



# THE CABIN CREW INTERVIEW MADE EASY



From Candidate to Crew:

A Behavioural Approach To Getting Hired.

Written By:

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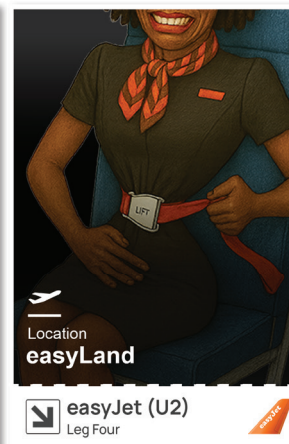


Welcome Aboard

# Route Map

Airlines don't train in unicorn onesies — and neither do we. We take our cue from crew training, with dress rehearsals, in-the-unlikely-event scenarios, and full-kit drills. This is prep that earns a clipped wing.

Through real-time simulation, you'll shadow me through my most memorable interviews, using my experience as your case study. From multiple perspectives and through actionable activities, you'll move from theory to lived insight. After each scene, I'll draw on 30 years of research and experience to cut through the noise, make sense of the chaos, and guide you closer to your ideal airline. Along the way, you'll **build and refine the habits that naturally signal "Crew material."**





# Itinerary



## Leg 0 → Welcome Aboard (Induction)

Serial Reject

Caitlyn's Story from serial reject to Emirates



## Leg 1 → Virgin Atlantic (VS) First Attempt

Leave your sensible shoes at the door and step into my seven-inch heels. We're boarding Virgin Atlantic — the airline that flies in the face of ordinary. Through it, you'll see how wildly recruitment can vary, and why this is nothing like a traditional interview. There's method in the madness — and you're about to learn how to read it.

1.1	<b>Virgin Pre-Screening</b>	Requirements and Crosschecking
1.2	<b>Clipped Wings</b>	Unravelling The 99% Failure Rate
1.3	<b>Paperwork</b>	Application Photos (Corporate Culture)
1.4	<b>Getting Dressed</b>	Grooming (Corporate Culture)
1.5	<b>Planning</b>	The Cabin Crew Lifestyle (Early Mornings)
1.6	<b>Guest House</b>	Grooming (Operational Clothing)
1.7	<b>VHQ</b>	Impression Management and Cabin Crew Habits
1.8	<b>Uniforms</b>	Why do you want to become cabin crew?
1.9	<b>Lobby</b>	Airline Intel
1.10	<b>Briefing Room</b>	Cumulative Impressions and Airport Time
1.11	<b>Meet Your Crew</b>	First Impressions and Personality Dynamics
1.12	<b>Dress Code?</b>	Grooming (The Corporate Colour Trend)
1.13	<b>Swimming Test?</b>	Gilding the Lily to Overcome Requirements
1.14	<b>Meet Your Seniors</b>	Performative Alignment vs Behavioural Integrity
1.15	<b>Q&amp;A Round</b>	Ignorance vs Silence
1.16	<b>Self Presentations</b>	Alignment and Personality
1.17a	<b>Discovery Mission</b>	Self Deprecation and Conflict Resolution
1.17b	<b>Discovery Mission</b>	Comparison vs Connection
1.17c	<b>Discovery Mission</b>	Curiosity and Teamwork
1.17d	<b>Discovery Mission</b>	Cultural Awareness and Pronouncing Names
1.18a	<b>Pretty Woman</b>	Flying Through the Crash
1.18b	<b>Pretty Woman</b>	Practical Personality Test and Leaning Into Tasks
1.19	<b>Elimination Round One</b>	Misunderstandings and Lopsided Eliminations
1.20	<b>Looking For Help</b>	A/B Thinking and Face Value
1.21	<b>Debriefing</b>	The Wrong Chain of Command



## L1 Layover - Nikki's Taverna

One layover finds us in a Greek taverna. There, covered in splintered plates, adorned by a tower of flaming glasses, and festooned in bank notes, you'll meet Bambas. What he taught me about Thinking Greek, may be the most effective interview strategy I've ever stumbled across.

L1a **The Audition**

Bambas and Dad's Underpants

L1b **The Event**

Think Greek and Dance Through the Spills



## Leg 2 → Old Wives

Stop trying to fit a myth and start aligning with reality. After we're given the collective cold shoulder and directed towards the rejection door, we'll take a detour to the local brewery, where we'll rub shoulder-pads with the Old Wives and soak up their airline recruitment "wisdom". Here, you'll get truth — crosschecked against policy, anchored in evidence, and stitched together with lived experience.

2.1 **The Toad In The Hole Pub**

Introducing the Old Wives and Group Think

2.2 **Research**

Illusion vs Logic

2.3a **Pillar One**

Reframe and Drop the Applicant Mindset

2.3b **Pillar Two**

Think Like and Align To Their Airline

2.3c **Pillar Three**

Think Like An Airline Recruiter

2.3d **Pillar Four**

Behave Like Cabin Crew

2.3e **Pillar Five**

The Simulated Flight



## L2 Layover → Virgin Atlantic (VS) Ghost Flight

In another, we'll revisit a Virgin Atlantic ghost flight so mesmerising, it ought to have lit up every recruiter's face. Aboard this special ghost flight, you'll learn to reframe your stories so they speak for you, not against you. And learn why it's important to stop preparing for "an airline" and start preparing for "their" airline.

L2a **Virgin Atlantic Ghost Flight**

Alignment and Thinking Like Their Airline

L2b **Virgin Atlantic**

Surviving Rejection



## Leg 3 → Virgin Atlantic (VS) Second Attempt

Then we'll circle back to Virgin Atlantic for a second attempt — only this time, everything is different. You'll move from self-focus to recruiter-awareness by stepping into their role, leading Crew Crosschecks and Debriefs.

3.1	<b>Application Form</b>	Turning Functional Into Bespoke
3.2	<b>Q&amp;A Round</b>	Welcome To Your Simulated Flight
3.3	<b>Self-Introductions</b>	Pre-Flight Briefing
3.4	<b>Boarding Announcement</b>	Public Speaking with Confidence
3.5	<b>Build a Bridge</b>	Teamwork and Problem Solving
3.7	<b>Mini One on One</b>	Answering Traditional Questions

And then we'll take the Old Wives' advice on a whirlwind tour — from British Airways to easyJet, with a quick jaunt to Switzerland for CrossAir. Along the way, you'll learn to tailor your approach, decode each airline's distinct culture, and spot exactly what their recruitment style reveals about what — and who — they're really looking for. Buckle up — oh, but don't touch the...never mind, we'll get to that soon enough.

## e Leg 4 → easyJet (U2)

4.1	<b>Functional Jump-seat Test</b>	Discrimination and Secret Tests
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## ➤ Leg 5 → British Airways (BA)

5.1	<b>Functional Reach Test</b>	Reality and Expectations
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## + Leg 6 → CrossAir (LX)

6.1	<b>Introduction</b>	Third Party Recruiters and Corporate Culture
6.2	<b>Break With Sobranie</b>	Old Wives vs Team Mates
6.3	<b>CrossAir Flight</b>	
6.4	<b>Switzerland</b>	Loss of Identity and Misalignment
6.5	<b>CrossAir Flight</b>	Attention to Detail and Readiness



## Leg 7 → Emirates (EK) Open Day

After soaking up the lessons from each, we arrive at an overbooked Emirates Open Day — where you'll witness mass eliminations, herd mentality, and see the moment my strategy shifted and why it worked. Then you'll learn how to align your behaviour and approach with the values of your chosen airline — standing out authentically, even in a room of 100 identically dressed hopefuls.

7.1	<b>Lobby</b>	Open Day vs Invite Only
7.2	<b>The Ballroom</b>	Overbooked and Mass Eliminations
7.3	<b>Infinity Mirror</b>	The Cheatsheet Mill and Standing Out
7.4	<b>Q&amp;A Round</b>	Gate Lice and Thinking Like A Recruiter
7.5	<b>CV Handover</b>	Undercover Recruiters and 6 Month Reapplication Rules
7.6	<b>The Bathroom Break</b>	Impression Management



## Leg 8 → Ground(ed) School

Now that you've seen what works — and why — it's time to turn the spotlight on you. You'll gather your application materials, piece together your story, and build a solid foundation rooted in reality, not rumours.

Debriefing and Accident Report Cards  
Customer Service Experience  
ATS and CVs  
Scar Declarations  
Introversion and Airline Alignment  
Swimming Requirements  
Beauty vs Grooming  
Luck and (Un)Fairness  
Age and Other Discriminations  
Researching the Airline  
Understanding the Profession  
Role Plays

From the Emirates **Application**, through the **Invite-Only Group Interview**, to the **Final Interview**, the **Golden Call**, and **Onboarding**, join me as we navigate the entire recruitment journey (complete with seven sets of rejected photos). See every lesson in action, revealing how expectations and reality rarely match.



## Leg 9 → Emirates (EK) Group Interview

9.1	<b>Application Form</b>	Split Testing Your Application
9.2	<b>Video Interview</b>	And Other Pre-Screenings
9.3	<b>Pre-Interview Prep</b>	Mock Interviews and Blacklisting
9.4	<b>Grooming</b>	Aligning To Corporate Culture Without Sacrificing Authenticity
9.5	<b>Setting Off</b>	Warming up and Conversations on Paper
9.6	<b>Arrival</b>	Early Assimilation and Strategic Positioning
9.7	<b>Emirates Video</b>	Where Is Your Attention? and Oversharing
9.8	<b>Q&amp;A Round</b>	Strategising Your First Impression and Cumulative Success
9.9	<b>Group Discussion</b>	Managing Chaos Like Crew and Focusing on Behaviour
9.10	<b>Elimination Round One</b>	Misaligned Expectations and Shifting Dynamics
9.11	<b>Break</b>	Maintaining Awareness and Strategising Breaks
9.12	<b>Application Form</b>	Essay Questions and Your Professional Persona
9.13	<b>Personality Test</b>	Outdated Labels and Attention To Detail
9.14	<b>Group Discussion</b>	Verbal Circles and Realignment / Topical vs Behavioural
9.15	<b>Group Discussion</b>	Energy Management and Repetitive Tasks
9.16	<b>Eliminations</b>	Silent Eliminations and Staying Alert
9.17	<b>Mini One on One</b>	Handling Success and Problematic Deviations



## Leg 10 → Emirates (EK) Final Interview

10.1	<b>Birmingham</b>	Problem-Solving Like Crew
10.2	<b>London Head Office</b>	Expectations
10.3	<b>Behavioural Questions</b>	Turning Authentic Experience Into Memorable Answers
10.4	<b>Top Ten Traditional Questions</b>	The Authentic Approach



## Leg 11 → Emirates (EK) Onboarding

11.1	<b>The Golden Call</b>	The Holding Pool and Timeline Expectations
11.2	<b>Rejected Photographs</b>	Rigid Requirements and Why Photos Matter





## Leg 12 → Emirates (EK) Training

Finally, we'll jet out to Emirates Aviation College (EAC) in Dubai, where the myths unravel and all those unusual interview tasks and stubborn requirements suddenly make sense.

### **Body Image and Grooming**

### **The Real Job**

Mapping the Interview onto Training

### **SEP**

### **Graduation**

Image and Uniform Standards

90% Safety and Security / 10% Service

Real Reach Tests and Realities of Drowning

The Realities and Risks of Misalignment

## A Behavioural Approach to Getting Hired

Through these particular airline experiences, you'll see:

- How recruitment approaches vary between premium and budget airlines.
- Cultural differences between international and regional carriers.
- The contrasting hiring styles of flag carriers and private airlines.
- How interview formats can differ, even within the same airline.
- What to expect from open days compared to invitation-only sessions.
- And exactly what it takes to succeed, or fail, at each stage.

But, I should break it to you early. We are not starting this journey in first class. Not even premium economy. I'm introducing you to the very bottom of the application pile — otherwise known as the Slag Heap. Catchy, don't you think.

I'm glad you smiled because you'll become intimately familiar with the Slag Heap during your time here. In fact, we'll first sink far deeper into it than you ever want to go, dragged down by the Old Wives, whose airline recruitment folklore has led many applicants astray — myself included.

But, don't worry. We won't be wallowing here forever.

Throughout the case study, we'll claw our way up the stack — chipped nails, crumpled hopes, and all — to show you exactly what it takes to earn that clipped wing. Whether you're starting in freefall or just stuck in limbo-land, you'll see the mindset shifts, the strategic pivots, and the strategies that buried me into or propelled me out of the Slag Heap.



This is a behavioural blueprint — grounded in the following five core philosophies that will carry you not just through the interview, but into your new career.

**Think Like And Align To Their Airline**

**Think Like An Airline Recruiter (Aka Working Crew Members)**

**Drop Applicant Thinking**

**Behave Like Cabin Crew**

**Treat The Process As A Simulated Flight**

**Don't just walk in prepared.  
Walk in experienced.**

Your knowledge and behaviours will come together as the journey winds down, so that when you enter the interview room yourself, it'll feel as if you've already lived through it.



# Caitlyn...Carrie...um, Clarke?

I'm Carrie-Ellise Poirier — though depending on the era, the outfit, or the identity crisis, you might know me as **Caitlyn Rogers** (pen name), **Layla** (stage name), **Jasmine Pfeiffer** (Hollywood misadventure), or **Ellette Morgan** (ugh, don't ask).

Names are my favourite accessories.

In all, I've tried on, worn, and immortalised at least **12 names**. Some of which I now have to explain at every future customs inquisition — because, yes, some have their own passports.

There was a Clarke in there somewhere, but only by pure accident and thankfully it never made it onto my credentials. (Oh wait, this book is a credential.)

It's safe to say, I've had a complicated relationship with identity, which explains why I've racked up almost as many names as I've had flight attendant interview rejections.

My pen name, **Caitlyn Rogers** made her debut in 2005 when I auctioned my flight attendant interview research on eBay — hiding behind a pseudonym, of course, because I had zero expectations. Except...the auction went viral and, just like that, my alter ego became an author and an overnight success.

Since then, Caitlyn Rogers has taken on a bit of a bad-ass reputation for herself, through six editions of this, my best-selling book "The Cabin Crew Interview Made Easy".



My factory setting — and the name stamped on my Emirates certificate — is Carrie-Ann, but I never use that name.

If this is all sounding a little crowded — don't worry. When it comes to cabin crew, just call me Caitlyn. She's the overnight success, after all.

But I was not an overnight success. The Cabin Crew Interview Made Easy was not so-called because it was easy for me. In fact, I have a confession:

# I am a serial reject

Nineteen rejections, to be precise.

Yes, nineteen, not exactly the kind of thing you embroider on a tote, I know. It's a number that makes people exchange uncomfortable glances. Which is why it has been my dirty little secret for twenty years.

Being a serial reject comes with its curiosities (applicants), hecklers (Gordo), and exasperated sighs (Dad). No one expects someone who failed nineteen interviews to still be smiling, let alone trying, after seven years. (thirteen years when you count my teen prep).

Many people ask, how do you keep going after so many rejections?

If it's an applicant asking, what they're really saying is: *Please tell me I'm not doomed*. If it's Gordo or Dad, there's usually a job centre flyer involved. Folded. Thumbed. Definitely highlighted. If it's a recruiter: *Oh no. You again*.

So, why should you listen to me?

Well, allow me to lead by example and rephrase my introduction to something a little more inspiring.

I have a unique view of the airline recruitment process because I reverse-engineered my way from the bottom of the rejection pile and into the elite ranks of Emirates, one mascara-streaked rejection at a time.

Put another way...

**Interview 18 — I couldn't even walk through the door.**

**Interview 19 — I walked out halfway through.**

**Interview 20 — Got the Golden Call.**

So, what changed everything? You're asking the right question — now things get interesting.

But, where to start? Ah yes...

## The measurement of failure:

♥ 183bpm

I finally admitted I was not cut out for this job at interview number eighteen. Rather poetically, in the same spot it all began, three years earlier: right outside Virgin Atlantic Headquarters, Crawley, West Sussex.

There I stood, nose to glass, staring at a flock of Virgin flight attendants. Everything mirrored my first, and second, and third, (and 4th...6th...8th...9th...) and on through my seventeenth interview: the building, the grey sky, even the perfume lingering in the doorway — save for one difference:

I glanced down at my Polar watch, where a furious little heart emoji flickered away with a resting heart rate of: ♥ 183bpm. I was motionless — but my body was already legging it down the M5 back to Bristol. I was having my first panic attack.

After years of dreaming, scheming, manifesting, prepping, preening, pretending — that tiny screen, lit in cold clinical LED clarity, served up the first honest and concrete feedback I'd ever received.

Whilst I was performing confidence, it was recording collapse and calling me out as a fraud, because...

## ...I looked like a wally

My reflection in Virgin's glass stared back. I tried focusing on the flight attendants in their stunning red, but I couldn't visualise myself wearing that dream uniform anymore — not with my fake flight attendant scarf flapping and choking the last bit of fantasy out of me.

It had been flailing and flapping in the breeze all damn morning. I'd bought it to "look the part" and thought blue made me look less desperate. But there I was — wheezing, overdressed, mid-palpitations — finally seeing the truth: I looked like a proper wally. And, on top of all that, I might have to ask Virgin's recruiters for the defib.

That was the moment I finally ditched my dreams at the curb like a dirty old fag butt, not realising I **was standing in the seam between failure and success.**

I told my boyfriend I'd failed the reach test. He bought me chips and gravy, then introduced me to his favourite airline: Emirates. This wouldn't have made any difference, except Emirates made no mention of swimming in its requirements. Nothing at all. Had I finally found an airline that didn't measure my suitability by the metre? That was enough to push me towards one more interview. If only I could enter the building.

I set my sights on an Emirates open day.

# Binge-Watching Failure

A week after abandoning my Virgin Atlantic interview, I found myself herded — no, corralled — into a hybrid conference-ballroom-banquet-hall situation at the London Edwardian Hotel.

I stationed myself next to the nearest exit. Except, I was soon shepherded into the middle of the room, into the middle of an aisle, and into the middle of a tightly packed row. No leg room. No window seat. No emergency exit. Trapped.

This time, it wasn't my watch setting off alarm bells. 183bpm had become 183aia (applicants in attendance). Give or take. I didn't perform a head count. But someone did because the recruiters, somewhat politely, asked everyone still standing to leave — they'd run out of folding partitions and the 4-in-1 ballroom had reached and exceeded maximum capacity.

**Just like that. Pfffofff. 183 became 100.** Or there about, let's not get nit-picky.

That was my first mass culling. And I "made it through" purely because I'd been shoehorned into a chair.

Watching those applicants leave, I envied their rapid departure. I didn't want to stick around for my first mass humiliation. But, no such luck. For me, it was welcome aboard the absurdity that is an Emirates Open Day.

Looking up and down my row, **it was like staring into an infinity mirror. All around me, across five, ten, fifteen rows of applicants, I was one of the dozens of identical black-suited, red-lipped, hair-dough-nutted, beaming, Pan-Am smiling applicants.**

Then, as soon as the Emirates video concluded, I was stunned to silence as dozens of identical arms shot up. Each one asking a variation of the same identical question I had tucked up my identical sleeve.

I saw what happened when everyone follows the same advice.

**I was everyone and everyone was me.**

For the next thirty minutes, I saw everything. On loop. One hundred times over. And then I saw it all again — echoed in every one of my failed attempts.

Back at Virgin, I'd stared at my own reflection and seen a fraud. This time, I saw the choreography. We weren't just making the same mistakes. We were trapped by the same rules. Smile wide. Speak often. Perform confidence. Project charm.

We wore the same scarlet accessories. Recited the same laminated model answers through the same brittle, overbright voices. With our stiff buns tugged so tight it vacuum-packed all trace of individuality. And I had followed so many damn rules, I moved with doll-like precision, and was even monitoring my eye-accessing cues. Trying to be perfect was exhausting and ineffective.

Then another number occurred to me. The statistic that casts a great big shadow over every hopeful applicant...

# 99%

I'd heard about the 99% failure club. But I'd never stared that number down in the flesh. And if the numbers were true — if 99% really did fail — then the outcome had already been decided. Ninety-nine of us were walking out with nothing. Only one would leave with a job. Which meant,

**we had already been mass eliminated. We just didn't know it yet.**

If I was doomed, there was no point in trying. The pressure to perform lifted. I had nothing to lose because I had nothing to gain. Then, I got curious. **If only 1% succeed, who was that one?** And, more importantly, how do recruiters figure it out? **In asking that question, I transitioned into success because I had shifted from applicant mode and into recruiter mode.**

The room felt less like a recruitment event and more like a departure gate during a delay — restless bodies all elbowing for acknowledgement. And the recruiters moved through the crowd with the same elegant detachment as cabin crew dealing with a flight full of entitled business-class upgrades: swift, polite, professionally disinterested. **Smile, nod, next.**

So I stopped watching the hopefuls and started watching them. What made them perk up. What made them tune out. I looked for the tiny cues: a flicker of a wince, a smile so sharp, it slashed a name off the roster. Not that we had names. We didn't even have numbers.

And it dawned on me — the anonymity went both ways.

I'd been operating under the grand illusion that this was all about me: my answers, my dream, my bloody outfit — that I'd never once considered the people behind the clipboard. I hadn't asked what they might need, or how they make a decision.

Had there been a moment of breath to ask a question that day, mine probably would have been, *“Um, wait, who are Emirates?”*

I knew — and lived by — all the so-called rules. But I knew nothing about the airline, and misunderstood the job. I had no customer service experience because I'd job-hopped my way through 30 jobs. And somewhere along the way, I had lost sight of my real goal and the real me.

## The silly rules I'd followed seemed ridiculous, and I felt ridiculous.

I wasn't wearing that awful blue scarf this time. No. I'd upgraded my delusion. I'd dressed like I already worked there alright. I'd done it all, all the way down to the cream parchment resume with red headings. I was one sewing needle away from embroidering an Emirates cartouche onto my interview lapel.

I was trying so hard to be someone else, there was no space left for me. If I didn't walk out now, I'd be escorted out — by legal with a cease and desist stapled to my rejection slip.

Whilst applicants queued for the CV handover, I slipped out the exit.

**I rushed home and used what the personality test labelled a handicap, my introverted nature, to research, study, and unpack the process like a combination lock.**

For two years, I tested. I peeled back the polish, poked the soft bits, and found out where the system bends and where it snaps. In dismantling the system, I learned how the system is designed to dismantle us, to find out where we bend and where we snap.

So, I changed my habits and shaped my instincts. I stockpiled a variety of customer service experience. Learned to swim (or so I thought). Researched the airline. Validated every rumour and regulation. Binge-watched Airline. By the end of it, I had a revamped CV and 400 pages of rejection notes turned interview prep. It wasn't fast. It wasn't sexy. But it worked.

When I approached Emirates for a mock interview, I stopped playing by the imaginary rulebook. I showed up as someone no one else could imitate: Myself. No red lipstick. Hair long and loose, trailing past my waist. And because it was "just" a mock, I let myself have a little fun — a little rebellion. I reached into the back of my wardrobe and pulled out my old school shirt. And that's what I wore to my Emirates interview. Yes, really. Powder blue. Collars so wide they looked like they could generate lift — or pierce an eye. (photos in leg nine.)

Those ridiculous collars made me smile — Not that brittle, compliance-coded Pan Am smile I'd been straining to perfect for years.

I made it through the first elimination round — and yet, that's when I took my most humbling walk of shame: past a mob of 30 or so rejected applicants flanking the exit.

Even though it was the first time I'd been truly myself, I felt like a fraud. And by the looks I got, I wasn't the only one who thought so. One woman even muttered, "Why did they make it?" And honestly — fair question. She was right to ask and be confused because I'd broken every "rule" they tell you to follow.



I managed only one half a comment in the group discussion. Wore the “wrong” clothes. I blundered through that round, and seven more after that — all the way to the Golden Call where I had seven sets of photos rejected. And then, in week three of SEP training, my team had to fish me out of the ditching pool when it became painfully clear I couldn’t swim after all. Which, according to the “Old Wives,” should’ve disqualified me. I sat shivering and alone in the raft, bracing for rejection #20.

Three weeks later, I graduated — even though I still can’t swim.



### Debrief

Jargon and logic doesn’t make it credible

If you’re new to the process, this might all sound dramatic and if I have anything to do with it, you never have to experience any of this yourself.

But if you’re like me — or like hundreds of others — and you’ve been rejected once, twice, maybe more times than you care to admit... And now you’re scratching your head, exhausted, frustrated, quietly furious because you’ve done everything right, and still heard “no”... Yet you’ve watched others, like me, break every so-called rule and still make it through...

It’s not luck. It’s strategy. And you can learn it too.

The truth is, much of what you’ve been told isn’t just incomplete — it’s misleading. Sure, the 99% rejection rate is true, and you should dress like you align, but each lacks critical context. And that’s what’s missing in this industry. Context and logic.

Because this industry is alive with echo chambers — filled to the brim with hundreds of thousands of applicants, yet starved of honest feedback — so we’re at the mercy of old wives tales, faulty assumptions, and residual 20th century discrimination. And the misinformation is peppered with just enough industry jargon and logic to sound credible.



### Debrief

Failure Dressed As Success

The fastest way to stay stuck is to keep moving without learning. And the most destructive is to keep moving whilst listening to the wrong advice. But, airlines don’t give feedback, so we turn to the only chain of command we have: other applicants. They walked the same carpet, wore the same blazer, and left the same room holding back the same tears. They understand. They are kind and supportive.

But here’s the problem: They were rejected too.

After every rejection, I rubbed shoulder-pads with my fellow rejects. And there, in that booth, I

unknowingly handed them my dream and asked them to decode it. And I never questioned their responses — until the Emirates open day. That's when it hit me: We were all survivors of the same crash, standing around the wreckage, trading theories about the cause — without any of us ever having the skills to decode the signals.

**The mistake wasn't asking. The mistake was listening blindly.** Taking advice without validation. And if you're not careful, you'll build each attempt on a foundation of confusion. And then you risk something far worse than time and another "no". You're risking erosion. Of your confidence. Your clarity. Your sense of self.

One rejection becomes four. Four becomes years. Years become a version of you that's exhausted, brittle, and starting to believe the story that maybe you're not cut out for this because now everyone is telling you you're too old at 25.

That erosion is why I didn't really succeed in the end. Oh, but I succeeded with Emirates, right? Yes, that is true, but I Lost My Airline Soulmate. That's why I'm still here, 20 years later. I never left the interview process. In fact, part of me is still in that damn interview room, staring at Virgin's rejection door, pining for the one that got away.

Virgin is the airline that makes my skin tingle, in a very good Aerosmith kinda way. **I lost Virgin because I listened to the wrong people.** I ignored the encouragement from actual Virgin crew, and instead believed the Old Wives that told me I wasn't "Virgin material."

Over the last 20 years, I've watched Virgin evolve even more into its bold, beautiful self. And I've come to see all the ways I did align — all the way down to the seven inch heels I wore to my first interview, if only I'd known how to make fun of them at the time.



### Coaching Cues

Practical advice to shift you closer to crew-ready

But, I did get my Virgin Viv uniform and a pretty little clipped wing in the end. It smells faintly of someone else's eu de parfum because I pieced it together from eBay. The skirt fits, the jacket doesn't. The blouse still has a dry cleaning tag with Matilda's staff number scribbled out. I've never worn it to work a flight. But I start at it on the wall, because that unmistakable Virgin red still feels like a promise I haven't let go.

And whilst I was purchasing my dream in auction, I met others doing the same, holding onto what little they had left of their dream.

One young woman, only 22 years old, spoke about regrets for not pursuing KLM. Her mother and her cousin — a Purser at a top airline — had warned her off. Said the competition was too fierce, the odds too slim. And that's how it happens. That quiet detour away from your dream. The caution can come from anywhere — even the people who love you, even those who've clipped the wings

to their perfectly pressed lapels.

Please don't let anyone slam a nail into your dream box or direct you to the wrong airline terminal. An airline is not just an airline, it's your future family. It has to align.

I morphed into what others told me Virgin wanted, and lost my entire sense of self in the process. By the end, I couldn't even look at the mirror because I hated my face and was later diagnosed with a severe form of Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD). Don't let this process do that to you.

Don't go sandpapering your skin because people are telling you that freckles are flaws. Don't go filing your teeth because someone said they are too crooked. Things are blown completely out of proportion in this industry.

I didn't know how to ask questions. I had no internet or books to validate truth. But you have everything today, and that's part of the problem as much as it is the solution. Ask questions. Cross-check everything. Use your judgement. And don't let someone sandpaper your personality just to fit their version of what belongs.

There's a whole movement now about scar declarations. But nobody seems to ask why a declaration is required — other than assuming the "obvious", because of course it's about superficial beauty. But, could it be because airlines are hell-bent on safety and security and those scars are used to identify your body in an air crash? Huh, good question. Anyone reading this want to crosscheck the answer? or prove me wrong? Because you should absolutely crosscheck me too.

Advice gets passed around like in-flight peanuts. And your dream will get passed around with them, if you don't protect it. Your dream is delicate, and so is your mind. Handle it like the finest pair of lace panties — yours, precious, not to be sullied by someone else's soiled advice.



### Lesson De-Brief

Success is not luck, or fuelled by cheatsheets — it's strategised

My story may seem naive, but it's no different to what I'm seeing today. Applicants confused by their rejections, yet don't meet the basic requirements. Misplaced effort. Misaligned choices. Fuelled by following outdated and misguided advice.

My Emirates success was not luck or fuelled by cheatsheets. It was strategised.

Inside this book, I'll teach you how to strategise your success. Not so you can succeed in two years, or write 400 pages of prep, and not with cheatsheets or model answers that will have you sounding and looking like everyone else. You never have to borrow an identity that doesn't fit. You just have to become the best version of yourself.



**Being crew means taking charge. Solving problems. Staying steady under pressure — even when you don't have all the answers.** And that's what you'll learn to do if you continue reading.

It's time to unlearn, relearn, and recalibrate everything you think you know about this process — so you can finally shift your results and earn your clipped wing.

So, if you're ready, grab your unicorn onesie and buckle up. Just don't try to hide your unbuckled seatbelt under a blanket. Recruiters will catch that a mile away.



# LEARNING KEY

(The Only Cheatsheet We Use)



## Caitlyn's Log

Move from theory to lived experience with Caitlyn's in-scene interview case study



## Debrief

Caitlyn's post-event reflection with a recruiter lens



## Coaching Cues

Practical advice to shift you closer to crew-ready



## Crew Crosscheck

Shift from passive replay to intentional review.



## Behave Like Cabin Crew

Crew habits that you can start today



## Task Card

Crew habits that you can start today



## Think Like A Recruiter

Peek inside the mind that's sizing you up



## Think Like An Airline

Stop preparing for "an airline" – start preparing for their airline



## Philosophies

Offbeat lessons that sneakily make you crew-ready



### Ground(ed) School

Get grounded in what's real — not what's rumoured



### Old Wives

Bad advice, stylishly retired



### Thinking Like An Applicant

How Applicants Think — and Why the 99% Don't Make It



### Simulated Scenario

Study real-world behaviour and refine your situational awareness



### Case Study

Behind the scenes of crew-in-progress



### Announcement

This is your captain speaking — with a wake-up call



### Arrivals

Airline Interview Arrivals



### Departures

Airline Interview Departures



### Pre-Briefing

Aligning focus ahead of each lesson



### Lesson De-Brief

Summing it all up

<sup>(1)</sup> See a little number floating above the line? That's your breadcrumb trail to the source. You'll find the full reference in the bibliography.



## Discovery Mission - Group Task - Part 1

# Who are they and what are they looking for?



### Pre-Briefing

Failure often reveals success

Let's pause. You're about to walk into a moment. One of those moments — not dramatic enough to be a meltdown, but personal enough that you'll feel it. A small, quiet spiral where the group task kicks off, and you find yourself... slightly adjacent to it.

This isn't a lesson about failure — it's a lesson about what failure reveals.

So before we get into it, know this: Everyone gets it wrong. That's the point of the event. What matters is how quickly you spot it — and what you do next.

I'm ready when you are, I think.



## Caitlyn's Log

Nosecone announces another task: A "Discovery mission".

This time, we are to move around the room, ask each other questions, then write our findings on the attendee's corresponding paper airplane window pinned to the wall.

She's barely finished and everyone turns to their left and right, pairing up before they even stand. And there are fifteen of us, which means I'm left on the end, without a partner. But that's okay because I have my own cigarette recon mission to complete first.

I lean down and pretend to fix my shoe strap, grab the dirty filter from the floor, then loiter about the room,





pretending to listen whilst stealthily seeking a bin.

A bin, a bin, I need a damn bin.

I flick the cigarette behind my case, then teeter towards the group.

They're still nattering, no signs of letting up, so I read the names. Sarah, Louise, Angela, and, and, a four syllable name beginning with S and middling with a letter J. I rehearse various attempts at pronunciation, and come up with at least three potentials, but I can't say any of them without tripping over my tongue.



### Crew Crosscheck

Real problem or imagined?

- Ignoring my cigarette problem for a moment. If I weren't frozen or inwardly spiralling, what useful action — no matter how small — is available to me?
- Does anyone see a problem here? Or am I interpreting silence or unfamiliarity as rejection?
- How do you think the recruiters are reading this moment? Not how you feel about it. How might they interpret what they're seeing.
- If this were reframed as a simulated flight, what is this task, really?



### Ground(ed) School

Behavioural, not topical

Let's call this what it is: a group discussion.

It's a favourite amongst airlines and you'll no doubt encounter its many variations. This one just happens to take away the chairs and the semi-circle. That might seem cosmetic, but it creates a very different dynamic. (We'll see exactly how different when we reintroduce the chairs at Emirates.)

Like all group discussions, there's a central topic. In this case: each other. But let's not get too caught up in that because **the topic is a decoy**. It gives your mouth something to say, your mind something to cling to, while recruiters pay attention to what really matters.

**This isn't a topical task. It's a behavioural one.**

Nobody is eavesdropping on your conversation hoping you'll drop some juicy detail about your gap year or that one time you saved a hen party from disaster. They've heard it all before — in every other row, on every other flight, and from every other applicant.

This is where many applicants slip. They get hyper-focused on words. Trying to sound impressive, say the right thing, get it right. And sure — words matter to your conversation buddy, but we'll get to that if I ever interact with the group.

## Words are not the core currency here.

This is the problem with thinking like an applicant, it drags the old interview framework into a setting that doesn't fit.

In the average interview world, you sit stiffly at a desk while a panel of suited managers grill you on the classics: "When have you made efficiencies in budget?" and "What was your greatest leadership challenge?" In that world, words are currency.

Even in customer service interviews — the ones framed as behavioural, that ask: "Tell us about a time you went above and beyond for a customer" — you're still trading words.

Airlines have all of that in the final interviews, but they are by no means traditional.

This group discussion is that same interview, except, they've ditched the desk and chairs, taken the words off-script, and made it practical — because their assessors are fluent in something far superior than words: They are behavioural experts.



## Think Like A Recruiter

Professional people watchers

Recruiters don't rely on your words to get a read on you. They rely on something they've honed over years in the cabin: observation.

As I've no doubt mentioned already — and will likely say again, because it bears repeating — recruiters aren't clipboard-wielding Karens from HR in grey cardigans who've never comforted a businessman crying in row 9.

No, these are flight-hardened, seasoned crew — fresh off a long-haul and still slightly jet-lagged. Some have spent ten, even twenty years on the line.

But let's quantify this with some real stats. According to Season 10, Episode 19 of Airline UK, Bob Brain — purser at easyJet — served twelve million passengers over nine years. That's twelve million chances to read faces, track moods, and spot the moment energy shifts in row 21 and threatens to tip into row 22.

That's who you're dealing with: highly trained people-watchers who've become exceptionally skilled at reading people — fast.

And it's not just instinct. It's training.

Cabin crew have been drilled in SEP (Safety and Emergency Procedures), taught to scan for

behavioural anomalies, monitor subtle changes in body language, tension, ease, responsiveness. It's not guesswork — it's behavioural data. Logged. Lived. Trusted.

Words don't carry weight. Not in this industry. Here, words and weight are slippery — what says "15 pounds" often lands closer to a hundred. And recruiters? They're the scales. They don't go by what the label claims. They go by how your body carries that weight.

So while you're busy focusing on the topic, trying to sound clever, what are they weighing? Glad you asked.



## Think Like A Recruiter

### Passenger manifest

At the start of the event, sometimes applicants have names on their badges — but functionally, they're seat numbers. Just like passengers. And as with any cabin, it's a mixed manifest.

You've got your entitled businessmen, your nervous first-timers, your try-hard influencers in suspiciously curated corporate colours. Some feel entitled to the job upgrade. They want priority boarding — a fast-tracked outcome, minimal turbulence. Others just want to look good to boost their influencer cred.

The recruiter's job is to sort. And they sort by how you behave today — that's the clearest forecast of how you'll behave tomorrow. Because when the uniform goes on, you don't suddenly transform.

That's why they're not locked in on what you say. They're watching what's happening while you say it. How fluidly you move through the group. Who you track with your eyes. Who you ignore. They're reading the social temperature: What happens when you interact — or don't. Do others lean in or back off?

All the while, they're in flight mode, wondering: Would you freeze or act when the entitled businessman in 34B refuses to sit down during turbulence? Could you take charge when oxygen masks descend and the Captain shouts, "Brace for impact"?

So when your brain goes tunnel-vision — panicking over that girl in paisley who keeps interrupting, or whether your hair's doing that weird flick again — that's exactly when recruiters lean in.

Because to them, it's not a task or a topic. It's a behavioural x-ray, also known as, a role play. And they want to see what you're hiding behind all that interview polish.

Speaking of hiding, where the hell am I in this team task? Oh, that's right, I'm the passenger taking a sneaky smoke in the aft lav and conversing with fake airplane window taped to the wall.



## Think Like A Recruiter

Managing adversity

What about applicants like me, the lone ranger, rolling about without a partner? Virgin invited an odd number of applicants to a task that requires pairing. Why pairs? Why not groups of three? That would have solved the uneven number problem.

Ah ha, yes, exactly, and it would have removed a delicious opportunity. This setup — this slightly awkward, slightly unfair arrangement — gives them something precious to observe: a microdose of adversity. A chance to see who adapts, who flounders, who takes initiative, and who quietly dissolves into the wallpaper.

They want to see how you behave when things go tits up — Because at 38,000 feet, things do. Routinely. And not in the perky, retro Mrs Maisel-style tits up. No. The very real and very British, “Oh bugger, I’ve just frightened the nervous flyer in 23C” kind of tits up. The kind that sorts those who freeze from those who function.

Every conflict, no matter how small, is an opportunity to evaluate our natural instincts. And whilst everyone else’s instinct told them to move far away from me, mine was to take a long, wistful glance out the fake airplane window and rehearse a conversation with a faceless stranger whose name I still cannot pronounce.



## Behave Like Cabin Crew

Active involvement is mandatory

If — like me — you’re the odd one out, or just feel like the odd one out, then congratulations: you’ve just been handed an opportunity to shine. Not in spite of the situation — but because of it.

Here are some options:

5. **Simple:** Eavesdrop, elegantly. Hover nearby, listen in, and when pairs shift, drift in with grace.
6. **Intermediate:** Slide into an existing duo and make it a cosy trio. Interrupt with style — “Mind if I join you two?” No one’s going to say no. It’s only awkward if you bring the awkward with you.
7. **Bold:** Turn a recruiter into your mission partner by asking them a question. Not something I’d personally dare — but if you’ve got the charm, darling, unleash it.

Whatever route you take, remember: this is a group exercise. And even if you’re not currently in a team, you’re still in the team — the room. The assessment doesn’t pause just because the groups are uneven. It shifts, adapts. Like a cabin crew roster mid-disruption.

Eventually, teams will rotate. Some people will be writing. Others chatting. The imbalance will iron itself out. Instead of anxiously scanning the chart and second-guessing pronunciations, I could’ve been listening. Letting names surface organically in conversation. Picking them up by ear. Instead, I faked involvement.



Meet Your Crew

# Interview Buddies & Slam-Clickers



## Pre-Briefing

Breaking ice with a slam and a click

You've walked in early — good. But oof, the atmosphere in here? Frostbitten.

I know we talk about breaking the ice, but what happens when the ice is already carved into cliques?

Welcome to that awkward pre-interview pocket.



## Caitlyn's Log

Only three seats remain: two at the head of the semi-circle, clearly reserved for whomever is conducting this event, and one to their immediate left. I guess that's mine.

I would say hello and introduce myself except everyone is in total rapport with one another. There's an ease to their laughter, a rhythm to their discussion, like they've rehearsed this moment together.

I try to follow the formation, except my knee is seven inches higher thanks to these shoes, which prevents me from crossing my legs without risking a pantie shot. So I cross at the ankles instead.

Ankles crossed, head leaning towards the left, I smile, giggle on cue, and nod as though I've been here all along. Except, the girl next to me is jutting out like a snaggletooth and I can't see around her, so I'm just staring at this girl's back. And now that I think about it, the body language book said crossing anything sends defensive signals, so now I feel defensive for even thinking about being defensive.





## Debrief

### Personality Diagnosis

Growing up, I didn't have a bestie or a "Sisterhood of Travelling Pants" kind of friendship group. To make friends, I had to audition.

The first time was in junior school — I sang "I'm So Excited" from the chocolate advert to earn a seat at the popular girls' lunch table. It worked. One chorus later, I was sharing their Kingsmill sandwiches. Then came the Tropicana invite — the local water park. But then I had a panic attack in the wave pool and they never invited me to the water park or the lunch table again.

In high school, I tried infiltration instead of auditioning. I watched the cool kids, mirrored their habits, changed my name, then eased into their circle. That lasted an entire year, before...well, let's save that ending for later.

I enjoyed the social challenge that came from being a nomadic socialiser. It meant I was always the mysterious new girl. Transitory relationships worked well with my personality type. It's one of the reasons the flight attendant profession appealed to me.

It wasn't until I was thirteen, when I took a career personality test, that I discovered the so-called truth: Apparently, I was an introvert. This wouldn't have been so debilitating to my whole life had the results not told me, "flight attendants are extraverts". Full stop. The end. Despite telling me there are no right or wrong answers, I had somehow given the wrong answers. The test basically said: "You'll make a lovely filing clerk." Or "Ever considered bedpans?" Definitely not: "Welcome aboard."

So, there I was, not even outgrown my training bra, and a personality test cinched my budding personality and career dreams into a straight-jacket with no room to grow. But I desperately wanted that uniform, so I turned this devastating information into an action plan. I'd go to college after all — not for aviation, but to learn how to fake it till I made it. I enrolled in a performing arts course and, for a full year, studied how to walk, speak, and carry myself like someone who belonged in that uniform.

And, it backfired. First, I became a people watcher, and got stuck there. Then, I became an over-thinker, hyper-aware of how my body betrayed me and how my face and eyes moved. Until one day, I lost my ability to improvise, to be in the moment, to be myself. Every social setting became a stage, and I couldn't stop performing.

And so, instead of being natural, I'm all up in my head, rehearsing small talk, using luggage tags in place of hello, and overthinking my ankles, no longer an introvert or an extravert, just awkward.



## Ground(ed) School

Airlines Do Hire Introverts - Slam Clickers

If you are an introvert, take heed, airlines do not have an “extraverts-only” boarding policy.

Introverts can and do become cabin crew. We even have our own moniker. We’re what the industry dubs, “slam clickers”. Pretty catchy don’t you think? So called because of our tendency to disembark from our flight, scramble to our hotel room, “slam” the door shut, and “click” the lock on then recharge with room service, bubble bath, and chocolates instead of hanging around the bustling hotel bar — sounds divine, don’t mind if I do thank you.

Fun Fact: Did you know Sir Richard Branson — you know, the charismatic founder of Virgin Atlantic — is a self-proclaimed introvert?

That was my ‘you’ve got to be kidding’ moment. It was like discovering Superman had vertigo. But I didn’t have that revelation until 2003 — five years too late.

We’ll take a closer look into personality tests and personality types as we go along. But, suffice it to say, there is no one-size-fits-all personality type because there is no one-size-fits-all airline.



## Debrief

Listening Superpower

With everyone’s backs to me, it felt like I was interrupting a private conversation. And all my high school social insecurities came to the surface.

Even though I knew their turned backs had nothing to do with me, the recruiters wouldn’t know that. No, they’ll see me sat on the end, alone, staring at another girl’s back, and they’ll think I’ve been shunned, like an outcast. So, I began focusing on body language.

When I’m overly anxious, I focus so much attention of not looking anxious, that I overlook the one superpower that would make all my anxieties disappear — listening.

I knew the worst thing would be to sit there picking my nails and staring at the door, looking like I didn’t belong. But I didn’t know what else to do. Singing wasn’t going to fly with this group — at least, I didn’t think so. Turns out, this interview is full of surprises and I should have arrived with my audition head on. But I didn’t.

And so, I’m fiddling with my body language, pretending to be in tune and missing the opportunity to actually get in tune, pretending to listen instead of, you know, listening.

But, let’s step outside of my insecurities for a moment and get perspective.







## Crew Crosscheck

Beyond face value

There are fifteen total applicants in this room.

Fifteen strangers all saying — in one way or another — “I have what it takes to be cabin crew.”

We’re all here to make an impression. We’re all here applying for the same role. We’re all sizing up the room while trying not to look like we’re sizing up the room. And yet... somehow... 95% of it is already buzzing like they’ve known each other since cabin crew college.

At 8:45 in the morning. Before coffee. Before name tags. Before instructions. How?

Are these just natural-born socialites? Extroverts in their element? Have they met before? Are they friends? Were they on the same shuttle from the hotel? Did they clock my silly shoes and silently agree I wasn’t their type? Or is something else going on here?

It’s possible this is all effortless. It’s possible they clicked in the bathroom. But it’s also possible that what you’re seeing isn’t chemistry, but choreography. It might even be insecurity — just wearing a bolder shade of red.

That’s what we’re about to explore. Because sometimes, the chatty clusters aren’t built from confidence at all.

So let’s take a closer look. Not at the people — but at the pattern.



## Thinking Like An Applicant

Buddy Systems are just Cheatsheets

It’s not unusual to stumble upon tight-knit clusters such as this.

Applicants often link up beforehand — swapping numbers in WhatsApp groups, syncing travel plans, arriving as a neatly coordinated buddy system. And fair enough — it’s far easier to step into a room of familiar smiles than it is to break into a circle of turned backs. Honestly, I could’ve used a buddy of my own.

There’s comfort in numbers — and often, that’s exactly what these groups are for. A bit of courage by proximity. A human comfort blanket, if you will. But here’s the catch: **comfort isn’t the currency of success in this room.** This role demands a different muscle entirely — the ability to build instant rapport with complete strangers.

As crew, you won't walk into a pre-flight briefing with your bestie. You'll walk in solo and you're expected to gel instantly with a rotating cast of colleagues in the time it takes to demo a seatbelt — from ex-military types to drama school escapees, all carrying different stories, different dialects, and an overstuffed suitcase full of quirks

One day it's a breezy five-sector hop with a brilliant galley partner who shares their KitKat. The next, you're four delays deep with a sour-faced purser who hasn't smiled since Gatwick.

Then, wheels up, cabin crew aren't just service providers — they're social acrobats. They settle a nervous flyer in 7A while keeping an eye on 24C's eyebrow twitch. They manage a family meltdown with one hand and heat a lasagne with the other, then signal across the aisle to crosscheck with, oh, darn, what's-their-name?

Group interviews aren't about showcasing your ability to sink into a lay-flat seat, don a complimentary onesie, and coordinate a watch party with your mate in 3A. **It's about proving you can run the cabin, not recline in it.**

**Group means team. And in this industry, team means crew.** Not chaperones. Not comfort blankets.



### Coaching Cues

Crew don't cling

If you bring a buddy to get you through the door — that's fair enough. Even captains have co-pilots, and crosschecks happen in pairs. But they also need to operate solo.

Share a nervous giggle at the door, but once you're in that room, it's eyes open. No huddling. No cliques. No playing social hide-and-seek behind familiar and leaving someone else stranded, staring at the backs of your head, looking like they need a sick bag just to survive the morning.

That's not crew behaviour. Crew don't cling. They connect. They scan the space, clock the quiet ones, and start building the scaffolding of teamwork.



### Coaching Cues

Reframe the experience

If you're anything like me — introverted, or just a bit of a wally at interviews — you don't need social cheatsheets to stand out because confidence doesn't come from who's standing beside you — it comes from how you frame the process.



If you're thinking of this as an interview, that's a mistake.

Airline interviews aren't really interviews — they're simulations. Closer to performance reviews. And as this Virgin event unfolds, you'll start to notice how neatly it mirrors a real flight.

Still, I know that alone doesn't quite help.

So let's do what you'd do with a hideous frame around your favourite photo — take it off and swap it for something better. One that actually fits the picture and makes sense of the whole thing.

Oh, speaking of fit, let's step down from my seven inch heels and slip into something more practical. Say, a pair of plush cabin crew ground shoes.



### Simulated Scenario

The pre-flight briefing

When we entered the room, all heads were bent towards Mr Waistcoat. And I took this as a popularity context. But, what if Mr Waistcoat is the Captain and the rest are crew and this is a pre-flight briefing? I know — a slightly dated, sexist tableau, but bear with me.

Does it still feel awkward to walk into? Not unless you've ambled into the wrong room, right. Are they really shunning us with their backs? No. Not if you're thinking like crew. And that's the other key reframe here. Thinking like crew. So, let's adopt that mindset.

We are crew arriving for our pre-flight briefing, and this is our crew.

The Captain is the highest in our chain of command, and for whatever reason, in this moment, so is Mr Waistcoat. Our job isn't to question why. Our job is to calibrate and get caught up.

And, of course, we're the late arrival who arrived early. So, how should we respond in "airport time"?

- A. Shrink at the end of the row, stare at our shoes, and fidget with our posture?
- B. Stare down Mr Waistcoat and decide he's an undercover recruiter planted to test your manners?
- C. Tune in, catch the rhythm, listen, observe, and get briefed?

A is applicant thinking.

B is folklore thinking.

C is crew thinking.

As C thinking crew, how would you introduce yourself? Would you dive in willy nilly? Would you be nervous? Would you be obsessing over how defensive you look crossing your ankles?

Of course not. You'd do what any good crew member does when stepping into a new cabin with unfamiliar faces: you'd smile, nod, contribute when there's space, and most of all — you'd listen.

So why do we abandon all that when the word “interview” gets thrown around?

Because of the frame. And it's a nasty, ugly frame, full to the brim with excess baggage.



## Philosophies

Reporting for duty or ready to impress?

“Interview” makes us think of cold panels, scrutiny, judgement. It disconnects us from the very qualities we're supposed to bring forward — warmth, adaptability, teamwork.

And it's this crew-ready version of you — calm, crew-minded, and naturally responsive — that seniors are hoping to meet. Not the one clutching imaginary armrests in a jump-seat brace position, too tense to let a gesture slip, or the you who memorised model answers and downloaded every cheatsheet.

They want the natural version of you — and they will get it regardless of your intent because this process is designed to strip you down to your instincts. That's why we practise habits, not scripts.

When you're thinking like crew — not like an applicant — your instincts begin to align with exactly what recruiters are looking for. You stop trying to impress, and start operating. You're not gate-crashing, you're reporting for duty. Not auditioning — aligning.

Now, to really drive this home — let me offer a little confession.

By the time I finally succeeded at my Emirates interview, I wasn't just a quiet, introverted type. I was deep in the grip of undiagnosed Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). Yup, my personality was actively dissolving into a disorder.

As I mentioned in the opening pages, by interview #18, I couldn't even talk myself inside Virgin's building. Eye contact made my face tremble. And still — I succeeded at interview #20 and all the way through Emirates training. Not because I dazzled, but because I reframed.

I stopped trying to be an applicant — and started behaving like crew. I treated it like a flight, not a test. And that shift took me out of my 183bpm emergency evacuation heart rate zone and dropped me into calm cabin crew mode.

This is the version they're looking for. And this is the version you're becoming. But first, we have to slip out of the crew shoes and back into my lanky seven-inch numbers so you can see how to apply this reframe in reality.





## Behave Like Cabin Crew

A golden opportunity

If you're relegated to the silly seat — with a grooming coordinator's close up view of a bun and blouse and wondering if you accidentally boarded the wrong vibe — darling, get up and move around the cabin. This isn't a brace-for-impact drill. Welcome to Airline HQ doesn't mean you're strapped into a jump seat... Unless you are, then keep your mitts off the buckle. We'll be talking functional jump-seat tests when we arrive at easyJet.

In the absence of seatbelts, you are free to move around the room. No senior will evict you from the interview for stretching your legs. Just don't start scrolling through French bulldogs wearing bow ties, because electronic devices are meant to be in flight mode or stowed for takeoff.

This is the golden hour for reading the room. Who are these people? Where are they from? Did you catch a name? Can you repeat it without catching your tongue on the pronunciation? What are they talking about? Is there anything you can pilfer that will help you in establishing small talk later?

You're not gathering gossip — you're gathering tools. Conversation hooks. Shared references. Little nuggets to weave into small talk later when the cabin's tight and tensions rise.

And if you're a member of those buddy groups, lovely. Prove you're crew.

Look behind you. Who's arrived? Who's hovering at the edge? Who's pretending to check their phone because they don't know how to break in? Invite them. Smile. Open the circle. Widen the group. That's leadership. That's emotional intelligence. That's behaving like cabin crew. And that's the currency for success in this room.

How you respond to applicants now reflects how you'll respond to passengers later.

Oh, hold up, I can hear the Old Wives muttering about the five-second rule for first impressions — let them natter in the corner. We'll circle back to them shortly, after they've cooled down and had a biscuit.



Dress Code?

# Grooming (The corporate colour trend)



## Pre-Briefing

Red Shoes, Red Lips... Red Herring?

“Dress like you already work there” is everywhere. That faint echo of uniform that says “I already belong up there”. Red lips. Buns. Waistcoats. Corporate colour accents so exact they could’ve been signed off by corporate.

Maybe you’ve tried it. Maybe you’ve stood in front of a mirror and wondered if the right shade of corporate might help you pass as someone already on the inside.

Let’s pull that instinct apart. Let’s step out of the mirror and into the recruiter’s view. Because if you’re going to reach for the airline’s colour palette, you’d better know how to carry the weight of what they stand for.

And if you aren’t following the colour trend, will you look like the outsider? Let’s find out.



## Caitlyn’s Log

Everyone is wearing something red — red shoes, red earrings, red lips, red dress. I look at my skirt — grey. My jacket — grey. Even my legs look sort of grey.

Did I miss the dress code? Wait, am I in the wrong room?

No, she’s holding a school record of achievement folder. This is the right room. Just... not the right outfit.

Note to self: Wear red next time.



## Debrief

### Psychological dress code

I think you'll agree, I'm doing a pretty good job of observing the group here. Emphasis on observing.

It's what I do when I feel uncomfortable. I shrink back and watch. And what I saw was high school, no-uniform week, Year 10, where everyone's turned up looking effortlessly on-trend.

But, the only dress code at Virgin HQ is a psychological one. Even to my then-newbie eyes, it was clear: red wasn't fashion — it was a formula for success.

Does it work? Honestly, I thought it was genius and fully intended to follow the formula. And I won't disappoint you with half-hearted tests. But does it actually work, in the real world?

Let's peel back the surface layer of this trend.



## Coaching Cues

### Red Shoes, Red Lips... Red Herring?

This wave of corporate colour coding isn't without merit. There's no denying, pops of colour work. The iconic red hat is the first thing you see with Emirates. Virgin's red doesn't enter a room — it claims it. Etihad's plum lipstick? Gorgeous. Who wouldn't want to echo that in their earrings, nails, tie, dress, shoes, cravat, knickers?

Navy, black, grey — those are backdrops. They aren't owned in the way Emirates owns red, or Etihad owns plum. No one sees navy and thinks, "Ah, Aeroflot." At least, I hope not. But pair it with a splash of blood orange, and you announce your brand loyalty.

But, that's all it does. It's a first impression, at best.

When recruiters take notes, they're not jotting, "Wore the colour well." They're writing down how you enter the room. How you respond when no one laughs at your joke. How you handle fourteen cold shoulders in one go.

That's what leaves an impression. Not the I ♥ Virgin lipstick and matching nail polish.

Having said that, let's step into the recruiter's view for a moment.





## Think Like A Recruiter

It's a bit like wearing I ♥ Branson PJs

When recruiters enter this room, what will they see?

Red is their corporate colour. And they see so much of it, do they even notice red anymore? Or has it settled into something deeper, more instinctive — a kind of reflex cue that signals familiarity before the mind has even caught up?

And if that's the case, what happens when someone walks in without it? When their outfit doesn't echo the uniform, doesn't play to the palette — do they suddenly stand out as "other"? Like an ungroomed brow?

Well, now we're full circle to the argument I made in lesson 1.4, about my Hollywood heels. Which means we're touching on corporate culture again. And corporate culture comes from something far deeper than a colour palette. It comes from behaviour.

Sure, it is possible that a splash of colour will smooth the edges of unfamiliarity just enough to make the recruiter forget that you're an outsider and shift you from "applicant" to "huh, do I know you?" And that's great — if you can pull it off. And I don't mean pulling it off in the way that doesn't clash with the green in your skin undertones. I'm talking about pulling it off in a way that doesn't scream tragic groupie wearing I ♥ Branson PJs with matching Virgin in-flight socks.

When you accessorise with corporate colours, you're borrowing the brand's visual shorthand. It's a clever trick. But make no mistake — that's all it is. A sleight of hand trick. And if that flash of colour convinces them — even for a second — that you belong, then everything that follows must back it up. Your presence must convey red. Your tone — red. The way you move, respond, recover, reset — red.

Because otherwise, you don't look polished and familiar, you feel off — dare I say, counterfeit. And then, you may as well be wearing green — which, by the way, does clash with green undertones.

Colour is just a costume if you don't wear the brand in your bones. And let's not forget, recruiters have seen every version of this colour trend — and they're not fooled by fabric.

So, here's the bottom line. Wear the corporate colour if it pleases and empowers you. If that pop of plum lights you up like your favourite rock anthem — that's the kind of vibe you want to bring to the interview. Because when you feel it — they feel it too. And that will leave an impression. But don't confuse red for ready, plum for poise, or teal for trust. And don't wear the colours if they make you feel foolish.

If you carry red in your spirit, you can wear black from collar to cuff without a splash of colour. Because the right presence doesn't need punctuation. We'll talk about dressing for the corporate culture when we arrive at Emirates.



## Crew Crosscheck

Can presence rewrite perception?

Now, please spare a thought for me.

Seat fifteen. End of the row. Thighs out, thanks to a skirt that seemed longer in the mirror. Threads fraying over my knees. Heels tall enough to trigger airport security. Fourteen applicants deep and not a single one has looked my way.

I'm locked onto the back of a stranger's bun, ignored, awkward, ungroomed — and any minute now, the recruiters will walk in.

Am I doomed?

Not quite. Let's pan out.

At the time, I didn't know what I didn't know. I was fresh off my Virgin Atlantic ghost flight — California still sun-dusting my shoulders, heart still skipping from the glamour of it all. LAX airport tags whispering sweet nothings from my luggage in the corner of the room. And those scandalous shoes? I adored them. They made me feel like I could headline Top of the Pops.

And let's not forget — I thought I was walking into an induction, not an assessment centre. My vibe? Buoyant. Not rehearsed. Not aloof. Just genuinely thrilled to be there. At any moment, I'm expecting a warm welcome aboard and a uniform.

Sure, I was clocking the others: bun after bun, blouse after blouse. Feeling a little off-palette. But from the outside? My behaviour wouldn't raise a perfectly plucked eyebrow. I wasn't broadcasting panic. Just a girl in the wrong outfit, a little green, but carrying the right kind of sparkle.

So, the question becomes:

Does the outfit eclipse energy?

Do first impressions hinge so tightly on grooming, they can't be undone?

Or can presence rewrite perception?

Well now, we're skimming the line between livery and structural integrity. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. That lesson is coming — when we meet the seniors.