TEACHING ASSISTANT INTERVIEW
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Helping you prepare for your TA Interview

R A Jodah
Introduction

Familiarizing yourself with a few teaching assistant interview questions can make all the difference between getting the job and not getting the job. A job interview can be one of the most demanding and stressful part of starting a new job.

Whether it's a teaching assistant job interview or any type of job interview, you must prepare yourself by practicing and familiarizing yourself with some of the most commonly asked interview questions and prepare mental notes of some of the answers the interviewer will be looking for.

Because the role of a teaching assistant can be so demanding at times, the interviewer will be asking key questions to assess your classroom management skills and ability to work with children on a one to one basis. Just remain calm and answer the questions naturally without overstating and going off topic, remember that the outcome of the interview will depend on how well you can answer your teaching assistant interview questions.
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 - 50 TA Interview Questions and Answers

Chapter 3 - Why do you want to be a TA - Sample Answers

Chapter 4 - 10 Questions to Ask at the End of a TA Interview

Chapter 5 - 10 Special Needs TA Interview Questions

Chapter 6 – How to Prepare for a TA Interview

Chapter 7 - What to Expect at a Teaching Assistant Interview

Chapter 8 - 5 Common Teaching Assistant Interview Tasks

Chapter 9 - What to Wear to a TA Interview

Chapter 10 - 10 Things you Shouldn't do at a TA Interview

Chapter 11 - 5 Things you can do to Improve your Chances at a TA Interview
1. **Question:** Why do you want to work at this school?

Having looked at the school's website I was impressed by the positive outlook and the initiatives used (antibullying/anti-racism/healthy eating) to make the school a happy and safe place for its pupils and staff.

2. **Question:** If a child tells you that he or she is being harmed by someone outside school what would you do?

I would follow the safeguarding procedure of the school and report the incident to the named senior member of staff responsible but not disclose this to anyone else. I would try to reassure the child and keep them updated on what's happening.

3. **Question:** How would you deal with a child who persistently misbehaves in the classroom?

I would work closely with the class teacher to deal with the child in a consistent way. I would use positive encouragement and praise good behaviour when possible and follow the school's behaviour policy if things don't improve.

4. **Question:** What would you do if a parent asked you a question about their child in the playground after school?

I would explain that I am not allowed to talk to parents about individual children for reasons of confidentiality and would direct the parent to arrange to speak to the class teacher.

5. **Question:** Where a child with special educational needs is reluctant to participate in classroom activities, what would be your approach to motivating them?

I would be consistently positive and reassuring, try to discover any barriers which I could help the child ease, and reward their efforts wherever possible, including positive recognition of their hard work and other outcomes - for example, in assemblies.

6. **Which skills would you like to develop?**

There is nothing weak about knowing you need to increase skills in certain areas. Have a think about professional areas you could take courses in. The Open University or local colleges will have courses relevant to teaching, mention these teaching courses and the interviewer will see how passionate and determined you are to progress your career.

7. **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**

Be careful with this, the interviewer wants to hear how serious and committed you are at contributing to their school. The worse thing you could mention is your intention to use this job as a stepping stone to another teaching job elsewhere.

8. **What do you consider to be your greatest strength?**
Don't be shy; this is your chance to tailor your answer to the demands of the job you are applying for. Go back to the research notes you made while you were preparing for the interview and highlight your ideas on how you would tackle some of the most common problems affecting the school.

9. **How do you react to criticism?**

Nobody enjoys having their faults commented on, but it is important you communicate an ability to reflect on feedback calmly. The purpose of these teaching assistant interview questions and answers is to help you cope with awkward issues and provide you with a basis to focus your individual answer around.

10. **What would be your priorities for the first fortnight in the job here?**

Talk about learning staff and pupils’ names quickly and familiarising yourself with school layout and policies on everything from discipline to green issues. Don't be afraid to let the interviewer know how eager you are to gain as much experience and knowledge from supporting staff at the school.

11. **In your opinion, whose responsibility is literacy?**

The only answer to this is 'all of us'. Everyone in the school, whether teaching or support staff, has to work hard to help children develop literacy. This is a popular teaching assistant interview question which could also ask about responsibility for discipline or health and safety issues.

12. **Can you explain the necessary skills to maintain order in a class?**

You will have acquired techniques from experience and in training. One of the most helpful skills is to know each child's name so that you can communicate clearly with the class.

13. **How can the school support their teaching assistants?**

Think about specific examples of where schools can help, such as providing mentors or training days. If you've worked as a teaching assistant before then highlight some of the issues that has affected you in the past and give examples of any solutions you can think of.

14. **How can you protect yourself from allegations of abuse?**

Simple strategies like not being alone with a child when the door is shut, or not carrying out any personal care unless prescribed by the school, are the type of answers required here.

15. **If you witness some bullying behaviour while on playground duty, what actions would you take?**

Every school should have its detailed bullying policy. You would of course act to stop any bullying and then seek to follow the agreed procedure. The safety and security of the child is of prime importance.

16. **What are your career aspirations/goals?**
This is one of the most important teaching assistant interview questions, and will show the interviewer that you have put thought into a long-term commitment to the industry.

17. Why did you leave your last job?

The interviewer will be looking for any negatives surrounding the completion of your last contract or termination. Focus on positives, such as seeking new challenges or being attracted by the good reputation of the school.

18. What is the role of a teaching assistant?

The interviewer wants to see if you understand the role of teaching assistant. In addition to the main duties performed, mention other duties such as creating a supportive environment, encouraging children to grow and being a positive role model.

19. What qualities do you possess that make you a great teaching assistant?

The interviewer is interested to see if you have any extra skills that will be an asset to the school. If you have musical ability, are artistic or have any other skills - bring them up now.

20. How would you deal with disruptive or disobedient students?

This is another one of the key interview questions for teaching assistants. Classroom management is a key component of any teaching assistant role, and the interviewer wants to see if you have experience, and how you dealt with the situation. Try to include a positive result to the example.

21. Tell us about a time when you encouraged a student and it had a positive result?

Again, this is another one of the most important interview questions for teaching assistants. The role often involves providing personalised support for students experiencing difficulty, and the interviewer will be keen to hear about your experience in this situation.

22. How would you support a student with reading difficulties?

Another performance based question that will show the interviewer if you have any real-life experience dealing with learning difficulties, and how confidently you dealt with it.

23. How would you deal with conflict in the workplace?

The interviewer will want to learn about your conflict resolution skills, as well as get a general idea of your personality in regards to social interaction. A happy workplace is a productive workplace, and the interviewer will be looking for a confident, well-adjusted individual.

24. What have you done recently to improve your teacher assistant skills?

Many teaching assistant interview questions will give you the chance to promote yourself, and this one is the perfect opportunity to mention any short courses, extra training or volunteer work that you have done in the last
year or two. They will want to see your engagement with the industry and any specialised areas that you may be interested in.

25. **Question:** Describe an occasion when you provided excellent teaching support.
This is your opportunity to show you can translate theory into practice, by relating how the teacher/support assistant relationship works in the classroom to deliver a quality learning experience.

26. **Question:** Should teaching be a fun activity?

The best educators mostly demonstrate an irrepressible enthusiasm for their subject. In turn, this makes learning easier and more enjoyable for pupils. However, this does not mean that 'entertaining' pupils in a frivolous way is ever justifiable. There must always be a genuine enthusiasm imparted if pupils are to be educationally engaged.

27. **Question:** Do you have any special abilities, such as art or music skills, which could be useful in the classroom?

Any such abilities or interests can sometimes help to 'reach' certain pupils, and also offer some different teaching and learning approaches if you feel confident in your abilities. (A potential interview 'tie-breaker'.)

28. **Question:** How could a classroom teaching assistant help the teacher to engage the children?

By helping to keep children on task, for example, by intervening quickly if there is a low-level disruption. Also, by noting whether children seem to understand what is required, and (discreetly) asking the teacher if further clarification seems to be needed.

29. **Question:** How would you react if two students were talking and playing constantly during a class?

Answer: The role of a teaching assistant would be to get them back on task. First, by moving closer to that area of the class, then by quietly reminding them they should be working/paying attention etc., before reporting the matter to the classroom teacher if the students persist in their behaviour.

30. **Question:** Describe a time when you used a creative approach to solve a problem.

Answer: Think of something novel, such as employing a popular aspect of children's media culture to effectively support a child to overcome a learning difficulty.

31. **Question:** What is your experience of working with children with SEN? How did you support them?

Remember SEN work covers a broad range of educational support, so be specific about what you have done. In terms of general classroom support, measures include: break tasks into manageable chunks, reformulate task explanations where necessary, help children to create and follow simple routines, keep instructions brief and simple, always check for understanding, repeat instructions as often as required, and allow plenty of time for work to be finished.

32. **Question:** What factors do you think makes good teamwork?
Good communication, mutual respect, collaborative ethos, shared goals and pro-active problem solving. Watch out - this may prompt a follow-up 'conflict' question.

33. **Question:** What are your views about parental involvement in a child's learning?

Acknowledge the primary role of parents as carers and educators. Value parental enquiries and positive advantages of two-way home/school communication. Best practice is to keep parents well informed in a manner appropriate to the age and stage of learners. Some parents with special skills may wish to take more active voluntary roles.

34. **Question:** What kind of relationships would you make with parents/pupils/staff?

Staff relationships relate to team attributes; appropriate parental relationships should be friendly, open and supportive - but note the need to observe confidentialities; pupil relationships should be friendly, open, trust building and supportive too - but also appropriately professional at all times.

35. **Question:** What measures would you take to ensure an SEN child settles in class in their first few weeks?

Ensure they have an accurate, easy-access timetable. Focus on their ability to find their way around the school site. Make sure all staff were aware of the child's SEN needs (including equipment). Discreetly check that friendships were developing satisfactorily, e.g. without bullying.

36. **Question:** Role play areas are important- can you explain the work you have experienced and how it progressed children's learning?

Role-play is often used to develop social skills and support general development. Thus, it can be used, for example, to promote and refine the development of collaborative working without conflict.

37. **Question:** What strategies would you use to help with learning?

In a TA classroom context, this may include using questions to check if individuals understand the concepts being taught, or monitoring children's work to check learning is being applied. Another context might be reformulating a knowledge explanation for the benefit of individual learners.

38. **Question:** What action would you take if you disagreed with an activity planned by your teacher?

Fully support your colleague. S sensitively raise the matter at the right time and place - asking to learn more about the details would be a good start. Where the teacher is responsible for the work, you must never challenge or intervene. If you have real concerns, share these in confidence with your line manager.

39. **Question:** What is the importance of classroom observations?

Observations allow another independent perspective on classroom interactions and may inform later analysis of learning styles, classroom behaviour and a host of other specific educational goals.
40. Question: "I had to read a story for YR3 children... later, I was asked what I would have done next, if further time allowed."

If your interview schedule includes a practical task, always be ready to say what you would plan as an extension activity. It often happens that a certain classroom activity finishes early, and staff should always be prepared for an extension task to develop the learning and keep the class engaged.

41. Question: Give details of how you have helped a child progress.

This should relate to a specific context and detail how your support was personalised to meet the needs of a particular child. For example, this could mean helping a child to understand a concept by framing it in relation to one of their hobbies or interests.

42. Question: How could you help a student to improve their reading skills?

To an extent, this will depend on the school's reading policy, teaching methods, age of child and similar factors. Always be encouraging, give them time, and structured help if necessary. Be sure the teacher is aware of any real difficulties.

43. Question: What would you do if you suspected a child was being abused?

Within the context of the school's child-protection policy, make your suspicions and evidence known to the designated senior member of staff. The matter must then remain strictly confidential - nothing should be discussed with anyone else.

44. Question: Can you describe anything you have done recently to develop your TA skills?

Answer: This question encourages you to promote your professional development. Reference any recent courses, training or volunteer work. Your interviewer will expect to see evidence that you are engaged and learn about any relevant specialism you can offer.

45. Question: In what circumstances would you discipline disobedient students?

Answer: Discipline sanctions should only be initiated and applied by the classroom teacher in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. You would only assist the teacher in this when required.

46. Question: Why have you decided to become a teaching assistant?

Make it clear you enjoy working with children and mention any relevant employment, community volunteering experience, or informal reading support. Where your previous experience is limited to occasional child-watching or babysitting, present it in an enthusiastic and positive manner.

47. Question: What would you do if the teacher failed to turn up for a lesson?
Prior to allowing children to enter the classroom, inform the teacher next door. Ask if a TA for that class could report the matter to the office. Have temporary classroom routines to hand out (register/setting up equipment/revision topics etc.). Never leave a class unattended.

48. Why should we hire you? What makes you different or unique from the other applicants?

This is where you should highlight any special skills that you may have which relates to the job description, explain to the interviewer how these skills could be put to use on the job.

49. Are you currently applying for any other jobs?

The interviewer wants reassurance that you really want this position; make it clear that while you have applied for jobs in the past, this is the one you think would best suit your skills and background.

50. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?

This question can be a little awkward if you are unprepared. Prepare 2 of 3 short questions beforehand, and remember to ask about further training options. This will show you are pro-active.
Why do you want to be a Teaching Assistant - Sample Answers

If you have been offered an interview for a teaching assistant position, you will probably be wondering what sorts of questions are likely to crop up. Possibly the most common teaching assistant interview question is the classic: Why do you want to become a teaching assistant?

The interview panel wants to know that you have a genuine interest in the role, and this is your opportunity to show your passion and dedication. Here are a few example answers you could use or rework to fit your needs and requirements.

Sample answer #1

In my experience of working with children in the past, I am aware of the importance of positive role models in the life of a child. As a teaching assistant, I would be able to have a major impact on children's lives in both an educational and social context.

By leading by example, I can show the pupils how to behave appropriately and how to interact with each other in positive ways. I look forward to having the chance to help children to improve their social skills which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

Sample answer #2

I have a genuine interest in the different ways that children learn, and look forward to having the opportunity to assist them in their path to knowledge. I would embrace the challenge of finding effective ways to encourage each individual child to engage with their work through a learning support role and to see them reap the benefits of my interventions.

As a teaching assistant working with single pupils or small groups, I would be in a strong position to effectively adopt a range of strategies tailored to each child's learning needs and to see them flourish thanks to my personalised approach to their education.

Sample answer #3

I love the challenges of working with children in a classroom environment. In my experience of working with young people, every day is different and the flexibility required really appeals to me.

I thrive on the excitement of having to adapt to different situations while finding solutions to handle varied problems as and when they arise. The unpredictability of working with children really keeps me on my toes and keeps me constantly switched on and engaged, making every day a fun and stimulating working experience.

Sample answer #4

I would relish the opportunity of making a real difference in children's lives. Working with children with learning difficulties, language barriers or social problems may pose its challenges, but seeing the progress of those children as they overcome the obstacles that education throws at them is extremely rewarding.
I would be proud to say that I had played a part in helping each child to achieve their potential and to enjoy the opportunity to be successful, no matter what their background, disabilities or issues.

**Sample answer #5**

Working with children is my passion. I particularly enjoy seeing the positive results of my interaction when children show more confidence in themselves and make progress in their work. I also find it extremely satisfying to know that I have helped my targeted children to understand key concepts and to achieve success in a field that they have previously been struggling with.

**Sample answer #6**

Working one to one with a named pupil is my specific field of interest as I particularly enjoy being able to build up a positive and close working relationship with that child. As a teaching assistant, I would be able to make a huge difference in the life of that one individual through regular encouragement, support and praise and I would have the satisfaction every day of seeing the results of my work in the growing confidence and ability of that pupil.

**Sample answer #7**

I love the buzz of working in a school, and in particular the rapport with the teacher in the classroom. I enjoy sharing my ideas and helping the teacher to prepare and deliver high quality lessons, as well as using my skills to assist in improving the classroom environment.

I relish the challenge of multi-tasking and managing all the jobs that a teaching assistant is required to do, while using my own talents to help children to get more out of their time at school.

These are just some of the possible responses to the question "Why do you want to become a teaching assistant?" You can use some or all of these as a basis for your own response, but of course it is important that you add your own experiences and ideas to your reply.

This will ensure that the interview panel can get a clear insight into your own genuine and personal reasons for wanting the position and your passion and dedication to the role will shine through.

**10 Questions to ask at the end of a TA Interview**

Your teaching assistant job interview is a conversation between you and your potential school employer, though it can sometimes seem more like a verbal examination. Actively engaging in this two-way dialogue creates a very positive impression provided you handle it well.

At the very least, your interviewer will enquire if you have any questions to ask at the end of an interview, and if you are well prepared, this is an opportunity you can really turn to your advantage.

1. **Does the school encourage teaching assistants to engage in further training?**

This question signals your commitment. You should expect to be discussing skills and career development. Career-wise, the question also allows you to flag up your main areas of interest.
2. Can you explain the management structure of your teaching team?

This type of question helps to clarify your role, as well as indicating that you are seeking an overview of the management hierarchy. On a practical level, it not only allows you to see who your immediate line manager is, but will also enable you to determine other key links in the command chain.

3. Can you explain the systems used to deal with matters of student discipline?

In order to support your school's student discipline policy effectively, you will need to know the details of how its procedures operate. As a teaching assistant you will undoubtedly have a role to play in classroom management. This question shows your interviewer you understand the implications of a key aspect of the post.

4. What are the main things the school wishes to improve, and how would I be able to help?

This deals with broader school goals and how your role fits in. It also sends a strong message to your interviewer that you are keen to be a team player right from the outset.

5. What is the key aspect of a school teaching assistant's role?

Not only does this question give you more information about school priorities, it also gives you another chance to highlight your strengths. For instance, if your interviewer highlights reading support you can mention your abilities and give an example of your previous success in that area.

6. How will my performance be assessed and reviewed?

This question shows you understand that certain outcomes will be expected, which in turn flags up your commitment and sense of responsibility, and demonstrates you have already thought about the implications of the post.

7. How would you describe the school ethos?

This type of question indicates you wish to know what kind of social climate the school seeks to promote. Once again, it also demonstrates you can look at your role holistically and see how it might contribute to how the school is perceived in the wider community.

8. What are the main challenges the school faces?

To pose a question like this, you need to have done some research. In addition, your question will show your interviewer you are interested in the broader picture too.

9. May I tell you a little more about my interest in [your job relevant interest]?

This will gain you an opportunity to add a little more about one of your key strengths - especially useful if you can show how this would be an asset.

10. Do you think I would be suitable for this teaching-assistant post?

Finishing with this question allows you to restate your serious interest in the post. In addition, if your interviewer expresses any reservations about your application, it gives you an opportunity to address them directly.
These questions show your genuine interest and willingness to hear, and learn from, the opinion and experience of others. Furthermore, they also allow you to set the agenda and show why you are the best person for the post.
10 Special Needs TA Interview Questions

1. Can you give examples of your experiences in working with pupils with SEN?

This is one of the simplest questions to answer as you simply need to talk about yourself and your own experiences in the classroom. Be sure to include a broad scope of SEN conditions if possible and provide precise examples of how you were instrumental in their progress. If you can, talk about working across different key stages, and demonstrate your understanding of the varying issues that affect pupils who have different educational needs.

2. How can you ensure that the teacher is kept fully informed about the progress of the pupils you are supporting?

You need to show here that you understand the importance of an ongoing dialogue between yourself and the class teacher in order to carry out planning and assessment. You need to demonstrate your ability to understand the importance of your own role in ensuring that the work for those pupils that you are responsible for is pitched at the right level by communicating regularly about their understanding and abilities.

As an SEN teaching assistant you will be working closely with individual pupils and groups of pupils, and therefore may even be in a better position than the class teacher to speak with authority about what the children in your care are capable of, and therefore you need to communicate in your response that you require regular daily communication with the class teacher regarding progress.

3. How would you manage to stay professional while working closely with an individual pupil with SEN?

This question is designed to show that you understand how vital it is to never step over the boundary into informality no matter how closely you have to work with a pupil. You need to express here that you value the importance of professionalism and take your role as an educator seriously, showing that you are not there to be the pupil's friend but their educational facilitator.

You can talk about maintaining boundaries such as not revealing too much personal information, never slipping into using informal language and refusing to be drawn into discussions about other staff members.

4. How would you work effectively with an SEN pupil's parents?

You need to demonstrate here your understanding of the need to work effectively with parents to achieve the best educational achievement and behavioural outcome for your designated pupil. You can talk about ongoing dialogue through regular contact or home/school books on a daily basis, as well as immediate discussion of any issues or problems with carers before they get out of hand.

5. Why do you think keeping regular written records is an important part of an SEN teaching assistant's role?

This question is asking you to show that you have a deeper understanding of your role over and above doing what you are told. You need to show here that you understand the importance of records in sharing information with all relevant parties from the class teacher to outside agencies who come in to work with the child. You can
also discuss how these written records are useful in spotting patterns of behaviour and showing progression over time.

6. What qualities do you possess that make you a good special needs teaching assistant?

This is a good opportunity to promote yourself, your skills and abilities. The interview panel wants to hear that you are professional and competent, yet value the pupils and their needs.

You need to talk about your good communication skills, your understanding and patient nature, your positive attitude, your ability to handle tricky situations effectively and non-judgmentally and your understanding of the need to work cooperatively with others from the class teacher to parents and the wider school community.

7. How do you handle behaviour management?

A large part of the special needs teaching assistant role is to help the teacher by managing behaviour in the classroom. Often, the pupils that you will be working with will be disruptive and have behavioural issues, so a major part of your job will be dealing with this during lessons.

This is your opportunity to show that you fully comprehend the nature of your role, and that you understand that both the needs of your designated pupil and the other children in the class needs to be accommodated. You can demonstrate that you understand your key role in keeping SEN pupils on task during class time and that you will always adhere to the school's behavioural policies.

8. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement as a special needs teaching assistant?

You need to draw on your own experience here and be concise while showcasing your skills as an SEN support assistant. Be specific about the pupil's condition, why it posed challenges and how your help enabled them to overcome a specific obstacle or achievement beyond their expectations. Without being overly dramatic, describe how effective you were in your previous role and why you would be an asset to the school's team.

9. What kind of challenges do you think you are likely to face in the special needs assistant role?

Again, this question is inquiring into your understanding of the job. You need to show here that you are aware of what will be expected of you, and the ways in which you are able to handle any challenges that are thrown your way.

You can talk about the various complexities of dealing with children with additional physical or behavioural needs and how these can be approached within the classroom environment using patience and understanding. You should also express how much you value professionalism despite any difficulties you may face in dealing with SEN children on a daily basis.

10. How would you motivate a special needs pupil who doesn’t want to complete his/her work?

Your response to this question will show your flexibility and ability to react to difficult circumstances as well as your understanding of the best ways to approach SEN pupils. You can demonstrate your understanding of the
need to adopt different positive approaches to the situation such as reward charts and stickers, as well as devising accessible ways for the pupil to complete the work.

**How to Prepare for a Teaching Assistant Interview**

Preparing for a teaching assistant job interview is the same as applying for jobs in other fields, but there are certain questions and scenarios that will come up that you should be prepared for.

In addition, the interviewer will most likely invite you to ask any questions that you have about the school and teaching assistant position.

Due to the trusted position of a teaching assistant, this is a great opportunity to show your dedication to the student’s well-being by asking questions that are focused on them.

This article will share some tried-and-true job interview preparation tips, plus a more in-depth look at the teaching assistant job interview questions and information that you will need to prepare for your big day.

**Be prepared**

Research the school that you have applied to and try to find out any information that will help your interview prospects. Does the school have any special programs or initiatives that you can bring up? Perhaps they have a unit for children living with disabilities, or the school is well-known for their sport or music program.

By casually mentioning something about the school in your answers, you will show that you take the job seriously and have researched the position. In addition, it will give you a chance to praise the school. Everyone likes to get positive feedback so use it to your advantage.

**Sell Yourself**

The interviewer will have a list of candidates to meet, and you need to stand out to make an impression. Don’t leave anything to chance; prepare a mental list of your strengths and relevant experience and make sure to bring these points up during the answering phase of the interview.

**Be Confident**

Be confident and friendly without being overwhelming. It’s easy to talk too much when faced with a case of nerves, but try to step back and present a calm demeanour. It’s a good idea to get into the habit of nodding thoughtfully after hearing the teaching assistant job interview questions and formulating your answer before speaking.

**Bring Relevant Documents**

In addition to the regular job interview documents, such as a resume and copies of education credentials, a teaching assistant applicant will benefit from taking a selection of photos from previous work experience.
Samples of art & craft activities, work sheets and other teaching aids are quite acceptable to bring to a teaching assistant interview. Along with clear answers to the teaching assistant interview questions, a portfolio of work samples will make your application really stand out.

**Teaching Demo**

Be aware that some schools will ask you to do a teaching demo as part of the application process. The demo may involve real students or staff members. While being a little nerve-wracking, a teaching demo is a fantastic way to show your skills in a real teaching environment.

From experience, some schools may ask you to give a demo straight away after a successful interview, so try to have a basic 15 minute class ready to go at any time.

**Teaching Assistant Based Questions**

There are other more in-depth guides on this site to the teaching assistant interview questions that you will encounter at the job interview. Basically speaking, the interviewer will need to find out your experience and skills relating to a teaching assistant role.

This will require you to follow a basic S.T.A.R formula to deliver the best answer.

**S – Situation.** Describe the place and time where you encountered the problem outlined in the interview question.

**T – Task.** Speak about the task that you had to complete.

**A – Action.** Outline the steps taken to resolve the problem.

**R – Result.** Tell the interviewer about the outcome to your problem solving.

A great teaching assistant is always prepared, flexible and creative. Bring these skills to your job interview and show the interviewer that you are focused on the students and dedicated to the industry.

**What to Expect at a Teaching Assistant Interview**

Your application for a teaching assistant post has been successful, and your chosen school has invited you for an interview. Congratulations! That's one tough hurdle overcome. Now let's look at the next important step and consider what you should do to prepare for your teaching assistant interview.

Though each school will have its own interview style, the format will be broadly similar. Usually, the only major difference between schools is that some are very relaxed, whilst others may appear quite formal.

As a general interview rule, you should always be prepared for a more formal approach even if you are really confident; adopting an ultra-casual approach would generally be interpreted as unprofessional, and is best avoided.

**Interview format**
The interview process can usually be broken down into two parts:

1) An interview panel session with two or three interviewers. The purpose of this session is to gather information about you from several different perspectives.

2) Some kind of more practical discussion which will focus on the classroom environment. Here, it is quite likely that you will be asked to complete a task with a group of students. The purpose of this activity is to allow you to demonstrate how you interact with children in a teaching assistant role.

Interview preparation

You won't know precisely what to expect at teaching assistant interview until afterwards, but the key is to prepare thoroughly. Most interview panels will probably comprise a school governor, a senior teacher, and perhaps a teacher or a classroom teaching assistant.

The panel's job is to assess how well you fit the published person specification for the role, and also whether you will be able to carry out the specified job description.

Studying these two formal pieces of outline information will give you an idea of the likely focus of questions. If the post requires someone 'reliable', or 'responsible', or mentions that 'a patient, caring attitude is more important than experience', these keywords and phrases will signal the information the school is seeking. So what have you done previously which confirms you are responsible and reliable? What evidence can you offer to show you can be patient and sympathetic?

Afterwards you will be invited to ask a couple of questions of your own. Use this opportunity to make the panel aware you have researched the school carefully by framing positive questions accordingly. For example, if you know the school is seeking to develop its use of technology, you could ask if the post will allow you to use your computer skills.

Task preparation

The school should brief you about the kind of task you will be asked to complete. If not, prepare a short (10 minutes.) task appropriate to the age and abilities of the students, just in case.

Where you produce your own activity, remember to bring along whatever materials you need - don't just rely on the school. Be sure to observe any instructions or guidance you may be given. For instance, you might be asked to read a short passage to the children in your group and follow this with some questions to check their understanding.

Even where you are not asked to fulfil a task, remember to bring some examples of previous work you have completed with other students. After you have completed the task you may get the chance to have a less formal debriefing with your observer to discuss how it went.
This is yet another opportunity to show your knowledge and experience by asking focused questions. And once again, your background research will help your cause if you can introduce relevant topics which also relate to the school's interests or concerns.
5 Common Teaching Assistant Interview Tasks

If you’re applying for a teaching assistant position, you may be looking for guidance on what to expect at the interview or advice on how to prepare for the teaching assistant interview tasks you're likely to be set.

There are several types of task that you may be asked to execute, depending on the type of school and the ages and abilities that you may be working with. Here are some of the most common teaching assistant interview tasks that you may encounter.

1. General Classroom Observation

One of the most popular tasks that prospective teaching assistants are asked to carry out at an interview is a general classroom observation. This is basically just a trial run to see how you interact with the class teacher and the children in a classroom setting. You won't be expected to prepare anything for this type of task, just turn up and do exactly what you would if you got the job.

Of course, it's important to create the right impression, so there are several things that you need to bear in mind to be at your best.

Firstly, before the lesson begins, speak to the class teacher to find out what you will be required to do, if there is anywhere specific they want you to sit or if there are any key children they want you to keep an eye on. Find out which ability group you will be working with during the independent task and what the work will be.

During the teaching part of the activity, it is part of your role to ensure that everyone stays on task, so be sure to demonstrate your understanding of this by encouraging children who are not paying attention to concentrate fully.

Of course it goes without saying that you must appear approachable and friendly, but professional at all times, with a positive yet firm attitude towards the pupils. Learning the children's names and using them appropriately will definitely make the panel look favourably upon you.

2. Written Task

Some schools like to set a written task as part of the interview process. This is a task with two purposes: to discover your level of written English and to assess your understanding of the role.

For example, you may be asked to write a letter to a parent regarding an issue with a particular pupil, or you may be asked to watch a sample lesson and take notes about a particular pupil's behaviour with suggestions about how you could have intervened within the role of a teaching assistant.

In any written task it is imperative that you pay attention to good sentence structure and grammar as well as excellent punctuation as this is part of the assessment process. You should also ensure that your written task displays a full and comprehensive knowledge of your expected role and is written in a formal and professional tone.

3. Working With A Small Group - Secondary
If you are applying for a position as a teaching assistant in a secondary school, the kind of task you may be asked to complete is a little different from those that are common in primary schools.

You may be asked to prepare a maths or English activity for a small group of pupils, to achieve a particular objective and to cover certain topics. You should be told the subject and objective of the task in plenty of time for you to prepare and also the length of the expected observation so that you can provide the correct amount of work.

Be sure to fully research the topic that you will be covering, especially the relevant vocabulary that you will be expected to use. Ensure that you plan your activity thoroughly; with any resources that you are using prepared and ready to go.

It's likely that you may be given a mixed ability group, so ensure that you have differentiated for different ability levels and think about how you can make the task engaging and clear so that the pupils can easily access the work without confusion and will be encouraged to stay on task.

4. Working With A Small Group - Primary

If you are applying for a teaching assistant position within a primary school, you may well be asked to work with a small group of pupils on either a literacy or numeracy activity. You may be given a topic with an objective or you may simply be asked to create a short activity of your own devising.

The group will almost certainly be of mixed ability and may well include a child with special educational needs, especially if the position that you have applied for is to work 1:1 with an SEN pupil.

The panel will be looking for several things from this type of task. They want to know how well you can manage behaviour in a small group setting, how you interact with a range of pupils, how well you can differentiate and engage pupils of different abilities and whether you can make a task interesting and fun.

If possible, choose a task that you have done before and had success with. If this isn't possible, choose something interactive, fun and engaging. The task doesn't need to be too complicated - it is likely to be only around 15 minutes long, but the more active the children can be, the more likely they are to stay on task.

Ensure that your questioning is appropriate to all ability levels and ensure that the more able children can be challenged. Maintain your professionalism at all times during the observation, be firm and ensure that everyone participates and completes their task. It is especially important to choose something that is age appropriate but not too challenging.

5. Whole Class Activity

If you are asked to complete a whole class activity, don't panic! The panel are interested in seeing how well you can interact with the class as a whole, and aren't expecting to see a blinding teaching standard lesson. Usually, you will be asked to choose a book then read the story to the children and use it as a discussion point or as a basis for a simple whole class activity.
The task shouldn't last any longer than 15 minutes, it will focus on your ability to engage with and relate to the children as well as your ability to communicate.

Choose an age appropriate book, prepare some questions for a range of ability levels in advance and if you have to prepare a short activity, make it interactive and fun to keep the class engaged. Be sure to have all your resources ready to go.

Whichever activities you are asked to complete, it is important to stay calm and focused and just behave in the classroom as you would if nobody was observing you. Remember that you are trained and capable of doing the job, the trick is to just be yourself and effectively demonstrate your skills to the interviewer.
**What to Wear to a TA Interview**

We're all used to making judgements about people based on what they wear. Clothes are used to complement body language and quickly convey information about status and competence.

Luckily, it's easy to tell a policeman from a plumber, which is handy and avoids confusion when you need help and expertise. If you are in any doubt, imagine sorting out the aftermath of a road accident: a) dressed as a plumber, and b) dressed as a traffic cop.

So, when you are deciding what to wear to your TA interview, be aware that - directly or indirectly - your choice of outfit will influence your chances of being appointed. Furthermore, it will be in your interests to consider the 'message' your choice of dress, and other preparations are communicating.

**Why does it matter?**

This is not a good time to be making fashion and/or lifestyle statements. First impressions count, and securing a post as a Teaching Assistant means you are part of a professional educational team and a role model for those in your care.

Because your job entails working alongside children, your school will want to be sure, first and foremost, that you are an adult who can establish clear boundaries.

Pupils must know exactly who you are and what your role is. So, for example, being 'approachable' - which is a vital attribute - never means dressing/talking/acting like a juvenile. Your TA interview is therefore an opportunity to show employers you understand this core responsibility by adopting a sensible dress code.

Aside from this, it is also a simple courtesy, shows you are a serious candidate and indicates how you might dress for the classroom. Knowing you are suitably dressed will also boost your confidence, putting you 'on the front foot' even before your interview begins.

**Research your school**

You need to read the job description carefully so you understand what the job entails and what qualities the school are looking for. This may give you some clues about how an ideal candidate might dress.

To gain more information, it's also well worth establishing how the school is perceived in the community. For instance, are they 'posh' and strict by reputation or trendy and relaxed, etc.

It will help too if you can find out how teachers and teaching assistants dress in the classroom. Your aim at interview would then be to achieve a smarter version of this.

In any event, beware of appearing too casual. Even an 'informal interview' is still an interview, and a school that says 'it's up to you' as regards to dress will still note how you present yourself. When in doubt, it is always safer to err on the side of too smart.

**Smart and comfortable**
Dressing smart does not necessarily mean searching out your standard 'weddings and funerals' attire - especially if it requires you to squeeze into something uncomfortable. Though it's not required in the classroom, a smart suit is a good solution to the problem of what to wear to your TA interview, provided it fits well and leaves you feeling at ease. If not, there are still plenty of alternative options, discussed by gender below.

**Men**

A smart jacket and trousers - not jeans - is fine, and a long-sleeved shirt is more acceptable than short-sleeve versions. Shoes should be black or brown as your outfit dictates, relatively conservative in style and worn with a pair of socks. A tie shows respect and marks you out as dressing for the occasion. Appearing at an interview without a tie, plus ostentatious 'bling', piercings etc. is always a gamble. It will certainly get you noticed, but probably for the wrong reasons.

**Women**

A blouse, jacket and smart trousers, or a skirt, always works well, and shoes should be matching and comfortable. Smart-casual is fine, just remember high-fashion clothes will not impress the interviewers, and may prevent you getting across the personal qualities they are looking for. You should be able to sit comfortably and move freely in any outfit you choose to wear.

**Details and accessories**

All clothes should be washed and ironed, and a clean handkerchief is a sensible option. For women, a spare pair of tights (if appropriate) leaves you well prepared. Personal hygiene is vitally important, and hair should be clean and tidy, with any jewellery definitely understated. Tattoos should not be on display. Your choice of outfit should make you feel confident and capable, ready to show what you can do and give the best possible impression to your interview panel.

**10 Things you shouldn't do at a TA Interview**

If you're preparing for a TA interview, it's important to know what to expect. You may already have read some sample interview questions for teaching assistants and begun to think about your responses, however it is also important to know what mistakes to avoid too. Here are some of the things that you should never do at your TA interview.

1. **Don't criticise your previous school**

   During your interview process you must never say anything negative about your previous or current school, no matter how tempted you may be to do so.

   Some candidates are under the misapprehension that being critical about their current post will make them appear more eager for the position that they have applied for, but in fact the only impression it gives is of disloyalty to their employer. No school wants someone on staff who will publicly denigrate their staff, practices or policies, especially to others within the industry.

2. **Don't dress inappropriately**
First impressions count and your appearance is part of the professional image you are trying to convey. If you turn up to your interview dressed too casually or inappropriately, you are unlikely to be offered the position.

Feel free to wear your facial piercings and flaunt your tattoos at home, but cover them up at your interview. Of course it goes without saying that you should never wear a very short skirt or a low cut top, remember you are acting as a role model for the children in your care.

3. **Don't forget to do your research**

If you want to be successful in your interview, you need to be fully prepared. You will never be offered the post if it's obvious that you know nothing about the school or role that you have applied for.

Education is a competitive field and interview panels are looking for candidates who are keen and professional enough to find out more about the school's policies, background and issues. Take your time before your interview to read the teaching assistant job description thoroughly, visit the school's website and read the OFSTED report.

4. **Don't arrive late**

Whatever you do, you should ensure that you turn up for your interview on time. Arriving late makes you look unprofessional and unreliable - never a good impression.

5. **Don't forget your resources**

If part of your interview requires a classroom observation or an activity that you have planned yourself, make sure that you have all your resources prepared and to hand. Turning up without the necessary book, equipment or worksheets makes you look unprofessional and disorganised, which is not the impression that you want to create.

6. **Don't fidget or giggle during questioning**

Be confident and in control at all times, no matter how nervous you may feel. Allowing your nerves to get the better of you will prevent you from doing your best in your interview. Fidgeting or giggling while you are being questioned will create a poor impression and will prevent you from effectively expressing yourself.

7. **Don't give rambling or unclear responses**

The interview panel are looking for clear and concise answers to their questions. A Rambling response gives the impression that you don't really know what you're talking about. If the panel cannot understand you or get a clear idea of what you are trying to say, you won't be offered the position, no matter how perfect you are for the role.

Avoid this problem by reading some sample questions in advance and preparing some stock responses to the most obvious topics that are likely to arise so that you won't be caught unaware.

8. **Don't appear disinterested**
It sounds obvious, but you need to appear to be peachy keen and engaged throughout the interview process. Remember that you are being observed from the moment that you walk through the school's door.

If you are being shown around the premises, interact with the children, ask questions and engage with the staff. If you stand at the back of the group ignoring the children and never speaking a word, you will seem to be lacking in the enthusiasm and eagerness that the panel are looking for in a successful candidate.

9. **Don't be over-familiar**

Whether it's during your classroom observation or in the interview itself, avoid being over-familiar either with the interview panel or with the pupils themselves. The school is looking for professionalism at all times, so when you are talking to the children be sure to keep your language professional, and when you are in the interview room, never be too casual, too chatty or over-confident.

10. **Don't raise contentious issues**

When you are asked if you have any questions at the end of your interview it is absolutely essential that you ask a few well thought-out questions, but never take this as an opportunity to raise issues that are potentially contentious such as those regarding pay or non-contact time.

Avoiding these common errors is a big step forward towards being successful in your interview. Remaining professional in manner, dress and language, doing your research and creating the right impression through the correct demeanour and attitude will stand you in good stead to win you the TA job you want.

**5 Things you can do to improve your chances at a TA Interview**

If you're thinking of applying for a position as a teaching assistant in either a primary or secondary school, you may find that it is a competitive field.

If you want to boost your chances of securing an interview and winning the position for yourself, you need to make sure that you can bring something really special to the post and stand out from the competition. Here are five suggestions for ways that you can improve your chances at your next TA interview.

1. **Volunteer**

One of the best ways to gain experience in a school is to go in as a volunteer. This is easier if you already have children in the school, but even if you don't, most local schools are crying out for volunteer helpers who can assist with tasks such as one to one reading with pupils.

This will not only give you something extra to add to your CV but may also lead to securing a full time position if the school requires a teaching assistant in the future. They are much more likely to offer the vacancy to someone that they already know and trust and who has built up a relationship with the pupils.

2. **Signup with a Supply Agency**
If you want to secure a long term teaching assistant position, one of the best ways to go about it is to sign up with a day to day supply agency first. Registering with an agency is very simple and they will be able to offer you daily assignments that will add greatly to your CV.

You will also have a wealth of experience from different schools to discuss at your next interview. Not only that, but day to day cover may well lead on to a longer term position if you impress the school.

3. Signup for an Online Course

If you want to stand out from the competition, having a specific teaching assistant qualification will really stand you in good stead. Signing up for an online course is a great way to improve your CV while fitting around your lifestyle.

There are lots of relevant online courses that are directly aimed at those looking for employment as a teaching assistant. These include qualifications at all different levels from CACHE awards to diplomas. Signing up is simple and you can learn from home, adding another string to your bow.

4. Learn a Specialist Skill

Head teachers and governing bodies are always on the lookout for staff who can contribute something unique to their school, and what better way to do it than by developing a specialist skill? For example, learning a minority language or sign language will put you ahead of the competition and give you a strong edge in an interview.

5. Specialise in Special Needs

Many schools are searching for high quality teaching assistant support for pupils with various special needs, and if you want to have the edge in an interview for such a position, you are much more likely to succeed if you possess a specialist qualification in this area.

There are lots of qualifications that you can take in various specialism including autism, dyslexia and hearing or visual impairment. Even if the role that you are applying for is for a general teaching assistant, having a member of staff on board with these skills is very appealing to employers.

Following some or all of these suggestions is the best way to maximize your chances of being successful at your next teaching assistant interview. Making sure that you stand out from the crowd by offering a broad spectrum of skills will make it much more likely that you will not only be offered that key interview but you will secure a job at the school of your choice.
Thank You for Reading

I hope this Ebook has answered some if not all the questions you might have when it comes to attending a TA interview. If you’ve found this to be useful please send a review to admin@tatips.com, your feedback will help us to improve this Ebook over the next few months.

Thank You,
The TATIPS Team.