

Interviews

Now that you have an interview you have already convinced the employer you are potentially the right candidate. The interview is your chance to make a meaningful connection with your potential employer. This is also an opportunity for you to assess whether this position, and organization is a good fit for you.

Three Things to Research Before an Interview

Yourselves

Reflect on your experiences, and be familiar with all aspects of your resume, cover letter, and your application responses. Know your strengths, values, and specific details of your relevant experiences.

Position

Study the job description to pinpoint the set of skills the position requires, and assess how your experiences relate directly to the position.

Employer/Industry

Obtain any information about the employer (via LinkedIn, the company website, etc.) to help you feel more confident preparing questions to ask.

Preparing Experiences to Share

When getting ready for your interview, think about past experiences where you used skills applicable to the job for which you are interviewing. Try to brainstorm three to five stories from work, volunteering, or school related activities that demonstrate how you have the skills needed for the position. During the interview you'll only have to decide which story to tell, rather than think of a new story for each question.

Example Question: Describe a time when you disagreed with a co-worker; how was that resolved?

Example Answer:

[Situation] *"I worked at Macy's last holiday season. I was placed in a team of three to achieve sales goals and increase customer loyalty."*

[Task] *"Initially, one of the team members and I had different approaches, which led to some tension between us. I was customer-oriented, and they didn't interact much with customers. This resulted in our department not meeting sales goals."*

[Action] *"I organized a meeting with my manager and co-worker to develop strategies to work better as a team. During the meeting I suggested we provide each other constructive feedback while recognizing and respecting our different perspectives."*

[Result] *"By understanding each other's styles and approaches, we were able to better support each other. For the next two weeks our team exceeded our sales goal by \$100."*

This story could be used to answer a variety of questions.

How to Answer Questions

There is no way to know exactly what you will be asked in an interview. Recognizing potential interview themes (e.g., organizational skills or teamwork) and reflecting on your personal experience before the interview is an excellent way to prepare. Telling specific stories and sharing examples using the STAR method is one of the best ways to give employers an opportunity to know you. They want to make sure you would be a good addition to the team.

The STAR Method!

Situation - First, describe the situation you experienced. Be concise and clear - this is not the focus - but it is important for the employer to understand; simplify if necessary.

Task - Concisely explain a related task, problem, or objective to the situation with which you were faced or had to complete.

Action - This is the most important part of your answer, and you are encouraged to explain and expand. Your response, ideally, can help the employer envision you working for their company.

Result - How did you resolve the situation: what was the result? An excellent strategy is to answer concisely: "That was an example of" or "as a result..."

The STAR method will help keep your answers on topic and be complete. When you prepare, you should spend 60-70% of your response focusing on the Action and Result.



Alumni & Student Connections

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COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Four Types of Questions You May be Asked

Every question asked has a reason behind it. Learning to analyze and thoughtfully respond to questions you are asked are important interview skills. This will help you highlight your most relevant experiences. Many of these questions can be answered using the STAR method, especially the behavior questions.

1.General/Open Ended Questions: "What strengths do you offer?" These questions can be difficult, and you will not want to divulge irrelevant information. Answering with specific stories can be very effective.

2.Behavior-based Questions: "Describe a time when...." These questions are based off the theory that past behavior predicts future behavior.

3.Case-study Questions: The employer may ask you to read and then analyze a scenario. These are designed to see and hear your thought process. Make sure to share aloud how you arrived at a decision, and feel free to ask for more time.

4.Off-the-wall Questions: Usually asked towards the end to understand your personality and observe your reaction to something unexpected. The best responses tend to be honest and humorous.

Sample Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- What encouraged you to apply to this position?
- Where do you see yourself in five year? Ten years?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What role do you typically assume on a team?
- Describe a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker.
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- Why should I hire you?

Interview Tips

Phone Interviews

Phone interviews are often used as screening interviews for employers to identify the strongest candidate for virtual or in-person interviews. Do not answer the phone for a potential employer if you are not ready; be in a quiet, comfortable location.

Virtual Interviews

Virtual interviews are more common these days and can be helpful when applying for a job that is far away or is remote. Things to consider for a virtual interview:

- Test your technology ahead of time to make sure everything is working properly. Make sure to have a back-up plan if technology isn't working;
- Limit your distractions. Try to be in a quiet setting where you are alone. Turn your phone to silent and make sure other notification noises on your computer are turned off temporarily.
- Remember to look at the camera. It is hard to not look at yourself, so practice when you can to get over that habit.

Practicing for an Interview

Meeting with a career advisor, conducting a mock interview, or sitting down with a friend or family to practice are all great ways to prepare. Dressing up for a mock interview will help it feel like a real interview.

Questions to Ask at the End of an Interview

It's important to prepare at least three questions for your employer. This will demonstrate your interest in the position

- Can you provide an example of someone who excelled in this position and what made them successful?
- How would you describe a typical day's activities?
- What diversity, inclusion and cultural competency training does the company provide to their employees?

What to Bring With You to an Interview:

- Portfolio/Padfolio (containing resume copies, a pen, and blank notebook paper);
- Proper attire, being well-dressed and groomed shows employers you are enthusiastic and genuinely interested in the position;
- References (these should not be listed on your resume, but should be listed on a separate paper) with resume heading.



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Promptly Write a Thank You Note

Emailed thank-you notes are acceptable, handwritten is preferred;
Send one to each person with whom you met;
Send a thank you note within 24 hours.