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Project supported by:



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Welcome to

Preparing for the Workplace

At Shine Ireland, we always pride ourselves with being innovative and proactive. Our motto "brighten the future" is at the core of our day to day operations, as well as our planning and development of projects and future services. We see the Preparing for the Workplace Programme as fulfilling this motto, and brightening the future of individuals far beyond Shine Ireland's reach.

BNY Melon recognised this ambition, and saw the programme for what it could be, and we are so grateful for the faith they have shown in us in supporting this programme. Carol Sheehan and Yvonne Scriven from Aspect, also recognised the potential of this programme, and have been invaluable in bringing it to fruition. We extend our deepest thanks to Aspect for helping Shine to make this programme a reality.

To the educators who will utilise this programme, we thank you. Take this opportunity to instil confidence and determination in your students. Help them to equip themselves with the tools they need to brighten their own futures. Help them by providing the best preparation possible. Help them by believing in them.

Many thanks,
Laura Crowley.
 BA ECS (Hons) MA Ed
 Shine Ireland.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laura Crowley".



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Preparing for the Workplace

At BNY Mellon Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is at the core of our business strategy. It enables us to power global investments and growth, earn the trust of our clients and stakeholders, and innovate for a better world. Our commitment to corporate social responsibility is crucial in how we fulfill our role as a major global financial institution and as part of that commitment we are fully invested in market integrity, our people and our world. At BNY Mellon our commitment to the wellbeing of communities is also an essential part of who we are and how we do business.

BNY Mellon is delighted to support the Preparing for the Work Place programme in partnership with Shine Ireland as it fully reflects our commitment to supporting social innovation to affect positive change in the communities where our employees live and work. This programme will deliver real opportunities to a group of people with many talents and abilities and allow them to make a real and valuable contribution to their local economies and communities.

Regards,

Heather Crowley-Kerr

Managing Director

BNY Mellon

Cork, Ireland



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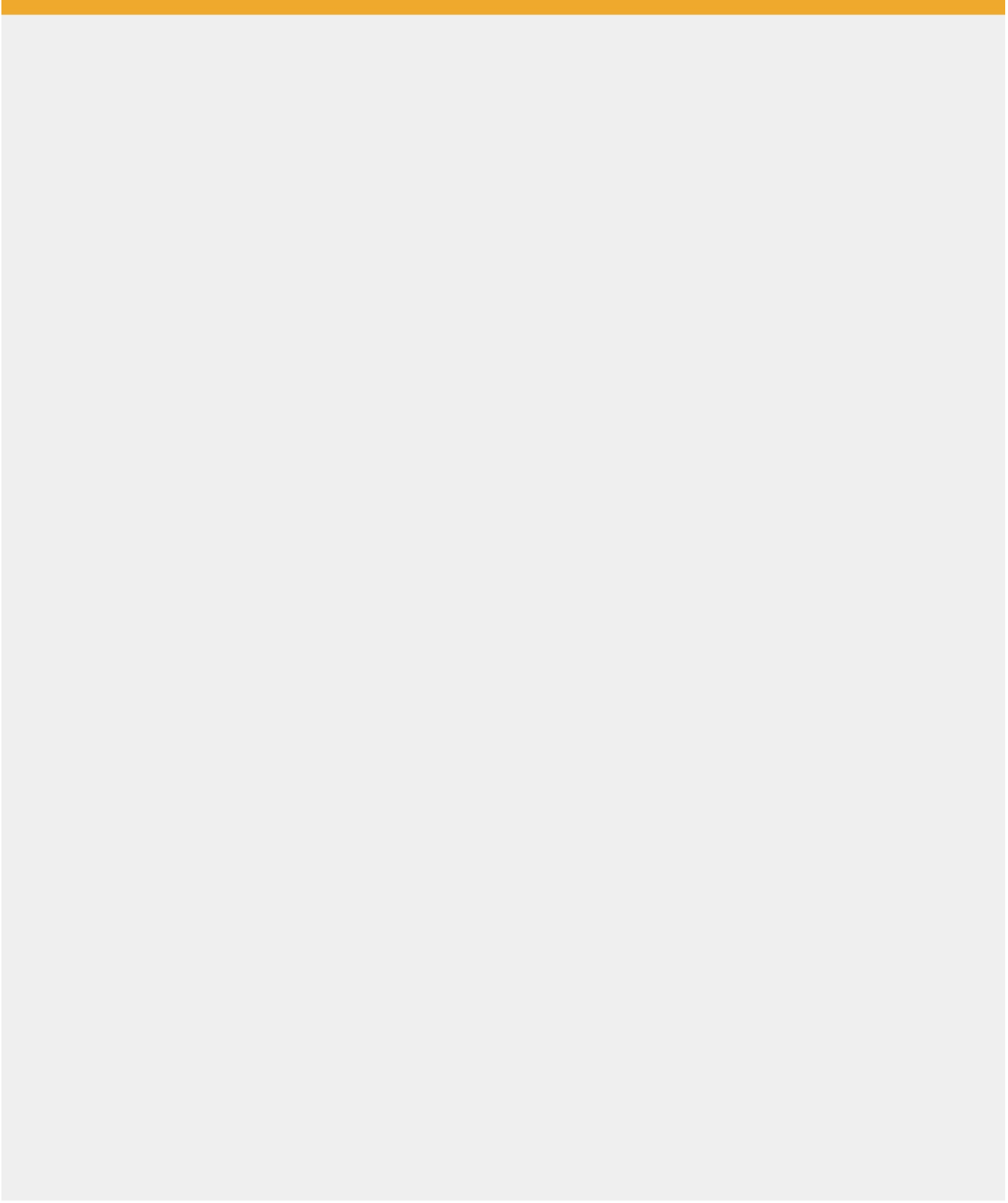
Important Note for the Instructor/Trainer:

This is a Master Copy folder and the lessons and assessments in this folder should be treated as originals and retained in the folder at all times. The folder is designed for ease of photocopying and this is how lessons and assessments should be distributed to the participants.

The programme is designed for multiple users so the integrity of the folder is very important because if any of the original lessons are lost the overall impact of the programme will be reduced.

Thank You.

View these lessons online at: www.shineireland.com



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ISP

Interview Skills Profile

Client Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Date of Interview _____

Interview Administrator _____

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Section 1: Personal Presentation

Area					Comments
Attire	1	2	3	4	
Grooming	1	2	3	4	
Hand Shake	1	2	3	4	
Body language	1	2	3	4	
Confidence	1	2	3	4	
Eye Contact	1	2	3	4	
Smile	1	2	3	4	
Greeting	1	2	3	4	
Body Orientation	1	2	3	4	
Scores					Total:



Section 2: Research

Area					Comments
Company Research	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of website and online presence	1	2	3	4	
Product/activity knowledge	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of Job Specification	1	2	3	4	
Scores					Total:

Section 3: Self Representaion

Area					Comments
Portrayal of personal skill set	1	2	3	4	
Portrayal of previous work experience	1	2	3	4	
Portrayal of Educational experience	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of how skill set will suit the position	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of own individual competencies	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of own interpersonal competencies	1	2	3	4	
Explanation of why the job is of interest	1	2	3	4	
Knowledge of own strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	4	
Personal and career objectives	1	2	3	4	
Scores					Total:



Section 4: Response to Questioning

Areas					Comments
Ability to stay on topic during response	1	2	3	4	
Ability to expand answers	1	2	3	4	
Positivity of responses	1	2	3	4	
Flexibility to apply experiences and academic knowledge accurately in response to question	1	2	3	4	
Scores					Total:

Comments

Area	Score	Total
Personal Presentation		
Research		
Self Representaion		
Response to Questioning		
Total		



Interview Feedback

Personal Presentation

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Comments

Research

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Comments

Self Representation

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Comments

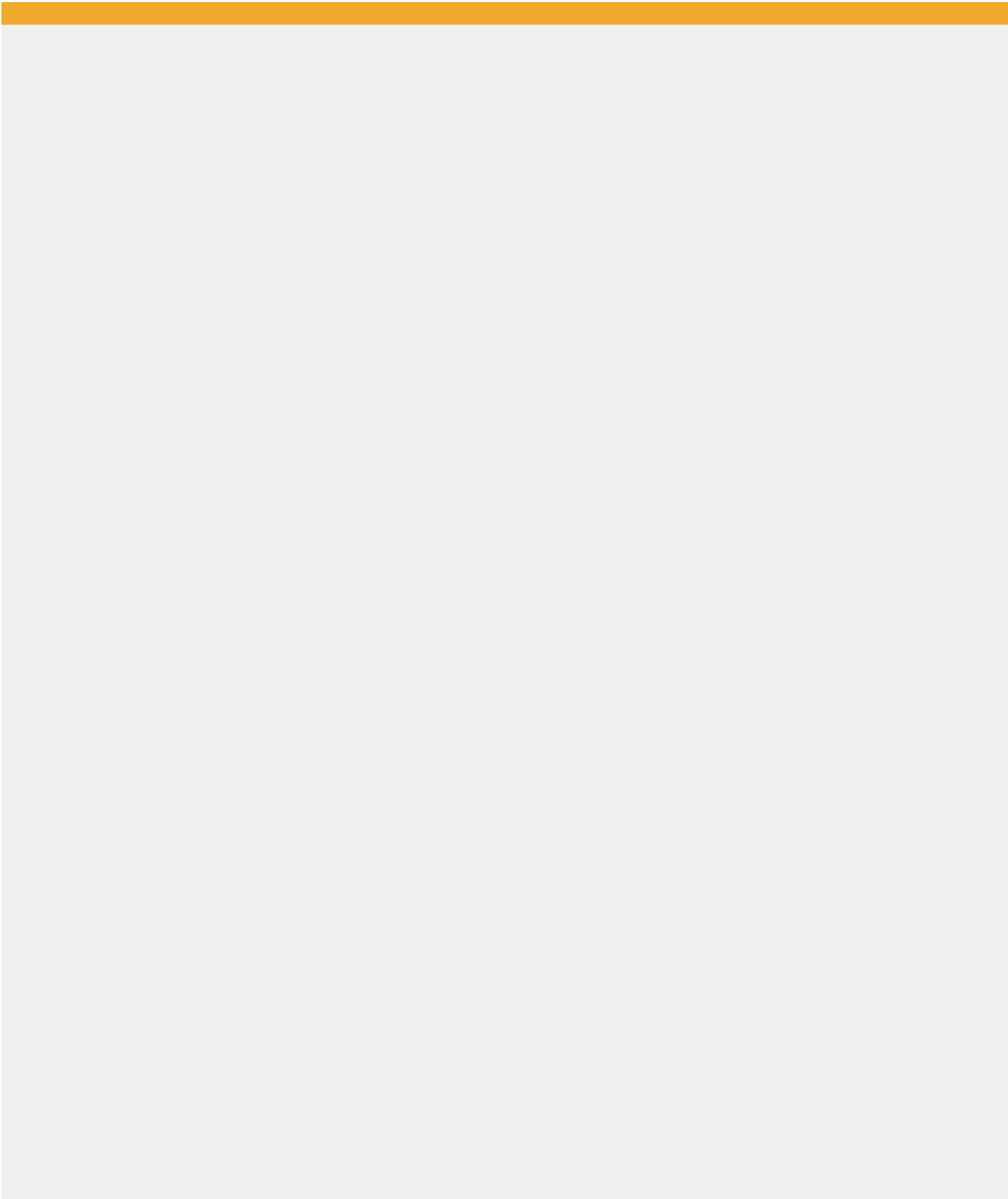
Response to Questioning

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

Comments





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Introduction



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Introduction Asperger's Syndrome

Asperger Syndrome (A.S.) is a spectrum condition which can present in many different ways and to varying degrees. It commonly effects social communication, social interaction, social imagination and sensory processing.

The following characteristics can help form an understanding of A.S., but should not take precedent over an individual's personality, interests, goals or abilities. Characteristics of A.S. can vary from person to person and as with everyone, personal patterns and challenges alter and develop with experience and maturity. Someone with A.S. may encounter challenges in the following areas:

Social Communication:

- Understanding gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice
- Initiating or maintaining conversations
- Choosing topics to talk about
- Understanding jokes, metaphors and sarcasm
- Processing social information intuitively

Social Imagination:

- Imagining or predicting alternative outcomes to situations
- Inferring or interpreting other peoples' thoughts, feelings or actions
- Transitions and change in routine

While A.S. can cause certain challenges, utilising personal strengths can encourage characteristics such as:

- Dependability and a desire to keep to a regular schedule
- Commitment to completing tasks and projects
- Ability to develop specialist knowledge
- Thinking logically and communicating directly
- Strong concentration around certain tasks
- Good memory for detail
- Single minded and focused

Social Interaction:

- Making and maintaining friendships
- Understanding unwritten social rules intuitively
- Interacting in a way society deems appropriate
- Becoming fascinated by a topic with an unusual intensity or focus

Sensory Processing:

Hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to the following senses:

- sound, e.g. being unable to filter background noises
- temperature changes, e.g. not realising it is cold enough to need a jacket
- smell, e.g. not noticing extreme odours
- taste, e.g. may not tolerate certain food textures
- touch, e.g. feeling anxious when unexpectedly touched by others

Sensory sensitivities may have a greater impact on daily life than social and communication challenges.

Using this manual:

The purpose of this Trainer's Manual is to assist trainers on the best way to present and teach the information in the Personal Presentation Workbook.

While interviews can be a good opportunity to present individual skills, abilities, and characteristics, certain standards of presentation and communication are also expected in an interview setting.

This training programme focuses on these standards and skills to help participants perform well in an interview. There is a wealth of information available online and in print on the topic of interview skills, however this information is rarely uniform in its advice, or in the quality of its advice.

To best assist participants with A.S. in improving their interview skills, it will be important to use clear examples of good interview skills rather than "rule of thumb" suggestions which can be ambiguous. Throughout this training manual there is an emphasis on using clear explanations and examples for the information presented (e.g. photographs, behaviour modelling, role-play, etc.).

Using checklists, worksheets, and printable notes will also allow participants to take the information away with them, and will provide them with resources they can review in the weeks or days before an interview.

Each lesson can be used as a standalone topic, or as a part of the complete section. This allows the flexibility in tailoring workshops to meet the needs of each participant. Recent diagnostic changes in the characteristics of A.S. include sensitivities related to sensory processing, which had yet to be formally recognised as a common characteristic. If a participant has sensory sensitivities, it will be important to acknowledge these both while the participant is in training (so they can best focus on the training and gain the most benefit), and to help them develop ways to minimise the effect of these sensitivities during an interview.

Some additional resources regarding employment and A.S. include:

- **How to Find Work That Works for People with Asperger Syndrome**
by Gail Hawkins, 2004
- **Asperger Syndrome and Employment, What People with Asperger Syndrome Really Really Want**
by Sarah Hendrickx, 2009
- **Asperger Syndrome and Employment, Adults Speak Out about Asperger Syndrome**
edited by Genevieve Edmonds and Luke Beardon, 2008
- **Asperger Syndrome Employment Workbook**
by Roger N. Meyer, 2001

Interview Skills Profile

The Interview Skills Profile is the first step in the process of interview skills training. This tool will allow the trainer to assess the individual's interview performance before the training begins, and will provide a baseline on which to build upon during the training stages. While gauging a baseline of skills is important, this assessment will also have other functions.

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View these lessons online at: www.shineireland.com

Using the ISP

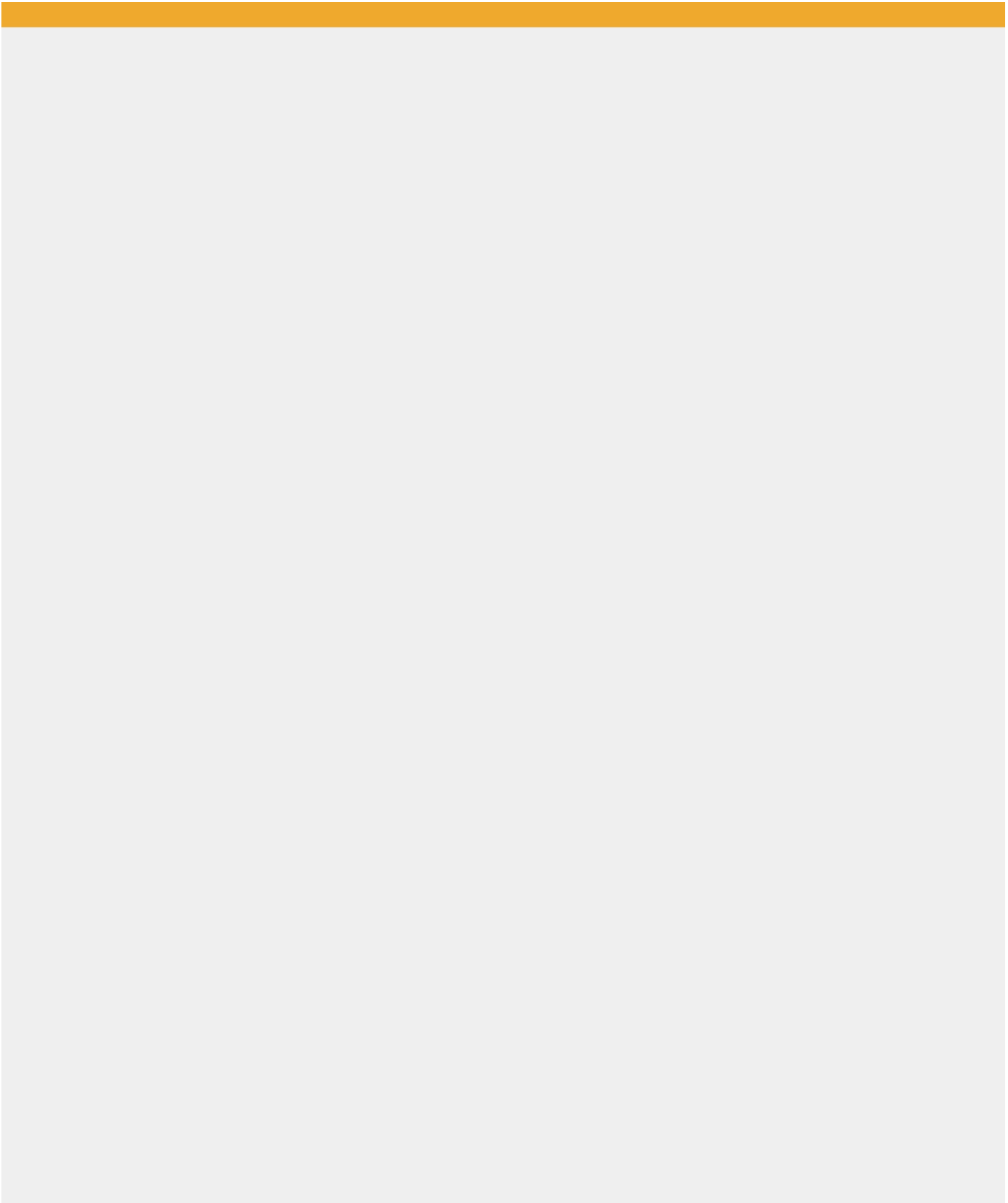
Firstly, the trainer must outline a fictional position which the individual can interview for. Please be mindful to include all the relevant information which will aid the individual in their preparation. It is advised to pick a fictional role, which would be suited to the skill set and educational experience of the individual, but place the role in a legitimate company to allow the person to research appropriately for the interview, and demonstrate their knowledge of this company and their services/products.

The ISP has been colour coded to allow immediate recognition of skill sections. The colour coding of each section within the assessment directly corresponds to the skills sections within the tool kit of lessons, thus allowing for easy identification of lessons required.

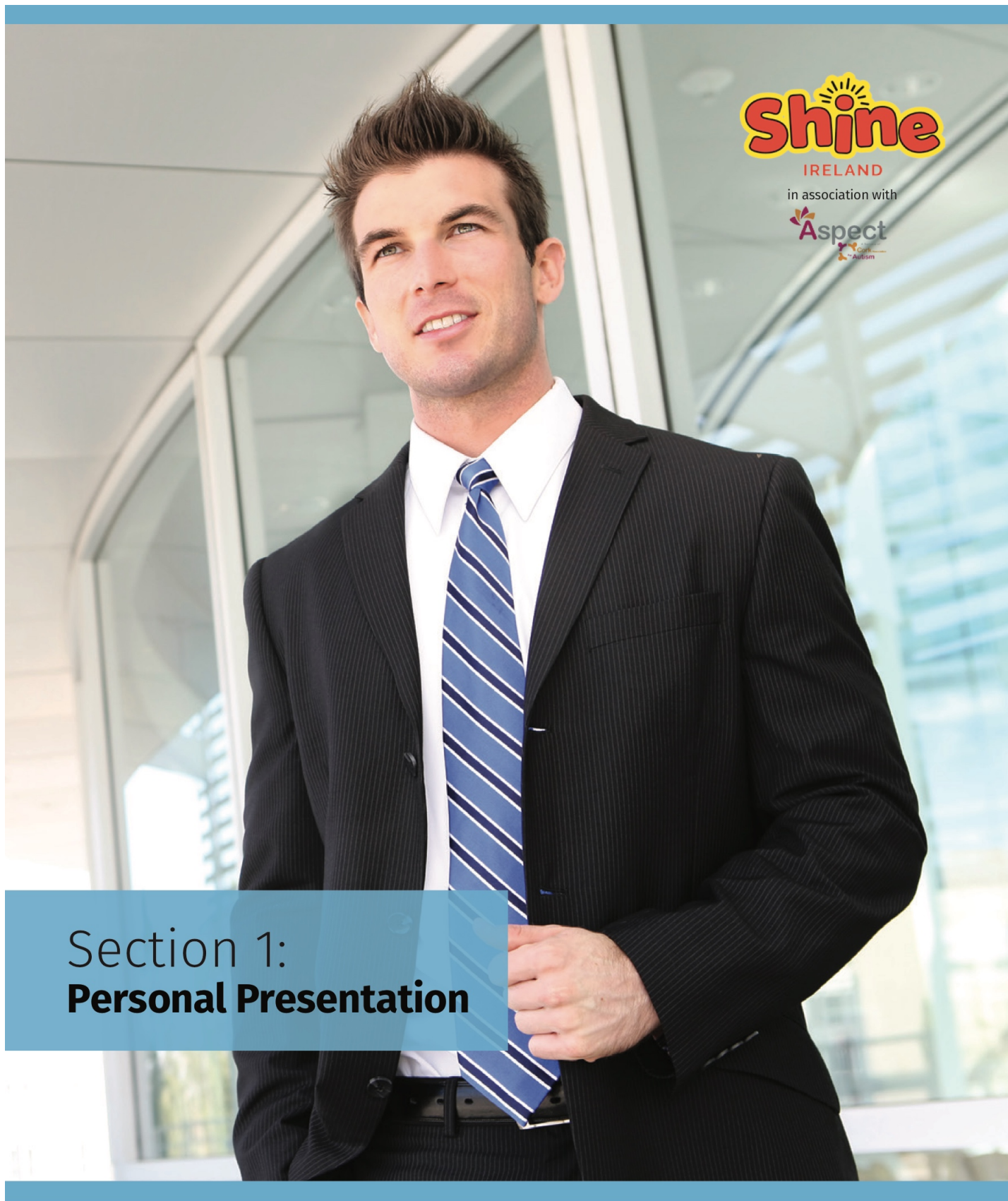
A score of between one and four can be awarded for each skill, with the highest score being awarded in areas which would require no further skill training. A score of two or below would indicate the need for extensive work in the particular area, and a score of three may indicate some additional work may be required. It is advised that the completed assessment is utilised to compile a list of areas which will need further training, and also to rule out certain areas from the training schedule. Once the practice interview has been completed, a tally of scores for each of the four sections should be calculated, and a total score for the assessment identified from this. These scores will provide a baseline, to which you can compare any further assessments and ascertain any changes in skill performance. Please note, if being tallied by the interviewer, and not by the individual as part of a self assessment, the assessment score should remain in the possession of the interviewer, and only the feedback sheet should be made available to the individual.

The feedback sheet is also colour coded to provide consistency and allow for easy identification of skill areas. When completing the feedback sheet, please be mindful to present the feedback in the most careful manner. We would suggest that positive feedback be delivered first, followed by areas which may require further work, and finally another offering of positive feedback. This allows the interviewer to close the conversation on a positive note, and recognise the skills which the individual already possesses. A copy of the feedback provided to

the individual should remain on file with the ISP, and this can be referred to during lesson planning. Once all lessons have been completed, a second practice interview should take place, and the ISP scored accordingly. This second assessment will provide an accurate reflection of learning for the individual, and will demonstrate the effect of the toolkit on their interview performance. When presenting the feedback from this assessment, please keep in mind the previous guidelines and phrase feedback as positively as possible.



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Section 1: **Personal Presentation**



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Section 1:

Personal Presentation

Personal presentation is an important factor for all of us every day, as it can relay others subtle information about our interests, style, and even personality.

It is not uncommon for people to use this subtle information to make assumptions about others based on their appearance alone. As a result of this, an even greater emphasis needs to be paid to presentation when attending an interview to help ensure that the interviewee makes a good first impression.

We were very conscious of the need for sensitivity when discussing the topic of personal presentation. That said, we believe that if this information is not presented to people who require it, it could result in a negative impression at the interview. Hence we feel it is essential for the subject to be addressed, while remaining sensitive to the feelings of the individuals in the group.

Section One includes three lessons:



Throughout this section, there is an emphasis on using clear explanations and examples, rather than describing examples only as “appropriate”, which can be ambiguous depending on the participant’s personal preference.

The information available online and in print regarding Personal Presentation for interviews has a wide range of suggestions, from very formal to very casual. It will be important to help participants identify clear examples of what is actually appropriate, as opposed to what tips are not usually necessary, and which are downright incorrect.

View these lessons online at: www.shineireland.com

Lesson 1: Appropriate Clothing

While appropriate attire in the workplace can vary from formal to casual, it is often expected for interviewees to dress formally for an interview. If the participant is unsure of the dress expectation for an interview, they may be able to contact the company and ask if the interview will be formal or casual. If the participant cannot find additional information, they should prepare for a formal interview, as it is better to dress too formally than too casually.

This section is relevant for both male and female participants, as there can be a lot of ambiguity around what to wear for an interview. Searching for clothing tips on the internet can provide a range of suggestions (e.g. “always wear a suit” vs. “sometimes wear a suit”, or “wear bright colours to stand out” vs. “avoid bright colours”). While teaching this section, you should focus on specific examples and try to avoid generalisations.

As with other interview preparation, selecting appropriate clothing can be done in advance.

Encourage participants to prepare an outfit well before the day of an interview, which will allow them time to focus on other preparation.

Sensory Sensitivities:

As previously mentioned, individuals with A.S. may have sensory sensitivities, which could include sensitivities to certain fabrics or cuts of clothing. If there are participants with sensory sensitivities, it may be helpful to explain that while their sensitivities are important, they will still be expected to dress professionally for an interview.

If this is a concern, it is even more important that they try a variety of different interview-appropriate outfits before the interview to find one that is comfortable. Additionally, participants can trial an interview outfit during interview role-plays with their trainer. This may help pin-point any difficulties which were not immediately obvious.

Note: If sensory issues are a major concern, personal accommodations may need to be put in place with the interviewer before the day of the interview.

Suggested Men's Interview Clothing:

For interviews, it is generally expected that men will wear a suit. If a participant does not own a suit, or does not feel comfortable wearing one, it will be important to explain that they will likely be dressed too casually compared to other applicants, and this may have a negative effect on their interview.

Suggested Women's Interview Clothing:

Women's clothing for interviews can be more varied than men's. This can cause more confusion about what is appropriate, and what is not. To help counter this, provide a variety of examples of appropriate women's outfits, including trouser, skirt, and dress options. Personal style may be taken into consideration, but suitability for the interview setting is a priority.

In relation to shoes, skirts and accessories, use precise examples to explain what "appropriate" means for an interview setting. Describing something only as "appropriate" can be ambiguous depending on the participant's personal preference. Clear examples could include things like:

"Skirts should be knee length, so it does not shift too high when you sit down"

"Heels should not be more than 2" high, and shoes should be close-toed"

"Do not wear dangling earrings, as these can be distracting to the interviewer"

Resources:

- **Clothing and Appearance for men and women, lists:**

<http://www.career.vt.edu/interviewing/interviewappearance.html#GROOMING>

- **Men's Clothing, video:**

http://www.careerspot.com/vidplay_links_ext.aspx?aid=462&partid=0&apass=/j8bKfreUnYuxo/GZaXXdQ=&vidnum=16

- **Women's Clothing, video:**

http://www.careerspot.com/vidplay_links_ext.aspx?aid=462&partid=0&apass=/j8bKfreUnYuxo/GZaXXdQ=&vidnum=4

- **What not to wear, list:**

<http://www.careerbuilder.com/article/cb-462-getting-hired-what-not-to-wear-to-an-interview/>

- **Men's Interview Grooming, list:**

<http://www.malestandard.com/grooming-checklist-the-job-interview/>

- **How to tie a tie, video:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7X7SpkkEMY>

- **Women's Interview Grooming, list:**

<http://www.bellasugar.com/Makeup-Tips-Job-Interview-1083269>

- **Personal hygiene, daily habits for men and women, list:**

<http://www.everydayhealth.com/healthy-living/guide-to-good-hygiene.aspx>

- **Personal hygiene, daily habits for men, list:**

[http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Daily-Hygienic-Routine-\(for-Men\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Daily-Hygienic-Routine-(for-Men)) (Note: this website encourages using cologne and aftershave, which would be too strong for a small interview room)



Lesson 2: Grooming

This topic is the most personal, as it includes a focus on participants' personal hygiene. While grooming and hygiene may be delicate topics to discuss, they are very important factors in the interviewer's first impression, and should not be underestimated as important elements of interview preparation.

If there are participants with particular hygiene concerns, it will be important to be sensitive and not to single them out in a group setting. In such cases, we recommend talking to the individual one-to-one, to see if there is an underlying cause to their limited hygiene practices, or if it is simply a lack of practice or routine.

Some people with A.S. may have difficulty with some hygiene practices (e.g. shaving, brushing their teeth, washing their hair, etc.) due to sensory sensitivities. If this is the case, coming up with individualised alternative practices will be necessary. These can include techniques such as using an electric razor rather than a standard razor, changing toothpaste brands based on taste preference, etc. If a participant requires support regarding alternative practices, the assistance of an Occupational Therapist may be beneficial.

In the case for both men and women, making big changes to physical appearance the day before an interview is not advised. If a last-minute haircut goes wrong, or if a new

face scrub results in dry skin, this can cause unnecessary stress on the day of the interview.

Encouraging participants to trial new hygiene practices well in advance of an interview will provide an opportunity to make changes and improvements before interview day.

Additionally, most hygiene practices are most effective if they are done over time, and not only the night or week before an interview. Encouraging participants to engage in good hygiene practice regularly will help make preparing for an interview easier as they will have already developed good habits. This can make a positive impact on the interview, and is also a positive habit to gain before entering a workplace as an employee.

For this section it is important not to imply that everyone looks like movie stars going to interviews. Instead, the goal is to be a clean, well presented version of yourself.

Men's Grooming Essentials:

Media often implies that grooming and presentation are "feminine" issues, even though appropriate hygiene is important regardless of gender. Do not be surprised if male participants have a variety of questions relating to hygiene, as they may not have had a safe forum in which to discuss the topic.

Women's Grooming Essentials:

For women, there can be a social implication to "get dressed up" for an interview. As with changing hygiene habits the day of an interview, changing makeup or hair styles on the day can cause unexpected problems and stress.

If participants regularly wear little or no makeup, they should do this on the day of the interview as well, as applying makeup effectively can take some practice over time.

If participants regularly wear heavy or dramatic makeup, you should explain that this will be distracting to the interviewer, and that less should be worn on the day of the interview.

Lesson 3: Body Language:

Body language is arguably the most complex topic in this section, as the different elements of body language can range from very obvious to quite subtle. For some individuals, utilising effective body language can be a daily concern, and the added pressure of an interview setting can make achieving confident and comfortable body language more difficult.

As the trainer, your individual interaction with the participant will give you insight into the particular difficulties that the participant may have around body language.

Before starting, it may also help to ask participants if they are aware of any difficulties that they have relating to body language. This can help you better tailor the training to suit the group. Depending on the participants in the group, the focus of this section can range from more basic body language cues, to more subtle and detailed techniques.

Role-Play

Practicing body language through role-play and demonstrations can help provide clear examples of good and bad habits, and can also help identify problems that may only arise in a stressful interview setting. Elements of effective interview role-play can include:

- Analysing the body language of someone on T.V. or in a movie to identify effective techniques
- Working in groups to identify common positive body language techniques, or role-play in groups to practice mock-interviews and provide group feedback
- Utilising video recording (with the participants' expressed permission) so they can review footage of their own body language to see if improvement is needed.

With all role-play it is important to provide constructive feedback and highlight positive actions regularly.

Because interviews can be very stressful, it may also be beneficial to include relaxation techniques with this section. Subtle actions like rotating your shoulders, utilizing breathing techniques, or positive self-talk can be done quietly while on the way to an interview. This may help participants relax and be better focused overall.

Resources:

Job Interview body language, videos:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/10030391/Body-language-at-interview-How-to-send-the-right-signal.html>

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/418753-How-to-Ace-an-Interview-with-Your-Body-Language>

Job Interview body language, lists:

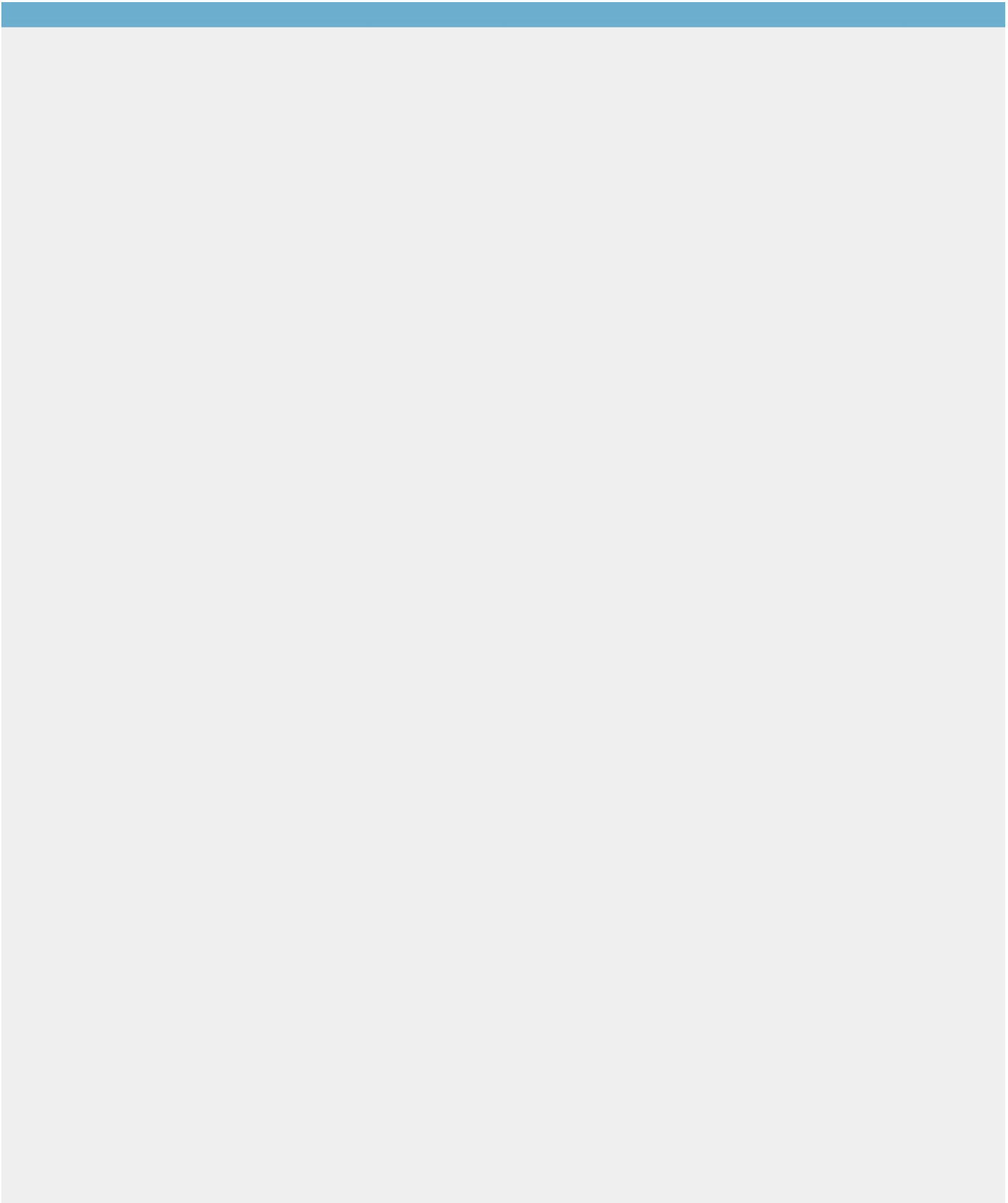
<http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr581&sid=7/29/2010&ed=7/29/2099>

Poor interview body language, list with images:

<http://www.forbes.com/pictures/lml-45lide/10-body-language-interview-mistakes-2/>

Handshake tips, lists:

<http://www.career.vt.edu/interviewing/Handshakes.html>



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Section 2: **Research**



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Section 2:

Research

While this section has only one lesson, it may be one of the most pivotal sections to be covered during the interview preparation process. A famous comedian is quoted as saying “80% of success in life is just turning up”, while this is a hypothesised and somewhat humorous summation, it may not be out of line to suggest that the remaining 20% could be put down to preparation and follow through.

Research is not only important when attending an interview, it is vital. Without it, participants are simply entering into the experience blind. Today’s job market is cut throat, and prospective employees are expected to adequately prepare themselves to sell their capabilities, while also showing how they will seamlessly integrate into the work environment.

In order to know where your participant’s place is in this prospective workplace, it is vital to have a good knowledge of the following:

- Who they are
- What they do
- How they operate
- Their history and future plans if available

Portraying themselves as an organised, conscientious candidate may aid their plight and can impart a lasting impression for a prospective employer. For this reason, research may be the most vital tool in any interview preparation.

Lesson 1: Researching the Employer

People with a diagnosis of A.S may often be quite comfortable with gathering information and researching, it may even be second nature to them. While research and preparation will prove a somewhat interesting and easy task for some, it is important to note that not all people will be as comfortable with this experience. Please be aware of the computer literacy skills of your participant, and ensure that they have an adequate knowledge of internet search engines, as well as reliable internet access.

Starting with the company name, ensure that there is only one company under that particular name. It is not unusual for companies to operate under the same names and preside in different countries, so ensure your participant has located the appropriate company first and foremost.

Utilising the checklist which supports this lesson, guide your participant through the website, paying close attention to the items requested on the checklist.

We have purposefully kept the limit to 10 points in the first two passages. It is important to mention that all of these lines may not be filled, but that no more than 10 points will be required. If they can list more than 10 relevant points, it will be necessary to guide them through the process of prioritising and summarising points.

If there are no new services/products or updated news, then leave this section blank. Some interviewees may feel that it is essential to complete the entire checklist, but if there isn't information which is pertinent to their application, then it is perfectly acceptable to leave a section blank. This should be explicitly explained to the participant.

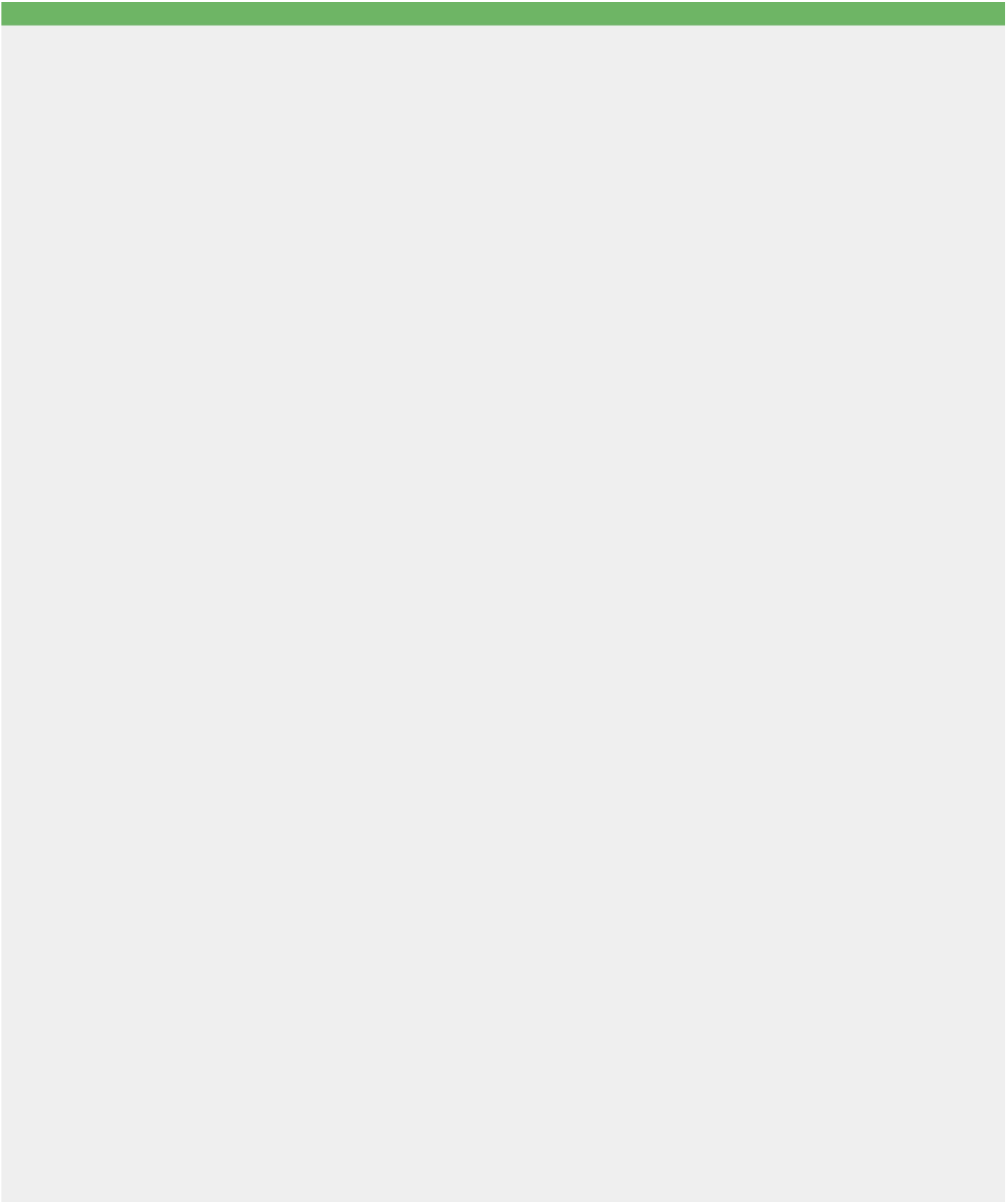
While exploring the management structure of the company, it is vital to communicate that only information which is pertinent to their application is relevant. Research of managerial staff should be kept strictly to their role and their seniority within the company. Personal information relating to these individuals is neither relevant nor warranted and could be seen as an invasion of privacy.

Blogs are becoming ever more common in the business community, and they will often provide up to the minute information which may not be available on the company website.

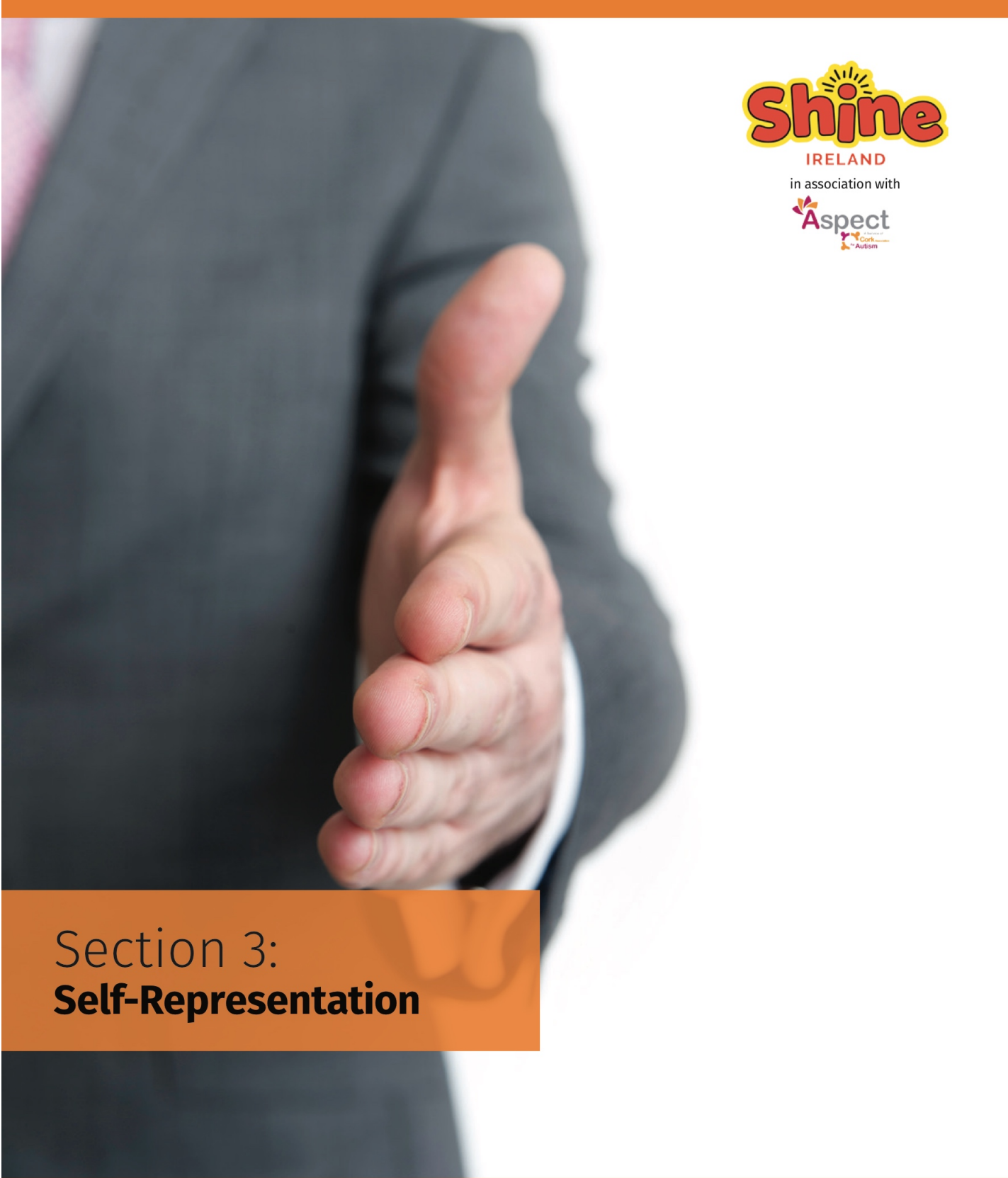
Be sure that the information received is appropriate, as information which could be portrayed as negative will not be appreciated by a prospective employer. It may be an idea to discuss the information which was retrieved in detail to make certain of its appropriateness.

Also check that the information is up to date. Things move quickly in the business world, and information contained in a blog entry dated last month, may already prove outdated. If the information uncovered is not contained on their website, carry out further research on search engines to either confirm or discredit the information.

Finally, remind the participant that knowledge is power, and that the information they have amassed may prove invaluable during the interview process. If the company does not ask direct questions regarding this information, it may be an idea to prepare a number of questions that the participant may ask the interview panel which demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the company and their activities. See section 4 lesson 3 for further guidance on this issue.



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Section 3: **Self-Representation**



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Section 3:

Self-Representation

Participants can use the mock questions presented in this section to prepare answers on their own, but it may be more effective for the questions to be used as a framework for a role-play practice. This will allow the trainer to take on the role of the “interviewer”, providing the participant direct feedback regarding their answers. Role-play will also allow the trainer to vary the wording of questions, to better prepare the participant for a wider range of interview questions.

It may also be helpful to video record the role-play, so the participant can review how they have presented themselves during a mock interview. Video recording of structured role-play will provide a “third person” view of the mock interview, which can give a participant the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses that they may not have previously recognised.

Section Three includes four lessons:



- **Lesson 1:** Portrayal of Personal Skill Set..... 3
- **Lesson 2:** Educational Experience..... 4
- **Lesson 3:** Work Experience..... 5
- **Lesson 4:** Knowledge of Strengths and Weaknesses..... 6

As with all elements of interview preparation, repeated practice will be a key factor in developing successful and clear answers to interview questions. The lessons in this section are intended to be reviewed multiple times, allowing participants time to become more comfortable answering interview questions, which can help reduce stress and increase confidence in an actual interview setting. Repeated practice can also allow the trainer to provide a variety of interview-style questions, as well as give an opportunity to discuss the range of questions that may or may not be asked during an interview.

If a participant has had negative experiences in employment, education, etc., it may be important to take time and discuss how these negatives can be viewed in a positive light. For example, if a participant had trouble in college because they found it difficult to submit assignments on time, they could acknowledge this as something that they are working to improve.

By reviewing any negative personal experience and finding positive elements, a participant may be better able to adapt to questions during an interview. It may also be important to explain that dwelling on negative experiences in an interview will come across poorly, and will not give the interviewer a good presentation of the participant's strengths and abilities.

View these lessons online at: www.shineireland.com

Lesson 1: Portrayal of Personal Skill Set

The questions in this section focus on general personal skills, and how they can be applied to a work setting. As these questions are a subjective interpretation of personal traits, some participants may find it difficult to identify positive personal traits, while others may have an inaccurate perception of their skills or abilities.

It is important to recognise that each participant will have their own individual skill set, even if a group of participants have similar educational or professional experience. These individual skills can be beneficial to discuss in an interview, as they can help an interviewee set themselves apart from other applicants.

Throughout this section, it will be important to help each participant identify positive traits, without over-exaggerating personal abilities. Helping participants find the balance between an honest, yet complimentary presentation of themselves may be difficult, but will help them be more successful in interviews. The adjective table that is included can be helpful with this, as participants can choose example words from the table to effectively explain their skills.

The adjective table provides a variety of example words, and some participants may need additional support to identify the best adjectives to use when describing their skills. If a participant chooses a word that does not clearly explain the skill they are describing, discussing why different words are more suitable than others in different applications will help them prepare more concise answers to interview questions. If a participant is struggling with this, they may be able to work with a peer to identify appropriate and effective adjectives for their skills.

Once a participant has prepared clear answers for the example questions provided, it may be helpful for them to write down their answers, including relevant examples from previous education or employment experience. They can then review



these written answers in the days coming up to an interview.

For each of these questions, it will be helpful to have the participant describe examples from personal experience to support their answers. Often, interviewers will ask for examples for questions such as, "How do you react under stress?", and having ideas prepared will help participants answer more smoothly and confidently.

Throughout this section, it will be important to help each participant identify positive traits, without over-exaggerating personal abilities.

Lesson 2: Educational Experience

The questions in this section focus specifically on educational experience. Questions regarding educational experience are very common in interviews, especially if the interviewee is a recent graduate. If a participant is interviewing for further education (e.g. Master's Degree, PhD, etc.) or a field-specific position (e.g. I.T., Food Science, Agriculture, etc.), it will be helpful to expand on the example questions provided in this lesson.

For educational or field-specific interviews, educational experience may be the main focus of the interview, and the questions asked by interviewers can be quite technical. If this is the case, it may be beneficial to have the participant draft additional questions that they think they may be asked, based on their field of study. If the participant is unsure of what types of questions will be asked, it may be helpful to consult a lecturer in the field for further clarity. For educational or field-specific interviews, it will also be important for the participant to be able to list their relevant qualifications smoothly and confidently, and expand on them if requested.

If the participant's educational history does not directly reflect the position they are applying for, it will be important to help them identify broader skills that they gained during education, which can be adapted to an employment position. Participants with A.S. may have trouble recognising examples of cross-purpose skills, so clearly identifying them will be important. For example, if the participant studied English in college, it may not directly correlate with a job in sales.

However, the organisational and time-management skills they gained while doing research and submitting papers can be adapted to meeting deadlines as an employee.

As with the activities for practicing answers to questions regarding personal skills, role-play and video recording may be helpful tools for this lesson. Video-recording and repetition of practice will give the participant the opportunity to practice answering a variety of education-themed questions and to review their progress.



Lesson 3: Work Experience

The questions in this section focus specifically on previous work experience. Work experience can vary from long-term to short-term, or include temporary work experience as part of a college or training placement.

Regardless of the duration of a participant's work experience, they will need to be able to identify work-related skills that they gained



from the experience to discuss during an interview. As with other interview questions, it may be helpful to have the participant discuss examples for each question, so they can elaborate short responses.

Some participants with A.S. may have difficulty securing work that is equivalent to their skill set. If this is the case, it will be important to identify examples of cross-purpose skills, to help an interviewer see that the participant has valuable employment skills, even if their employment history does not reflect them.

Also, some participants may have gaps in their work history. If this is the case, it will be important to discuss with them ways to explain such gaps to a potential employer. While gaps are not ideal, it is better for the participant to explain them if requested, rather than trying to

avoid a question. If a participant is currently unemployed, encouraging them to find volunteer opportunities may help fill in their current employment gap.

If a participant has not been able to secure relevant/challenging work in the past, or has no clear way of explaining gaps in their work history, it may be beneficial to discuss the option of disclosing that they have A.S. to the interviewer. The option of disclosure is very personal, and it is up to the participant to decide whether or not they want to disclose their diagnosis. Disclosure at the interview stage can have its benefits and shortfalls, and weighing these carefully will be important. However, if a participant is unable to comfortably and confidently discuss their work history, it may be necessary to explain to them that this could negatively impact their interview.

Before discussing the topic of disclosure with a participant, it will be important to research the disclosure process. Some resources include:

- **Asperger Syndrome Employment Workbook**
The second chapter in this book focuses on "Diagnosis, Disclosure, and Self-Advocacy".
by Roger N. Meyer
- **Workplace Disclosure available at:**
<https://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/ssp/documents/Workplace%20Disclosure%20Strategies.pdf>
by Barbra Bissonnette

Lesson 4: Knowledge of Strengths and Weaknesses

The focus of this section is to have participants highlight their strengths and weaknesses, which is a common feature of interviews. As graduates, participants will have a variety of skills and knowledge that they can discuss in an interview setting.

Questions regarding strengths and weaknesses are usually woven into other questions, such as, “What are three strengths that you believe you would bring to this position?”, or, “Please explain something that you have recognised as a personal weakness, and how you are working to overcome this.”

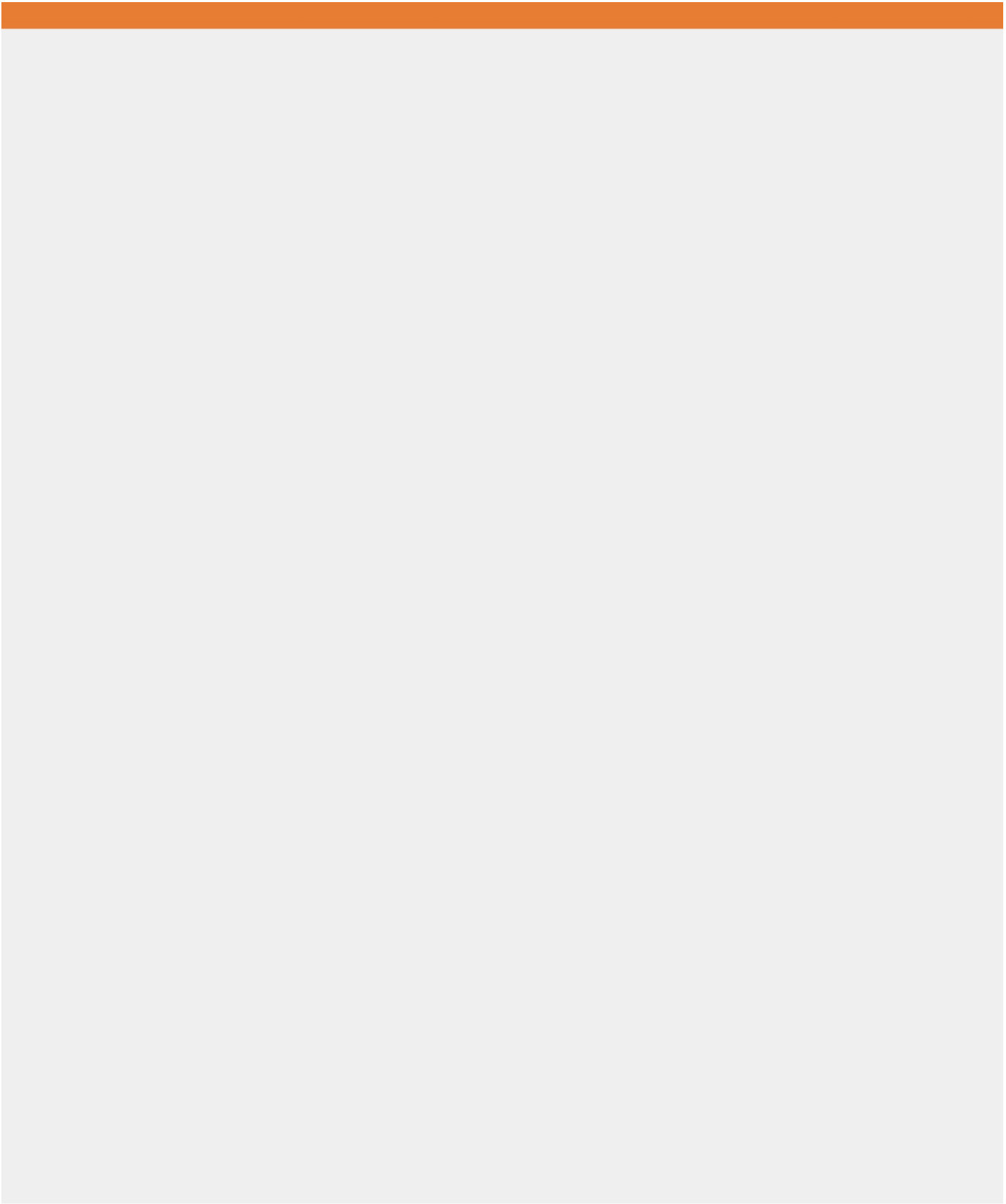
As with Lesson One, it will be important to help each participant find a balance between positive and negative personal traits. This will ensure that participants do not exaggerate personal abilities, or present a disproportionately negative view of their characteristics.

Included in the Lesson is a table of “negative” traits. This table will be very helpful during role-play practice, as it shows examples of how to re-word a “negative” trait into a positive or neutral workplace example. As with all questions, it will be important to have the participants prepare examples of when their “negative” traits have impacted a work or education situation, and how they adapted it to improve the situation’s outcome.

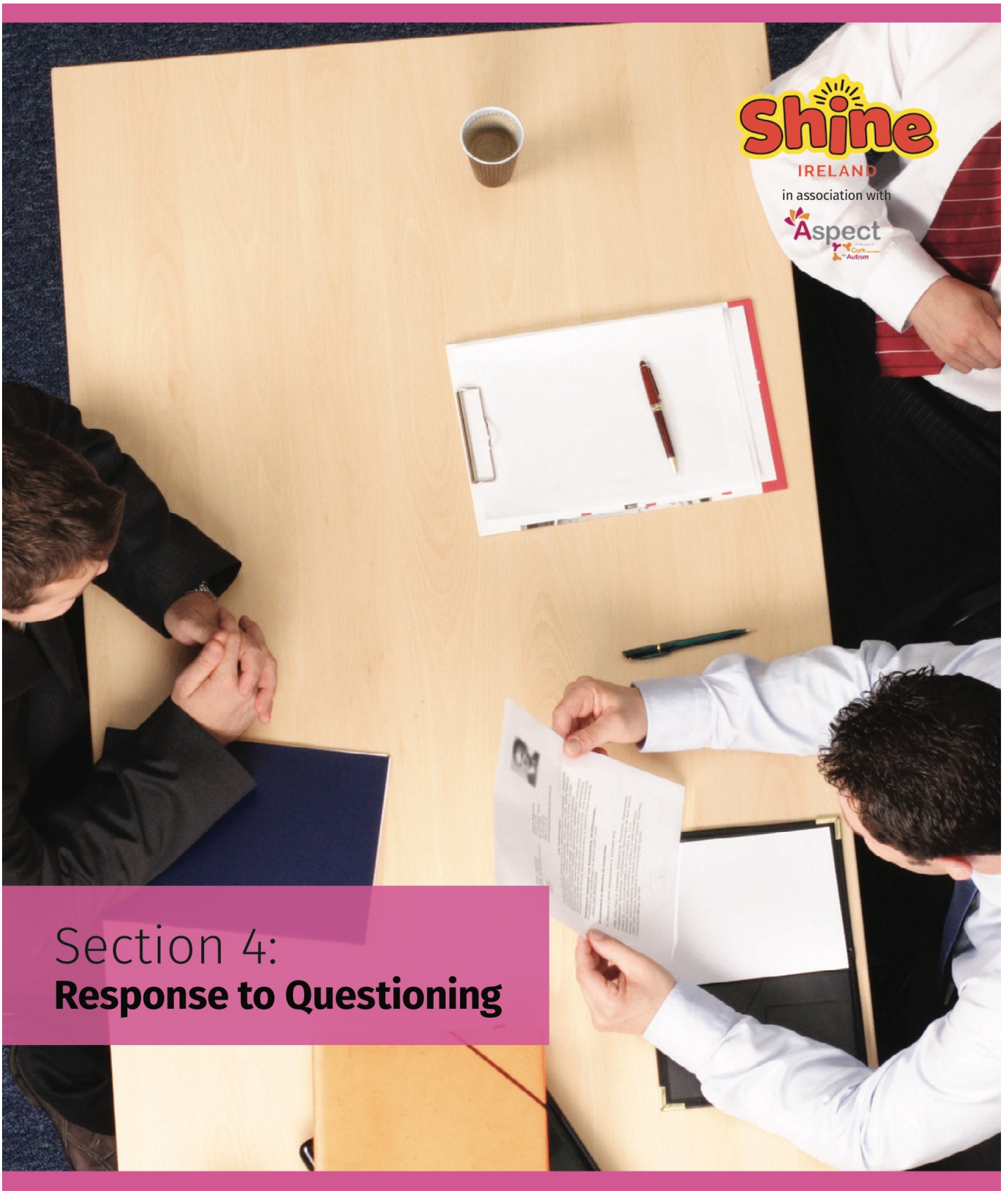
If the participant cannot think of an example where they were able to correct a “negative” trait, an alternative can be to explain how they intend on adapting “negative” traits in the future. This may not be an ideal answer to the question, but it will show initiative and forward thinking, which is better than simply avoiding the question.

Some participants may have trouble recognising how negative traits or events can be expressed in a positive light. Providing practical examples may help participants relate to their own experiences, and give them an opportunity to develop practice examples.





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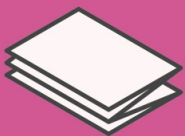
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Section 4: Response to Questioning



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Section 4:

Preparing for the Workplace

While this is the final section in the tool kit, it is still as pertinent as the preceding sections. This section will provide an insight into how best to keep the interview on track, while also recognising the crucial do's and don'ts of interview responses.

Body language has previously been discussed in Section 1, but in this section, we will delve further into social perceptiveness, and explore how to interpret the body language of the interviewers and adjust behaviour to suit this information.

The lessons contained in this Section are as follows:



- **Lesson 1:** Staying on Topic..... 2
- **Lesson 2:** Social Responsiveness..... 4
- **Lesson 3:** Asking the Interviewer Questions..... 5

We hire people, not resumes. We are not just looking for a set of qualifications that match a job description

While these lessons are comprehensive, there may be points which are particular to the job/company your client is interviewing for, that may not have been covered. It is advised to use these lessons as discussion points with the person you are supporting, and take note of any further salient points which arise.


View these lessons online at: www.shineireland.com

Lesson 1: Staying on topic

When individuals feel passionate about a topic, it can be difficult to stop the flow of their conscious thought, and keep them on track. It is common for individuals on the spectrum, to develop special interests and often amass huge amounts of information on their specialist topic.

While this can be advantageous at times, they may find it difficult to spot when information is relevant to the situation/time/audience, and may fail to realise when they are in fact drifting away from the main point of the question. This can be frustrating for a listener in general conversation, but in an interview situation, it could in fact be damaging. So, it is of vital importance that we encourage the individuals being supported to give brief answers to questions, and keep to the point as much as possible.

The first step in staying on topic is to be able to listen properly to the question being asked. Take some time with the person you are supporting, and evaluate how long is appropriate to leave between the asking of the question and the response. Some people on the ASD spectrum require more time to process information, so please be mindful of this. Others may rush into answering without fully contemplating the question posed, and they may need to learn to slow down and think. In either situation, a good tip is to ask for a glass of water at the beginning of the interview. If they feel they need time to process the question, or if they would like to try to slow themselves down to avoid mistakes, they can take a sip of water and utilise that time to organise their thoughts.



A good tip is to ask for a glass of water at the beginning of the interview.

You may need to practice extracting the main points from a question. If it is a technical question this will be easier than a question based on personal skills or experience. Either way, construct a few example questions, and allow the person to summarize the main points from the questions you have posed. This skill will aid their responses and allow them to stay closer to the main points and answer appropriately.

When carrying out practice in answering questions, tell them in advance that you will give them regular non verbal feedback on their progress. A thumbs-up can signify that

they are doing well, and are sticking to the point of the question. A thumbs-down will indicate that they are drifting off the topic and may need to get back on track. This is a simple exercise which can help your student learn to identify when they are off topic and how to get themselves back to the point. You may need to pause the conversation mid way if the person is struggling to get back on point, but get back to the conversation as quickly as possible so that they do not lose their train of thought. This exercise is specific to remaining on point, and should be explored before adding body language and social cues to the experience.

The individual will need to be shown how to adapt and respond if the interviewer interrupts their flow, and how to finish a point if they feel that it will add to their performance within the interview. Practice at this skill will ensure that it does not come as a surprise if it occurs within their interview. If they are interrupted it may signal one of two things:

- *The interviewer requires them to go into more detail on a point they have made*
- *The interviewer wants them to finish the point as they have spoken for too long*

It will be very important to show the individual the difference between the two interruptions and how to react to both. If they have spoken for too long, and the interviewer changes direction or re-defines the question to direct them to get to the point, it is important to stress that they should not be visibly upset or embarrassed by this. The interviewer has limited time, and they will want to spend it shrewdly by gaining as much relevant information as possible. If the interviewer is looking for more information, ensure that the individual knows to give exactly the information asked for, and is as brief as possible. Less is more unless explicitly requested!

Just as it is crucial to stay on topic, it is as important to know what topics to steer clear of entirely. These have been covered in the lesson plan, but be clear that these topics have been chosen for a reason, and engaging with the employer on any of these topics, even if only to agree, may be detrimental.

Individuals on the spectrum may struggle to comprehend the thoughts, feelings and emotions of others, and so can find it hard to identify when they have offended, hurt or annoyed another person. Staying away from these topics, removes the need to sensor the information imparted on the topic, and will serve to minimise the chances of an awkward conversation.



It would be advisable to practice how to respond if a question or comment is brought up which pertains to these topics. Knowing how to redirect the conversation is important, but the most important thing is to not cause offence while doing so. It can often happen that these subjects arise during pre or post interview chats, and politics is probably the most frequent of topics discussed. Discussing phrases which can lead away from the topic, while keeping the tone light, will help the individual to navigate the conversation appropriately. As individuals on the spectrum can be quite literal, it is important to stress that they cannot state that they don't want to, or cannot, discuss the subject, as this may cause confusion or offence. Practice in this area will pay dividends in the real life situation should it arise.

Lesson 2: Social Responsiveness

As ASD is a social communication disorder, difficulties with communication, both verbal and non verbal, is inherent to the diagnosis. Therefore, body language can pose a difficulty for some individuals.

As the majority of our emotions are communicated through this medium, the person with ASD can sometimes find it difficult to ascertain the tone of a conversation and gauge the listener's level of interest. They may also find it difficult to differentiate the meaning of gestures which are identical but occur in different contexts. It is vital to stress that the examples given in the lesson are contextually sensitive to an interview, and may not be relevant outside of that setting. The lesson should be utilised as a guide for deciphering these gestures, but actual practice of reading the cues will be of vital importance.

The examples provided within this lesson should be role played and demonstrated for the individual before they are exhibited within the practice interview settings. Rehearsing these gestures in such an isolated manner will provide an opportunity to examine these behaviours and decode them without the stress of further information to process. Once you have gone through all of the behaviours outlined and

discussed them, it would be an idea to randomly perform the gestures and check that the individual has fully comprehended the meaning of all behaviours. For some individuals, this exercise will not pose any difficulty, and for others it may be the most challenging area. Please be mindful of the individual strengths and needs of each person, and direct them accordingly.

As already stated, some individuals may find this to be very straight forward, and may require very limited practice in the area. Others will require more practice in this area before being able to move on. Once this area has been explored and some mastery is evident, move to include these behaviours and gestures into practice interviews. Remember that the degree and intensity of the behaviours exhibited will vary in a real life setting, so be prepared to demonstrate both the obvious and the subtle forms of these behaviours.

During the practice interview, give immediate feedback if the person picks up on your behaviour and

alters their behaviour accordingly. If they fail to identify the behaviour and do not act, be mindful of how you present your correction. Search for the positive, and present the correction in as tactful a manner as possible. People on the ASD Spectrum can experience high levels of criticism, and focus on their weaknesses rather than their strengths. Spend time focusing on the positives in their performance, and direct them to amend their mistakes in as supportive a manner as possible.

One to one interviews will ease pressure slightly in this area, as the person will only have the body language of one person to decode. However, panel interviews are more likely to occur, and will provide further difficulties. If possible, please try to practice these skills in front of a practice panel. This step should only be taken if success has been experienced on a one to one level. Otherwise this may completely overwhelm the individual, and they will experience failure rather than the positive learning experience that we are seeking.

Lesson 3: Asking the Interviewer Questions

In the final minutes of an interview, the final question posed by an interviewer may just be “do you have any questions?” While this may seem a straight forward question, it can be the trickiest of all the questions posed. If this is not answered with the appropriate question, it can leave the interviewer with a negative image of the candidate and undo any of the good work already done.

As previously stated, individuals on the spectrum can be quite honest, and sometimes fail to recognise when their comments could be construed as blunt or even perhaps rude. In an effort to avoid a situation which may damage the individual’s chances of employment, it would be an idea to script questions in advance which the individual can recall if this question arises.

We have provided a list of typical questions which may be appropriate answers to this question. However, it might be an idea to spend time exploring this issue with the individual you are supporting, and ascertain if there are any other pertinent questions which they can come up with themselves. There may be questions which are particular to the industry their skills pertain to, which would provide further insight into their knowledge base and skill set. If they can come up with more unique questions, decide how best to phrase the question as to ensure the main point of the question is clear and

concise. The more insightful the question, the more of an impression can be made, so make sure the phrasing is right.

As with lesson 1 in section 4, it is important to stress the questions that are not advisable to ask. Asking about pay or holidays before even being offered the position can put employers off. Be sure to go through this portion of the lesson well, and ensure that these topics are firmly comprehended in their various forms.

If the person is asked about their salary or holiday expectations, it may be best to say that they are open to negotiation, but unless it is explicitly raised by the interviewer, it should not be raised. It is advisable to practice how to react if these topics are raised by the interviewer as this may cause some confusion. Again, if the subjects are mentioned which we have stated to avoid, it is essential that the person does not refuse to answer, but rather answers calmly with a previously scripted reply.

While this is not the longest section in this toolkit, it is certainly the section which requires most practice. As you are working through the lessons, utilise the checklist below to ensure that you have covered all of the relevant practical work.



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Practical Checklist Section 4

Lesson 1

Stop, think, respond after question has been posed

Extract the main points of a question

Staying on topic – providing non verbal feedback

How to respond to interruptions

- The interviewer requires more information
- The interviewer wants them to finish their point

Topics to avoid completely, discussed and noted

How to re-direct conversation if they are raised

Lesson 2

Rehearsing body language in isolation

De-coding subtle and obvious presentation of body language

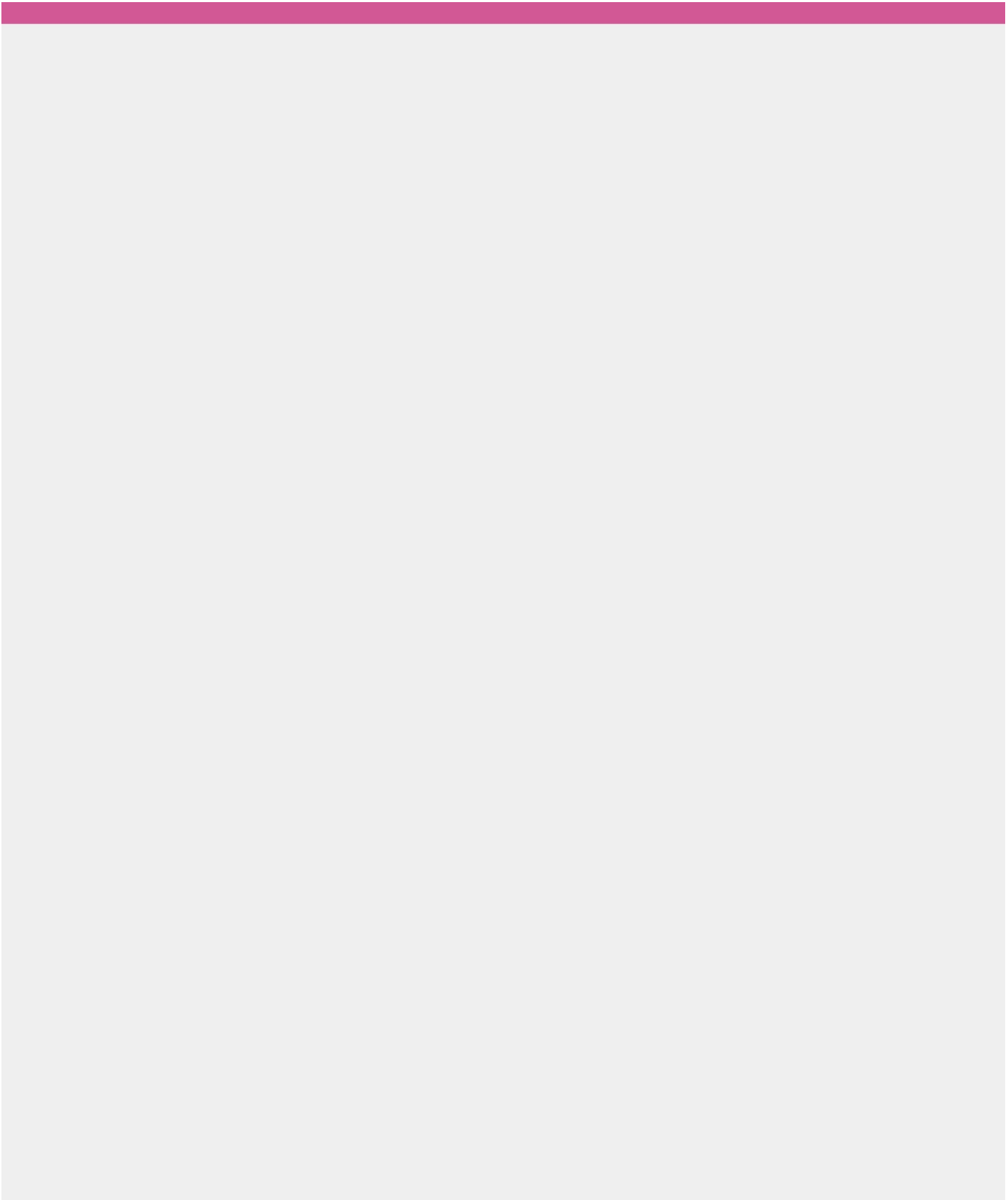
Rehearsing body language de-coding in practice interview - one to one

Rehearsing body language de-coding in practice interview - panel

Lesson 3

Scripting questions to pose to the interviewer

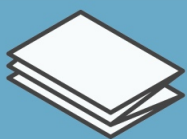
Topics to avoid completely, discussed and noted



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Section 1: Personal Presentation



Lessons

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Preparing for the Workplace

At BNY Mellon Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is at the core of our business strategy. It enables us to power global investments and growth, earn the trust of our clients and stakeholders, and innovate for a better world. Our commitment to corporate social responsibility is crucial in how we fulfill our role as a major global financial institution and as part of that commitment we are fully invested in market integrity, our people and our world. At BNY Mellon our commitment to the wellbeing of communities is also an essential part of who we are and how we do business.

BNY Mellon is delighted to support the Preparing for the Work Place programme in partnership with Shine Ireland as it fully reflects our commitment to supporting social innovation to affect positive change in the communities where our employees live and work. This programme will deliver real opportunities to a group of people with many talents and abilities and allow them to make a real and valuable contribution to their local economies and communities.

Regards,

Heather Crowley-Kerr

Managing Director

BNY Mellon

Cork, Ireland

Lesson 1 Appropriate Clothing

The first impression you make on an interviewer is the most important one. The first judgment an interviewer makes is going to be based on how you look and what you are wearing.

Remember: It is always important to dress professionally for a job interview, even if the work environment is casual and you would not be expected to dress professionally on a day-to-day basis if you were employed.

Suggested Men's Interview Clothing

- Suit (solid colour - navy or dark grey)
- Long sleeve shirt (white or coordinated with the suit)
- Belt
- Tie
- Dark socks, conservative leather shoes
- Little or no jewellery (Watch and ring is okay, earring is not)
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- A small amount of aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails
- Portfolio or briefcase



Examples of inappropriate interview clothing

Suggested Women's Interview Clothing

- Suit (navy, black or dark grey)
- The suit skirt should be long enough so you can sit down comfortably
- Trousers should be tailored
- Coordinated blouse
- Conservative shoes (plain colour, low heel)
- Limited jewellery (no dangling earrings or lots of bracelets on arms)
- Simple hairstyle
- Light make-up and perfume
- Neatly manicured clean nails
- Portfolio or briefcase



Examples of inappropriate interview clothing



What **Not** to Bring

- Chewing Gum
- Mobile Phone
- Ipod
- Coffee or drink
- If you have lots of piercings, leave some of your rings at home (earrings only is a good rule)
- Cover tattoos



Interview Clothing Tips

- Before you even think about going on an interview, make sure you have appropriate interview clothing and everything fits correctly.
- Get your clothes ready the night before so you don't have to spend time getting them ready on the day of the interview.
- Make sure your clothes are not wrinkled and iron them the night before the interview if necessary.
- If your clothes are dry clean only, take them to the dry cleaners after an interview, so they are ready for next time.
- Polish your shoes.
- Bring a breath mint and use it before you enter the building where your interview is being held.

Lesson 2 Grooming

An interviewee's dress and grooming can be important —and sometimes even critical — factors in an interviewers hiring decision.

To many interviewers, first impressions still count. Poor personal appearance and careless dress at an interview are major factors leading to the rejection of applicants. If you appear for an interview carelessly-groomed, a potential employer may assume you are careless about other things. He or she may think that you lack initiative, may need close supervision and may not be a good employee.

Interview Grooming Essentials

Shoes are shined and heels are in good order.

Fingernails clean and short with the cuticle pushed back.

Hair products, if used, should not give your hair a forced or stiff appearance but a natural look instead.

Some facial features may need extra attention: chapped lips, blackheads, pimples and scaly scalp.

Make sure your teeth are clean and your breath is fresh. Using mouthwash or fresh breath spray is quite important.



Men's Grooming Essentials

- If you are wearing a tie, ensure that it is neatly tied so that it covers the top button of your collar and the short end lies well under the longer end.
- Suit and shirt are cleaned and pressed.
- Hair neatly cut or trimmed. You should also ask your barber to clip any hairs poking out of your ears and nostrils. If your eyebrows are bushy, ask the barber to thin them a bit as well. Facial hair (moustache, sideburns or beard) should be neatly trimmed.
- Cologne or aftershave is applied sparingly



Women's Grooming Essentials

- Keep make up conservative, a little is better than none for a polished look. Wearing too much makeup might leave the hiring manager with an unfavourable impression.
- With interview makeup, it's important to remember that more is less. You want your face to appear fresh and natural rather than painted and made-up. This way, the hiring manager will be listening to your qualifications, rather than distracted by your appearance.
- Nails should be clean and well groomed, but avoid extremes of nail length and bright or sparkly nail polish colours, especially if interviewing for a conservative industry.
- Perfume should be used sparingly or not at all. Remember that some people have allergies or sensitivities and this may derail your interview. One spray of perfume should be sufficient. It is essential not to smell of cigarette smoke either.



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Lesson 3 Body Language

The first impression you make on a potential employer is a very important one. The old adage, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it,” still holds meaning, even if you’re not talking, you need to effectively communicate your professionalism both verbally and non-verbally.

Greeting

Interviewers often maintain that they can spot a possible candidate for a job within the first two minutes. This may have something to do with the way you look, but is often the result of your body language. Be reassured that it is natural to be nervous but you were called to the interview because you are qualified to do the job.

- Take a moment to compose yourself before you enter the room
- On entering the room acknowledge the interviewer/s by looking at him/her with a smile



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The Handshake

Remember that the interviewer will initiate the handshake. If they do not offer their hand then greet the interviewer/s and smile.

Using the pictures below, which do you think are appropriate or inappropriate handshakes in an interview setting and why?







Remember

- Do look at the person and smile
- Do use the person's name
- Do shake their hand two to three times
- Do ensure that the palm of your hand is dry
- Avoid squeezing the person's hand too hard
- Avoid shaking the person's hand for too long, 2-3 seconds is long enough.

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The Ideal Handshake

1

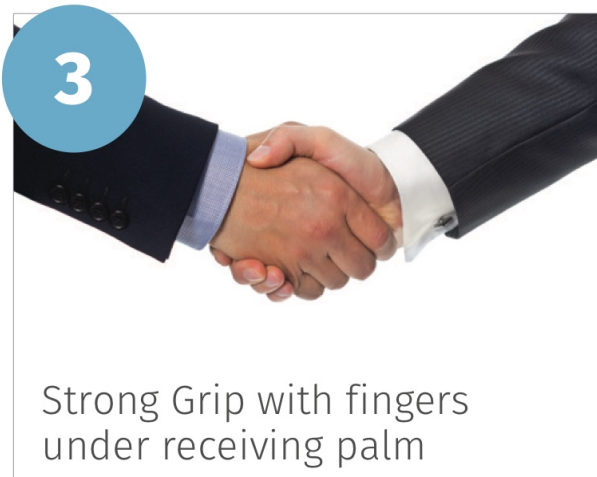
Right Hand

**2**

Dry Palm

**3**

Strong Grip with fingers under receiving palm

**4**

3-4 vigorous shakes for 2-3 seconds

**5**

Eye Contact and appropriate smile throughout



The Interview

Body Language

- Do keep a **relaxed but alert posture and a friendly expression**. This will indicate interest on your part. Be conscious of maintaining good posture throughout the interview.
- Do **maintain good eye contact**. If there is more than one interviewer, look at the person who asked the question but glance at the other interviewers from time to time during your response.
- Do **show your enthusiasm**, this can be expressed by nodding your head, smiling at the interviewers and making eye contact.
- Do ensure that you **do not invade the interviewer/s personal space**.
- Do remain aware that **interruptions can happen** during the interview (phone calls, etc.). If they do, indicate your willingness to leave if they need privacy.
- Do develop a technique prior to the interview that will **help you minimise fidgeting** whilst still appearing natural and relaxed.
- Do remember that **most interviewers will take notes** as you are speaking so that they will remember key things about you when making their decision.
- **Avoid sitting with your arms folded** across your chest, keep your hands on your lap with your fingertips together.
- **Avoid crossing your legs** or casually shaking one over the other. This can be distracting and can illustrate your anxiety.

On Completing the Interview

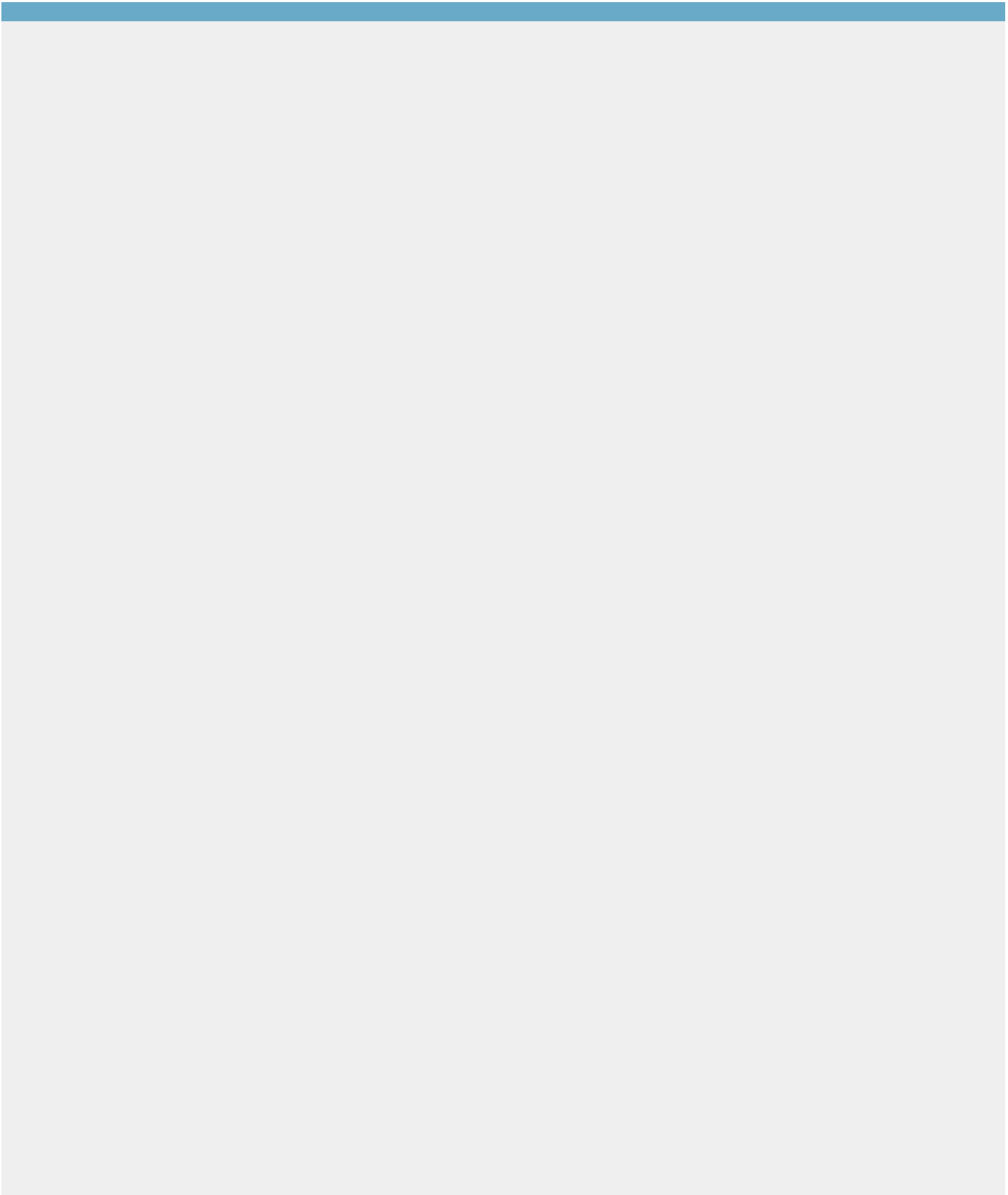
The interviewer will usually let you know the interview is over by thanking you for coming and telling you when they will be letting people know if they have been chosen for the job.

Remember it is important to maintain positive body language throughout the interview even when leaving the room. Do make eye contact with all interviewers, shake the interviewers' hands if offered and thank them for the opportunity to meet with them. Once you have left the interview don't express how positively or negatively you felt it went either through a discussion with other interviewees or by your body language.



Notes

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Section 2: **Research**



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Lesson 1 Knowledge of Company

It is always advisable to do your homework on the company before your interview.

Researching as much information about the company as you can will boost your confidence and reflect well on you during the interview. Mentioning some of the prominent features of the company during the interview can help to create a good impression. By visiting the company's website, you will collect important information about its products, recent changes, competitors and clients.

Knowledge of Company Website

If you are not familiar with the company's web address, simply type the company name into any search engine e.g. Google, Bing or Yahoo. Check details on the website to ensure they correspond to details you are already familiar with to ensure that you have the correct company and the correct website.

If you already know the web address simply type this into your browser

Use the 'Company Website Checklist' form to help you look for and remember relevant information.

Once the website is open, go straight to the "About Us" section. This section will give you a profile of the company, and an overview of their activity. Take note of the main points from this section. These points can be written in bullet point format. Keep the points brief, and there should be no more than 10 points.

Take note of the products/services that the company offers, and make connections between these and your skill set.

The next section which should be investigated is "News" or "Press Releases", as this section will give you up to date knowledge of new products/services or any changes within the company.



It is also advisable to see if you can find details of the **Management** or **Executive Team** within the company. Familiarise yourself with their names and their roles if possible, one of these individuals may be on your interview panel. If they are on your panel, this information may come in useful and will demonstrate that you have thoroughly researched the company.



Remember!

You should only mention information about individuals working within the company which is directly related to their job. While some people may have more personal information online, talking about the personal lives of the interviewer or other members of the company is not appropriate for an interview setting

Knowledge of Company's Online Presence

It may also be beneficial to browse through blogs, especially business blogs such as Google Blogs. Countless companies and their employees post good information about their companies in online blogs and so these are a great way to get inside information about a company.



Remember!

While blogs may be a good source of information about a company, they are based on opinions and so can be biased. Be careful about quoting information you have read in a blog during an interview as the information may not always be accurate.

Remember!

You can just read threads in online discussion forums for information but if you do take part in an online discussion forum about the company you are interviewing for, make sure your interviewers would not be able to identify you if they looked at the forum.



Look at online job networking resources, groups and discussion forums. All companies may not be featured on these resources, especially smaller, newer companies. If you cannot locate any further information about the company beyond their own webpage, that will not be a problem.

Social media sites may also be beneficial to review for additional information e.g. Facebook, Twitter. Many companies now have their own Twitter or Facebook accounts which will tend to have up to date information about upcoming events.



Remember!

If you decide to add the company on Facebook or follow them on Twitter, first make sure that there is nothing on your personal Facebook/Twitter profile that you do not want future employers to see as they will be able to see your profile once you connect with them.



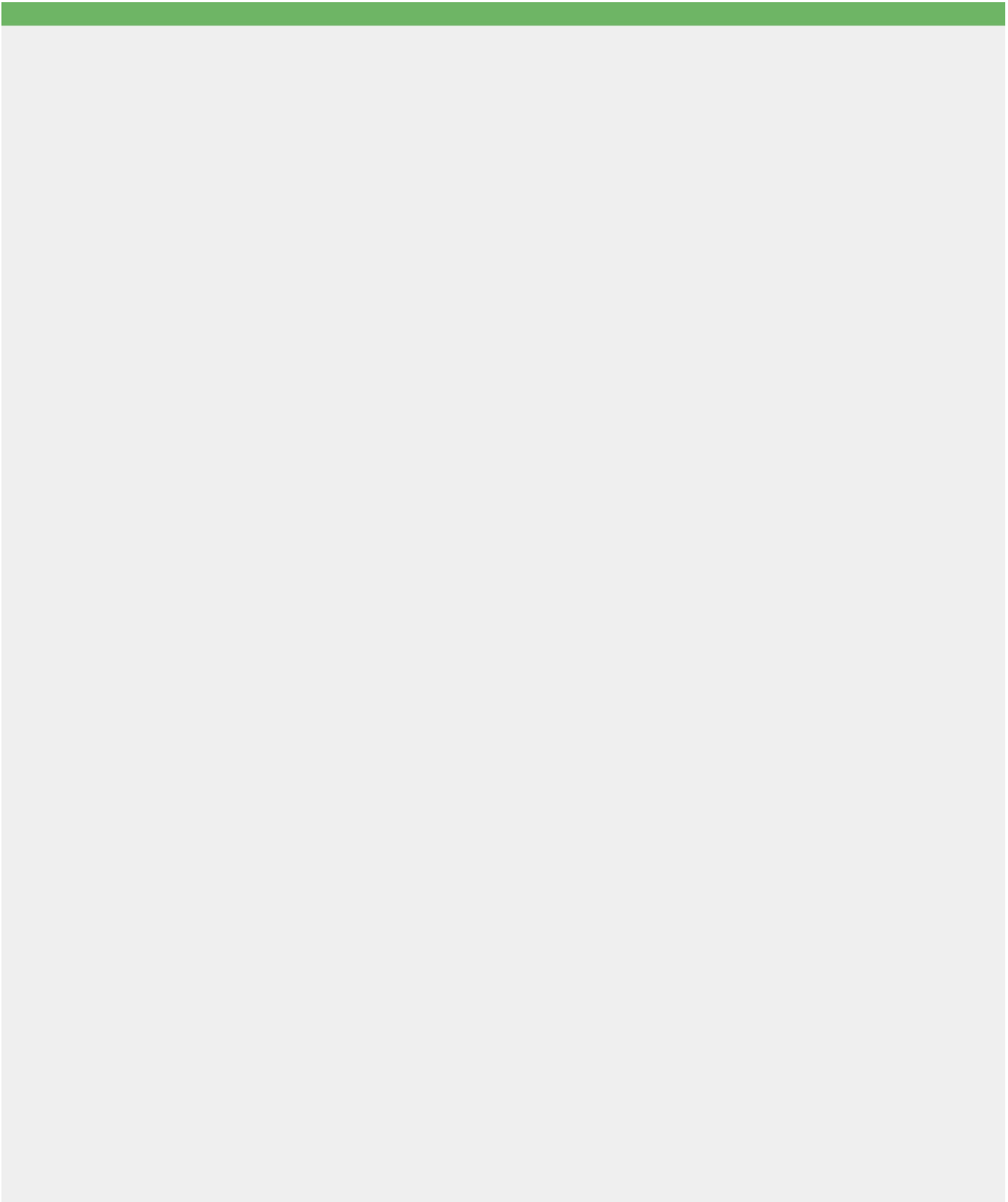
Once you have familiarised yourself with the company's products/services, take time to research other companies which offer the same or similar products/services. Knowledge of the company's competitors is important.

Company Website Checklist

Area	Completed
Locate the official website of the company	
Read over the "About us" section in the website	
Compile a brief list of main points from the "About Us" Section <ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	
Compile a list of the main products/services which the company provides <ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	

Area	Completed
<p>Read over the “News” or “Press Release” section</p>	
<p>Make note of any new products/services, or changes within the company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	
<p>Review the “Management” or “Executive Team” sections if there is one available</p>	
<p>Take note of the names associated with the various roles and try to familiarise yourself with their picture if available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	
<p>Search on business blogs for information about the company</p>	
<p>List any relevant information gathered from blogs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	

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Section 3: Self-Representation



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Lesson 1 Portrayal of Personal Skill Set

Good preparation for an interview is essential as you will come across far better and it is the best remedy to overcome nerves. It is important to prepare your interview questions and to decide beforehand if you wish to disclose your A.S. However, the most important thing to remember is to be yourself.

The first personal question you may be asked could shape the questions posed afterwards, so be sure to practice answering questions as much as possible before your interview. Often, employers will ask a simple question like “who are you? Tell us about yourself”. When they ask questions such as these they are not looking for an in-depth explanation of who you are, but they are looking for a brief explanation of who you are, what you like to do, and what your academic history is.



For Example:

“I’m John Simpson. I’m originally from Dublin but now living in Cork. I have a Degree in Food Science and a Masters in Food Microbiology. I love reading and cooking, and I someday hope to visit America”.

This answer is something that you can prepare in advance, and deliver comfortably and confidently, which can set the tone for the rest of your interview.

Personal Skills

The activity on the next page has given you a list of possible questions which you may be asked in an interview relating to your personality and qualities. These are just a few examples as it is not possible to include every potential question here. However, it is important to remember that although the syntax or words may differ, the information that the interviewer is looking for is the same.

The table of adjectives below can be used to help you think of words you would use to describe your personality and qualities:

Circle those you feel are appropriate. if you find it hard to choose, ask someone who knows you well to help.

passionate	bright	confident	diligent	energetic
agreeable	calm	cooperative	discreet	enthusiastic
skilful	capable	credible	dynamic	excellent
team-player	cheerful	decisive	eager	fabulous
alert	coherent	detailed	efficient	fair
ambitious	comfortable	determined	encouraging	frank
friendly	helpful	kind-hearted	pleasant	receptive
funny	honourable	knowledgeable	productive	reflective
generous	impartial	likeable	protective	resolute
good	industrious	lively	proud	responsible
happy	instinctive	mature	punctual	self-assured
harmonious	kind	nice	quiet	sensitive
shrewd	talented	willing	loyal	energetic
sincere	thoughtful	wise	studious	dynamic
skilful	trustworthy	motivated	attentive	enterprising
steadfast	unbiased	reliable	conscientious	enthusiastic
stimulating	upbeat	self-starter	industrious	aggressive
successful	warm	organised	persistent	consistent
			professional	methodical

Interview Question Examples

How would you describe yourself? (Choose 5 words)

How would your friends describe you?

Why do you believe you are suitable for this position?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

How do you react under stress?

How do you deal with feedback/ criticism?

Do you consider yourself to be thoughtful, analytical or do you usually make decisions quickly? Give an example.

Describe a creative accomplishment, at work or home, which gave you great satisfaction?

Which organisations do you belong to?

What is your professional goal?

How do you see yourself in five years' time?



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Lesson 2 Educational Experience

Be prepared to discuss your studies in detail as interviewers will be eager to hear you speak perceptively about your area of study. Often employers expect you to continue studying for professional development and will check if you possess effective work and study habits.

Below we have given you a list of possible questions which you may be asked in an interview relating to your educational experience. These are just a few examples as it is not possible to include every potential question here. However, it is important to remember that although the syntax or words may differ, the information that the interviewer is looking for is the same.

Describe your most rewarding university experience.

What led you to choose your field of study?

Do you have plans for continued study?

Do you think that your results are an accurate reflection of your ability?

Which two accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction and why?

Describe a time when you led or motivated others.

What do you feel qualifies you for this position?

Tell us about a time when you could not meet a deadline. What did you do?
What was the outcome?

Lesson 3 Work Experience

Be prepared to discuss your work experience in detail as interviewers will be interested to hear you speak knowledgeably about previous work experience.

Interviewers will expect you to discuss your strengths and weaknesses as a worker and to show insight into your own personal learning curve. If you do not have varied work experience, be cognisant of the skills you have learnt in your academic career such as meeting deadlines, I.T. skills, group work, leadership, making presentations, etc. All skills that you may have learnt at college/university or part-time work should not be disregarded.



Below we have given you a list of possible questions which you may be asked in an interview relating to your work experience. These are just a few examples as it is not possible to include every potential question here. However, it is important to remember that although the syntax or words may differ, the information that the interviewer is looking for is the same.

What areas of your work experience have prepared you for this job?

What would be your most important accomplishments?

Did you typically require much supervision in your previous job/s?

What are your strengths and weaknesses as a worker? Which particular strengths are relevant to this job?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

What aspects of your last job did you find the most challenging?

Do you prefer working alone or in groups?

What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? Why?

If I were to ask your present (most recent) employer about your ability as a _____, what would he/she say?

How do you go about making an important decision affecting your career?

Why are you interested in working for our organisation?

What two or three things are most important to you in a job?

1.

2.

3.

Discuss a time that you worked on your own initiative.



Lesson 4 Knowledge of Strengths and Weaknesses

The most feared question in any interview will be in relation to the interviewee's strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths are easier to list, and can be decided upon on your own, or with someone who knows you well. Examples of strengths can be seen in the table below.

Quick learner	Self Motivated
Success orientated	Determined
Leader	Team player
Hardworking	Intelligent
Great listener	Computer literate
Honest	Productive
Dependable	Loyal
Willing to learn	Integrity

In an interview we all want to put forward a positive image, so how can we possibly do this if we are speaking about our own weaknesses?



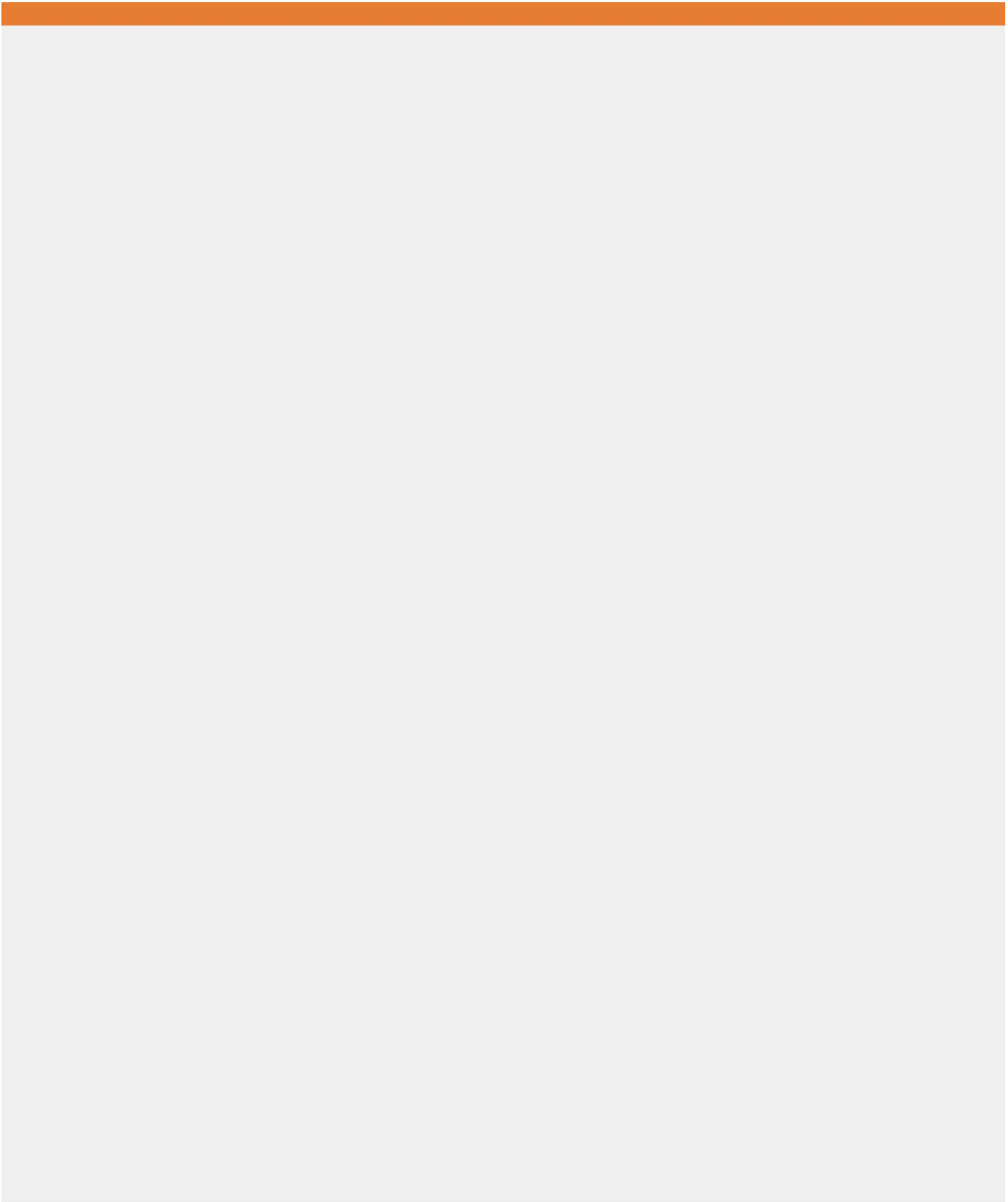
The answer to this is to realise your negative traits, and learn to express them as a positive. Everyone has weaknesses, but it is how you view these weaknesses, and the recognition that they can be worked on that is the most important factor during an interview.

Therefore, it is essential to prepare for this eventuality in advance of your interview, so that you are ready, and answer the question in a manner that reflects best on who you are, and

what you can bring to the role. In order to do this, you must first figure out which negative traits you possess. Everyone has negative traits, even the most successful people. If you are struggling to identify your traits, enlist the help of a family member or friend who knows you well. Tell them that you genuinely want to hear about your less than positive traits, so that you can understand how they affect you in the workplace.

Once you have your list, you will need to look at each trait, and decide how this trait affects your behaviour in the workplace. Consultation with a friend or family member who knows you well may help you with this point. Seeing the positive side of this behaviour is then the next step. See the table below for relevant examples:

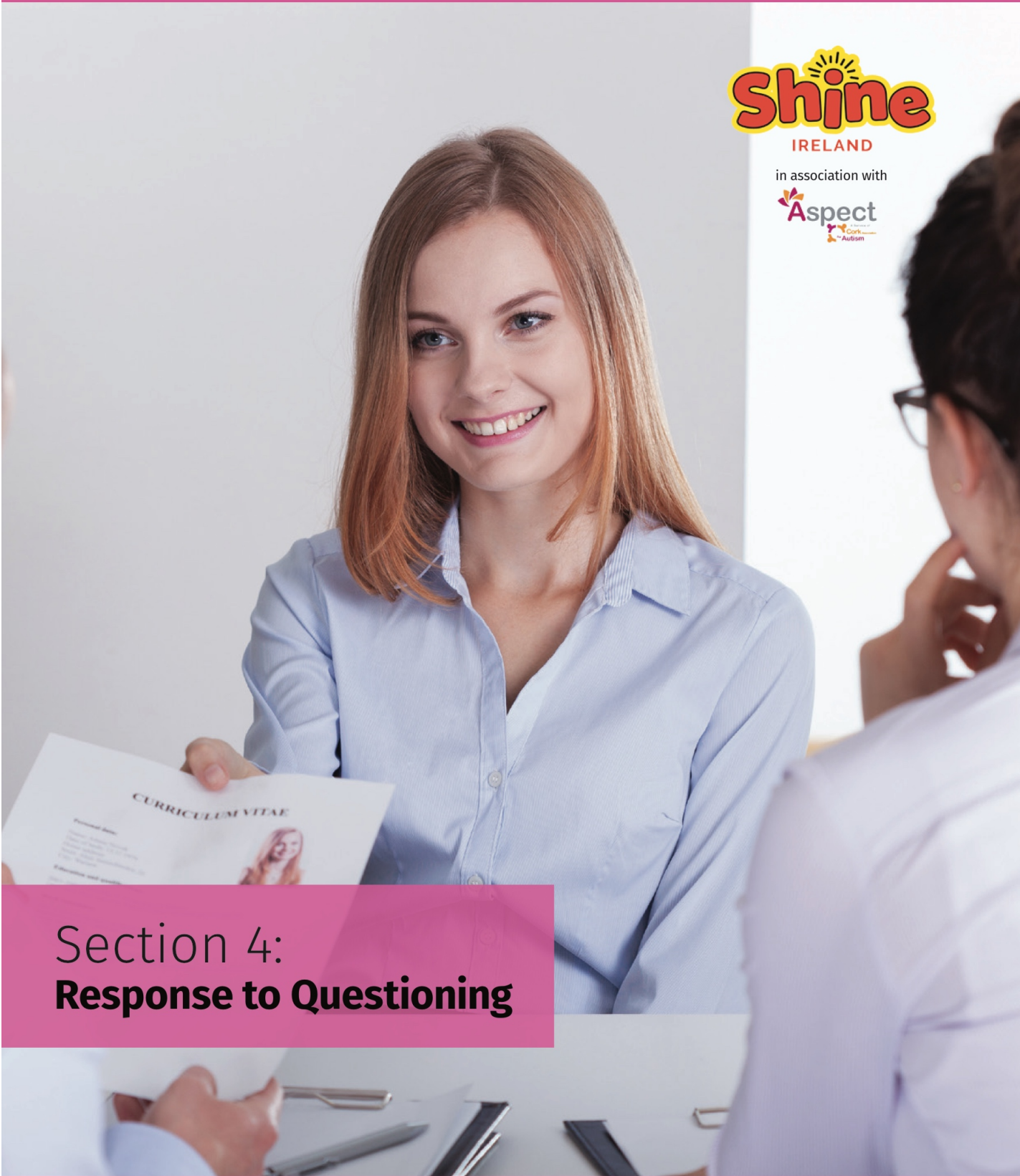
Indecisive	Take time to make decisions.	<i>I like to be sure the appropriate course of action has been taken, which will be of maximum benefit to the company</i>
Impatient	Find it hard to wait for others	<i>I am a diligent worker and like to be productive at all times</i>
Introverted	I keep to myself at work	<i>I enjoy my work, and prefer to be industrious while on company time</i>
Stubborn	I find it hard to see others point of view	<i>I am very knowledgeable in this area, and like to keep up to date on all advances in technology and research</i>
Tactless	I speak my mind without sometimes considering the feelings of others	<i>While in the workplace, I am conscious that I am on company time, and feel that the most direct way is the best, rather than drawing out long conversations to say the same thing</i>
Domineering	I tend to try to boss my co-workers	<i>I always try to remain focused on the job in hand, and it frustrates me at times when co-workers mismanage their time or go off-task.</i>
Over-critical	I tend to point out others mistakes, and am critical of their errors	<i>I am very focused while at work and feel time is valuable. If mistakes are made; I prefer them to be rectified as quickly as possible.</i>
Untidy	My workspace can be very disorganised	<i>Busy mind, busy desk is probably the best way to describe me. I find that getting the job done in a time efficient manner can sometimes mean that my workspace appears disorganised, but my mind is always dedicated to the task at hand.</i>



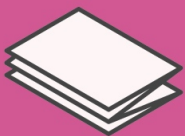
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Section 4: Response to Questioning



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Lesson 1 Staying on Topic

Being prepared for an interview is vital, and developing a game plan and sticking to it will help you to remain focused during your interview, and avoid going off topic when responding to questions.



Remember

- When you are asked a question, **listen closely** to what they are asking.
- Before answering, take a moment to **repeat the question silently in your head** - This will help you to construct your answer, and remember key points.
- Try to be as **concise as possible**- Get to the point quickly, and cover the most valid information only.
- **Answer only what they have asked you** - You may be able to talk for hours on the subject but the interviewer wants to see that you can give the appropriate information in response to a question.
- Watch for **signs of boredom** in your interviewers. These may include; frequently glancing at their watches or at the clock, trying to interrupt you, hand gestures to halt you, or frequent glances to each other.
- If they try to interrupt you, it **may be that you've gone off topic**, or that you've been talking for too long. If this happens, try to finish your point quickly, including relevant points only.
- They may also feel that you have been too brief in your answer, and may **look for you to expand on your answer**. Signs of this will include; Retaining eye contact, silence once you have finished your answer and retaining that eye contact, a nod, or hand gestures such as a circular hand motion like a wheel turning. (We will cover these concepts in depth in Lesson 2)



Avoid

- **Talking over an interviewer or responding too quickly.** Be sure to listen fully to the question, the key point may actually be at the end of the question, and responding too quickly will ensure that you miss the focus of the question and answer incorrectly.
- **Talking about politics** - You have a 50/50 chance that the person interviewing you will have an opposing view. If you are drawn into a political conversation, even if only casually after the body of the interview is complete, be prepared to let it go, and change the subject subtly.
- **Conversations about religion** - Wars have been fought because of this topic, so resist this conversation at all costs. You may unintentionally offend the person interviewing you, or put yourself in an unfavourable stereotype the interviewer happens to have of the religious information you share.
- **Racial issues, even about your own race** - If you are a diversity candidate and the interviewer wishes to discuss appropriate aspects of the firm's diversity culture, this is acceptable, but do not dwell on it.
- **Talking about death** - The death of a loved one or pet should never be discussed at an interview
- **Conversations of a sexual nature** - Inappropriate or sexist jokes have no place in an interview. Avoid comments which could be construed as having sexual connotations. Comments about your own sexual preference, or the preference of others should also be avoided, as well as comments regarding the appearance of any of the interviewers or staff of the company, good or bad.
- **NEVER discuss the details of your current or past employment in an unsavoury light.** Details about previous employers or co-workers should be kept to a minimum, and should be approached with diplomacy and tact. Negative comments of this nature are rarely favourably viewed by an interviewer.

Lesson 2 Social Perceptiveness

Social perceptiveness is the ability to understand others behaviour and actions in accordance with the interaction at hand. In an interview setting, this skill is very important in helping you to ascertain what the interviewer is thinking, and how they perceive your answers.

Non verbal communication in the form of our body language can sometimes tell us more than actual speech. Knowing what your body language tells the interviewer is important, but understanding their body language can also help us to perform better, and possibly change our performance style during an interview.

For example, if you can tell that an interviewer wants more information, without them having to ask you, you can go into more detail, and appear confident in your knowledge. If you have gone into too much detail, and appear from their body language to be boring them, you can finish your point and wait for them to redirect the conversation.

Being able to effectively decipher the interviewers body language can help you to alter your responses to suit their requirements, allowing you to make a better impression and a better interview.

In the table below you will find a sample of some of the body language which an interviewer may demonstrate during an interview.

Remember!

Body language is context sensitive, and we are only discussing the body language below in the context of an interview situation.

Waving hand in a circular motion

This can mean that the person wants you to continue your answer and provide more details. It is advisable to extend your answer at this point, but try to keep this expansion to one or two minutes unless you are asked to expand again.

Holding up hand with palm facing towards you

This is usually a sign that someone wants you to stop what you are saying. They may do this when you have spoken for too long, or they would like to change the direction of the conversation.

Tapping the table with their finger tips

This could mean that the person is bored, that you have been talking for too long, or it could mean that they are waiting for you to answer a question that they have asked.

Folded arms

Folded arms in an interview can be a sign that the person is trying to assert their authority. However, if it is paired with someone leaning back in their seat, it could be that they are bored and that you have been speaking for too long.

Swinging on their chair

This can be a sign that someone is bored and you may have spent too long answering a question. It may be advisable to wrap up your point as quickly as possible, or clarify if they would like you to continue.

Shrugging shoulders

This may indicate that the interviewer does not agree with your answer, or is unwilling to answer a question that you have posed.

Staring intently

This can indicate that someone is listening to you, and is interested in what you have to say. While it can be uncomfortable to keep eye contact while someone is doing this, it is important to keep trying to maintain a degree of eye contact during this time.

Raising eyebrows

If paired with a smile, this can indicate that someone is supportive of what you have said, or perhaps slightly surprised. Be wary of when this behaviour is paired with a blank expression, or a shaking of the head. This may indicate that the person is unimpressed or completely disagrees with your response.

Looking at watch

This is a classic indication that someone is conscious that the meeting is running over, or they are bored. Either way, you will need to wrap up your point as quickly as possible.

Looking at others on the interview panel

This may indicate that the lead person on the interview panel is trying to ascertain if there are any other questions, or they are looking for opinions on what you have said.

Whispering

This is simply a way to confer between the interview panel. It is vital that you do not interrupt at this time, and wait for the interviewer to address you again.

Nodding

This indicates that the interviewer agrees with or likes your answer.

Shaking Head

This usually indicates that the interviewer disagrees with your point or answer, but it can also be a dismissive gesture if they do not want to answer a question that you have posed.

Sighing

While some people do sigh as a habit, it can also mean that someone is frustrated, or bored. You may want to summarise or wrap up the point you were trying to make.

Feet Tapping/Shaking

Both of these movements can occur when someone has been seated for too long, or can simply be an unconscious habit, so try not to become distracted or alarmed if you notice your interviewer engaging in them.

Note taking

Almost every interviewer will engage in this behaviour, and it is neither a positive or negative indication of your performance. It is simply part of the interview process.



Lesson 3 Asking the Interviewer Questions

Towards the end of most interviews, the interviewers may ask you if you have any questions for them. The interviewer may have given you information about the company and job already so you may feel you have all the information you need.

However, it is important to use this opportunity to further show your interest in the position you have applied for. You could ask some of these questions, but you don't need to ask all of them. If you don't ask any questions, it may lead the interviewer to think that you are not interested in the position, or are not confident. However, it is important to only ask questions if they are the right ones. Consult your trainer on which questions are appropriate for the area of employment you are interested in.

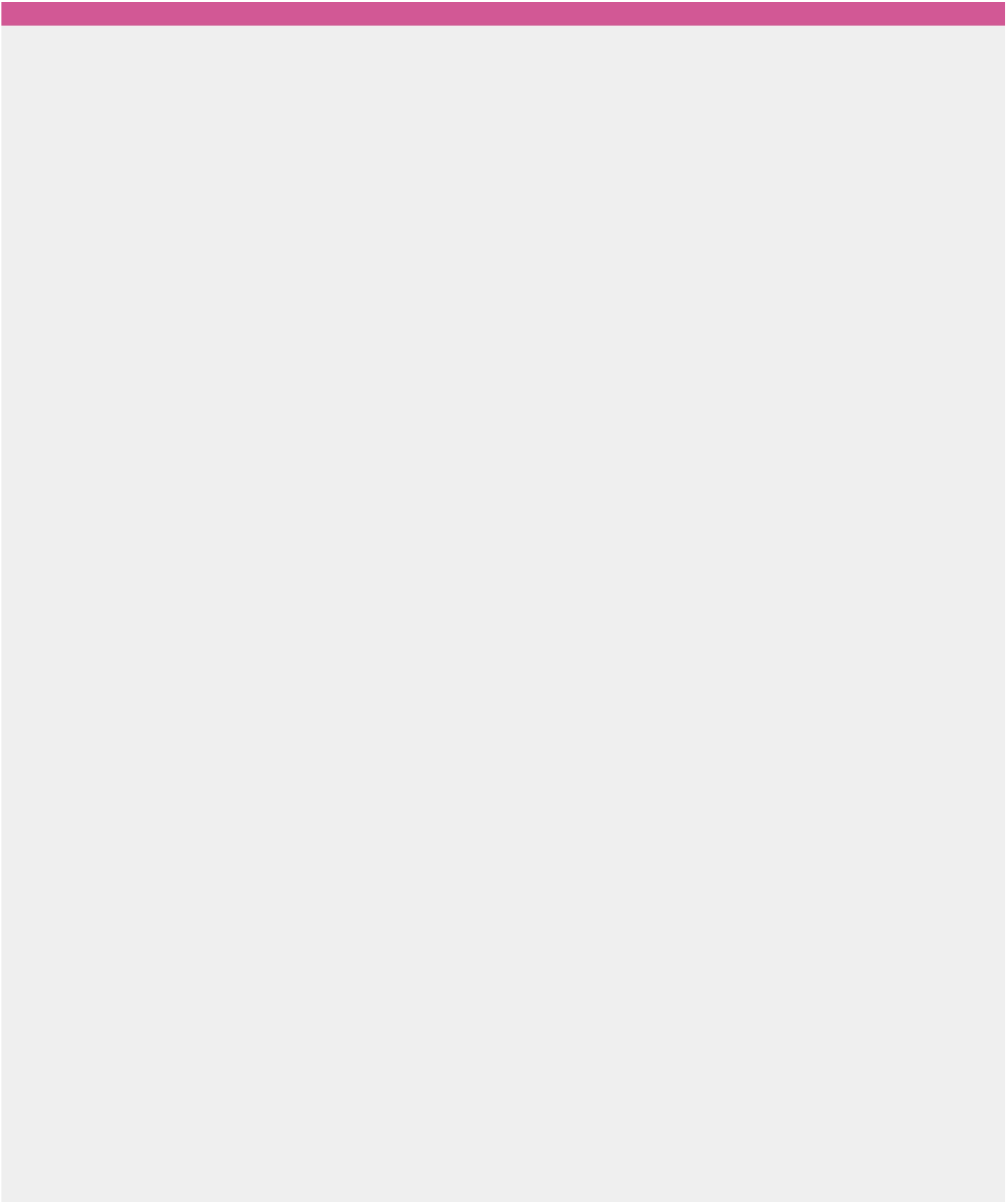
- How many people would I be working with if I got this position?
- What is the dress code for people working in this position?
- When will you be making a final decision on the position?
- If you have disclosed your diagnosis: Are there any other people on the spectrum in the company?
- Will I be able to get feedback on this interview?
- What do you like about working for this company?
- How will my performance be measured as an employee?
- What are the company's goals for the next five/ ten years?
- What is the opportunity for growth or advancement like in the company?
- Are you most interested in a candidate who works independently, on a team, cross functionally or through a combination of them all? Can you give me an example?



Avoid

- Questions about pay, time off and benefits. You can ask them at a later time.
- Questions about the company you could have found quickly yourself on the internet.
- Asking if you can change aspects of the job's salary, holidays, schedule etc.
- Asking if you got the job.
- Asking about the social activities within the company.

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