

"So tell me about yourself..." The interview is your opportunity to show employers how great you are. Your cover letter, resume, and personal network have gotten you this far. Now is the time for you to verbally communicate why they should hire you. In other words, it's your chance to show off! Perhaps the most important key to succeeding in the interview process is to *be prepared*. Questions will usually cover five key areas: education, experience, career goals, skills and abilities, and knowledge of the organization. Be able to effectively communicate how your background aligns with the position and organization using concrete examples. **Use the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Response) method to tell your story.** It is also important to remember that the interview process is a two-way street; not only are you being interviewed, but you are interviewing them.

Preparing for the interview

- Research the organization & understand the job duties.
- Be able to communicate your experiences, skills, and accomplishments with ease.
- Confirm the time, date, and location of the interview.
- Confirm the title and correct spelling of the interviewer's name.
- Obtain directions, and allow plenty of time to get to the interview location.
- Be able to discuss anything on your resume and cover letter.
- Prepare a list of questions about the position/organization to ask the interviewer.
- **PRACTICE!** There are sample questions on the back.

Interview day

- Be on time/early - arrive 15 minutes before the interview.
- Bring an extra copy of your resume.
- Always be honest, confident and positive when answering.
- Do not discuss salary or benefits in the first interview.
- Don't be afraid of silence. If you need to, take a few moments to collect your thoughts before answering. An interviewer will appreciate a well-thought-out answer.
- Keep your answers brief and to the point.
- Avoid using slang.
- Be aware of and control your non-verbal language - eye contact, posture, gestures, & hand movements. Be aware of nervous fillers (ums, ahhs, and hmms) and other nervous habits.

After the interview.

- Take notes to remind you what was discussed in the interview.
- Promptly email a thank you note to the interviewer(s), emphasizing your interest in the position and your qualifications. Use your notes to remind you what was discussed in the interview to make the note more specific.
- Take some time to reflect on how the interview went.
- If you do receive and accept an offer, inform and thank those people who helped you in the process.
- If you do not receive an offer, follow-up with the interviewer to say thanks and even ask for interview feedback if desired.

Appearance.

- Always dress professionally, neatly, and appropriately to the organization for which you are interviewing. When in doubt, it is best to always be on the more formal side.
- Navy blue or black are good go-to colors.
- Try to wear a well-tailored suit and walkable, polished shoes.
- Try to limit the use of makeup, jewelry, and accessories.
- Make sure you are comfortable so that you can concentrate on the interview.
- Do not chew gum or smoke.
- Do not overuse cologne or perfume.

Ethics

- Don't take an interview unless you are interested in the position.
- Always be honest about the info you provide, both on your resume and in an interview. It might be awkward if you're asked about something on your resume that you never actually did!

Illegal questions

- It is illegal for an interviewer to ask certain types of questions. These include questions about age, race, religion, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, marital/family status, physical handicaps, financial situation, and arrests without conviction.
- These questions may not always be asked outright. Keep in mind the information that is being pursued.
- You will find a sample list of illegal questions on page 2. If you are requested to disclose this information, in any form, there are a few ways you might choose to handle the situation:
 1. Address the question directly by asking how that information affects your ability to do the job, and then address the intent of the question (ex. My personal life will not interfere with the job because of my commitment)
 2. Answer truthfully (only if you feel fully comfortable doing so!)
 3. Remind the interviewer that the question is illegal

Types of questions.

Behavioral Questions: This type of question gauges how good you are at "soft skills" based on your past experiences. The key to answering these questions is to **show, not tell**. For example, let's say someone asks about your leadership skills. Instead of merely stating that you were in a leadership position once, you can describe specific examples where you took actions to be a good leader.

Stress Question: Also known as a confrontational interview, this is one in which a deliberate attempt is made to make you feel uncomfortable in order to assess how you might handle a stressful situation. These kinds of questions are more common in pressurized jobs such as speculation banking. Examples of stress questions include "How do you think this interview is going?" or "You don't have enough prior experience— why should we hire you?" As with all interviews, keep calm and think before answering a question. In other words, "roll with the punches," and remember that it is a technique designed to see how you perform under pressure.

Case Studies: These are most common with consulting interviews, and the basis is to give the candidate a problem to solve. For example, you might be asked "How many light bulbs are necessary to light NYC?" The object is not to come to a specific solution, but to observe your analytical and problem-solving skills as well as the process you take to reach a conclusion.

The following are some questions to use when preparing and practicing for your interviews. Keep in mind that these are not all of the possibilities, but rather a range of topics that are commonly covered during the interview process. Practice answering these and similar questions out loud, not in your head.

Some interview questions to prepare for...

Practice until you are able to answer these with ease and confidence. Try not to memorize your answers so they don't sound rehearsed. Use these questions as your opportunity to demonstrate how your skills and experience make you the best candidate by referring to the qualifications of the position and making a direct connection. Remember to always be positive and honest when answering.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why should we hire someone with a liberal arts background as opposed to someone with a more technical background?
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
4. Tell me about your internship at XYZ organization.
5. How would you describe yourself? How would your peers describe you?
6. What do you know about our organization?
7. Why did you choose to major in ___?
8. What did you do in your last job to create a collaborative environment? Be specific.
9. Tell me how your education and coursework provides a good background for this job.
10. Describe a situation when you needed to solve a problem.
11. Give an example of a creative solution to a difficult problem you have come up with.
12. What has been your most recent accomplishment?
13. If you had to do anything over, what would it be, how would you change it, and why?
14. What class did you like the best/least in college and why?
15. Tell me about a time you had to deliver a high quality project in a short period of time or one that required budgeting your time over an extended period of time.
16. How would you describe your leadership experience?
17. What do you plan to be doing 5 years from now?
18. Why do you want to work in this field?
19. Is there anything else you'd like me to know?
20. Describe a situation where you had to reach a quick decision.
21. Do you have any questions for us?

Illegal interview questions/topics...

Remember that not all illegal questions are asked in an outright manner. Some may seem perfectly honest, yet are aimed at obtaining information about age, race, religion, citizenship, national origin, sexual orientation, marital/family status and plans, physical handicaps, financial situation, and if you've ever been arrested. Pay attention to the information you're being asked for and be prepared for how you will answer if you are asked an illegal question.

Illegal:

1. Does your religion allow you to work on Saturdays?
2. What is your native language?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your maiden name?
5. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner?
6. Where and when were you born?
7. Do you plan to have children?
8. What's your citizenship?
9. Do you have any physical disabilities?
10. Have you ever been arrested?

Permitted Inquiries:

1. Are you able to work weekend hours?
2. What languages do you speak/write fluently? (if job-related)
3. Are you over 18 years of age?
4. Do you have authorization to work in the U.S.?
5. Do you have any disabilities which would interfere with your ability to perform the job in question?
6. Have you been convicted of a crime related to the job duties?

Some questions to ask the interviewer...

Having a few thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer will convey both your interest and enthusiasm for the organization. Be sure not to ask questions which were already answered, included in materials you were given, or that are easily answered through independent research prior to the interview.

1. Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
2. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
3. Tell me about your training and development programs.
4. How would you describe your organization's strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe a typical first assignment.
6. What path did you take to your present position?
7. Describe the work environment at your organization.
8. What is the retention rate of people in the position for which I'm interviewing?
9. What products/services is the company looking to introduce/eliminate in the near future?
10. What are the prospects for the organization's growth and expansion?