

INTERVIEW PREP GUIDE



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PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Your resume made it through, and you had a successful phone interview.

Congratulations! You've been invited to a face-to-face interview with a potential employer. To shine in the interview and move to the next step, you need to stand out from your competition and make the employer feel confident about everything you have to offer.

The more strategically you prepare for your interview, the better you'll perform... and the more likely you'll be to get the job offer.



CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Research gives you the information you need to appear confident, thorough, and knowledgeable. You should conduct research on four key things:

1. yourself
2. the company you're interviewing with
3. the person you're interviewing with
4. the position

1. Yourself

Your job is to give the interviewer reasons why you'd be a valuable addition to their organization. Do you know those reasons? Think through your knowledge, skills and abilities. Spend time reflecting on what you have to offer, and you'll be poised to impress the interviewer.

Use an Interview Cheat Sheet to prepare yourself and guide your thoughts

FIVE KEY POINTS The top 3-5 things I want the interviewer to remember about me. Highlight key strengths and skills.	HOW I SHINE Example of areas in which your skills and strengths really made a difference in your job and to your employer.	I'M MOST PROUD OF... The accomplishments and achievements that you are most proud of.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••
BRIGHT IDEAS Based on what I know, the ideas I have for the company or the team.	WHY I AM AWESOME Stories/examples that demonstrate how I'm uniquely suited for this position.	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT Strategic answers to the dreaded but inevitable question "what are your weaknesses?"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••

2. The Company You Are Interviewing With

- Primary mission or purpose of the company or organization
- Principal services or products
- Latest annual sales or revenue information
- Major competitors
- Organizational culture (management style, work environment, structure)
- Trends in the industry or field and the “hot” issues
- Notable work being done by the company or important events that are taking place

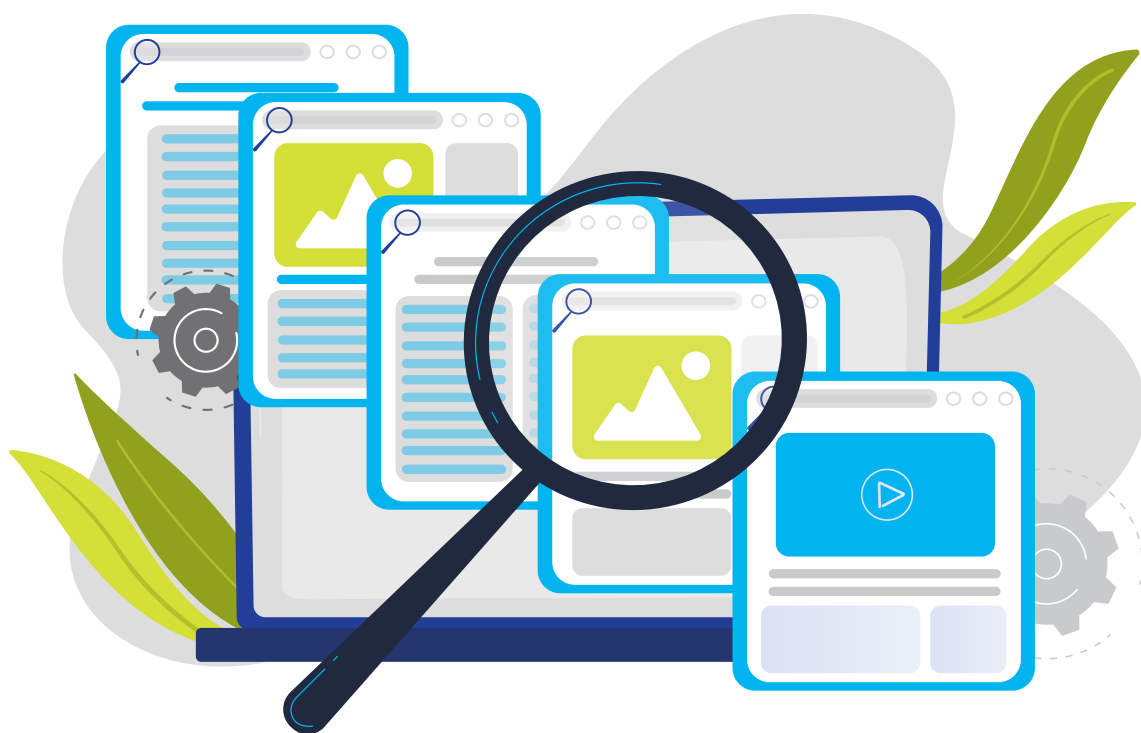
3. The Person You Are Meeting

- Google them
- Use LinkedIn
- Also use Facebook and Twitter
- Make note of anything that could be useful during your interview
- Look for ways to make personal connections to help you stand out
- Look for awards, accomplishments that you can congratulate them on

4. The Position

Thoroughly understand the job description, including:

- Major position responsibilities
- Qualifications and required skills
- Required training and education
- Typical earnings, advancement, career path, and employment outlook
- Opportunities for continuing education and training



BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Think through how you would answer some common questions. While you don't want to sound scripted, having a good sense of how you would respond will boost your confidence. Here are some ideas on how to answer some of the most commonly asked interview questions:

INTERVIEW QUESTION	POINTERS	YOUR NOTES
What is your definition of success?	Be prepared with your own idea of success. Sometimes it is helpful to mention a person who represents your vision of success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
Why are you interested in our company?	Talk about information that you found through your research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
What skills do you possess that would allow you to succeed here?	Refer to specific skills and provide concrete examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
What are your strengths?	Provide three adjectives or examples of your strengths. Present them as they relate to the particular position and organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••

INTERVIEW QUESTION	POINTERS	YOUR NOTES
What are your weaknesses?	Don't say "none." Give only one. Discuss your efforts to improve or manage your weakness. "My computer skills are not as strong as I would like them to be, so I've taken a Microsoft Office course, which has been helpful."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What is important to you in a job? What motivates you?	Talk about results and intrinsic returns in a position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
In what kind of environment would you like to work?	Open environment vs. closed, innovative vs. minimal change, good communication level throughout the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What do you know about our organization?	Demonstrate the research you've done!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What is your management style?	Address issues such as delegation, motivation, and how you promote team spirit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What are your career goals?	Talk first about the position for which you are applying. Be more specific with short-term objectives and fairly general with long-range plans (consider a 5-year plan).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

INTERVIEW QUESTION	POINTERS	YOUR NOTES
Why should we hire you?	Discuss things that you bring that other candidates might lack (i.e. work experience, specialized skills, multiple language skills, volunteer experience).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Describe what you find stressful in a job.	Provide examples of when you have been in stressful situations. Your response should include a positive result.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What other companies are you interviewing with and for what positions?	Answer this question at your discretion. The interviewer knows you are conducting a job search and expects that you may have other offers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Why did you select your college?	Avoid answering this question with “because of the school’s geographic location.” Think about academic programs, campus climate, and research opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What are your feelings about working long hours, evenings, and weekend? Travel?	Think about this question before you answer. Your values regarding work are important to the potential employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

A Note About Behavioral Interviewing Questions

The last seven questions listed above are Behavioral Interviewing Questions. The interviewer is looking for you to share a specific instance in which you handled a situation. Never reply to a behavioral interviewing question with a general answer. The STAR technique can help you provide specific and detailed answers to behavioral-based questions. Keep your response to 1-3 minutes (tops!) and provide examples that resulted in positive outcomes:



Situation

Open with a brief description of the situation and context of the story (who, what, where, when, how).



Task

Explain the task you had to complete highlighting any specific challenges or constraints (deadlines, costs, other issues).



Action

Describe the specific actions that you took to complete the task. These should highlight the desirable traits without needing to state them (initiative, intelligence, dedication, leadership, understanding, etc.).



Result

Close with the result of your efforts. Include figures to quantify the result if possible.

Here are some commonly asked behavioral interviewing questions:

- **Tell me about a time when you worked on a team. How did the team go about achieving its goal?** Discuss the benefits of working on a team. Stay positive in your answer, but make sure you address the challenges of working on a team and how you overcame the challenges.
- **Tell me about a situation when your priorities quickly shifted or changed.** This pertains to juggling many responsibilities at once.
- **Describe a leadership role you have assumed.** Possible answers, even if you haven't formally been a manager, could include elected/appointed positions held, the role you took on a project or team, volunteer leadership, etc.
- **Tell me about a time where you failed at a project or task. What did you learn from the experience?** The most important point to get across is how you turned a negative situation into a positive one.
- **Tell me about the best manager you ever worked for and why you liked working for that person so much.** Recall a positive experience with a former/current boss.
- **Name a recent situation when you had to motivate others.** Remember, every person has a different motivational style. This is another opportunity to showcase your personal leadership skills.
- **How do you organize and plan for major projects?** Give an example. Companies want candidates who have strong organizational skills. Elaborate.

BE PREPARED TO ASK QUESTIONS

There will come a time during the interview, usually at the end, when the interviewer will say something like, “what questions do you have for me today?” You absolutely must ask questions at this time. Having a list of questions prepared shows the interviewer that you are serious about the job and that you have taken the time to prepare.

Here are some suggested questions that apply to almost any interviewing situation:

- Who is the direct supervisor for this position and what is that person’s style of management?
- How are employees evaluated and how is success measured?
- What would you like done differently by the next person who fills the position?
- What type of people seem to do well in this company?
- What type of training is provided?
- What are some of the objectives that you would like accomplished in this job?
- What are some of the most difficult problems facing someone in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?
- What kind of support does this person receive in terms of people, finances, etc.?
- How would you describe the corporate/organizational culture?
- Where is the organization strong and where does it need to be strengthened?
- What are the opportunities you see for the department/company/organization in the next year?
- How is the organization ready to deal with technological changes over the next few years?
- What would you change about this organization?
- How well do departments interact with each other?



WHAT TO WEAR

While your skills and abilities are the most important thing, how you look impacts the first impression you create. A polished appearance shows the interviewer that you're ambitious, professional, and most importantly, a great fit for the company. Whether the environment you're interviewing in is corporate classic, business casual, or start-up relaxed, follow these general guidelines to dress for success:

Women:

- Suit (pant or skirt) or tailored dress in solid or subtle color, no extreme slits, necklines or hemlines
- Polished, closed-toe shoes, basic, dark pumps with medium or low heels (no open-toed or backless shoes)
- Clean nails, no chips (if polished)
- Light makeup and jewelry
- Match stockings appropriately (no bare legs)

Men:

- Dark, solid or pin-striped suit/sportcoat
- Shined, dark shoes
- Clean, well-groomed nails
- Conservative tie
- Solid shirt, clean and pressed
- Avoid flashy cuff links, rings, necklaces or earrings
- Over-the-calf socks that match appropriately
- One ring per hand (if any)

Both:

- Conservative colors (navy, black, gray)
- Light fragrance, if any (we recommend none)
- Make sure that clothing and accessories do not distract the interviewer from the process



WHAT TO BRING

- Several copies of your resume
- Any relevant work samples/portfolio
- A fact sheet with references (names and contact information)
- Mints
- A folio/note pad and pen
- Your list of questions

Note: remember to silence your phone or better yet – turn it off



SPECIAL NOTES: PHONE INTERVIEWS

- The only asset you have is your voice, so **SMILE** and convey energy
- Eliminate any potentially distracting noises
- Make arrangements to have at least 30 minutes, interruption-free
- Make sure your phone is charged and has good reception
- Don't drive during an interview
- Be an active listener; take notes



PREPARING FOR VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Your Tech

- Download any required software ahead of time
- Test your camera and sound beforehand; practice with a friend
- Make sure the camera is at eye level
- If you must use your phone for video, consider investing in a phone tri-pod
- Pump yourself up and get the energy flowing
- Make sure your wi-fi signal is strong, free up your Wi-Fi as much as possible
- Close out everything else on your computer

Your Interview

- Log in 10 minutes early
- Make great eye contact; look directly into your computer camera
- Maintain good posture and positioning
- If your video is lagging, free up as much of your Wi-Fi as possible
- If your tech fails, remain calm. Exit out and try to log back in again
- If you experience unexpected background noise, hit **MUTE**

Your Environment

- Clean up your background
- If necessary, use a photo background
- Adjust your lighting so it's most flattering
- Eliminate any potential distractions
- Wear simple clothing and makeup that will look great on camera



WRAPPING UP: WHAT TO DO AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours
- Connect on LinkedIn
- If you worked with a recruiter, contact them right after the interview with feedback
- Follow up when appropriate
- Be patient

