

A job search never happens on your timetable. A job search IS a job itself and may require a significant amount of time in order to get the position you seek! Depending on the job, company, industry, field and economic climate, your job search can go quickly or take some time. Below are some interviewing tips and questions, along with suggested answers, to help you prepare for any interview. Time spent preparing for an interview produces significant results.

How Can I Prepare for an Interview?

Interviewing is a skill. You must present your best and most relevant qualifications. To do this takes research on your field of study, the company, field, industry, job and practice, practice and practice! Steps to prepare for every interview:

Define your Career Goals – Employers look for people with a strong sense of personal and professional goals. Examine how this position and the employer’s advancement opportunities will help you move toward our long-term career goals.

Research the Organization and Position – Use the organization’s web site AND other resources (LinkedIn, Facebook, alumni databases) to learn about the employer’s products, services and customer base. News articles about the organization and related industry can also be helpful. Network with individuals, including alumni, who can offer insight into the company and culture prior to the interview.

Identify Your BEST Qualifications – Once you have examined the job description and researched the organization, take time to identify your top skill matches. Think about examples from your work, school, and volunteer activities that best demonstrate these skills and practice describing them in a concise, factual manner. Prepare to bring samples of your work when appropriate.

Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions

What type of goals have you established for yourself?

- Focus entirely on career:
 - *Example:* If interviewing for an accounts payable position, you might express a desire to manage the accounting department in the future.
- Provide meaningful, realistic goals that indicate drive, planning and good work/life balance.
- Explain how your vision will motivate you to achieve a personal, professional or academic goal.
- Ensure that your example aligns with the firm’s interests as well.
- May be asked to describe goals you have achieved in the past year.

What attracted you to this position?

- Answer honestly.
- Explain how this position allows you to pursue a personal passion.
 - *Example:* “I have always enjoyed statistics but I am less familiar with financial modeling. This role will allow me to use my skills and begin to pursue a banking career.”

Describe a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty?

- Define what you did.
- Detail how it was an unexpected form of leadership.
- Explain the result and what you learned from it.

How would your friends describe you?

- Focus on what the interviewer wants in an employee
 - *Example:* self sufficient, forward-thinking, responsible
- Provide examples explaining that you match the company's values, skills needed, etc..
- Conclude with a personal observation about the company and state that you would be a good fit at the firm.
- Interviewer might ask if he/she can call a friend – your response and body language might indicate truthfulness.

What is your greatest strength?

- Highlight a proven skill.
- Be proud, not arrogant.
- Relate how it is important to the role you are seeking.
 - *Example:* "I am creative, so I will be able to develop dynamic ad campaigns."

What would you say are your two greatest weaknesses?

- Using a strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving.
- Talk about a true weakness and steps taken to correct it.
 - *Example:* Planning and organization – just started using an online calendar and you use it.
- Identify one trait that is least important to position.
- Refrain from canned responses such as "perfectionist" or "workaholic".

Telephone Interviews

Employers frequently use telephone interviews to conduct initial screening, but can also be conducted at different times with multiple individuals. Keep in mind the following tips:

- Do not interview without advance preparation. If asked to interview unexpectedly, politely make an excuse (you're on your way to class/work) and ask to reschedule. Use the extra time to prepare.
- Confirm the schedule time in advance, especially if the company is in a different time zone.
- Turn off all distractions and notify roommates of the interview.
- Sit in a straight-back chair or even stand during the interview. Your voice will sound more professional.
- Have your resume, a list of questions and any notes about your qualifications near the phone.
- Use a pad of paper and pen for notes.
- Talk only when necessary. Allow for pauses in the conversation.
- Keep comfort items, such as a glass of water or tissues, nearby.

Video/Skype Interviews

- Dress the part and think about your location (what is behind you, lighting, camera angle, etc.).
- When possible, use a headset and microphone.
- Maintain Eye Contact -- look at the camera.
- Handle any tech glitches with grace. Have a phone available, just in case.
- Avoid avoidable tech glitches by practicing before.

Top Things that Annoy Hiring Managers

Exaggeration: There are plenty of ways applicants make themselves seem more perfect than they actually are. But total, obvious exaggerations, like saying you read through a book every day, is telling the hiring manager she's too naïve to pick out a lie.

Assuming You Have the Job: Certain questions give the impression that you think you already have the job, like asking where your desk would be located and how every minute of your day will be spent.

Feeling Too Comfortable: Even if the hiring manager appears to be around your age, do not treat him/her like she's your friend. Friendly small talk is encouraged to break the ice and show some personality, but don't get too personal. Examples: addressing by first name, complimenting dress, discussing previous night's activities, etc.

Making Sloppy Mistakes: Often applicants make sloppy and obvious mistakes, like putting the incorrect company name on the cover letter, getting the title wrong for the job you're after or addressing someone by the wrong name. Errors like these are turn offs and shows lack of attention to detail---a definite turn-off to a hiring manager.

Sharing Too Much: Sharing, disclosing or discussing too much personal information.

Not Managing Your Online Profile: How many times do you hear this statement? Hiring managers will look up all of your online profiles, and yes, they will look through your pictures. Don't be a disappointment and waste their time; clean up your online presence.

Thesaurus Overload: You can create a resume and/or cover letter and interview that sound intelligent without using words bigger than you. Use a thesaurus for keyword inspiration and variations but leave out the words that sound like you're trying too hard.

Not Asking Any Questions: Employer expects applicants to ask questions. Prepare 3-7 questions to ask....and think outside the box! Example: What would a successful first year in the position look like?

FINALLY.....Hiring decisions are based on your ability to do the job, how well you mesh with the team, how likable you are, and your interest in the organization, so put your best foot forward whenever by interviewing well!