

Interview Preparation

A successful interview starts with preparation. The information below highlights key areas of focus when preparing for an interview, whether in-person or virtual.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Gathering information about the employer helps you leverage your interview to ask better questions, understand their mission statement and successfully answer interview questions. In addition, your preparation and research shows your true interest in the company.

Company - Visit company websites to get a better idea of:

- Mission
- Values
- Goals
- Leadership Team and Staff
- Culture
- History
- Achievements
- Products/Services Offered

Glassdoor – Get to know the employer through the eyes of employees. Glassdoor offers information on:

- Job Reviews by Employees
- Salaries Within the industry
- Questions Asked in Interviews
- Benefits
- Photos
- Overall Rating

Salary - While we strongly advise against initiating conversation about salary during the first interview, it is important to understand the average salary for the role. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides the mean salary as well as a average range for positions. Knowing your value and skills will help you determine where you fall within the salary range.

DRESS TO IMPRESS

How you present yourself factors into your first impression with an employer. There are many options to a presentable outfit that don't require breaking the bank.

What Works

- Nice slacks or long skirt
- Professional dress
- Button up, dollared shirt or blouse
- Clean loafers, business shoes, closed-toed heels or flats

What Doesn't

- Shorts, jeans, pants with holes or short skirts
- Sundresses
- Spaghetti straps, t-shirts or lowcut tops
- Tennis shoes or flip flops

TIP FOR VIRTUAL

Although you are only presenting in a headshot frame during your interview, it's important to dress appropriately from head to toe. Not only will you feel prepared mentally, but will be ready if something goes awry.

Be careful to not match the colors in your background space.

PRACTICE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Named after the length of time on an elevator ride, an elevator pitch is a brief summary of yourself. This is not to be more than three minutes long. The elevator pitch provides a great framework for the common question, “Tell us more about yourself.” It allows you to explain your career interests while also demonstrating your ability to communicate effectively and confidently. A good outline for this question includes addressing the past, present and future:

Past – What is your background? Do you have a degree and relevant work experience?

Present – What are you currently doing? Are you currently employed and what value do you bring?

Future – What are you looking to do? Are you wanting growth, a career transition or a new opportunity? What peaked your interest in this particular position?

THE STAR TECHNIQUE

The STAR Technique is a strategy used to answer behavioral questions or questions that would benefit from providing an example. This allows an employer to evaluate your ability to think through situations as well as evaluate your skillset.

Situation – Briefly describe the situation.

Task – What tasks needed to be taken to alleviate the situation?

Action – What were your specific actions that contributed to solving this situation?

Results – This is often the most forgotten part of the answer, but an important one. Be sure to discuss what resulted of the situation. Did it increase sales? Improve productivity of the team? Try to make it a quantitative result, if possible.

Situation didn't end well? Sometimes, employers will ask you about a time you failed. Use the same technique, but explain what you learned from the failed attempt and what you would do, or are doing, differently. This shows an interviewer that you can learn from setbacks and move forward. Be sure to take accountability.

PREPARE FOR COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The best way to prepare for interview questions is to practice them. Below is a sample of questions. If able, diversify your answers among several of your work positions, instead of focusing on one position for all answers.

- How did you hear about this position?
- Tell us what you know about our company.
- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What do you consider your greatest strength?
- What do you consider a weakness?
- Why should we hire you?
- What type of training/certifications do you have?
- Tell me about a conflict you faced and how you dealt with it.

ASSOCIATION

- Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership skills?
- What is your management style?
- Tell me about a time you collaborated.
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Could you explain the gap in your employment history?
- What motivates you?
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- How do you navigate change?
- Tell me about your greatest achievement.
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake.
- Tell me about a time you failed.
- Provide an example of a goal and how you achieved it.
- Walk me through your first 90 days in this position.
- Talk about a time you went above and beyond for a project.

ESTABLISH A DAY-OF GAME PLAN

It's just as important to prepare for your travels as it is for your questions. Here are a few key reminders:

Know What to Bring: Print off several resumes and bring your notes. Have this prepared the night before in case you run into issues such as printing errors.

Know the Roads: Have your route mapped out and plan for potential traffic issues. There are many online platforms that can give you an ETA of your arrival. Better yet, do a practice drive the day before.

Know Where to Park and Enter: If you weren't informed of a specific location to park and you aren't sure, reach out at least 24 hours in advance to ask.

Know Who is Interviewing You: If there is a front desk receptionist, make sure you already know who you are asking for ahead of time.

Don't Arrive Too Early: Recruiters won't be ready. Aim to walk in about 5 minutes ahead of time. If you get there really early, use that time to decompress in your car and review your notes.

TIP FOR VIRTUAL

Make sure you have strong internet connection.

Find a quiet space away from others.

Be sure to confirm your camera, audio and microphone work ahead of time.

Blur your background if your space looks messy or will take away from your interview.

BEHAVIOR

Part of your success as a candidate is your nonverbal communication. Managers will be watching your body language just as much as listening to what you are saying. It's important to be aware of your actions and what they could be saying.

Posture – Make an effort to have good posture. Leaning forward on occasion will demonstrate you have active listening skills. Slouching and leaning far back in your chair has the potential to be viewed as too casual.

Eye Contact – With eye contact, it’s all about what not to do. Don’t roll your eyes or avoid eye contact. It can come across as disinterested or disrespectful. Making eye contact with your interviewer displays signs of confidence, sincerity and honesty.

Smile – It’s okay to smile. Enthusiasm shows passion for the job. Be truthful with yourself and don’t over-exaggerate if that is not your personality. However, if you come across as disinterested, employers will question if this is a job you will want and work hard.

TIP FOR VIRTUAL

Practice – Practice using your webcam ahead of time. Use the employer platform ahead of time if you can. This will help you figure out placement of the camera to capture best visuals, how to move the gallery photos and how to blur your background if needed.

Eye Contact – Eye contact on camera can make some applicants uncomfortable as you don’t know where to look. Here are a couple of tricks to help you out:

- Use the Gallery View to view all participants including yourself
- Exit full screen and move the interviewers’ faces as close to your webcam as possible. The proximity will appear as if you’re looking at the interviewer.

Stop Staring at Yourself – If you find that you are constantly watching yourself on the call, consider switching to a gallery view and placing your image as close to the camera as possible. It won’t be as noticeable if you keep taking a peek at your nonverbal behaviors.

What to do with Your Hands? – Excessive amounts of movement on a streaming platform can cause the streaming to lag. Expressing yourself with hand gestures is okay, but avoid too much of it.

Posture – Make every effort to have the camera at a good angle where your face and shoulders take up about one-third to half of the screen. Avoid sitting too far away from the camera or too close.

PREPARE QUESTIONS TO ASK

Having questions prepared for your interview shows the employer you have done your research. Prepare between 4-6 questions as some questions may inadvertently get answered. Questions you could ask include:

The Position

- What is the day-to-day like?
- Are there key performance indicators for this position?
- What is your biggest goal for this position?
- What would you consider is the biggest challenge for this role?

The Company

- Could you describe the company culture?
- What is the work environment like?
- What are the biggest challenges with the company right now?

The Interviewer/Supervisor

- What is your management style?
- What do you like most about working here?
- What keeps you at this company?

THANK YOU NOTES

A simple thank you letter can be the difference between hired or moving on to another candidate. It's an applicant's last attempt at convincing an employer they are the best fit for the position. A thank you email can replace a handwritten letter, especially if the hiring process is moving quickly.

[Address each person individually],

Thank them for the opportunity and use this paragraph to say what you appreciated about the interview.

Elaborate on specific skills that match what they are looking for. You can also use this space to elaborate on an answer to a question you feel you didn't answer well. Make this section more personable to each person you interviewed with. Think back to a comment, goal or skill they talked about and address how you could meet that goal.

This is another brief paragraph reiterating your interest and how they can reach you if they have any other feedback or questions.

First Name Last Name

Contact Information

CALMING THE JITTERS

Going into an interview can be scary. If you are getting nervous, here are some quick tips to help:

- Take deep breaths
- Do a mock interview
- Practice
- Get plenty of sleep the night before
- Smile
- Bring your notes to the interview
- Avoid too much caffeine
- Ask for some water or take some with you

POWER POSE GUIDE: HOW TO FEEL & EXUDE CONFIDENCE

INFOGRAPHIC BY WWW.INGREDIENTSOFOUTLIERS.COM

HIGH POWER



Wonder Woman

Make yourself look bigger to give the impression of assertiveness



Tall & Proud

Hold your arms in a V-shape and lift your chin to make you feel powerful

Social psychologist Amy Cuddy delivered a TED Talk about how posture impacts how we feel about ourselves.



Her research shows that "high power" poses increase confidence, while "low power" poses perpetuate a weak sense of self

LOW POWER



Protective

Folding your arms or legs communicates need for protection



Closed & Guarded

Making yourself smaller communicates lack of confidence



TRY THIS:
Before entering a social or high-pressure situation, stick a "high power" pose for 2 minutes for a boost in confidence

