



# DEFENCE

## Interview Questions:

BY JOHN ASHBURTON



**WHAT** ARE THE QUESTIONS,

**WHY** ARE THEY ASKED, AND

**HOW** TO ANSWER THEM

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# PREFACE

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**Welcome to ‘Defence Interview Questions’!**

**I certainly remember that wanting to find out all about the actual questions inside the job interview was one of my primary concerns when preparing for my Australian Defence Force (ADF) selection process. I had quite a bit of other experience to draw on but really wanted to know the specifics about what was going to go on in the interview.**

**Whilst finding out a little about the likely questions, I discovered it was more important to understand the purpose of the questions and why they were being asked. So I’ve created this eBook with this in mind for you. My aim is to prepare you for likely questions as well as giving you the foundations to be able to respond confidently to the inevitable unexpected questions...**

**I also want to thank you for choosing Defence Ready to help you on your way.**

**I would be thrilled if you thought someone else might also benefit from reading this eBook. Please consider the time I have taken to prepare this book and do not share or distribute your copy of this book without my permission. The most up to date version will always be available at:**

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Finally, please feel free to email [info@defenceready.com.au](mailto:info@defenceready.com.au) to let me know what you found most useful and whether this book helped you make it through your own interview process.

Good luck!

*John Ashburton*

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# **Defence Ready**

## **DEFENCE**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



compiled by John Ashburton

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE THREE MAIN THINGS THE JOB INTERVIEWER WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU

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*“Seek first to understand and then to be understood”*

Stephen Covey

I have some fantastic news for you! If you've taken the time to read this eBook about your ADF interview questions, then you're already way ahead of most people heading into the selection interviews - regardless of what stage they're at. This is because by stopping to consider what the questions will be, you are on the path to understanding the true purpose of the interview.

Unfortunately, most people look at finding out about interview questions at a superficial level only. So they want to find out what are the actual questions so they can have a think about how to answer.

This can be useful but it is far from the ideal approach that will get you selected for your ideal position.

The deeper level of understanding that you will gain in this first chapter is to really understand the fundamental things the interviewer wants to know about you. These are the underlying questions that will empower them to make an informed decision on whether you are the type of person who is going to thrive in the prospective work environment and go on to a successful career in the ADF.

They are looking at very deep motivations and character history to make this judgement and if you can relate to what they really want to know, you make their job easier in determining whether or not you are suitable. You also give yourself the best opportunity to show your best and most relevant side during the interview.

Therefore, before we get started into the details of the likely questions during your job interview, it is very important that you understand the purpose behind the questions. In fact, **if you only read this ONE page of this entire eBook**, then you will have gained a massive insight into the whole process.

Here are the three main things the interviewer wants to know about you.

- 1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?**
- 2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?**
- 3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?**

In case that sounds complex, here are the same questions but in very simple terms. These are much easier to work with:

- 1. Would I like working with you?**
- 2. Are you motivated to do the work?**
- 3. Do you have the foundation character and skills needed?**

That's it.

Now before you close the eBook and move on to the next in the series, I now want to help you use this information in preparing your responses for the interview.

Firstly, it is useful that you understand that the interviewer actually wants you to succeed. Yes, you might need to read that again.

**The interviewer is looking for a suitable applicant and they want it to be you.**

Contrary to popular belief, the ADF interviews are not designed to remove unsuitable applicants. Each stage is actually designed to FIND suitable candidates. Of course, unsuitable applicants are removed as a bi-product of this process, but the starting point of the interview is to FIND the best applicants to become the company's next employees.

If you consider this in the context of the three primary questions already mentioned, you can see that the interviewer is basically on the lookout for someone who ticks all the boxes.

If you can show them that you would be an excellent person to work with, that you would fit in with the existing culture and that you have the basic skills to be trained quickly, then you will likely succeed at this stage of the selection process.

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# CHAPTER TWO

## WHAT ARE THE ACTUAL QUESTIONS

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It's time for a quick activity and a little revision to help you cement in your mind the three primary questions that underly your entire interview. Do you remember them?

Although this is an eBook (so you're likely reading on a screen of some sort), see if you can fill in the blanks below:

*Activity: The three main things that the interviewer wants to know about me are:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

So the answers are...

*The three main things the interviewer wants to know about me are:*

- 1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?*
- 2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?*
- 3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?*

Or you might have been thinking in more simple terms like I do and had something like this...

- 1. Would I like working with you?*
- 2. Are you motivated to do the work?*
- 3. Do you have the foundation character and skills needed?*

Don't worry if you're not getting this yet. We'll be repeating this theme together over and over throughout this eBook about Defence Interview Questions.

We're now going to jump into another activity!

During the interview, it is very **unlikely** the interviewer is going to ask you any of these questions directly:

1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?
2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?
3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?

(Hopefully by this point these questions seem familiar to you)

So it will be important that you can identify when they are asking these category of questions through other means.

At this point, you may be confused about this whole concept of what question is really being asked. This is fair enough. I mean, isn't a question just question? Stereotypically, this can be harder for blokes to understand. Not exclusively so, but there is a tendency that women can better understand the concept that people don't always say exactly what they mean, and their questions aren't exactly what they're asking!

This example may help you grasp this concept. If you're a man driving a car and your **female** passenger turns to you and says "Honey, do you need to pee?" What is the first thought that occurs to you?

If your first thought is "Do I need to pee?" then you've likely missed the point of the question. You might simply respond with "no, I'm fine" and keep driving. If you're a woman reading this you can probably guess this is the wrong (not to mention unpopular) response.

What the woman is actually saying is "I need you to pull over so I can go to the bathroom!" She is just saying it very indirectly!

So remember, questions are not always direct.

Now its time to put this back into the context of the Defence interview and how to categorise questions automatically so you can respond in a way that answers the question favourably.

Let's take a look at some quick examples of each category of questions.

**Category One: Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?**

If the interviewer asks you: "Do you work well in a team? What role do you normally fill?" they are likely looking for information about you that would help them determine **whether or not you are going to fit in with the culture.**

So if you responded by saying "*I hate working with other people. I prefer to do everything on my own so I know it gets done right,*" then that might be an indication that you would not fit well in the team oriented culture of the company.

If, on the other hand, you recognise the purpose of this question is gauging how well you would fit into a team, you might respond with something like, "I like working in teams. It is interesting how different peoples skills and abilities come together to create a stronger unit than individuals doing their own thing. I like looking out for areas where some peoples strengths can make up for others inexperience."

Interestingly, this answer could be said by the same person. They are simply using softer words like 'lack of experience' to explain their complaint about others whilst also fairly identifying that there can be benefits of team work.

The other point to note here is that you may have realised that the first response (about hating teamwork) didn't actually answer the question. It simply stated "I don't like teamwork". The question was not asking for an opinion.

We'll talk about crafting your best responses in a subsequent chapter. The only thing I'll mention at this point is that you will still be crafting honest and truthful answers, but they will be focussed on an outcome instead of simply trying to survive the question and stumble on.

For now I want to make sure you start to appreciate how to quickly grasp the underlying question being asked throughout the interview.

Lets look at another category.

**Category Two: Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?**

The next possibility is based around the question, "Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?" Again, it is very unlikely you will be asked this question word for word as it stands here.

Instead you might hear a question like "Why do you want to be a \_\_\_\_\_?" Once more, it is very important to understand the category of this question. The interviewer is not really interested in **exactly** why you want to become a \_\_\_\_\_.

*[The blanks above are for you to insert your preferred service or specific Defence position]*

They are trying to assess your intrinsic motivation for the job so they can decide on whether you will endure the training and hardships of the work. It is very expensive to bring on a new recruit and it is critical that you can articulate that your motivation is sound and for the long term.

So if you simply responded to the question at a superficial level, you might say something like, "It seems like an exciting job and I want to challenge myself."

There is nothing wrong with this motivation, yet it doesn't help the interviewer satisfy the question of your long term motivation. So it becomes a missed opportunity to tick the box of "Are you motivated to do the work?"

So another way of responding would be to say, "I think this role is an important community service and I want to make a difference in my community. I also like challenging myself so I think I would enjoy the position whilst still doing something useful for the community."

*[You may need to adjust this to suit your selected job]*

As before, you can see that this response might come from the same person. It just places the self-interest as an afterthought to a much more sustainable motivation of community service.

Don't worry if these responses don't fit with you or your career. These are just examples to illustrate the difference between answering the questions at a superficial level and actually answering one of the three primary questions the interviewer needs to find out about **you**.

This category of motivation will feature heavily in the interview. One of the most common type of questions that challenge your motivation is to query your knowledge of the position. The logic here is that if you are keen and motivated, you will have spent some time researching the role and the ADF in general. If, however, you don't know much about the job, then you demonstrate that this is not something you have spent time looking into.

**Category Three: Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?**

The third type of question is going to be for the interviewer to make an assessment on whether you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of an operational team member.

An example of this question would be if they ask you, “Have you ever failed in something?” (this is also a very likely question)

The superficial answer to this might be to respond that, “I tried to become a paramedic a few years ago, but I didn’t get in.”

This may be perfectly true, but the problem again is that it doesn’t help the interviewer identify a suitable character trait that indicates you are Defence material. The purpose of this question is not to find out if you have ever failed at something. It is about how you manage a perceived failure. This in turn comes back to analysing your character and looking for signs that you have a suitable level of resilience to cope with setbacks and challenges during training and your career.

Another answer would be to choose a different incident. For example, you might say, “I’ve always played basketball and when I changed schools in year 10, I wasn’t good enough to get into my new school team. I’d never missed out before so I considered that a failure. I spent the rest of that season getting some coaching and subsequently got selected the next year. I actually ended up playing one of my best seasons too, so getting whooped on the first try out was possibly a good thing in the long term.”

This explanation draws attention to an incident where you failed, tried again and succeeded. It also indicates you understand putting events in context. That initial failure can be turned into a learning experience to make you grow and end up better than you were before. This might

sound like a fairly contrived answer, but if you really look hard you probably have times in your life where you have overcome challenges. You probably don't even consider them failures. These are the events that can help you stand out from the crowd.

Just remember, the question here is all about identifying your suitability for military service. If you've considered likely questions like this and you understand the underlying reason for each question you have a much better chance of providing a genuine answer that helps the interviewer identify whether you will thrive in the environment and commit to a career in the ADF.

**WARNING:**

Sometimes a question really is just a question! If you walk into the interview room and the interviewer asks "how are you?" do not spend seconds trying to analyse what are they really asking. However, this does raise the critical topic of first impressions which is we cover in subsequent trainings.

**Activity:**

In this next activity, you get an opportunity to try out categorising what is really being asked in all these common questions. This is also your chance to take a look at some likely questions that may come up during your Defence selection interview. To get the most value out of this activity it will be useful to grab a sheet of paper and a pen. Then write down for each number which category of question you think it is. To keep things simple, you might like to use the abbreviations indicated below:

**Culture:** Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?

**Motivation:** Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?

**Skills:** Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?

Some of the choices will have multiple options, so don't be too concerned if your answers don't match the answers that follow. As long as you're getting most correct you are on the right track to understanding the types of interview questions.

Don't worry about the actual responses to these questions just yet. Simply have a go at identifying what the interviewer is trying to find out.

## Categorisation Challenge

Your answer for each question in this activity will be either **culture**, **motivation** or **skills**.

*[Insert your preferred service or position in the blanks]*

1. What is the basic daily routine of a \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What type of person makes a good \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Why would you be a good \_\_\_\_\_?
4. Why do you want to be a \_\_\_\_\_?
5. What do you want to get out of joining the ADF?
6. What are you afraid of?
7. Are you scared of getting hurt?
8. What would be the most exciting part of being a \_\_\_\_\_?
9. Do you work well in a team? What role do you normally fill?
10. What leadership experience do you have?
11. When did you decide to pursue a career in the ADF?
12. Why this particular service? (i.e. Why not Army/Navy/Air Force?)
13. What is the equipment carried by \_\_\_\_\_?
14. What are the vehicles used?
15. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done?
16. What is the most physically arduous task you have ever completed?
17. What upsets you?
18. What frustrates you?
19. How will you cope with operational service overseas?

20. How will your family cope with you working away in or away from Australia?
21. What do you think about immigrants being \_\_\_\_\_?
22. What do you think the hardest thing about being a \_\_\_\_\_ would be?
23. What part of your character would hinder you being a good \_\_\_\_\_?
24. Do you ever drink alcohol before driving?
25. How often do you drink alcohol? How much?
26. What is the the most frustrating criminal activity to you?
27. What are the specialty fields of this branch of the ADF available to new members?
28. How long does it take to gain entry into these areas?
29. If you are interested in a special field, what are the exact requirements to get to that field?
30. How often do you conduct physical training?
31. Do you feel sad sometimes? What makes you sad?
32. How often do you feel happy?
33. What does your family think of you joining the military?
34. What do your friends think of you joining the military?
35. Why is discretion an important aspect of working in the ADF?
36. Do you anticipate seeing anything disturbing in this position?  
Provide an example of what that might be.
37. What do you think is the main problem we deal with in the ADF?

38. Describe your childhood.
39. How long are the shifts and what sorts of weekly rosters are used here?
40. Why are you applying for this specific role? What is it about the position here that attracts you?
41. Have you spoken to anyone in the ADF about working here?
42. If there are any prominent stories in the media relating to the ADF, what is your opinion about these?
43. What is the annual income of a \_\_\_\_\_?
44. Why are you applying to become a \_\_\_\_\_ right now?
45. What accomplishment in your life are you most proud of and why?
46. Provide an example of your problem solving skills?

[Answers on the next page...](#)

**Answers to Categorisation Challenge**

1. What is the basic daily routine of a \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation**
2. What type of person makes a good \_\_\_\_\_? **Culture**
3. Why would you be a good \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation / Culture / Skills**
4. Why do you want to be a \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation**
5. What do you want to get out of joining the ADF? **Motivation**
6. What are you afraid of? **Skills**
7. Are you scared of getting hurt? **Skills**
8. What would be the most exciting part of being a \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation / Culture**
9. Do you work well in a team? What role do you normally fill? **Culture**
10. What leadership experience do you have? **Culture / Skills**
11. When did you decide to pursue a career in the ADF? **Motivation**
12. Why this particular service? (i.e. Why not Army/Navy/Air Force?) **Motivation**
13. What is the equipment carried by \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation**
14. What are the vehicles used? **Motivation**
15. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done? **Skills**
16. What is the most physically arduous task you have ever completed? **Skills**
17. What upsets you? **Skills / Culture**
18. What frustrates you? **Skills**
19. How will you cope with operational service overseas? **Skills**

20. How will your family cope with you working away in or away from Australia? **Skills**
21. What do you think about immigrants being \_\_\_\_\_? **Culture**
22. What do you think the hardest thing about being a \_\_\_\_\_ would be? **Skills / Motivation**
23. What part of your character would hinder you being a good \_\_\_\_\_? **Skills**
24. Do you ever drink alcohol before driving? **Skills / Culture**
25. How often do you drink alcohol? How much? **Culture / Skills**
26. What is the the most frustrating criminal activity to you? **Skills**
27. What are the specialty fields of the branch of the ADF available to new members? **Motivation**
28. How long does it take to gain entry into these areas? **Motivation**
29. If you are interested in a special field, what are the exact requirements to get to that field? **Motivation**
30. How often do you conduct physical training? **Skills / Culture**
31. Do you feel sad sometimes? What makes you sad? **Culture / Skills**
32. How often do you feel happy? **Skills**
33. What does your family think of you joining the military? **Skills / Culture**
34. What do your friends think of you joining the military? **Skills / Culture**
35. Why is discretion an important aspect of working in the ADF? **Motivation**

36. Do you anticipate seeing anything disturbing in this position?

Provide an example of what that might be. **Motivation**

37. What do you think is the main problem we deal with in the ADF?

**Motivation**

38. Describe your childhood. **Skills / Motivation / Culture**

39. How long are the shifts and what sorts of weekly rosters are used here? **Motivation**

40. Why are you applying for this specific role? What is it about the position here that attracts you? **Motivation**

41. Have you spoken to anyone in the ADF about working here?

**Motivation**

42. If there are any prominent stories in the media relating to the ADF, what is your opinion about these? **Culture / Motivation**

43. What is the annual income of a \_\_\_\_\_? **Motivation**

44. Why are you applying to become a \_\_\_\_\_ right now?

**Motivation**

45. What accomplishment in your life are you most proud of and why?

**Skills**

46. Provide an example of your problem solving skills? **Skills**

These 46 example questions are just a hypothetical list of questions you may face. Most are very close to actual questions that I and other applicants faced during Defence selection interviews.

As you can see already, if you were to prepare scripted answers to EVERY possible question and combination of questions, you may quickly be overwhelmed.

This is why the categorisation system of understanding the question is so important.

Another way to think of this is like the politician answering media questions. Have you ever noticed that successful politicians rarely answer the actual question asked? This is the result of effective media training and sound preparation on their behalf.

They understand that what they say is played back on radio or television without the context of the preceding question. So they have a pre-determined amount of information that they want to say and then they basically say that in response to the questions that come forward. This keeps them in control of what is reported and helps them to stay 'on message'.

Whilst the tactic of 'not answering questions' is not appropriate for the interview, it is still useful to remember that the interview is a process to elicit basic information from you that answers the three fundamental questions:

1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?
2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?
3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?

If you can develop a comprehensive foundation of personalised responses, with appropriate sub categories, to these three questions then you will be ready to handle whatever comes your way during the interview. However, before you start considering your own information it is critical that you know what to look for. There is a lot of potential information about you that you can present during the interview. You're likely only going to have between 20 and 60 minutes of interview time. As you can likely imagine, this is a very short time to properly articulate who you are and why you are suitable for the job.

So to help you prepare for your own script we must first look at identifying...

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# CHAPTER THREE

## WHO IS THE IDEAL CANDIDATE?

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The ideal profile of a member of the ADF is going to vary across different services and roles. However there are certain elements of character that will likely impress an interviewer across multiple fields. In order to research this in a context that you can use for your interview preparation, I'm going to break this down into three categories in which to measure the ideal candidate. These are:

1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?
2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?
3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?

Do these seem familiar to you?

Lets take a look at each one and build up a quick start point for the ideal candidate. Please note, this is quite generic and the purpose is simply to provide you a starting framework on which to build your custom profile which will be much more detailed. **It is certainly not a recommended script to use.** We will be developing your own foundation script in the next chapter.

**Category One:****Are they a cultural fit for this organisation?**

They are relatively easy going and have excellent communication skills. They know how to build rapport relatively quickly, even if they don't like the other person. They understand the importance of first impressions and also know how to make an appropriate first impression. They understand basic principles of body language and how to avoid looking stand-offish. They know that the interview is an important opportunity to demonstrate natural ability to interact with a stranger in a professional and friendly manner.

The ideal candidate is someone who enjoys working in a team yet can work independently and unsupervised when required. They are considerate of others and are always looking to understand other people's perspectives. They are interested in helping others and get great satisfaction from resolving minor conflicts.

They are able to endure long challenges with a resilient attitude. They bring a sense of energy to times of hardship that helps difficult situations more tolerable to themselves and others.

They are trustworthy and are comfortable trusting others in the team. They are used to taking responsibility for certain team tasks and understand that working with others means occasionally missing out on what they want to do.

They may not have specific leadership experience but they know a bit about their own leadership style anyway. They have recognised good and bad qualities in other leaders or through their own leadership experience.

They may have a presence on social media such as Facebook and Twitter but they keep their professional life very separate from this avenue of socialisation. They've not openly mentioned on online sites that they are applying for a military career. They recognise that a degree of anonymity can be important in certain fields and they want to respect that even during the selection process.

They are confident of being selected and want to make sure they don't compromise the process with any social media problems. They know there will be certain social media guidelines once they get the position. They're aware that the ADF may look at their social media pages as part of the selection process!

## **Category Two**

### **2. Do they have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?**

The ideal candidate knows exactly why they want to become a \_\_\_\_\_. They don't presume to know everything about the job but they are confident that it is the right career for them. Right now is also the best time for them to start. They have specific reasons as to why this year is the right time to apply.

Their motivation is a combination of self-interest and community service. They understand that a high degree of job satisfaction is necessary if they are going to stick to a career. So this is, therefore, the right career for them. They also have a genuine interest in helping people and contributing to the community. They are more interested in resolving conflict than simply getting the job done at all costs.

They have conducted significant research into the job role by reading all the information on the recruitment website, attending any realistic job preview seminars, talking to people who are already doing the job and generally learning as much as they can about this new career. They know there will still be surprises but they have a respectable amount of knowledge as to what to expect.

They know what personal attributes they have which make them suitable. They also know what areas they would need to work on in order to perform well in this career.

They know what they'll be paid, what sort of hours they will work, the type of work, the type of people they will work with and a rough idea of what sort of equipment they will be using.

They might have some particular aspirations for a specialist area or they have at least thought about it and done some research as to how long that might take. For example, if they are interested in becoming a \_\_\_\_\_, they know that this is very competitive and requires many years of learning the basics before they can even apply for the training.

They understand that regardless of what career stream they are interested in, there will be a requirement to serve in some basic work first. Even if this is not their ultimate goal, they still look forward to this part of work and the associated duties.

They have considered the risks of this type of employment. This includes potential injury, the challenges to friendships and intimate relationships and that there are many people who experience times of depression doing this type of work. They also understand that Australian's have been seriously disabled or killed in the line of duty. They have also discussed this with their friends and family and have a good idea of what these people think about them joining the military.

They understand that some people do not like the ADF and that there may be some friendships compromised by this career choice. They've thought about this and still want to proceed with their application.

They may not know the specifics but they have considered that they will be exposed to potentially horrific experiences. Even if they don't know how they will respond to these aspects of the role, they have at least considered it and anticipate that with training and mentoring they will be equipped to deal with the psychological impact these events can have.

They would be willing to talk openly about these matters with other team members or health professionals if appropriate.

They look after their health and fitness and anticipate that there will be challenges to maintain their high standard of health once they start working. They've thought about some strategies to work around this. For example, they know whether or not they can expect there would be access to a gym at their workplace. They also know how to complete exercises without any specific resources or just with equipment at home. They take fitness seriously and understand that any culture of unfit or sluggish employees in the ADF is rapidly disappearing.

They've been following the news reports on media stories related to the ADF. They have thought about their own opinion on these matters. They understand that media reports can be extremely biased though so they don't form too strong an opinion just based on single source reports.

They understand that they have their own biases about what is and is not important in terms of the work required. For example, they may not be particularly interested every aspect but they certainly understand all functions are necessary.

### **Category Three**

**Do they have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?**

They have a good grasp of their own strengths and weaknesses. They know what their strengths are and they look to make use of this when appropriate.

In regard to their weaknesses, they have a plan to improve these and they are also willing to ask for help from others to make up for this shortfall.

They have their own specific examples of problems they have solved. They recognise that there are patterns to times they have succeeded and times they have failed. They know that there are certain environments where they work well and that there are others that they find challenging.

They view failure as a learning opportunity. So whilst they don't like to fail in a task, they can also see the bigger context of inevitable shortfalls in life. They look to identify why something didn't work and search for solutions to improve for next time. They are persistent and don't give up on challenges lightly.

They have thought about the specific experiences that may preclude them from fulfilling this position. This might be criminal offences for example. They acknowledge responsibility for these occurrences and do not try to explain themselves. They are not proud of what happened, yet they are not afraid to answer questions on the topic. They do not become flustered or embarrassed when questioned aggressively about the incident.

Whilst they understand it may be a serious concern for the interviewer, they want to get the message across that they take responsibility for the incident and, if appropriate, have learnt from the experience. They are not at risk of lapsing back to that type of behaviour.

They have some experience in working under pressure and can provide some specific examples of this experience. They recognise their own individual warning signs when they are starting to feel excessively stressed and they have coping strategies to deal with this.

They are happy to work in a range of environments from enclosed offices right through to outdoor work, including poor weather conditions. They're not afraid to get a bit wet or dirty if needed to get the job done.

They have a manual drivers licence and drive regularly. If they don't drive regularly they are taking some action to practice driving in various road and traffic conditions. They anticipate that basic driving skills are beneficial.

They have basic computer skills that allow them to work efficiently on Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel and other similar computer systems. They also learn how to use new computer applications relatively quickly. They are willing to spend time learning these basic skills because it will enhance their overall capability in the company.

They have good written communications skills and can handwrite legibly for others to later read their notes. Their verbal communication skills are excellent. They are an active listener and are respectful in their communications at all times.

They can handle multiple tasks at once such as maintaining a conversation over radio communications whilst talking to another person face to face. They can also keep track of multiple long term projects such as charge files and investigations into outstanding enquiries. They can manage their time and have experience in meeting deadlines for written work.

They have good attention to detail in written documents and also out in real life. They notice when something is out of the ordinary. They are not afraid to question something that seems out of place or isn't working.

Finally, they know what their values are. This is not a list of virtues such as integrity, courage and loyalty. They know their values are unique and are demonstrated by what they spend their time doing. For example, they know they value family and spend as much time out of work as they can with their family. They recognise that the ADF will challenge this value as the anticipated hours will limit their availability to spend as much time as they used to with their family.

## **Summary**

This quick overview of a potential applicant is designed to help trigger you to consider various aspects of your application that you may not have considered. My intent in putting this out to you is not for you to copy the actual script word for word. However, if you find some of the phrases fit your situation and personality then they may work well for you.

The primary benefit of this activity is to help you create your own custom foundation profile. If you have this "handled", so to speak, then you have an underlying foundation of information that you **want** to get across during your interview. This way you will look at each question as an opportunity to say what you came to say. Instead of each question being a hurdle that you need to jump.

In terms of researching your ideal position (particularly for your evidence of motivation) there is certainly some excellent information available via the Defence Recruiting websites to assist you in your research.

For now though, lets get started with this next powerful technique which is...

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# CHAPTER FOUR

## BUILDING YOUR OWN CUSTOM ANSWERS

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Before you get too excited that you only need to script the answers to three questions, remember that I did mention there would be sub headings in your plan...

Basically, the way this works is crafting your base script around the three questions with a little extra guidance on elements that you will benefit from considering.

Also, there is no requirement to make this scripting perfect. You are not actually taking this script into the interview with you. Nor would it be a good idea to try and memorise and recite certain parts word for word. This would come across over rehearsed and 'faked'.

The main benefit of this scripting activity is actually putting your thoughts down on paper. All the information you need about your motivations, your personal history and your relevant skills and experience are all likely in your head already. This activity helps you create the necessary bridge to make sure this information comes out during the interview.

Imagine that there is a bunch of information in your head. Some of it good, some of it bad. Some of it will get you selected for the job and some of it will end your career before it even starts.

If you go into the interview without organising this information, you run the risk of missing opportunities to get the good information across to the interviewer and also inadvertently letting out irrelevant information that may ruin your interview.

This process of scripting allows you to organise all that good information into useful packets. It also allows you to analyse any information you view as 'bad' or 'unhelpful' and determine how you will answer questions about that on the day.

It is not about covering up things or making shit up. It is about self-analysis and organising your thoughts so you can hit the interview in a state of confidence, knowing that you are ready for anything.

So how does this work?

On the following pages we're going to break down each category question with some trigger sentences for you to complete. At some points I will also provide you example scripts. Please note that you will get most benefit from developing your own script in each case. After all, the end product is some notes for you to go over that remind you of how you might respond to certain types of questions on the day. If you're using someone else's script, the information is less genuine and it is also harder to remember on the spot.

Use your own information and you will have a much more natural and positive experience on the day. This will also show in how you present on the day in terms of your overall level of confidence.

You can of course complete this on computer, but there is evidence in numerous studies that physically writing (on paper) these type of activities can boost your retention. Plus if you have a written component to your overall selection, this is a great chance to practice your handwriting.

Category One:

Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?

Here are some phrases to complete to help you prepare for these types of questions. Write down how you would best articulate your situation for each of these:

My personality style in talking to others is...

When I go into the interview, I'm going to make a great first impression by...

When I work in a team I prefer to...

The thing I like about teamwork is....

The thing I don't like about teamwork is...

My leadership experience is...

An example of a long-term challenge I've overcome is...

An example of a very tough short-term challenge I've overcome is...

The reason I use social media is to...

## Category Two

Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?

Here are some phrases to complete to help you prepare for these types of questions. Write down how you would best articulate your situation for each of these:

The reason I want to do this type of work is ...

The reason I want to start right now is...

The reason I want to work at in this particular service is....

The reason I would likely be very suitable is....

[If relevant to the role] Serving the nation is important to me because...

(on this question you may like to consider why you actually want to give

back to the community. Why are you so keen to do this work and not leave it to others. Why not just do volunteer work? What is it about this work that you see is such a valuable way to provide community service)

If I was to apply for a specialist field or specific position it would be...  
(and why)

I've thought about the risks of physical injury in this job. I think that...

*example: I am confident that I would be joining a cohesive team and that there is a lot of support and safety measures in place that minimise my exposure and risk to serious harm. Having said that, I still accept the possibility I could be hurt in this job.*

I've told my friends that I'm applying to work here and they think that...

I've told my family that I'm applying to work here and they think that....

**I have / have not** lost some friends since deciding to pursue this career. Details...

I've thought about being exposed to highly stressful incidents.

Suggested option: I think my experience of .... would help me cope with this.

Suggested option: I think this would be more than I've handled before but I am confident I can develop coping methods such as talking to others about my experiences that would help.

It's important to me that I keep fit. Currently I do the following activities (activities and frequency)....

I anticipate the following challenges to keeping fit if I start working here...

Here is a list of current media stories involving this field of work in my area...

For each of these, write down what it is the story and what is your basic opinion or assessment of what has happened. Keep this fairly impartial. It is important to see both sides of an incident.

I understand what it means to be discretionary.

If you don't already know, discretion is the ability to make a judgement decision within acceptable options. For example, if a police officer stops a driver for speeding, they may consider issuing a penalty fine or just giving a verbal caution. They will use their discretion.

An example of discretion in this type of work would be...

Finally on this category, here is a basic checklist of some fundamentals that you can find out to prove you are motivated to do research on the position. Please note this will be very specific to your chosen occupation:

Level of income in training and on starting work here is:

Basic equipment carried is:

Basic daily routines to expect:

Vehicles used:

### Category Three

3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?

The reason I would be a highly effective team member here is...

Suggestion: Be very specific here. There are hundreds of other applicants and you want to go beyond the standard things that the recruitment staff hear from everyone else. Look for something unique about you that fits well with the character or skill requirements of the role.

I have the following strengths that would be an asset...

I am aware of the following weaknesses that may impact my ability....  
(and what I am doing about them)

A specific example of a complex problem I have solved or help solve is...

Failure to me means...

A specific example of when I have failed is.... (and what I did about it)

The following incidents are likely incidents that I will be asked about during my interview:

Suggestion: These are anything on your employment record. This is one area where you want to demonstrate learning. You are not there to explain yourself.

A specific example of when I have worked in a high stress or high pressure environment is...

I have developed the following coping strategies to stressful situations...

Suggestion: Make sure these are empowering strategies. Curling up in a ball and sucking your thumb may be a coping strategy, but it is not an option for most job positions. Other methods you might have used are:

1. Writing down a list of tasks in order to prioritise and gain perspective
2. If appropriate, pausing for five seconds to consider options
3. Rehearsing and training for likely challenges so that you can process them faster and with less stress when they actually occur.

I can work in a range of environments. The challenges of working in an office for me are...

The challenges of working outdoors for me are...

I have a **manual/automatic** licence. My driving experience is....

Suggestion: If you're not driving every week, consider a plan to increase your practice and be ready to give this plan. Preferably you have already implemented this by the time of your job interview.

My experience on computer systems is....

Suggestion: If you don't have experience, consider a plan to increase your practice and be ready to give this plan. Preferably you have already implemented this by the time of your job interview.

In the ADF, most systems are Microsoft based.

I have good communication skills. I've developed these with experience in...

Suggestion: You want specific examples of your communications skills. Think about anything where you have to talk or write to people. So things like customer service, high school experiences and general social skills are all applicable here.

I can handle multiple tasks at once. A specific example of this is... (also state why this is important for the job for which you are applying).

I have good attention to detail. A specific example of this is... (also state why this is important for this job).

My previous employment was/is...

Suggestion: If appropriate you can relate this to how you have learned skills or gained experiences here that have helped prepare you for a this next position or career. If you have been fired, you need to be prepared to discuss why that was. Remember again, not to explain yourself. You want articulate what happened and what you learned from this.

My values are...

Suggestion: Don't confuse values and virtues. Virtues are simply ideals that are important. However, they don't reflect how you conduct your life on a daily basis. It may certainly be valuable to tell the interviewer that your virtues are aligned with the company (including honesty, courage, teamwork, empathy, etc...) but this is a great opportunity to make yourself stand out from other applicants. Everyone else will be reeling off similar values but it doesn't mean much in terms of distinguishing yourself. If, on the other hand, you can give a real insight into how you spend your life, this will get the interviewer's attention.

This will be very unique to you. We saw in the example candidate that they had a high value on family. Yours may be very different. You may value something like sport and recreation. Look at what you spend your time doing. This is what your values are. Someone once told me "your actions speak so loud I can't hear anything you say."

This basically means that it doesn't matter what you 'say' is valuable to you. What matters is what you are doing. If you look around at people you know you will see inconsistencies everywhere in what people say are their values. Some people say they value health and yet they eat high sugar desserts on a daily basis. It doesn't make sense!

This question is a good opportunity for self analysis to make sure you are clear on your own values before you head into the job interview. If you have congruence in your own values you will carry yourself with a very perceptible air of confidence. This will very much boost your chances of success in the interview.

## **Summary**

If you've completed this activity, you now have a solid foundation on which to lean on during your interview. This list may not be exhaustive for you so be sure to write down any other features that you think relevant to preparing yourself for your interview.

Equipped with a good understanding of what you want to say during the interview, it is now time to consider how to answer the exact questions that do come your way during the interview.

So you probably want to know...

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# CHAPTER FIVE

## WHAT DOES THE INTERVIEWER WANT TO HEAR?

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Imagine you're in the shoes of the interviewer and it is up to you to screen a hundred applicants and pick the best ten. This may not be the exact numbers, but I want you to understand that you are one of many whom the interviewer will be talking to that day, week and month.

Understanding their position will actually help your results significantly. Whilst you don't want to pretend you completely understand their situation, you can certainly empathise that they have a lot of people to see.

This means you will be attempting to 'play nice' in the interview. Basically this comes down to answering their questions directly, whilst bearing in mind the underlying themes of questions we've learned in previous chapters.

An interviewer needs to find out certain things. If you're avoiding questions or not listening properly, this forces the interviewer to have to rephrase or ask questions in a different way. You want to avoid this as it can make the interview drag.

However, at the same time, it is very important you do actually understand the questions. If you genuinely don't understand a question, don't be afraid to ask them to rephrase the question. You don't want to guess what they mean. Asking this will also demonstrate you value accurate communications which is an important skill set for most positions.

Apart from the three underlying questions that contribute to the actual questions, the interviewer is watching for **how** you communicate as much as **what** you are communicating. This comes across in your body language, verbal tone and other non-verbal ways.

So before we look at the ideal format, in terms of what the interviewer wants to hear, we're going to look at your personal communication skills.

Dr Albert Mehrabian, author of *Silent Messages*, carried out several studies on non verbal communication. This is where the famous number that only 7% of communication is conveyed through the actual words. He found that the remaining 93% was conveyed through certain vocal elements (38%) and through non-verbal elements (53%). Subsequent studies have questioned the exact break down, but all agree that the majority of communication is indeed non-verbal.

A job interview is no exception to this rule. In fact, it is potentially even greater as many applicants will have very similar responses. All that will separate them is **how** they communicated. So if you want to stand out from the other applicants, developing your non-verbal communication skills is a fantastic investment. This is a topic I develop in further training but for now you might benefit from the following practical tips:

Stand and sit up straight, smile, and show that you are in control of yourself and confident in what you're saying. Use the space available to appear confident. For example, sitting or standing with your legs slightly apart can indicate a degree of confidence. Ladies, if you might be the exception to this depending on what you're wearing! The point is to sit confidently.

Keep eye contact, but don't stare awkwardly. You don't want to appear too creepy! This is important both when listening and speaking. If there is more than one interviewer give them all some eye contact to create a better connection and see if they are listening. Don't look at the ground. You'll come across as insecure and a bit lost.

Relax your shoulders. Deliberately loosen your shoulders before your interview up by shaking them out and moving them back and down slightly. Don't make a big deal of this in the interview as it will come across as fidgeting.

Nod when appropriate. This indicates that you are listening. But take care not to overdo it. If you are nodding and smiling the whole time, you will appear somewhat fake or just someone who agrees with everything anybody says. Certainly don't nod and wink at the interviewer. This would be WAY too keen!

Lighten up and don't take yourself too seriously. There is a common misconception that recruiting are looking for the next machine to just DO the work. You need to demonstrate you can interact naturally and confidently with someone you've only just met. Relax, smile and laugh if someone says something funny. Be careful about laughing too much at your own jokes of course. It makes you seem insecure.

Keep your head **level**. You may have had advice on keeping your head **up**. This is not necessarily appropriate in Australia. You want more to appear as confident and aware. Rather than just confident and optimistic - which is the impression with the head raised. That comes across as being aloof in Australia.

The best way to do this is to create a confident overall posture. You can do this instantly with one subtly movement. Plus this is so easy you can even do it during the interview without appearing too stiff. The technique is all about **one** body party. It is the part of your chest at the top of your rib cage. If your each up with one finger you can sort of hook your finger on this little indent.

Now imagine someone has tied a string to this point and they lift you up by this string. You will find you chest lifts slightly and your head 'levels' out. If you're doing this right you will instantly feel more confident about yourself. Try this standing up first and let your shoulders drop back and down as you do it.

Slow down to a **deliberate** pace. Not only will you come across as more calm and confident. It will also help you control your emotions and maintain logical thought patterns. This slowing down is appropriate to how you walk, talk and turn to face individual people. Again, think of it as a **deliberate** pace instead of a slow pace.

Use your hands confidently. Avoid fidgeting but use your hands to describe something or add weight to a point you are trying to make. If you really want to improve here then video yourself answering some questions and then watch it back. You may be surprised at either how much or how little you are moving.

Finally, remember to smile! This interview is an opportunity to demonstrate you are enthusiastic about the position. Plus smiling also helps put the interviewer at ease and be more comfortable talking.

Now getting back to **what** the interviewer wants to hear...

Again this is going to vary for each specific question. However, there is a formula you can learn to quickly check off on most of your answers so that you are ticking off the boxes of what the interviewer wants to hear. Basically, they want to hear you answer the question, demonstrate you understand how it applies to the job and then provide some sort of example to reinforce your initial answer.

Therefore the basic format of each ideal response is going to have three components. These are:

1. Answering the question,
2. Putting this into context of the job requirements, and
3. Reinforcing your answer with a specific example.

So for example, if the interviewer asked you: "Why would you be great in this position?"

Ideally, you will first recognise this as a question about your **skills** and **motivation** appropriate to the job. Then you could draw on your rehearsed information and respond that, “I’ve got very good communication skills and I like helping others. I think these are important traits in this type of work as we would spend a lot of time interacting with people in need. I’ve developed my communication skills in my current customer service role and I also get quite a bit of satisfaction in helping people resolve their concerns.”

Let’s break this answer down into each chunk.

1. Answering the question: “I’ve got very good communication skills [**answers skills question**] and I like helping others. [**answers motivation question**]”
2. Putting this into context of the job requirements: “I think these are important traits in this type of work as we would spend a lot of time interacting with people in need.”
3. Reinforcing your answer with a specific example: “I’ve developed my communication skills in my current customer service role and I also get quite a bit of satisfaction in helping people resolve their concerns.”

This is a system I developed during university study from one of my lectures, Dr. McClenaghan. I realised that his model for essay structure also made sense to what I’d learned about interview conduct and general communication skills.

His model for each paragraph of an essay was the A.C.E. model.

This stands for:

**A**rgument

**C**oncept

**E**xample

So we're using a similar A.C.E. model, simplified as

**A**nswering the question

**C**ontext to job requirement

**E**xample from your experience

You might find that you can apply this model to other modes of communication including your written communication during your selection process.

I remember I once spoke with a stand-up comedian after his show and I asked him about general performance tips. He actually responded with some profound advice appropriate to job applicants and people sitting selection interviews.

He said "I always go on stage and tell every joke as though nobody has every heard it before and like I've never told anyone before. If you think even one person has heard the material or you feel a sense of repetition in yourself, then the joke will fall flat. There has to be a sense of innocent freshness to it."

So you might wonder what telling jokes has to do with getting a job or standing out in a job interview!

Firstly, many jobs can be quite repetitive and there is a trap that some employees fall into. This is to forget that just because it is the 999th time you've explained to a client the process of doing something, it is almost **always** their first time doing the process alone. So they should be treated and explained to accordingly.

Even more appropriate though, is the profound way this comment translates to conducting yourself in your job interview. If you've had a few interviews recently, it pays to remember this is the first interview with **this** particular person or people.

Secondly, after spending so much time in preparation to build and rehearse your foundation answers, you still want to come across fresh and sound like you are answering the question in a genuine manner. Not just recalling a script you wrote down two weeks earlier.

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# CHAPTER SIX

## FURTHER TRAINING

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In this eBook we have covered the following skills and techniques:

**Understanding the three main things the interviewer wants to know about you.**

Remember that these are:

- 1. Are you a cultural fit for this organisation?*
- 2. Do you have the intrinsic motivation to endure the challenges of the induction or training as well as the career that follows?*
- 3. Do you have the basic skills and character that the organisation can work with to quickly train you to the requirements of a productive team member?*

**How to categorise most questions into one of these three categories**

This activity gave you insight into understanding the underlying question that is really being asked for most interview questions.

**Determining the ideal candidate profile**

This activity helped you create a baseline in your head for the various topics to consider and what information about yourself you will need to have considered before the day.

**Organising all your skills, experiences and motivations into a system that allows you to answer any question during the interview**

By completing this step you have arranged your motivations, skills and experiences into succinct thoughts. You are ready to draw on this organised source of information during the interview.

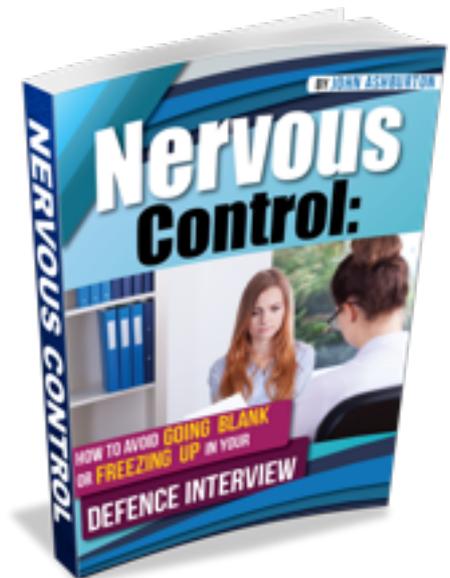
**Used the A.C.E. model to quickly construct excellent interview answers for the actual questions that arise during the interview.**

Using this model, you can ensure that you take every opportunity to answer the actual questions in a manner to include your relevant experience. Plus you can demonstrate to the interviewer that you understand the context of your experience relevant to the job requirements.

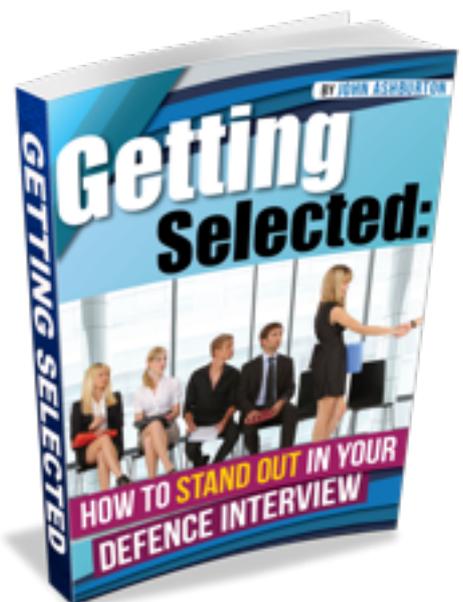
If you are interested in developing your interview skills further you may also like to consider the following eBooks which cover a range of more advanced training information.

**NERVOUS CONTROL** is about saving you from 'going BLANK' or 'freezing up' and how to answer the dreaded scenario or hypothetical type of questions. Plus I also go over techniques and sample ideas on how to answer candidate specific questions which are designed to put you on the back foot. These are the questions most likely to trigger hesitation and knock you off your confidence.

These include questions on your age, life experience, criminal history, size, height, weight, gender, prior work and even tattoos.



**GETTING SELECTED** takes you through advanced interview techniques that will really ramp up your performance and send you into the top percentile of applicants sitting the selection interview. This eBook includes key information on what to do in the first 60 seconds of the interview that will set you up for success over the entire interview. Getting this right can be the difference between an interview that is actually enjoyable versus an hour of pain and embarrassment. I also guide you through appropriate attitudes to take, advanced body language techniques and specific phrases that will help you express your enthusiasm without sounding overzealous!



**Finally, I do want to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to invest in Defence Interview Questions. If you learn and apply the techniques in this eBook you will be on your way to optimising your performance in the interview and making sure you can match what you want to say to the questions asked.**

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# BONUS CHAPTER

## THE TEN MOST DANGEROUS MISTAKES TO AVOID IN YOUR DEFENCE INTERVIEW

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In this BONUS CHAPTER I'd like to share with you a super quick snap shot of some considerations on what **not** to do during your selection interview!

Here are ten fundamental mistakes that you **must** avoid if you want to be amongst the few applicants who succeed at the interview stage.

These are:

- 1. Not paying attention to first impressions.**
- 2. Explaining yourself or talking yourself out of a job.**
- 3. Arguing with or disrespecting the interviewer.**
- 4. Confusing values and virtues.**
- 5. Stating weaknesses as positives.**
- 6. Demonstrating poor loyalty.**
- 7. Not having any questions to ask.**
- 8. Leaving your mobile phone on.**
- 9. Exaggerating.**
- 10. Pretending to know an answer when you don't.**

Lets talk about each of these very briefly so you can avoid falling into these traps that can completely ruin your chances of selection.

### **1. Not paying attention to first impressions.**

The value of a first impression cannot be overstated for a job interview. The first impression you make is not just a stand alone element of the interview. It can potentially be the single most important contributing factor to the interviewer's assessment of you as **suitable or unsuitable**. The reason this can be such a dangerous mistake is that even the interviewer may be unaware of the subconscious significance.

This is basically to do with the concept of stereotyping. Put simply, we all make assumptions about others in the first few seconds of meeting them. We do this unconsciously and it is a perfectly normal human behaviour. The problems arise when we act on those assumptions without giving a person fair opportunity to show who they really are. This becomes a learned behaviour.

What is also automatic behaviour is that **we tend to look for the information that supports our initial judgement**. We simply don't like to be wrong!

So what does this have to do with your interview? Well if the interviewer makes a positive assessment of you in the first few seconds then they will potentially **look mostly for positive information during the interview to support their initial judgement**.

If, on the other hand, they make a negative assessment of you in the first few seconds, then they will potentially **look for negative information during the interview to support their initial judgement**.

I'm sure you can appreciate the difference these perspectives will have on the final result. Not to mention how pleasant or unpleasant the interview will be!

## 2. Explaining yourself or talking yourself out of a job.

Someone once told me, “When you explain yourself, you incriminate yourself.” The reason is that most times when you explain an action, you can easily be mis-interpreted as inappropriately justifying your actions. The key thing to understand here is that this can happen even if you’re attempting to acknowledge responsibility for the event.

For example, if you are questioned on a speeding fine, you have many different options on how to respond:

If you choose to **explain** the event as a result of “being in a hurry for a family emergency”, then you are demonstrating poor judgement skills in your risk assessment of speeding for some other benefit.

If you choose to **explain** the event as an “accidental error” then you are demonstrating incompetence or inattention in your driving.

Neither of these options are a good outcome and only damage your impression during the interview.

If instead you acknowledge the incident and your role, then you are simply answering the question that you accept responsibility and have changed your behaviour since. So your response on this question might look like, “*Yes, I did have a speeding fine last year which was my responsibility. I’ve not had any since.*”

You may notice that this is a **very** short response. Which is pertinent to a few other mistakes including the error of **talking yourself out of a job**.

If in the above scenario you said, “Yes I did have a speeding fine last year which was my responsibility. I have not had any since. ***It’s actually made me a better driver as I now pay attention to my speed more.***” This is a costly mistake. You are now implying a level of incompetence that you were not paying attention before. So the interviewer may well think or even ask, “What else do you fail to pay attention to?”

I'm sure you get the idea here. When you waffle on with an answer you risk exposing a weakness that may not have come up during the interview. You may remember the lesson in the eBook *'Defence Interview Questions'* that the interviewer is looking to answer three fundamental questions. Plus you are looking to convey your pre-determined set of highly valuable qualities that fit these questions. Additional and unnecessary information can damage your interview irreparably.

### **3. Arguing with or disrespecting the interviewer.**

You may think that the person is being rude or just being a bit of a 'dick'. Remember, they may be deliberately acting like this during certain questions as they try and elicit a stress response from you. They don't necessarily have much time to conduct your interview. So if they are being curt, don't mistake this for deliberate rudeness. Part of the interview is to observe how you respond to stress. Creating an argument is a good way to do this.

It also pays to remember that you'll probably never see this person again. Yet they have a fair bit of power over whether or not you realise your dream to get this job. So don't feel like you need to give them feedback on their character flaws. It is not going to help you!

So if you realise that this is all a test, then it is easier to remain objective and not let your personal feelings or emotions overcome you. If nothing else, just remember that the interviewer is observing for 'how' you communicate as well as 'what' you are communicating. This is an opportunity to show you can remain calm and level headed during an awkward or heated conversation.

#### 4. Confusing values and virtues.

Virtues are simply ideals that are important. However, they don't necessarily reflect how you conduct your life on a daily basis. It may certainly be valuable to tell the interviewer that your virtues are aligned with the company (including honesty, courage, teamwork, empathy, etc...) but this is a great opportunity to make yourself stand out from other applicants. Everyone else will be reeling off similar values but it doesn't mean much in terms of distinguishing yourself. If, on the other hand, you can give a real insight into how you spend your life, this will get the interviewer's attention.

Your true values will be very unique to you. You may value something like sport and recreation. Look at what you spend your time doing. This is what your values are. Someone once told me "you're actions speak so loud I can't hear anything you say."

This basically means that it doesn't matter what you 'say' is valuable to you. What matters is what you are doing. If you look around at other people you know, you will see inconsistencies everywhere in what they say are their values. Some people say they value health and yet they eat high sugar desserts on a daily basis and view exercise as a chore. It doesn't make sense!

Remember, your actions reflect your real values.

This question is a good opportunity for self analysis to make sure you are clear on your own values before you head into the job interview.

If you have congruence in your own values you will carry yourself with a very perceptible air of confidence. This will very much boost your chances of success in the interview.

## **5. Stating weaknesses as positives.**

Whilst it is a useful strategy to identify the positive benefits, or lessons learned, from negative experiences, it is still important not to fall into the trap of stating all negative experiences or character traits as positives.

A better strategy is to acknowledge any weaknesses and clearly articulate how you mitigate this weakness. This means explaining what you are doing to develop this area.

For example, if you identify a weakness that you are a very young applicant, it is not good enough to say that your age gives you fresh perspective during problem solving. Whilst this is true, it is a bit of a cop out.

This comes back to remembering the three main questions that the interviewer wants to know about you. In this case, they are looking specifically at the 'skills / character' category of questions. They are analysing how you will handle your inexperience and if you have an understanding of potential options available to you.

So you would do well to state something along the lines that you *“acknowledge you have limited life experience and would look to consult with more experienced officers when practical”* and that you are *“willing to learn from others and that listening to more experienced officers can save a lot of unnecessary mistakes.”*

This is not necessarily a script that suits you, but it serves to demonstrate the point. Look for your weaknesses and then have a plan in your head as to how you can start to develop in this area and what resources are available to you to improve or mitigate this shortfall.

## **6. Demonstrating poor loyalty.**

The ADF expect a high standard of loyalty in its officers and soldiers. The job interview can be a dangerous environment for exposing potential challenges you may have to maintaining this standard. Loyalty, in terms of an organisation, is generally a matter of respect. The respect of subordinates to

their supervisors and vice versa. As a subordinate you expect that your interests are considered when supervisors make decisions that affect you. The flip side of this, specific to work environments, is the loyalty expected not to undermine the chain of command or supervisors. This means a measured respect to orders and policy.

At the most basic level, it relates to 'bitching' in the workplace. Talking about people who are not present is not loyal. This is a likely test during a job interview.

The problem that can arise in the job interview is that you may not realise how your past experiences and outlook on those experiences can indicate how you will perform in this function.

For example, if you talk badly about anyone at all during your interview, you are indicating a potential tendency for poor loyalty. This is because you are basically 'talking behind someone's back'. If they're not in the interview then they can't very well represent themselves.

This includes past employers. So be careful about how you explain previous employment and choose your words carefully if you need to answer a question of being fired or made redundant. Discretion and fairness should guide you in your response. This can be a very dangerous question!

## **7. Not having any questions to ask.**

The interview is a two way communication setting. It is not an interrogation.

If you don't have any questions for the interviewer, then you demonstrate a lack of interest which translates into a lack of motivation. This may not be true of you, however, you need to look at the tangible identifiers available to the interviewer.

Remember, that you need to take up all the opportunities you can to help them find positive evidence of their three primary questions. Asking questions (usually towards the end of the interview) demonstrates you see the interview as an opportunity to confirm you are suitable for the role.

It is useful to keep a balance of asking questions but not appearing ignorant of things you could have asked beforehand.

Example questions to ask might include:

*“What do you most enjoy about working here?”* Only ask this if the interviewer is actually a member of Defence.

*“What is the next step in the process?”* This demonstrates you are enthusiastic and want to continue in your preparations as required. You should definitely ask this at the end of the interview - unless they've already told you the next step!

*“Is there anything you recommend I do from here?”* This demonstrates optimism which is an attractive character trait. It may also provide you some feedback on your performance in the interview.

Example questions of **what NOT to ask** might include:

Don't ask about anything that you may have heard in gossip. Engaging in this type of talk in the interview implies you may continue to gossip in the workplace. This is not an attractive character trait.

Don't ask about how long it takes to be promoted. If you appear anxious to skip the lower ranks of constable you may be indicating that you're not interested in basic work.

Don't ask about background checks. This implies you are concerned about your personal history or are trying to hide something.

## **8. Leaving your mobile phone on.**

Other than the interruption if it rings, you do expose a potential negative trait if your mobile phone makes any noise at all during the interview.

Even if you rarely use your mobile phone, you need to consider how this looks to the interviewer. If they've only been talking to you for five minutes and your phone goes off, they might subconsciously think that you're a 'person who is on their phone a lot.'

Many work environments can require extended periods without use of your mobile phone. Don't give the interviewer a false (hopefully not true) impression that you are 'attached to your phone'.

Remember, some phones trigger daily alarms even if they're switched off! So check your alarms are off as well.

### **9. Exaggerating.**

You're certainly in the interview to show your best side. However, remember that one of the key questions the interviewer has is trying to work out if they would like working with you. Have you ever worked with someone who was constantly 'talking themselves up'? Or at the other end of the spectrum, someone who always makes a story sound worse than it really is? I'm sure neither experience was pleasant.

Particularly in Australia, you need to have a balanced perspective. The interview is a great opportunity to demonstrate that you can articulate the positives without going over the top.

Plus if you exaggerate your own talents you risk sounding arrogant. Nobody likes an arrogant team member - as you may well have experienced!

### **10. Pretending to know an answer when you don't.**

Finally, if you don't understand a question, simply ask the interviewer to rephrase the question. Nobody likes a 'bullshitter'. So make sure you understand what you're answering.

If you really don't know an answer, it is better to say so instead of making it up. Acknowledging that you need to find out about something is better than guessing and proving that you're incompetent. This goes back to the dangerous mistake of talking yourself out of a job. Stick to what you know. Acknowledge what you don't.

