

The Interview Guide Workbook

A Step-By-Step Guide to
Preparing for Interviews.
Things to consider, tips, etc.



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Why is it important to prepare for an interview?

To ensure you give the best interview performance possible

Practice makes perfect! Preparation for an interview helps you gather courage, identify your weak points, address them, and impress the interviewer. You'll also be able to answer questions quickly, confidently, and comprehensively.

Minimize stress and nervousness

Nervousness happens due to being in unfamiliar territory, surrounded by new faces. While a little nervousness is common before and during an interview, practicing and thinking through any possible questions can help you feel calm and bold.

It sets you apart from other candidates

There is a high chance that you will be competing for a position with candidates who will have better qualities than you, and it's up to you to set yourself apart. Prepare and show the interviewers what unique values you bring to the company!

This is what you should focus on:

- Look at ways your personality and other skills match the job specifications
- Think through and bring out any experience relevant to the job
- Prepare to ask relevant questions as it shows you're interested

It helps you be and appear confident

Confidence is key to a successful interview. It helps you approach the interview with ease and answer all questions convincingly.

With preparations, you can craft answers for questions you think the interviewer might ask. Also, If you also have answers beforehand, you will be able to answer all questions boldly.

It helps you take control

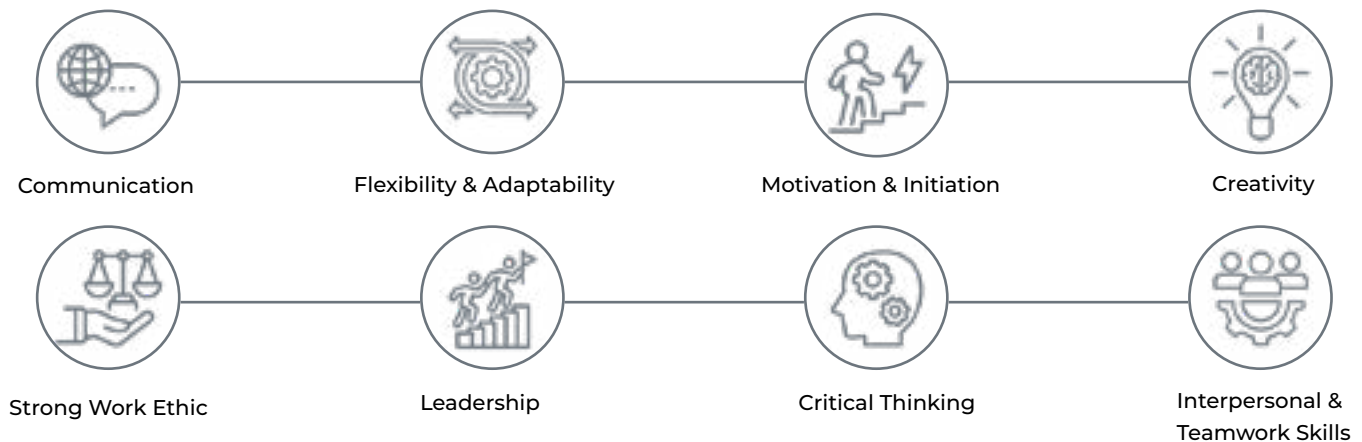
Job interviews can be intimidating. And if you're scared, you are bound to flop as you'll not compose. However, you can take charge of the interview if you are prepared. As you practice, you'll be training your mind to anticipate any question.

1 PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

What do employers look for during interviews?

- Can you do the job? (Competencies: knowledge, skills, and personal attributes)
- Will you do the job? (Motivation)
- Will you fit in with the organization?
- Are you sincerely interested in this job?

Interviewers also look for these competencies and qualities in potential candidates:



What should you look for during an interview?

It is important that you can demonstrate a clear understanding of yourself. This means that you should be able to communicate your competencies, values, interests, and goals, and be able to relate them back to the employer/organization.

Here are some important questions to consider:

- How does the organization's mission match with my interests?
- Does the nature of the job sound interesting?
- How does the organization run? Do you like this style of operation?
- How do the employees interact with each other? What is their overall dynamic?
- Does this job match my career interests?
- Are you excited about the possibility of obtaining this position?

The above questions are important considerations when preparing for your interview because they can reveal how well you may fit in with an organization.

It is important that you can articulate to an employer that you can fit in/are a good match to their organization.

What questions can you ask the interview (that are not on the website) that can help you answer these?

Research the Organization

You will want to research the organization that you're applying to. How much should you know before the interview? **As much as possible.**

Be aware of any industry or organization news that could come up in the interview. Know their competitors, their history, and their mission. Check their website, newsletters, and social media to be knowledgeable of current events. It is helpful when thinking of questions to ask the employer.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Opener/ Self- descriptive

Opening questions are generally similar, and because of this, they are easy to be prepared for. Your answer should address your experiences, qualifications, and goals.

Examples

- Tell me about yourself.
- Can you describe your background?
- How would you describe yourself?

Interviewers like to hear stories about candidates. Make sure your story has a great beginning, a riveting middle, and an end that makes the interviewer root for you to win the job.

Behavioral

Behavioral questions are designed to see how you've handled challenges in the past and what you've learned from them. Though a past example is preferable, you may provide a theoretical case and the way you'd handle it to show your critical thinking competency.

Examples

- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team.
- When was a time when you had to work under pressure?
- Describe the most innovative or creative thing you have done in your work experience

To answer these questions convincingly, you will need to demonstrate how a specific skill or knowledge helped you in a work-relation situation.

Negative

A negative question will address one of your weaknesses or failures in order to determine if you have some level of self-awareness.

Examples

- What are you doing to strengthen your weakness or prevent failure?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Tell me about a time when you failed.
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you handle it?

Your answer should explain how you overcame/overcome the negative aspect and what you learned from the situation. The key is to **always end on a positive note**. A good answer will be structured like, “My weakness is X. I overcome it by doing Y.”

Situational

Situational questions are designed to see how you make decisions and solve problems in complex situations you will likely find yourself if employed.

Examples

- What would do if you found out a co-worker wasn't contributing to a project?
- If you were to put together a team, what qualities would you look for in teammates?
- What would you do if you faced resistance or opposition when introducing a new idea or policy to a team or workgroup?

You may be given a situation or case and asked to describe how you would handle it. Your answers can help the interviewer gauge your self-confidence, decision-making skills, communication skills, and level of experience.

Discipline/Department Specific

Questions that are specific towards the organization or position you are applying for.

Examples

- Why have you chosen to pursue this degree at our university?
- What are some challenges faced by professionals in this field?
- How are you staying up to date with news in this area?
- What characteristics/habits do you believe are important for success in this program?

This is a great chance for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization or in your field and to better clarify why you are a good fit for the position.

Closing

How the interviewer will wrap up the interview

Examples

- Why should we hire you?
- Why do you believe that you are a good candidate for this position?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

You should summarize your competencies, directly addressing why you are a good candidate.

3 RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When answering interview questions, your answers should typically be 30-90 seconds. Think of your responses to those questions as opportunities to share who you are and what you could bring to the organization, as it relates to the job.

When responding to questions:

- Touch upon aspects of your skill set, education, and experience that are relevant to the position you are applying for. Offer examples.
- Understand that everything on your resume is fair game. Be able to talk in-depth about those experiences.
- If a weakness or an area of development comes up during the interview, explain how you are improving and developing that skill set.
- When outlining your career goals be sure they align with the position and organization you are applying to.

S.T.A.R Method

The S.T.A.R. Method is a technique for answering questions that help you structure your answers in a way that gives the interviewer all of the relevant information about a specific qualification for a job.

Consider using the STAR method for situational questions, behavioral questions, or questions that prompt you to recall a problem.







- **Situation-** Tell the interviewer about a specific challenge or situation. Give your audience context and enough detail to understand the story.
- **Task-** What were you trying to achieve? What was the assignment? Tell the interviewer what you were trying to get accomplished in this situation.
- **Action-** What did you do? If there was a problem or challenge, how did you handle it? Tell your interviewer what you did and why. Always include examples.
- **Results/Reflection-** What was the outcome of this situation? Did you meet your objective? Don't forget to tell your interviewer what you learned from this experience, and how have you applied that knowledge since.



Asking The Interviewer Questions

Asking the interviewer questions is an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and enthusiasm for the organization. Interviewers appreciate and expect questions. Also, think about what you wish you knew in past positions.

Here are some tips regarding questions for the interviewer:

- Ask **open-ended and intentional** questions to determine if a job is a good fit for you.  How would you define success in this position?
- Ask questions that help you **align your values** with the organization's values.  What are the core values of the company, and how are they demonstrated in the workplace?
- Review the website to generate ideas, but do not ask questions explicitly answered on website.  What are the current challenges or opportunities that the company is facing in the market?
- Avoid asking about salary. It is the interviewer's job to initiate this conversation. It may not even be discussed during the first interview.  Focus on questions related to the role, responsibilities, and company instead of compensation
- Ask about supervision style and how they measure success.  Can you describe your management or supervision style?
- As a final question, ask for the interviewer's contact information, such as a business card, if you do not already have it. This will allow you to send a thank you email after your interview.  I appreciate the opportunity to interview with you, and I would like to express my gratitude in writing. How can I reach you?

Practice

The best way to feel more comfortable during an interview is through intentional practice. Fortunately, the Career Center can help! Make an appointment with a Career Coach to practice a Mock Interview here!

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OTHER TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Phone Interviews

These are short first round interviews designed to filter candidates before bringing them onsite.

Answer the phone by stating your name.

"Hello, this is ____."

Perform the interview in a quiet room to minimize distractions.

Turn off notifications to avoid any interruptions



Minimize background noise

Be concise. You will not have non-verbal cues from the interviewer about when to stop speaking.

Have your resume nearby

Smile! it brings energy and excitement to your voice.

Virtual Interviews

Virtual interviews help companies save resources while still seeing your personality and mannerisms.

The camera should frame your face, shoulders, and hands.

Body language and nonverbal cues are important!

Be sure that your **username or handle** is professional, and your **profile picture** is appropriate.

Your background should not be cluttered or distracting to the interviewers.

Use your notes sparingly.
The interviewer can see your eyes, so it is important that you are not obviously reading from your notes.

Close other applications on your computer

Ensure that you are in a quiet, well-lit location with a **solid internet connection.**

be sure that you are **plugged into an outlet.**

Smile and try to keep a **pleasant facial expression** for the duration.

Avoid wearing odd patterns like stripes and checks. They have an odd effect on the camera that can be distracting.

Address any technology problems **immediately.**

It's better to stop the interview than to give an inaccurate answer.

Dress like you would for an in-person interview.

Look directly into the camera, not the screen.
It gives the impression of making eye contact



5 SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

Why Should You Negotiate Your Salary?



Starting on the right foot is important

If you don't feel comfortable with the pay, you're offered, it may be more difficult to put your all into a new role. Starting out at a salary you're comfortable with lets you put your best foot forward at a new job.



It sets you up for future success

Starting out at a higher versus lower salary means when you do receive performance or annual raises, you'll be happier with them. This can help you stay motivated at your current job if you like the work, so you avoid job-hopping solely for the sake of finding better pay.



Asking for a raise shows confidence

Taking the initiative to ask for a pay raise, along with noting your accomplishments that warrant asking for a raise shows you know your worth.

A Plan for Negotiating Salary

1 Stay positive

Keeping an upbeat attitude and remembering to treat your boss or hiring manager with the utmost respect is key. Being polite can help you avoid coming across as pushy, and if you start to feel intimidated, remember that your boss wants you to be happy in your position so you're at your most productive.

2 Use your leverage

Your chances are high to receive the pay you want, especially in certain underserved professions. According to a 2022 Payscale report, labor shortages stemming from COVID-19 have companies scrambling to attract and retain employees. 92% of businesses are giving raises in 2022, which is up 7% from 2021.

3 Know your worth

Research your profession and industry before settling on a number. Check the salary ranges on job postings, public organizations make it easier to find salary ranges because they are more transparent about pay.

4 Plan for tough questions

Prepare how you'll respond if you are asked about your current/previous salary. Remember, you are not obligated to disclose your pay history! You can say your pay has varied based on the type of work you did. Give a salary range instead of an exact figure — for instance, \$70,000–80,000 — to provide you with some

5 Determine your bottom line

What is the lowest amount you'd be willing to accept? Have that figure in mind! It can be helpful to research your budget and the cost of living in your city to ensure you pick a comfortable, livable wage. You'll also want to consider other job factors, such as commuting and paid-time-off allowance. If you don't receive your desired salary, are there other perks you could negotiate?

6 Come prepared to discuss your achievements

Whether you improved your last company's bottom line or have garnered awards for your work, salary negotiations are the time to discuss your strengths and accomplishments. It can be helpful to compile a list of your achievements and commit them to memory so you can speak about them comfortably when asked for a rationale for a pay increase or salary bump.

7 Timing is everything

Timing your salary negotiation talk may not always be possible, but when it is, you should choose a time when your boss is relaxed and free to talk. A day filled with back-to-back meetings is probably not the best time to spring a discussion on them. Be sure to schedule it with plenty of notice and accommodate your employer's schedule and time demands.

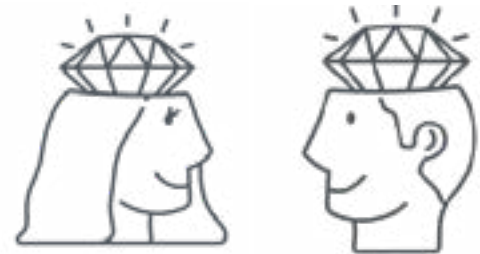
8 Prepare for a counteroffer

There are a few courses of action if your request is not approved, but a counteroffer is made. You can choose to maintain your position and ask for a higher offer, you can negotiate further to meet in the middle, or you can accept the counteroffer. Be sure to accept the counteroffer graciously, whether you plan to take it or not.

Proven Salary Negotiation Strategies

Showcase Your Value

It's always a good idea to bring more value to the table than what you take away and finding a way to communicate this to your employer is an excellent place to start. Creating a list of your values can show your employer what they stand to gain by giving you the salary you want.



Highlight Your Accomplishments

Focus on your strengths. Do you have extensive experience in one area that is important to your current company? Everyone has strengths that can be desirable to employers and sets them apart. It can even give you a confidence boost by looking at all that you have done in your career, which will help you go into the talks feeling more self-assured and comfortable.



Gather Information

Check resources for your particular job field to see what the market is currently paying. You should also look at your specific title and see any open job listings and if they list the salary range. Make a list of accomplishments in your current or previous role that apply to your pay request and can strengthen your appeal for higher pay.



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FOLLOWING UP AFTER AN INTERVIEW

Follow-up with a thank you email or card within 24 hours of an interview. After an interview, you may not hear right away as to whether or not you've been hired. You can email either the HR Representative or Hiring Manager a week after an interview to see if they have any additional questions or need further information.

After that, only initiate contact via email or phone once a week. The hiring process can be lengthy, so be patient.

If you are given an employment offer, ask how much time you have to respond if you have not already been told. Be sure to respond within that time frame.

If you need an extension in response time, politely ask the employer, but be sure to give a good reason as to why you need one. The employer is not obligated to give you an extension so be professional and polite when making any requests.

WHAT IF THE INTERVIEW DOES NOT GO WELL?



Reflect on the experience and learn from it. Examine what went well, then identify and reflect on what you would have changed and note it for the future. The interview experience may have felt worse for you than how it actually happened, so try to not be so hard on yourself but also learn to accept mistakes and move forward with determination and positive actions.

If you did not receive the position, let them know you are sorry to not get the offer, but enjoyed meeting them and would love to be considered for other positions in the future and remind them of your key strengths. Sometimes it simply comes down to the best fit for the position, and you will find the right one.