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Interviewing

How to Prepare for an Interview: A Step-by-Step Guide

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Introduction

Congratulations you applied for a job and the hiring team contacted to inform you that you have an interview. Getting an interview means the company is interested enough to connect with you and learn about your skills and experiences, and how you can help their team. While making it past the application process to the interview is a positive sign, it does not mean you will get the job or internship. Your application materials or networking will get you the interview, then it's up to you to communicate your skills and experiences in-person or virtually. The organization is likely interviewing other candidates for the position, so you need to stand out and make a great impression. This guide will explain different ways to prepare for your interview.

Different Interview Methods

Before you start to prepare you should know your method of interview as it might change how you approach preparation. There are various ways for a company to conduct interviews. Here is a list of the more practiced ones:

Traditional In-Person Interview

An in-person interview is the standard one-on-one, in-person interview where one interviewer from the company asks questions and engages in a discussion with the candidate.

Virtual Interview

The virtual interview is very similar to the traditional In-Person Interview. The only real difference is that instead of being in person, you are on a video call with the interviewer.

Group Interview

Group interviews have become more popular in recent years. These interviews are done with a small group of other candidates. You will likely be answering questions, but you also may be asked to demonstrate your ability to work with others through a task. Group interviews can be done in-person or online.

Video Submission

Some companies may ask that you submit a video of yourself answering pre-determined questions. You record yourself following the prompts and send it to the hiring team.

Panel Interview

One interviewee and multiple interviewers. Here, it is important to make eye contact with, and address answers to, everyone on the panel – not just the hiring manager or the person who asked the last question.

Presentation

A presentation during an interview day plays a crucial role in assessing a candidate's expertise, communication skills, creativity, organizational abilities, problem-solving aptitude. It provides a more comprehensive and holistic view of the candidate beyond what can be gleaned from a resume or traditional interview questions. The employer will ask you to prepare a presentation on a specific topic in advance or to give a blind presentation.



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Case Study

Case study interviews are used to determine a candidate's creative and problem-solving abilities. In a case study interview it's important to show your work or verbally explain why you made a choice or how you got to an outcome. There is often not one correct answer, but they want to understand how you think.

Preparing for the Interview

There are a variety of ways to prepare to have a successful interview. You will want to begin this process at minimum a few days before your interview, so you give yourself enough time to prepare. Here are best practices to follow so that you can feel confident going into the interview.

Research the Company

Gathering as much information as you can about the company before your interview is a great way to gain an advantage. Knowing some of the company's ins and outs can make you sound more prepared and ready to take the job if offered. Ways to begin your research can include:

Explore the Company's Website

Review the website in detail to gain an understanding of how the company portrays themselves to the public and what their mission and values are. Read any descriptions of the organization and see if there is an employee section so you can get an idea of who you would be working with. Go to any "Careers" tab to see how the company describes their work environment.

Browse Social Media/LinkedIn

This is another way to see how the company presents themselves online. As the world is becoming more digital, companies are using social media as a more prominent marketing tool. LinkedIn is also a great place to review, as it is a site where many organizations recruit employees. If you do not have a LinkedIn account, there is a guide on how to make one on the Career Services Canvas Course.

Be Aware of the Company's Financial Situation

Investigate quarterly and annual earnings reports of the company. Knowing the financials of the company is important because you should really evaluate if want to start your job there when the company is in financial trouble.

Prepare for Answering Questions

Questions are the main component of an interview. You are going to be asked questions about your skills, experience, and how you believe you can help the company. It is a good idea to prepare answers in advance to questions that are commonly asked. Coming up with responses to potential questions beforehand will ensure you are prepared and answer the best possible way. Even if you think you are good at responding off the cuff, in an interview you want your best responses prepared, at minimum an outline of what you want to convey.

Look at the table below containing some popular interview questions:

Tell me about yourself.	Why do you want this job?
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What are your strengths/weaknesses	Why should we hire you?
What is your proudest accomplishment?	Describe a time you were stressed. How did you handle it?
What are your goals and how do you plan to achieve them?	How do you set priorities and how do you manage your time?
Describe a time you learned something new. What was your learning process?	What skills can you bring to our team?
Describe a time you went above and beyond.	What are you passionate about?
Why did you choose your major?	What is your ideal workspace culture?

Questions You Ask

Typically, the last question the interviewer will likely ask you is: Do you have any questions for us? You will want to have several questions prepared. Having questions helps show your interest in the job and willingness to learn more. A good number of questions to ask at the end of your interview is around three. You should have at least 10 questions prepared, as many may get answered throughout the interview. Chances are you will only have time to ask about three questions, especially at a first round interview. At the final interview, you will have time to ask many questions, so have lots prepared. Here are tips to formulate thorough questions:

Phrase the question as if you are about to be hired

Use the words "I" and "Me" when asking about the job. Your goal is to get the interviewer to view yourself already working at the company. For example, a question like, "Who will I work most closely with?" Placing yourself in the work environment already will force the interviewer to visualize you working there, which can help improve your chances of landing the job.

Find out more about who's in charge

This piece of advice may only apply if your boss/manager is the one interviewing you. Asking something such as, "How would you describe your management style?" is a good way to find out how working for them will be like. If the boss is not the one interviewing you, ask, "What is it like working under the current management?"

Revisit a previous conversation

If there was a topic in an earlier conversation during the interview that you want clarification on, now would be a good time to ask. For instance, if a certain project was mentioned that the company is working on, now would be a time to ask more about that project and your potential role. "The project you mentioned, how would I contribute?" is a question you can ask to show you were paying attention and can already see yourself working on said project.



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Here is a table with categories and potential questions to ask:

Job Related:	Personnel Related:	Company Related:	Misc.
What are your expectations for me in this role?	Who would I be working with?	What are the company's goals?	What is an example of a career path for someone in my potential position?
What would my immediate responsibilities be in this position?	What do you find enjoyable about working for this company?	How would you describe the culture of the company?	What type of person are you looking for to hold this position?
What are some challenges I may face in this position?	How long have you held your position here?	What are you excited about for the future of this company?	What is the next step in the hiring process?

The Night Before Interview Preparation (In-Person)

The night before your interview you will want to prepare several things to make the next day run smoothly.

1. Set out what you will need for the interview.

Have your Cover Letter, Resume, and any other documents you need in a place where you will remember to take them with you the next day. You may not be asked for copies of your applications materials, but have them available in case they ask.

2. Pick your outfit.

Lay out the clothes you are going to wear for your interview. Pick an appropriate outfit and one that fits the dress code for the type of company you are applying for. Make sure your clothes are ironed.

3. Know your route.

You need to know how long it will take you to get to your destination. You should plan out when you need to leave to be there early. Know where you need to go, where to park, etc. Arrive about 5 minutes early, you do not want to be late, you also do not want to show up really early.

4. Get a good night's sleep.

The last thing you want is to be tired the day of your interview.



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Day of Interview Preparation (In-Person)

Now you have done your research, planned out what you might say, and got the details ready the night before. However, there is still some preparation to be done the day of your interview.

1. Check your time.

Double check the time you set to leave is still appropriate. Leave even earlier to ensure you are not late. Factors such as traffic, weather, and walking to where you need to go may add time. Know where you are meeting and who you are greeting.

***Do NOT be late for your interview.**

That is a poor impression and may rule you out immediately as they might assume that being late is a trait of yours that would continue if you were hired.

2. Review your planning.

While you are in the in the car or before you get on the road, do a rundown to yourself or a willing helper. Know the name and title of the person interviewing you, rehearse how you are going to answer certain questions, and review the questions you plan to ask.

3. Arrival and check in.

When you arrive, be polite and courteous to anyone you may see. If there is a front desk administrator, be kind to them as they may inform the interviewer how you were acting while checking in and waiting.

4. Waiting your turn.

While waiting, sit up straight and maintain a proper posture. If you have not already, silence your mobile device and any smart watches if you wear one. You do not want your phone buzzing in the middle of the interview as this is disrespectful.

5. You're up.

When called, give a firm handshake and introduce yourself.

Interview Preparation (Online)

While you don't have to map your journey, drive to, and find the exact location of your interview, an online interview is something that will take more steps than you many think to prepare for. Here are tips on how to make sure you are ready for your video call.

1. Check your internet

The last thing you want is to disconnect mid interview. Double-check your internet connection is good and able to handle a video call. Try this out with a friend beforehand to make sure you have a strong signal from whichever room you are calling in from.

2. Test your computer's camera and microphone

Other conditions you will want to check are your camera and microphone. Test your camera to check if it's working and is good enough quality to capture your face. Verify your microphone can pick up your audio. These factors are another reason to call a friend beforehand to test if they work.



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3. Remove all distractions

People, pets, and items in the background can all be distractions during an online interview. Make sure the space in your background is clean and does not contain inappropriate or distracting decorations. Keep any pets out of the room and confirm that any roommates will not disturb you during your call.

4. Be Professional

It may be a challenge to be professional on a video call in your home compared to being interviewed in the company building. However, you should still maintain the same level of professionalism as you would for the in-person interview. Wear a nice outfit, style your hair, make sure you look clean. You should keep your eyes on the screen/camera and have good posture. All similar practices to an in-person interview

5. Log in early

Be ready to go several minutes before your call. This gives you another last chance to check that everything is working and ensures you do not join late. Being late to your call is just as bad of a look as being late in person.

Following Up After the Interview

Following the interview, send a thank you email to each person you interviewed you within 24-48 hours. Be sure to briefly reiterate why you are uniquely qualified for the job and restate your interest and enthusiasm. [Personalize](#) the note as much as possible hopefully including a connection point you had with the interviewer. The key is to make it look clean and have no mistakes! Proofread, proofread, proofread.



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