it'd be great, but I suppose five years is a long time without a change, so I'd try to get a promotion, if I could.

I see myself doing a job I really enjoy.

- i** ▶ 4.5 Listen to an improved answer and compare it with your ideas. What techniques did the candidate use in the improved answer?

- j** Look at the third interview extract from Exercise 5e. Rewrite the candidate's answer and improve it by:
- trying to make it more action-focused – make every sentence focus on what the speaker actually does or did;
 - adding specific examples.

Well, usually there needs to be a clear picture of what the aims of the project are. So it's essential to speak to everyone involved before taking any action. In my current job we use project management software to help us keep track of what we have to do and when we have to do it. Of course, it's important that someone keeps an eye on whether people are actually doing what they're supposed to be doing, and obviously you also need to deal with unexpected situations as they come up.

The first thing I do is make sure I've got a really clear picture of what I need to achieve. Let me give you an example ...

- k** ▶ 4.6 Listen to an improved answer and compare it with your ideas.
- l** In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the three questions in Exercise 5e.

Talking about yourself

In all interviews you will be required to talk about yourself. The interviewers want to find out whether you're the type of person who would be able to do the job and also whether your personality would fit in with the rest of the company.



- 6 a** In pairs, discuss how you would answer the following questions.
- 1 Can you tell us something about yourself?
 - 2 What did you learn during your time at university?
 - 3 What kinds of things do you worry about?
 - 4 Would you say you're an ambitious person?
- b** ▶ 4.7 Alejandro is a recent Economics graduate, practising for an interview at an international bank. Listen to his answers to the four questions in Exercise 6a. In pairs, discuss what you think of Alejandro's answers, and suggest ways in which he could improve them.
- c** ▶ 4.8 Listen to a recruitment expert, Grace, commenting on each of Alejandro's answers. Do you agree with her?
- d** ▶ 4.9 Listen to the answers Alejandro gives in the real interview. How has he improved his responses?

e ▶ **4.9** Complete Alejandro's improved answers using the correct form of the verbs in the box. Listen again and check your answers.

apply	communicate	develop	gain	get (x2)
lead	make	meet	motivate	put
				work

Interviewer: Can you tell us something about yourself?

Alejandro: Well, I'm motivated and I (1) put a lot of effort into everything I do, whether I'm studying at university, at work or even when I'm playing sport. During my last year at university I was captain of the basketball team. I had to organise matches and (2) _____ the players. As captain it was essential that I was able to (3) _____ effectively and get along with everybody in the team ... and for the first time in years our team managed to reach the regional final. We didn't win, unfortunately, but (4) _____ the team to the final was a big achievement for me.

Interviewer: What did you learn during your time at university?

Alejandro: Oh, lots of things. My Economics degree was very practical, and there were many elements of the degree that could be (5) _____ to the business world. I had a number of challenging assignments, which often had to be completed within a short period of time. This helped me to (6) _____ my prioritising skills and ability to (7) _____ to tight deadlines.

Interviewer: What kinds of things do you worry about?

Alejandro: I worry about normal things, the same as everybody else, I think. I worry about (8) _____ deadlines and (9) _____ everything done on time. I used to worry about data on my computer quite a bit. Now I back up all my data on an external hard drive, so that everything is protected. This way I've got one less thing to worry about.

Interviewer: Would you say you're an ambitious person?

Alejandro: Yes, I would say that I'm ambitious. I'm very keen to (10) _____ a job with a company such as yours where I can (11) _____ full use of my degree and professional experience. I am a dedicated worker and would hope to (12) _____ internal promotion based on my performance at work.

f Underline useful phrases from Alejandro's answers in Exercise 6e which you could use to answer the same questions. For example, I put a lot of effort into everything I do, whether I'm ... or even when I'm ... Plan your own answers to the questions.

g In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the questions.

Avoiding common mistakes

Whatever job you're applying for, there are some questions that you will nearly always get asked. Preparing for these questions will help you to use them to demonstrate effectively why you are the best candidate for the position.

7 a In pairs, discuss how you would answer the following questions. Then, take turns to ask and answer them.

- 1 What do you see as your strengths?
- 2 What university did you attend, and why did you choose it?
- 3 What are your weaknesses?
- 4 What do you like doing in your spare time?

- b** ► 4.10 Listen to two recruitment experts, Grace and Oliver, sharing tips on effective ways to answer these questions. Do you agree with them? What would you change about your own answers to make them more effective?
- c** ► 4.10 Match the advice given by Grace and Oliver (a–h) to the questions (1–4) in Exercise 7a. Listen again and check your answers.
- a Use examples from your experience to support your claims. 1
 - b Don't say that you chose it because it was the closest one to home.
 - c Mention what steps you have taken to tackle this problem.
 - d Focus on the educational/academic/professional reasons for your choice.
 - e Don't use tentative language such as 'I feel' or 'I think I'm quite good at'.
 - f Mention anything that demonstrates you working as part of a team or group.
 - g Don't say that you have none.
 - h Talk about things that are unusual and memorable.
- d** ► 4.11 Lidia and Rafa are both applying for a marketing position with a magazine based in New York. Listen to their answers to the questions in Exercise 7a and decide who is the stronger candidate.
- e** ► 4.11 Complete the following extracts from Lidia's interview. Listen again and check your answers.
- 1 *I'm also able to prioritise my work and work under pressure if deadlines are moved forward.*
 - 2 *I did a lot of research into universities, both abroad and in Spain.*
 - 3 *In the end I decided to go to the University of Barcelona as it was clear that its Economics department had an excellent reputation.*
 - 4 *Well, my French is a bit rusty, so I have recently started evening classes to improve it.*
 - 5 *I still play football for a local club and love going away with the team for matches against other clubs.*
 - 6 *I'm also a keen traveller.*
 - 7 *During the summer last year I spent a month in Africa working with volunteers at a national reserve.*
- f** Look at the following answer templates based on Lidia's answers. Complete the templates so they are true for you.
- 1 I am and apply a approach to my work. I believe in . This enables me to . I'm also able to . For example, in my last job . I implemented a new system for . This way we were able to .
 - 2 I did a lot of research into . In the end I decided to as it was clear that its had an excellent reputation.
 - 3 Well, I feel that , so I have recently started to improve . I used to be , but I've started , which has enabled me to .
 - 4 I enjoy . I'm also a keen . During the I . I'm currently .
- g** In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the questions in Exercise 7a, using the templates in Exercise 7f.

Proving you've done your research

Successful candidates are the ones who research the job and the company. They are able to walk into an interview confident they have exactly what the company is looking for.

- 8 a ► 4.12 During her interview with Futerra, Silvia Carnali is asked what she knows about the company, and why she wants to work there. Listen to the extract from the interview and answer the following questions.

- 1 What did Silvia do before applying for the position at Futerra?
- 2 What attracted Silvia to Futerra?
- 3 What experience will Silvia be able to use in the job?
- 4 What did Silvia like about Futerra's website?
- 5 Would Silvia prefer to work for a large or small organisation?

- b ► 4.12 Complete the following extracts from Silvia's interview using the phrases in the box. Listen again and check your answers.

attracted me to dynamic place to work from everything I've learnt
It's clear from look at your website ~~research into the market~~
well-established reputation

- 1 Well, before applying for this position I did some research into the market and Futerra came out on top.
- 2 I had a _____ and could see that you work with a variety of people ...
- 3 Well, it's really something that _____ Futerra.
- 4 The Junior Consultant post combines these two areas at a company with a _____.
- 5 You came across online as an exciting, _____.
- 6 _____ your website that Futerra is a quite a small company ...
- 7 I definitely feel, _____ about Futerra, that this is the type of organisation I'd like to work for.

- c ► 4.13 Listen to the interviewers, Matt and Dan, discussing Silvia's performance in the interview. Do you agree with their comments?

- d When demonstrating that you've researched the company, you should mention positive things that attracted you to the company. Find examples of positive expressions in audioscript 4.12 on page 90. Can you think of any more examples of positive language of your own?

- e Cross out the word in bold that cannot be used to complete each of the following sentences.

- 1 I had a look at your website. It's really **impressive/innovative/challenging/eye-catching**.
- 2 I wanted to work with this company because you have a really **strong/enjoyable/outstanding/excellent** reputation.
- 3 The work you do seems to be very **fulfilling/worthwhile/satisfying/first-class**.
- 4 I was impressed by your **fulfilling/innovative/first-class/best-selling** products.
- 5 I think working for you would be very **enjoyable/challenging/fantastic/fulfilling**.

f Think of a company you would like to work for. Plan your answers to the following questions. In pairs, role play the interview. Student A, you are the interviewer. Student B, you are the candidate. Swap roles and practise again.

- What do you know about _____ ? And why would you like to work here?
- Can tell us why this impressed you?
- Can you tell us a bit more about what attracted you to the position of _____ ?
- You mentioned that you looked at our website. What did you think of it?
- Wouldn't you prefer to work for a _____ organisation?

Demonstrating you've got what it takes

In every interview you will be asked to talk about your transferable skills and experience and how these meet the requirements for the job.

9 a ▶ **4.14** Susana Cilveti is a recent graduate. Listen to an extract from her interview for a sales assistant position and answer the following questions.

- 1 What skills does Susana think are necessary for a sales assistant?
- 2 What was she doing before she moved to England?
- 3 What evidence does she give of her financial experience?
- 4 Susana claims to be a highly effective communicator. Do you think she provides enough evidence to support this claim?

b ▶ **4.14** Listen again and complete the following sentences so they are true for Susana by underlining the correct words in bold.

- 1 In my last job I was responsible for **implementing new strategies** / selling souvenirs / negotiating deals.
- 2 I am used to **dealing with customers** / managing big budgets / coping with problems.
- 3 I can speak Italian **reasonably well** / a little / fluently.
- 4 This period of employment gave me experience of **managing people** / networking / organising events.
- 5 When I was at university I used to be **editor of the university magazine** / a member of the student council / captain of the volleyball team.
- 6 I feel I am a **well-organised person** / highly effective communicator / reliable and efficient employee.
- 7 I can work **well under pressure** / well autonomously / best as part of a team.
- 8 I am able to be **firm but fair** / delegate effectively / use my initiative to solve problems.

c Choose the best ending for each sentence in Exercise 9b so they are true for you. You can invent your own endings.

d In pairs, take turns to ask and answer the following questions, using your answers in Exercise 9c to help you.

- 1 What languages can you speak?
- 2 How would you describe the way you work?
- 3 What skills did you develop at university / at your last job?

- e ► 4.15 In her interview at Futerra, Silvia Carnali is asked how her skills and experience match the requirements for the position. Listen to the extract and make a note of the skills she mentions.
- f ► 4.15 Silvia uses a range of phrases to organise her answer. Complete her answer using the phrases in the box. Listen again and check your answers.

also when ever since finally Firstly Following
 For example For my dissertation for three reasons
~~I think I'm suitable for the position at Futerra because~~
 Secondly So So to sum up That's really when
 When I was at years ago

Well, (1) I think I'm suitable for the position at Futerra because I understand the issues you deal with and am passionate about them. Four (2) _____ I joined Greenpeace and have been an active member (3) _____.

(4) _____ my BA I found out about an exciting project in Kenya and spent six months there educating local people about the need for reforestation. (5) _____ I started getting interested in sustainability and (6) _____ I started learning about different communication strategies. (7) _____, our team found that simply putting up posters didn't really have much of an impact, but going and talking to respected members of the community and getting them to talk to others was much more effective.

(8) _____ university I was the communications officer of the student union and I was responsible for dealing with suppliers and other student organisations. (9) _____ I've got quite a lot of communication experience. I know you're also looking for someone who's good at research. (10) _____ for my MA I'm researching how best to communicate reforestation issues, building on my own practical experiences gained in Kenya.

(11) _____, I think I'm suitable for the position at Futerra (12) _____. (13) _____, I've done a lot of communication work. (14) _____, I'm a good team worker, and (15) _____, because I have a good understanding of the sustainability issues this agency deals with.

- g Underline useful phrases from Silvia's answer which you could use in an interview of your own. For example, I think I'm suitable for the position at ... because I ...

- h Put the following stages in the same order as Silvia's answer.

- 1 Talking about your experience, providing background information for an anecdote
- 2 Summarising how the various examples have fully answered the question
- 3 Giving specific details from previous experiences and showing how these experiences relate to the requirements of the job
- 4 Expressing enthusiasm for the job and briefly relating your character to the job
- 5 Giving a second example of experience that relates to the job requirements

- i** Think of a job that you would like to apply for. Plan your answer to the question, *'How do your skills and experience match the requirements for this position?'* using the structure in Exercise 9h.
- j** Complete the following sentences so they are true for you.
- 1 I think I'm suitable for the position of _____, because _____.
 - 2 Following my degree I _____.
 - 3 I started getting interested in _____.
 - 4 When I was at university I _____.
 - 5 So to sum up, I think I'm suitable for the position at _____ for three reasons. Firstly, _____.
Secondly, _____, and finally _____.
- k** Look at the following table and add two more common interview questions. Think of a job you would like to apply for. Prepare your answers to all the questions using words and phrases from this unit.

Question	Clear	Explicit	Audible	Concise	Truthful	Action language	Body language
Can you tell us something about yourself?							
What do you see as your strengths?							
What do you like doing in your spare time?							
What do you know about our company?							
How do your skills and experience match the requirements for this position?							

- l** In groups of three role play a job interview using the table in Exercise 9k.
- Student A, you are the interviewer. You should ask a selection of questions from the table in Exercise 9k.
- Student B, you are the candidate. You should answer the questions honestly, using your notes in Exercise 9k.
- Student C, you are the observer. You should make notes on the candidate's answers in the table in Exercise 9k, using ✓ and ✗ symbols.
- If possible, record the interview, as this will help you to identify your individual strengths and weaknesses. When you have finished, the observer should give feedback on the candidate's performance. Swap roles and practise again.