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## Job Interview — Preparation, Process and Tips

How to prepare for a job interview in Germany: interview process, typical questions, and salary negotiation.

**Deutsche Begriffe:** Bewerbungsgespräch | Vorstellungsgespräch | Selbstpräsentation | Gehaltsverhandlung | Assessment Center

### Job Interview in Germany

The **job interview** (also called Vorstellungsgespräch or interview) is the most important step in the recruitment process. In Germany, the interview has a formal character — good preparation is essential.

#### Typical Process

Phase	Duration	Content
<b>Greeting</b>	5 min	Handshake, small talk
<b>Company Presentation</b>	10 min	Employer introduces themselves
<b>Self-Presentation</b>	10-15 min	You introduce yourself
<b>Technical Questions</b>	15-20 min	Questions about qualifications and experience
<b>Your Questions</b>	10 min	You ask the employer questions
<b>Closing</b>	5 min	Next steps, goodbye

**Duration:** Usually 45-90 minutes, longer for management positions.

### Preparation

Research the Company

- **Website** — products, services, values, news
- **Job description** — what requirements are mentioned?
- **Reviews** on Kununu.de — read carefully, don't believe everything
- **Commute** — plan with a buffer, arriving 10 minutes early is ideal

## Prepare Your Self-Presentation

The question "**Tell me about yourself**" appears in almost every interview. Prepare a **2-3-minute presentation**:

- 1. Current situation** — "I am currently working as ... at ..."
- 2. Career path** — key positions (not everything!)
- 3. Relevant experience** — what qualifies you for this role
- 4. Motivation** — why you're applying

**Tip:** Practice your self-presentation out loud — in front of a mirror or with friends.

## Typical Questions — and Good Answers

### #### About You Personally

- "**What are your strengths?**" → name 2-3 strengths with concrete examples
- "**What are your weaknesses?**" → be honest, but with a solution: "I'm sometimes impatient, so I use checklists"
- "**Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**" → realistic career goals that fit the company
- "**Why do you want to change jobs?**" → phrase positively (new challenge, development), never complain about your previous employer

### #### About the Position

- "**Why are you applying to us?**" → specific reasons (not: "because you pay well")
- "**What do you know about our company?**" → show that you've done your research
- "**How do you handle stress?**" → concrete example from practice

### #### Trick Questions

- "**What would your colleagues say about you?**" → honest, positive traits
- "**Tell me about a failure**" → situation, what you learned, how you did better
- "**Why should we hire you?**" → your unique selling points (USP)

## Prohibited Questions

The employer **cannot ask** (§ 611a BGB, AGG):

- **Pregnancy** — "Are you pregnant?" / "Are you planning children?"
- **Religion** — "What is your religion?"
- **Political views** — "Which party do you vote for?"
- **Union membership** — "Are you a union member?"
- **Health** — "Do you have chronic illnesses?" (only allowed if relevant to the job)
- **Marital status** — "Are you married?" (often asked in practice, but you don't have to answer)

**Your right:** You can **lie** about prohibited questions — there are no legal consequences.

## Dress Code

General Rules

- **Better overdressed than underdressed** — when in doubt, dress more formally
- **Clean and well-groomed** — hair, nails, shoes
- **Discrete jewelry and perfume**
- **No sportswear, no sweatpants**

Depending on Industry

Industry	Dress Code
<b>Banking, Insurance, Law Firm</b>	Suit, tie, subtle colors
<b>Office, Administration</b>	Business Casual (shirt/blouse, trousers/skirt)
<b>IT, Startup</b>	Smart Casual (shirt without tie, jeans OK)
<b>Crafts</b>	Clean casual wear, well-groomed
<b>Retail, Hospitality</b>	Well-groomed, appropriate for the industry

## Salary Negotiation

When Is Salary Discussed?

- Often only in the **second interview** or at the end of the first
- Sometimes the employer asks: "**What are your salary expectations?**"

- Research **typical salaries in your industry** beforehand (gehalt.de, kununu.de, glassdoor.de)

### Tips

- **Name a range** — e.g., "I'm thinking of 42,000–48,000 € gross per year"
- **Justify your request** — "Based on my 3 years of experience and qualification X..."
- **Don't set it too low** — you can't increase it later
- **Consider the whole package** — vacation, home office, training, company car

### Typical Entry-Level Salaries (gross/year)

Industry	Entry-Level Salary
Engineering	45,000–55,000 €
IT	42,000–52,000 €
Business/Marketing	35,000–45,000 €
Healthcare	33,000–38,000 €
Crafts	28,000–35,000 €
Retail	26,000–32,000 €

## After the Interview

### Follow Up

- **Thank you email** — within 24 hours, brief and professional
- **Be patient** — the decision can take 1–4 weeks
- **Follow up** — if you haven't heard anything after 2 weeks, politely email to ask

### If You Get an Offer

- **Read the contract carefully** — probation period, notice period, overtime rules
- **Don't sign immediately** — you can take the contract home and review it
- **Agree on a start date**

### If You Get Rejected

- **Don't take it personally** — there are often many good candidates
- **Ask for feedback** — "What could I have done better?"
- **Keep going** — every interview is practice

## Special Tips for Foreigners

- 1. Punctuality** — In Germany this is extremely important. 5 minutes early is ideal.
- 2. Handshake** — firm, brief, eye contact
- 3. Use "Sie"** — use the formal "Sie" until the conversation partner offers "du"
- 4. Explain foreign qualifications** — Not everyone knows your education system. Explain comparability.
- 5. Present language skills positively** — "I speak 4 languages and am actively improving my German" is better than "Unfortunately my German isn't very good"
- 6. Cultural differences** — Directness is valued in Germany. Clearly say what you can do and what you want.
- 7. Legal questions** — Check whether your residence permit allows the planned work  
--- As of: March 2026. All information without guarantee.