

Preparing for Key Interview Questions

Respond to typical interview questions with focus and detailed examples.

“Tell me about yourself” (30 seconds).

Your response might include points from items 1-3, so prepare for those first.

Tell me about yourself may also be addressed with a summary of how your education and experiences have led you to become interested *and* skilled for this type of role. Then, describe why this role seems like the best next step for you.

1. Why do you want to work here?

Discuss your *interest* in the field/company/position.

2. Why should we hire you / Why are you a good fit?

Talk about your experiences and your transferable *skills*.

3. What makes you special? What can you bring to our company that is unique to other candidates?

Discuss your *values* as they relate to the company’s mission and the *core competencies* that show you will fit in with the culture of the organization. Mention something about your skills, education or experience that will better serve their specific customers/clients.

4. What are your strengths? / Describe one weakness.

Describe 3 strengths related to the job you are applying to and be sure to address the question about weakness. You can describe a weakness that has a positive spin to it, but some employers feel that response is becoming overused. Instead, try to choose a past weakness and talk about the way you have been working on it and how you are improving. This shows your flexibility and self-motivation.

5. Behavioral Interviewing

Research shows that past work behavior can predict future behavior with 55% accuracy, so employers are interested in how you approached work related tasks and problem situations in the past. Giving examples can demonstrate a number of skills and competencies that are important to an employer. Prepare 3 or 4 examples of when you showed initiative and saw a positive result, or when you successfully challenged an idea. Keep your scenarios focused and brief by using **STARS**:

Situation/Task, Action, Result:

- **Situation/Task:** The details of a problem or task at a past job or internship.
- **Action:** The action you took and what influenced your decision.
- **Result:** The positive outcome of your involvement in the situation.
- **Summarize:** State what you learned from the experience and how it relates to the job.

6. Do you have anything to add?

Bring up the points you prepared to discuss that have not yet come up in conversation and briefly summarize important points that have been covered in the interview.

7. Do you have any questions?

See list of “Questions to ask an employer”. Have questions prepared for the interviewer that are open-ended and will help facilitate conversation.

Behavioral Interview Question Samples

Teamwork

- Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
- Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
- We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.
- Tell me about a time you needed to get information from someone who wasn't very responsive. What did you do?

Client-Facing Skills

- Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on a client. How did you go about doing so?
- Give me an example of a time when you did not meet a client's expectation. What happened, and how did you attempt to rectify the situation?
- Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
- When you're working with a large number of customers, it's tricky to deliver excellent service to them all. How do you go about prioritizing your customers' needs?

Ability to Adapt

- Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?
- Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to think on your feet in order to delicately extricate yourself from a difficult or awkward situation.
- Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with this situation?

Time Management Skills

- Tell me about a time you had to be very strategic in order to meet all your top priorities.
- Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?
- Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?

Communication Skills

- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.
- Describe a time when you were the resident technical expert. What did you do to make sure everyone was able to understand you?
- Tell me about a time when you had to rely on written communication to get your ideas across to your team.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to explain something fairly complex to a frustrated client. How did you handle this delicate situation?
- Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it was a hit.

Motivation and Values

- Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.
- Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.
- Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?
- Give me an example of a time you were able to be creative with your work. What was exciting or difficult?
- Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied in your work. What could have been done to make it better?