

THE SELECTION PROCESS

A practical guide for candidates

At Halecroft Recruitment, we want you to feel informed, prepared and confident throughout your job search. This guide explains common selection methods and how to approach each stage.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

Every employer recruits differently. You may have one interview, several conversations, a presentation, a practical task or an assessment centre. Interviews may take place in person, by telephone or by video.

The process helps the employer understand your skills and experience. It also gives you the opportunity to decide whether the role, team and organisation are right for you.

Common selection methods

- CV-based interviews and discussions about your experience.
- Behavioural or competency-based interviews using examples from your experience.
- Technical interviews, problem-solving exercises and practical activities.
- Presentations and case studies.
- Ability tests, situational judgement tests and personality questionnaires.
- Assessment centres combining several activities.

2. BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Confirm the stages, timings, interview format and names or roles of the people you will meet. Ask what each assessment involves and what to prepare or bring.
- Read the job description and identify the skills and experience the employer needs. Research the organisation and prepare relevant examples.
- Let your Halecroft consultant or the employer know in advance if you need adjustments or support to take part, including accessible materials, breaks or changes to the format.
- Clarify deadlines, equipment requirements and any rules on notes, external help or AI tools. Follow the instructions for each assessment.

Your Halecroft consultant can help clarify the brief, discuss preparation and request feedback on your behalf. Keep them informed of any questions or changes to your availability.

INTERVIEWS

3. CV-BASED INTERVIEWS

The interviewer will explore your experience, achievements, career choices and reasons for applying. Review the exact CV or application submitted for this role so you can discuss it accurately.

- Prepare a brief introduction covering your relevant experience, strengths and interest in the role.
- Be ready to explain career moves or gaps clearly and honestly. Keep explanations relevant and share only personal information you are comfortable discussing.
- Choose achievements that show your contribution. Use figures or other evidence where possible, while protecting confidential information.
- Discuss development areas honestly and explain the steps you are taking to improve.

4. TECHNICAL INTERVIEWS

Technical interviews assess knowledge and skills relevant to the role, such as accounting, systems, engineering, data analysis or specialist processes. You may be asked to explain a method, solve a problem or demonstrate a task.

- Review the technical requirements in the job description and ask about the format.
- Explain your reasoning, assumptions and checks, as well as your final answer.
- If you do not know an answer, say so. Describe how you would investigate, find reliable information or seek appropriate support.

5. PRACTICAL INTERVIEW TIPS

- Plan your journey and allow extra time. For video interviews, test the link, camera, sound and internet connection, and keep a contact number available.
- Choose clean, professional clothing suited to the employer and role. Ask your consultant if you are unsure about the dress code.
- Listen carefully, pause to think and ask for clarification when needed. Speak at a comfortable pace and use notes briefly if permitted.
- In a panel interview, acknowledge the person asking the question and include the wider panel naturally.
- Prepare questions about priorities, expectations, team support and development.
- Be ready to discuss salary expectations, working arrangements and notice period when asked. Your consultant can help you prepare.
- For a recorded video interview, check the preparation time, response limits and whether retries are allowed before starting.

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEWS

6. USING YOUR EXPERIENCE

These interviews ask for examples that show how you have used skills or handled situations. Match your examples to the job description. You can draw on employment, study, volunteering or other relevant experience.

Questions you may be asked

- Tell me about a time you had to meet a difficult deadline.
- Describe a change you helped introduce. How did you involve other people?
- Give an example of a problem you solved or a decision you made with limited information.
- Tell me about a challenging working relationship. What did you do and what did you learn?

7. THE STAR METHOD

Use STAR to structure a clear answer. Keep the background brief and give most attention to what you personally did. Explain the result and any learning, even when the outcome was mixed.

Stage	What to include
Situation	Set the scene. What was happening?
Task	Explain your responsibility and the outcome you needed to achieve.
Action	Describe the steps you took, your decisions and how you involved others.
Result	Explain the outcome, evidence of success and what you learned.

Illustrative example: managing competing deadlines

Situation: Two teams needed urgent reports on the same afternoon.

Task: I needed to deliver accurate information without delaying either team.

Action: I clarified the essential requirements, agreed priorities with both managers and checked the key figures before sending a concise first report.

Result: Both teams received the information in time. I then introduced a shared reporting calendar to identify future clashes earlier.

Prepare several examples and practise explaining them naturally. Be ready for follow-up questions about your role, choices and results. Avoid memorising a script.

TESTS AND PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

8. UNDERSTANDING ASSESSMENTS

Different assessments measure different things. Ask which type you will complete, how long it takes, whether it is timed and what equipment or support is permitted.

Ability tests

These may assess numerical, verbal or logical reasoning. Questions usually have correct answers and may be timed. Familiarise yourself with the format using the provider's official examples or practice tests.

Personality questionnaires

These explore typical working preferences and behaviour. They do not usually have right or wrong answers. Respond honestly rather than trying to guess the profile the employer wants. A profile may be discussed alongside other information during the selection process.

Situational judgement tests

These present workplace scenarios and ask you to choose or rate possible responses. Read the context carefully and follow the instructions for that assessment.

Before completing an online assessment

- Use a quiet space, a suitable device and a reliable connection. Allow enough uninterrupted time.
- Read the instructions and try any sample questions before beginning. Check whether calculators, notes or other resources are allowed.
- Request any adjustments before starting and confirm the arrangements with the recruiter.
- Complete the assessment yourself. If a technical problem occurs, record what happened and contact the organiser promptly.
- Ask whether feedback is available. If a profile does not reflect your experience, discuss it calmly and offer relevant examples.

9. PROBLEM-SOLVING AND PRACTICAL TASKS

Activities might include a spreadsheet exercise, written response, case study, role play, prioritisation task or technical demonstration.

- Clarify the brief, deadline, expected output and assessment criteria.
- Plan your time, prioritise the essential work and check accuracy before submitting.
- Explain assumptions and recommendations clearly. Use only information and resources permitted by the brief.
- Use anonymised examples and avoid sharing confidential material from previous employers.

PRESENTATIONS

10. PLAN A CLEAR MESSAGE

A selection presentation gives you the opportunity to show your knowledge, judgement and communication skills. Focus on answering the brief and making your ideas easy to follow.

- Confirm the topic, audience, time limit, expected format and whether questions are included in the time available.
- Decide on your main message and a small number of supporting points. Open with the purpose, develop your evidence and finish with a clear conclusion or recommendation.
- Check facts, explain assumptions and acknowledge sources. Avoid unexplained jargon.
- Keep slides simple, with readable text and clear contrast. Use charts or images only where they help explain the point.
- Rehearse aloud and time the full presentation. Adjust the content to fit comfortably and allow for questions where required.
- Check the equipment and submission instructions. Keep an accessible backup, such as a PDF, where permitted.

11. DELIVER WITH CONFIDENCE

- Speak at a steady pace, pause between key points and use brief prompts rather than reading each slide.
- Engage with the audience in a way that feels natural. You do not need a particular speaking style to communicate effectively.
- Listen to questions fully. Clarify anything unclear and take a moment to organise your answer.
- If you cannot answer a question, explain what you would check and how you would find out.

12. MANAGE PRESENTATION NERVES

It is common to feel nervous. Preparation and a few practical routines can help you feel more in control.

- Practise the opening and the transitions between your main points.
- Arrive or join early enough to settle in and check the set-up.
- Pause, breathe steadily and focus on the point you are explaining.
- Prepare for likely problems, such as a slide failing to display.
- Aim to communicate clearly and respond thoughtfully. You do not need to deliver a perfect performance.

ASSESSMENT CENTRES AND NEXT STEPS

13. WHAT TO EXPECT

An assessment centre brings together several activities, online or in person, over a few hours or longer. Tasks may include interviews, group discussions, presentations, case studies and individual exercises.

Ask for the agenda, activities, preparation requirements and assessment criteria. Plan for breaks and any travel or access needs, and speak to your consultant about areas where you would value support.

During group and individual exercises

- Read the brief carefully and keep the objective and time limit in view.
- Contribute ideas, listen to others and build on useful suggestions.
- Invite contributions and help the group make progress without taking over.
- Explain your reasoning, use the information provided and check key details.
- Remain professional throughout the event. Ask the organiser if you are unsure which activities are assessed.
- If one exercise feels difficult, refocus on the next task. Use each activity as a fresh opportunity to demonstrate your skills.

14. AFTER EACH STAGE

- Write down the questions and activities while they are fresh in your mind. Note what went well and what you would change.
- Update your Halecrot consultant on your impressions, interest in the role and any concerns.
- Confirm the next steps and expected timescale. Follow up through the agreed contact if you have not heard back.
- Ask for specific feedback where available and turn it into one or two practical actions for your next interview.
- If you receive an offer, review the written terms, salary, working arrangements, start date and any conditions before making your decision.

Questions to help you assess the opportunity

- What would success look like during the first three to six months?
- What are the main challenges for the role and team?
- What induction, training and ongoing support are available?
- How does the team work together and how is performance reviewed?

YOUR PREPARATION AND REFLECTION

15. FINAL PREPARATION CHECKLIST

- I have checked the format, timings, location or joining link and contact details.
- I have reviewed my CV, the job description and the organisation.
- I have prepared relevant examples, questions and any requested materials.
- I have confirmed any adjustments, equipment needs and assessment rules.
- I am ready to discuss my interest, availability and salary expectations.

16. STAR PLANNING WORKSHEET

Use a separate copy for each example. Keep notes brief and include evidence of your contribution.

Prompt	Your notes
Competency / question	
Situation and task	
Action: what I did	
Result and learning	

17. FEEDBACK AND NEXT ACTIONS

Activity / date	What went well	Feedback / improvement	My next action

Further preparation

National Careers Service: [Interview tips](#) | [The STAR method](#) | [Psychometric tests](#)

SHL: [Practice tests and assessment advice](#). Use the provider named in your invitation.

Guide reviewed: 28 October 2026. Speak to your Halecroft consultant for support.