

How to prepare for your interview

Find out everything you can about the company

- What is the company's position in the industry and how are they perceived within it?
- Know the numbers - Review last two annual reports and current year's quarterly reports.
- Search google, blogs, and press releases. Get a sense of the direction the company is moving in.
- Look at their mission statement or core values. Understand what they are all about. What is their culture like?
- Review the governance of the company. Who are their top people? Who is on the board? What is their stance on corporate responsibility? Annual reports help here as well.
- Truly understand the job specifics, be sure you are qualified for the position.
- Find out who your interviewer(s) will be and what their style is like. Research the backgrounds on those who will be interviewing you. Look for common ground, similar interests or experiences, etc.
- Dress appropriately for the interview - check out the company and get a sense of their cultural style with respect to dress code.
- Make certain you know where you are going and how to get there - allow extra time for unexpected delays.
- Have your contact's phone number in case you need to call.
- Make sure you make a positive first impression. A firm handshake, good eye-contact and a smile is a good start.
- Know your resume, but present it extemporaneously. Don't sound rehearsed and don't ramble on!
- Be able to speak to each point on your resume in a clear concise manner, know what your role was.
- Bring four copies with you to the interview.
- Think about how you will add value to the position, the department and the organization.
- Be prepared to tell the interviewer why you want to work for this organization.
- Ask smart, insightful questions to demonstrate knowledge of company and interest.
- Show interest and enthusiasm! BE POSITIVE!

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Why do you want to work for us?

Emphasize the positive reasons why you want to join their company, but avoid aspects such as more money or shorter hours. These would not endear you to a prospective employer.

What do you know about this company?

This is your chance to impress the interviewer with your knowledge of their company. Give them a run-down of their products/services, sales figures, news, company figures, customers, mission statement, etc.

What interests you about our product or service?

Again, your research into the company should aid you in answering this question. Tell them something you really liked about their company, maybe something unique about them.

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What can we (the new company) offer you that your current employer can't?

Tread carefully here! DO NOT mention money or better benefits. Stress opportunities for personal growth, new challenges, use of more advanced technology, experience etc.

What competencies do you think will be required for this job?

The job description may help you a little but you should also think of the other qualities that may be required. These may include leadership ability, supervisory skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, problem solving, analytical skills, etc.

What do you contribute?

This is your chance to shine. Tell them about your achievements in your previous positions which are relevant to the new position you are applying for. Give them a range of what you're capable of to show your versatility.

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What not to do on your interview

- Don't be defensive about any questions relating to your background. Remain poised and confident.
- Don't control the interview - be respectful at all times.
- Don't say anything unfavorable about previous employers or co-workers.
- Don't over or under communicate - be concise and clear.
- Avoid negative phrases - be optimistic!
- Don't leave your cell phone on (even on vibrate). It is easy to become distracted.

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Behavioral based interviewing

- Describe a time that you were challenged or put under pressure and how did you respond?
- What job accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a co-worker (or subordinate) who was not pulling his or her weight. What did you do?
- What was a major obstacle that you have had to overcome?
- Tell me about a time when you led a change effort.

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Why did you leave your last job? What's your reason for making a change?

- Maintain and express a positive attitude even if the reason you left your last position was due to job performance, poor fit, career change, money, politics, boredom or personality conflicts. Negatives always have some kind of unwanted effect on the interviewers, even if the story is perfectly understandable.
- We highly recommend that you prepare well for this question in advance. You must also make sure that you're keeping the potential employer's interests ahead of yours in the interview. Saying, "I left to seek better opportunities" could sound self-serving. It could be better stated as, "I'm looking for a situation where my skills and experience can be utilized most appropriately."
- What has your current company done to assist you in your career goals?
- What do you expect from us (the new company) to make your work experience rewarding and productive?
- What was attractive to you about this role that made you apply?

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Phone screen

- Keep a list of every company you've applied to (along with contact names) and a copy of your resume at hand.
- It's important that you listen carefully, so try to take the call in a quiet room, away from distractions. If the interviewer calls at a bad time, ask if you can return their call in five or ten minutes preferably from a land line if possible.
- SPEAK CLEARLY. Be sure to pace yourself, even if you are nervous you need to be careful not to talk too fast. It will be difficult for the interviewer to understand you and may give them the impression that your communication skills are lacking. Answer their questions completely but keep them short and to the point. Here's a tip: Try and smile while you're speaking, you'll sound more enthusiastic.
- Practice giving a brief overview of your work history, but be prepared to discuss everything included in your resume. You will probably be asked to elaborate on specific duties and explain your role in more detail.
- Ask questions, you want to show your interest in the opportunity/company. Just be careful not to overdo it on the phone screen. If they decide to move you forward in the process there will be more time later on to ask about salary, vacation time and benefits. It's acceptable to ask about things like company history, dates and office location; but avoid topics like salary, benefits, or problems with your current employer.

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Compensation strategies

- Know your salary history including expected increases, bonuses and incentives.
- Let the interviewer bring up the salary discussion - usually in the second or third interview.
- Don't say that your salary is flexible or open. Tell them you are looking for their best offer.
- Make sure to convey correct and current salary data, as some companies will ask to validate your earnings.

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Questions you can ask

You should always have some questions prepared so that when asked if you have any questions - you do! Choose a few appropriate questions from the list below.

- What will be my responsibilities?
- Where will I fit into the overall organizational structure?
- Who will I report to?
- Where does he/she fit into the organization?
- Who will report to me? (Assuming that you know people will report into you)
- What do you expect me to do in the first six months?
- How do you see me adding value to your company?
- Who are your customers?
- Does your company have any expansion plans in the near future?
- Are there opportunities for advancement/promotion in this position?
- What will be my salary, benefits and bonuses? [Do not bring this up too early in the interview - wait until they are sold on you.]
- Will travelling be required in this position?
- Will relocation be provided now or in the future?
- What training will be provided?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?

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Millennial interviewing

With a new generation there comes a different style of recruiting. If companies are smart they will have already adapted their traditional interviewing questions to make them more applicable to the millennial generation. Millennial candidates must be ready for this.

Here are some questions you might be asked:

If you are hired, how do you plan to advance to the next position above this one?

Do you believe you have qualities necessary to advance professionally, and if so what are they?

Emphasize hard work and dedication. Many employers have a stigma regarding Millennials. They think that this generation was brought up with a sense of entitlement.

Play your strengths; they want to hire Millennials for a reason. You are tech savvy, intelligent and energetic people. Tell them that you can offer them innovative ideas and that you are a quick learner.

What do you want to obtain from this position?

- Answer this question carefully; avoid saying something that sounds self-serving.
- You could say that you want to be challenged, to gain responsibility, knowledge and make a positive impact.

How do you approach a difficult problem?

“I look at all my possible options and try to make the decision that affords me the least amount of risk and the best possible outcome.”

“I would ask for advice from trusted friends and superiors then consider their thoughts and my own before I make a decision.”

How do you spend your free time? Do you prefer to do things on your own or with friends?

This question is asked to get an idea of how you will interact with co-workers and perform on projects. They want to know if you are a team player or you like to stray from the pack. This is another question that needs to be delicately addressed.

If you say that you always like to be around people and don't like to do things on your own. They will think you can work well on a team but can't ever be a leader.

If you say that you prefer to be solo than they may think you would have difficulty cooperating on a team and can't collaborate. You may have the potential to be a good leader but have trouble listening to other's opinions.

Try something like:

“I love to spend time with friends but also enjoy diving into a good book.”

This shows that you are a social person and interact well with others but also that you are capable detaching yourself and being a free thinker.

When you do an outstanding job, how do you want to be rewarded?

“I would appreciate respect and recognition.’ ‘If I do a great job I like to know so I can continue to give you the same quality if not better every time.” That feedback shows me that I am doing my job correctly.”

Could you describe your work/life balance?

“My ideal work/life balance would consist of me being successful in my career and in my outside life.’ ‘Ideally I can excel at work, perform at my best, and still be able to disconnect and enjoy my life on the weekends.”

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Thank you note

You should ask for a business card from all those who interviewed you if they didn't already offer it to. Be sure to send a thank you note immediately after the interview to all those who interviewed you - including your recruiter.