

How to Prepare for an Interview

Do your homework. One of the biggest complaints of hiring managers is that many job interview candidates know very little about the company they're interviewing for. Google the company you're interviewing with and read some of the articles that pop up; study the company's website; know the company's mission, its products and services.

Interview yourself for the position. Before every interview, ask yourself: "Why am I a good fit for this job?"

Identify what is unique or special about you. How have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? What did you accomplish that no one else managed to do? Did you volunteer to tackle a problem and solve it? Don't underestimate the value of looking at yourself, your skills and your accomplishments and outlining the key points you will want to share with a prospective employer.

Practice and plan. Role play answering typical interview questions with a friend, colleague, or coach. You don't necessarily want to memorize responses—but try to have a general strategy for answering common interview questions.

Figure out how to articulate your goals. Most of the commonly asked questions during an interview either dig into your previous experience or want to explore your future goals. Prepare and articulate your goals, and remain honest here. I

Be positive. When preparing for an interview and anticipating likely questions, plan to answer all questions positively. It is much better to talk about a glass being half full than to talk about it being half empty. It's all about your perspective, and in an interview being positive counts.

Never say anything negative about your prior employers or bosses, either—no matter how bad the situation may have been.

Get comfortable. Preparation and practice aside, the most important tip I would like to suggest to job seekers is to feel comfortable with the interview process. You can read all the advice in the world about acing the interview, but none of the tactics will work out if you are not yourself during the process.

Feeling comfortable and relaxed positively influences your confidence. "And interviewers always appreciate a relaxed and confident candidate, as opposed to a heavy promoter and edgy one," she adds. Practice calming your nerves, and focus on how you can prove you'd be a valuable asset to the company.

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How to answer 4 of the most common interview questions according to Jessica:

“Tell me about yourself.” The worst way to approach this request is to tell them your life story, which is something they’re definitely not interested in. The best way to approach this is to only discuss what your interests are relating to the job and why your background makes you a great candidate. Ex: “My name is Jessica Thomas. I am a people-person who loves working and collaborating with professionals and students alike. I have an extensive background in sales with a passion for education. I see the need to help bridge the gap between fantastic students with great gifts and the businesses out there that need them. I am really looking forward to bridging that gap and watching our students soar.”

“What are your strengths and weaknesses?” It’s easy to talk about your strengths; you’re detail oriented, hard working, a team player, etc.–but it’s also easy to get tripped up when discussing your weaknesses. Never talk about a real weakness unless it’s something you’ve defeated.

Ex: “I feel like one of my strengths is the ability to juggle a lot of tasks all at the same time. However, this can also be a weakness when I take on too many tasks at one time. I have learned to ask for help when needed and to use my resources at hand to assist in managing my workload.”

“Where do you see yourself in 5 years from now?” No one can possibly know where they’ll be 5 years from now but hiring managers are looking to get a sense of your commitment to the job, company, or at least the industry. You will need to do a bit of self-assessment.

Ex: “Within 5 years I would like to have developed close relationships with many businesses, have significantly expanded my student intake for internships, and perhaps have expanded my placements outside of Oregon.”

“What are your goals for this next year and how do you plan to achieve them?” You want to connect your answer to the job you are applying for or to the year ahead here at A3. Narrow it down to about 3 goals that you feel you can achieve this year at A3.

Ex: “This year at A3 I plan to place 100 students interns, continue to improve my business base, and strive to improve my curriculum to better prepare my students to go out into the business world. I hope to achieve these goals by reaching out to more businesses and students as well as collaborating with co-workers and professionals.”

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