



Interview Guide

Be Prepared

Preparing for an interview is a must. Interviewers can usually discern which candidates took the time to think about their answers and have researched the company they are interviewing for. Being prepared for an interview can entail a variety of things.

How do I prepare for an interview?

1. Answer commonly asked interview questions by writing them out or speaking them out loud. This technique is especially helpful for those who tend to get anxious or nervous. Common interview questions often include:
 - a. Tell me about yourself.
 - b. Why did you apply to this position?
 - c. How long will it take you to make a contribution?
 - d. What else besides your schooling and experience qualify you for this job?
 - e. Tell me about a difficult situation and how you resolved it.
 - f. What are some aspects of your present job that you enjoy/dislike?
 - g. How would you define a positive work environment?
 - h. What do you see yourself doing 5 or 10 years from now?
 - i. Why should I hire you?
 - j. How much do outside influences play a role in your job performance?
2. Research the company by doing an Internet search. Look for the company's specific website as well as other sites such as reliable news sources that reference the company. From this search, you should be able to speak intelligently about the company and pose some questions to the employer about specific things you learned.
3. Map it. Know where you are going and how long it will take to get there. Drive the route if your interview is in town and you unsure of where you are going.
4. Prepare your references. Inform your references that you are interviewing for a position. You should express to them the degree of interest you have in the position, the qualities you believe they should emphasize, as well as any other positions you have applied for.

Be Polite

Often times your interview begins even before you step foot into the building. Anyone you encounter may be a part of the interview/screening process. Therefore, you should conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times. Some employers may even test your interaction with their employees by setting up situations or force you to deal with people before you enter the interview. Below is a list of general guidelines to stay professional:

1. Arrive at least **15 minutes** prior to the start of the interview.
2. Turn off your cell phone **before** you get out of your car.
3. Greet others with a smile and a hello.
4. When entering the interview, wait to be directed to which seat you are to take and remain standing until the interviewer(s) sit. If there are others already seated in the room, it is acceptable to sit down immediately once you are directed to a vacant seat.
5. Maintain appropriate eye contact.
6. Do not interrupt others

Be Positive

Employers are more likely to hire someone who smiles and remains both positive and enthusiastic during the interview process. Employers want employees who get along well with others, are personable, as well as approachable.

Do not spend your interview dwelling on the faults of your other jobs, bosses, or co-workers. Instead, focus on the things you liked about your previous job but also concentrate on how those positive things can be beneficial to your new employer.

Dress to Impress

FACT: The way you dress for your interview says a lot about you as a potential employee.

What does your appearance say about you? Low cut shirt girl? Tacky tie guy? Don't be remembered for your fashion faux pas. Your clothes as well as your overall appearance should make a positive statement to others. Here are a few guidelines to follow when dressing for your interview.

Guidelines for Men & Women

Suit: A two piece matched suit in black/navy/dark grey is best. Ensure that it fits properly as well as remove all tags and loose threads. Coordinate your shirt or blouse to compliment your suit. Shirts (and blouses where appropriate) should be pressed and tailored to fit.

Is a suit always appropriate attire for an interview?

If you are entering into a job or worksite that does not require a suit, it may still be appropriate to wear one. Wearing a suit to the interview shows respect and that you are serious about the job. If you believe you are entering a company that would frown upon a suit, seek advice from professors or people you know who have been employed in the industry and/or ask the company directly.

Shoes: Choose shoes that match/compliment your suit and are close-toed, low heeled, polished, and scuff-free.

General appearance: You should be freshly showered/bathed, have your hair groomed, and your nails should be neat, clean, and trimmed. Stay away from heavy colognes or perfumes and make certain to hide tattoos and abnormal piercings.

Additional Guidelines for Men

Socks: Wear dark dress socks that go to mid-calf so skin doesn't show when you are seated.

Belt: Belts should match the color of your shoes.

Ties: Tie styles come and go, purchase one made of good quality fabric in a conservative solid color or small pattern. Stay away from loud colors and character ties.

Jewelry: Keep jewelry to a minimum. A watch and wedding or class ring at most. Remove earrings.

Facial Hair: If worn, should be neatly trimmed/groomed.

Additional Guidelines for Women

Skirts: When seated, your skirt should fully cover your thighs. Longer skirts are acceptable as long as they are not billowing. Skirts should have a proper form and compliment your body; however, they should not be so tight as to not allow you to move comfortably.

Shirts: Underneath your suit jacket, wear a tailored blouse or finely knit shell. Do not show cleavage.

Jewelry: Be conservative. Minimize the number of pieces you wear. (e.g. a watch and a necklace)

Makeup: Keep makeup natural and light.

Hosiery: Fads come and go, be certain to remain neutral and wear hosiery that matches your skin tone.

Shoes: Shoes should match /compliment your suit in both color and fabric. Heels should be no taller than 2 ½ inches.

Purse/Bag: If you choose to bring a purse, keep it small and simple, especially if you bring a briefcase/portfolio.

Interview Formats

Phone Interviews

Employers often use phone interviews to screen candidates in order to narrow the applicant pool. Phone interviews are also cost effective ways to interview out-of-town candidates. Be prepared for a phone interview; it can happen at any time. Here are a few quick tips when dealing with a phone interview.

1. Ensure that if using a cell phone, you have adequate reception and battery
2. Do not smoke, eat, or chew gum during your interview. Keeping a small glass of water nearby if your throat gets dry is acceptable
3. Conduct your interview in a quiet place with no interruptions (kids, pets, co-workers etc.)
4. Have a copy of your resume to look at
5. Keep a small list of accomplishments to refer to
6. Be certain to ask appropriate questions, **salary is not one of them**
7. Have a pen and paper handy for keeping notes
8. Speak slowly and clearly
9. Don't interrupt the interviewer
10. Keep your answers short. Your ultimate goal is to get a face to face interview

Video-Conference Interviews

Like the phone interview, video conference interviews are a cost effective method for companies who wish to interview candidates that are out of town. While most of the traditional interviewing skills apply with a video-conference interview, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind:

1. **Appearance:** Be careful when dressing for the video-conference. Whites tend to wash out your face while blacks tend to make you over exposed. Steer clear of reds as they will look blurry and bold patterns as they will be distracting to the interviewer. The best bets are blues, medium grays, brown or deep colored suits. For women, be certain to keep makeup natural although you may wish to add a little more color to your cheeks and lips. Avoid flashy and dangly earrings.
2. **Rehearse:** Just as in a traditional interview it is important for you to rehearse your interview. Record yourself on camera answering questions. You may be surprised! Are you saying one thing but your body is saying another?
3. **Arrive early:** If you are attending a video-conference at a satellite office, be certain to arrive early enough to have the technology person on hand show you how to do some basic troubleshooting during the interview.
4. **Set up:** Be certain to center yourself in the middle of your screen. Make sure there are no distracting objects in the background if you are video-conferencing from home or other location. Have the camera as close to eye level as possible and during the interview, concentrate on looking at the camera not yourself on the screen. Set objects such as your resume, pen and paper, and water, outside the view of the camera.
5. **Etiquette:** Ask the technician assisting you if there are any delays and account for those in your responses so you do not interrupt your interviewer. You can do this by pausing before you begin speaking. It is important to speak clearly and listen carefully. Do not be frustrated by being asked to repeat yourself and do not hesitate to ask the interviewer to repeat the question if necessary.

Site Interviews

Site interviews are generally offered only after you have gone through a possible initial screening and first interview. Site interviews typically last a full day or more and can entail a variety of activities including a tour, a meal with future colleagues, pre-employment testing, and a prepared demonstration by you in addition to several interviews.

The site interview is designed to determine how well you "fit" with the company. In many cases, you will be interacting with all levels of employees on a professional and personal level in a variety of situations. It is imperative for you to do your homework about the company when you are invited to a site interview. Employers typically want someone who will go the extra mile to learn about the company's position in the market, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.

Most employers will offer to pay your expenses when you attend a site interview. Remember to keep your receipts and only submit those expenses you incur as a part of your trip. Do not include personal items such as toiletries, cosmetics, or alcohol but do include miles traveled if you drive your vehicle.

Potential Interview Questions

-from Monster.com, by Thad Peterson, Monster Staff Writer

Basic Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why do you want this job?
- Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?
- What's your ideal company?
- What attracted you to this company?
- Why should we hire you?
- What did you like least about your last job?
- When were you most satisfied in your job?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What were the responsibilities of your last position?
- Why are you leaving your present job?
- What do you know about this industry?
- What do you know about our company?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Behavioral Interview Questions:

- What was the last project you headed up, and what was its outcome?
- Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty at work.
- Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?
- Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?
- What is your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?
- What irritates you about other people, and how do you deal with it?
- If I were your supervisor and asked you to do something that you disagreed with, what would you do?
- What was the most difficult period in your life, and how did you deal with it?
- Give me an example of a time you did something wrong. How did you handle it?
- What irritates you about other people, and how do you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict on the job.
- If you were at a business lunch and you ordered a rare steak and they brought it to you well done, what would you do?
- If you found out your company was doing something against the law, like fraud, what would you do?
- What assignment was too difficult for you, and how did you resolve the issue?
- What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years and how did you come to that decision?
- Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.

Salary Questions:

- What salary are you seeking?
- What's your salary history?
- If I were to give you this salary you requested but let you write your job description for the next year, what would it say?

Career Development Questions:

- What are you looking for in terms of career development?
- How do you want to improve yourself in the next year?
- What kind of goals would you have in mind if you got this job?
- If I were to ask your last supervisor to provide you additional training or exposure, what would she suggest?

•

More About You:

- How would you describe your work style?
- What would be your ideal working environment?
- What do you look for in terms of culture -- structured or entrepreneurial?
- Give examples of ideas you've had or implemented.
- What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person?
- Tell me about your proudest achievement.
- Who was your favorite manager and why?
- What do you think of your previous boss?
- Was there a person in your career who really made a difference?
- What kind of personality do you work best with and why?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you like to do?
- What are your lifelong dreams?
- What do you ultimately want to become?
- What is your personal mission statement?
- What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?
- What negative thing would your last boss say about you?
- What three character traits would your friends use to describe you?
- What are three positive character traits you don't have?
- If you were interviewing someone for this position, what traits would you look for?
- List five words that describe your character.
- Who has impacted you most in your career and how?
- What is your greatest fear?
- What is your biggest regret and why?
- What's the most important thing you learned in school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What will you miss about your present/last job?
- What is your greatest achievement outside of work?
- What are the qualities of a good leader? A bad leader?
- Do you think a leader should be feared or liked?
- How do you feel about taking no for an answer?

- How would you feel about working for someone who knows less than you?
- How do you think I rate as an interviewer?
- Tell me one thing about yourself you wouldn't want me to know.

Taken from: <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/interview-questions/100-potential-interview-questions/article.aspx>

The Star Method of Interviewing:

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question by discussing the specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esult of the situation you are describing.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.

Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Oftentimes students have to be prompted to include their results, so try to include that without being asked. Also, eliminate any examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

SAMPLE STAR RESPONSE:

Situation (S): Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, *The Review*, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

Task (T): My goal was to generate new ideas, materials and incentives that would result in at least a 15% increase in advertisers from the year before.

Action (A): I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of *The Review* circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a School of Business Administration professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

Result (R): We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period last year.

Taken from: <http://www.drexel.edu/scdc/resources/STAR%20Method.pdf>

How to answer tough interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.

It seems like an easy interview question. Its open ended. I can talk about whatever I want from the birth canal forward. Right?

Wrong. What the hiring manager really wants is a quick, two-to-three-minute snapshot of who you are and why you're the best candidate for this position.

So as you answer this question, talk about what you've done to prepare yourself to be the very best candidate for the position. **Use an example or two to back it up.** Then ask if they would like more details. If they do, keep giving them example after example of your background and experience. Always refer back to an example when you have the opportunity.

Tell me about yourself does not mean tell me everything. Just tell me what makes you the best.

2. Are you a team player?

Almost everyone says yes to this question. But it is not just a yes/no question. You need to provide behavioral examples to back up your answer.

A sample answer: Yes, I'm very much a team player. In fact, I've had opportunities in my work, school and athletics to develop my skills as a team player. For example, on a recent project.....

Emphasize teamwork behavioral examples and focus on your openness to diversity of backgrounds. Talk about the strength of the team above the individual. And note that this question may be used as a lead in to questions around how you handle conflict within a team, so be prepared.

3. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?

Note that if you say no, most interviewers will keep drilling deeper to find a conflict. The key is how you behaviorally reacted to conflict and what you did to resolve it.

For example: Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person's perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, and then seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example...

Focus your answer on the behavioral process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively.

4. What is your greatest weakness?

Most career books tell you to select a strength and present it as a weakness. Such as: I work too much, I just work and work and work. **Wrong.** First of all, using a strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving. Second, it misses the point of the question.

You should select a weakness that you have been actively working to overcome. For example: I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I'm now taking steps to correct this. I just started using a pocket planner....then show them your planner and how you are using it. Talk about a true weakness and show what you are doing to overcome it.

5. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?

Focus on two words: leadership and vision.

Here is a sample of how to respond: The key quality in a successful manager should be leadership—the ability to be the visionary for the people who are working under them, the person who can set the course and direction for subordinates. The highest calling of a true leader is inspiring others to reach the highest of their abilities. I'd like to tell you about a person who I consider to be a true leader.....

Then give an example of someone who has touched your life and how their impact has helped in your personal development.

Taken from: <https://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/mastering-the-interview/ten-tough-interview-q...>