

Job Interviewing Tips

- ✓ Always think about how you bring **VALUE** to this employer. Reflect that in your answers. Emphasize more of what you can **DO** for this next employer and less of what you **DID** in the past.
- ✓ Visualize yourself in the job, doing the job. If you can already see yourself there you will have more confidence in your interview. The interviewer will also be trying to picture you in the job.
- ✓ Learn about the company or organization before you go to the interview. Know something about their customers, industry, and competitors. Visit their website and read what is being said about them in the news.
- ✓ A job interview is a two-way interview. The employer wants to know if you have the skills, knowledge and motivation to do the job. You want to know if you can do the job and if you want to work for this employer. What can you learn about the job that wasn't in the job posting? What can you learn about the work environment and the management style of your future boss?
- ✓ Never speak negatively about your previous employer, boss, or coworkers. **ALWAYS** be professional and diplomatic. If there were problems with past employers, practice what you will say if asked about them.
- ✓ Have thoughtful questions prepared to ask the interviewer about the job.
- ✓ Prepare well and practice, practice, practice!
- ✓ Smile, smile, smile!
- ✓ Don't forget to ask for the job. Many people are reluctant to be assertive for fear of being viewed as aggressive. Don't assume that the interviewer can read your mind when it comes to how much you want the job. Be direct.

Behavioral interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is based on the principle that your past behavior in a particular situation is a good predictor of your behavior in a similar situation in the future. Employers want to know what you did in actual situations, not what you might do in hypothetical situations.

Most behavioral questions are not really questions at all. They are invitations to tell a story, such as, "Tell me about a time when you..." or "Give me an example of when you..." And the interviewer wants to hear specifics.

Here's the simple secret about behavioral interviews: **The job duties, requirements, and work environment are the basis for the questions!** Review the job posting as a way prepare for a behavioral interview. Each job duty listed is a potential question--just add the words, "*Tell me about a time when you. . .*" before each item listed in the job posting. That will get you close to what you will likely be asked in an

interview, but the questions will usually be worded differently. The qualities of a successful person in the job may also be used to form a behavioral question. For example:

Job posting: Lead projects involving multi-disciplinary team members.

Possible question: What has been your experience in gaining the cooperation of individuals who are not in your span of control?

Job posting: Must be able to work in a fast paced environment.

Possible question: Tell me about a time when your deadlines were unexpectedly moved up. What steps did you take to meet the changes?

How to prepare for behavioral interviews

1. Think of your positive accomplishments in past jobs, volunteer situations, or school activities.
2. Write them down! This will help you to recall specific facts and actions.
3. Create a story for each following the STAR format: The Situation (or Task) you had, the Action you took, and the Result you obtained.
4. Write and rewrite your story. Start chronologically and use bullet points. Forget fancy prose—just capture the facts. Turn your bullet points into short, declarative sentences.
5. Read your story aloud. Then tell it without the paper. Continue to revise your story until you find the conversational language and phrasing that clearly and concisely conveys each part of STAR. Your story should highlight your actions and the positive result from your actions.
6. Practice your finished stories aloud until you are comfortable and they don't sound like a script you have memorized.

Even though you need to provide plenty of specific information try to keep each story brief—one or two minutes. If the interviewer wants to know more they will ask follow up questions. Be prepared for specifics and the things which make you look good. Prepare 3 or 4 totally positive stories and 3 or 4 stories where the situation was a challenging problem and the result was positive because of your actions.

Sample behavioral questions

Tell me about a time when you were part of a team and some team members were not living up to their commitments. What did you do?

Give me an example of something totally new or innovative that you created at work.

Give me an example of when you didn't have enough time to get your work done. What did you do?

Tell me about the most difficult customer you had to deal with.

Tell me about a time when you had to take shortcuts to meet a deadline.

Tell me about the biggest mistake you made at work.

Tell me about a time when your boss didn't give you enough information to get a task done.

What has been your experience with administering performance management systems?

Common non-behavioral based interview questions:

Some version of these questions will likely be asked in most interviews.

“Tell me about yourself.”

This is often just an ice breaker to open the interview. Don't dwell on it. Be brief and upbeat.

The typical answer is to provide a brief history of skills and work experience that has brought you to this point in time and then a highlight what you do well, or what you are known for in your line of work. This is an easy way to answer, but it does not tell the interviewer much more than he or she can already read from your resume. Try to tailor your answer to be relevant to the job opportunity at hand. You may want to emphasize your competencies which are not always explicit on the resume. Address how you go about doing what you do so well.

Keep to a summary of your professional life. Do not give a personal history. Employers must base hiring decisions on job-related information so don't open the conversation to your personal life or issues.

“What are your strengths?”

Briefly highlight the one or two competencies which make you unique. These are the work-related talents which demonstrate how you do what you do. Highlight a technical skill only if you are an expert and it is critical to the position.

“What is your greatest weakness?”

Everyone has areas of weakness. Don't try to say you don't have any. Interviewers want to know how you compensate for a current weakness which challenges you. Don't give an example of a past weakness that is no longer a problem.

Prepare **two** “weakness” answers, but only give **one**, unless you are asked for another. Be honest, but try to emphasize the more positive aspects of how you cope. Use a phrase like *“What I've learned is. . .”* to demonstrate that you have not just accepted your weakness as a given. Show action toward compensating for or eliminating the weakness.

“Why should we hire you?”

Determine the core message you want to get across in the interview, break it into three main points, and then develop a 30 or 40-second response for each of the three points. Three points are easy for the interviewer to remember if they are clear and you are brief.

Selecting questions for the interviewer

1. Make a list of those things that you are genuinely curious about the job or the organization. Could you find any of this information through an online research or through networking? Keep researching until the questions which remain unanswered will sound like insightful inquiry to the interviewer.
2. What is the best way to ask your question? Consider the other person's perspective. Is your question clear enough that they could not misinterpret what you are asking? Could the question cause the interviewer to react defensively?
3. What questions could you ask which would open a conversation allowing you to further promote your suitability for the job? Ask open ended questions which cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. For example, "I've read where your organization recently began an initiative to introduce job sharing among your frontline employees? What have the supervisors learned so far from this new model?"
4. Always ask about "next steps" in the interview process. Secure your permission to follow up at a specific time. This will keep you from living in uncertainty and wondering, "How long should I wait to call them?"