 Interview Preparation & Follow Up

Preparing for an interview is a process that takes time and should be unique to every job and company. Take the steps below with your coach to make sure you stand out among the applicants.

Be prepared to answer the question, ‘Why should we hire you?’, with a value proposition specific to the organization. Your value proposition should include the expertise, skills, and personal qualities you have that would be important to the organization.

Have a list of Accomplishments in the form of Situation, Action, and Result (SAR).

Research the companies you plan to interview with - Who runs things? What is the company's history? Has it been in the news lately? What's the company motto? Does it have a vision statement? Look through its social media and get a feel for the brand voice and company culture.

Study up on industry happenings. Mentioning a few high-profile industry headlines is a smart way to demonstrate that you're clued into current events within and around the industry.

Create connections with the company. Follow the company and employees you may know from the company on LinkedIn.

Review/Update your online history - Some 70 percent of employers now incorporate a social media review into the candidate screening process.

 You should do the same. Check out the public view of your social media accounts and delete any pictures or posts that could be considered controversial or at odds with the company's culture.

Create your own questions for the company. You will inevitably be asked if you have questions. Prepare questions targeted to the organization and see suggestions below.

Practice with your coach! See sample questions below.

Be prepared to make a positive first impression

* + dress for the position
	+ check your body language (are you projecting confidence, making eye contact, ‘leaning in’, offering a firm handshake?)
	+ if the interview is virtual, be sure your background is professional, and your space is free from distractions
	+ turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices
	+ bring printed copies of your resume (if interviewing in person) and a notebook to make quick notes about what you learned and a copy of the questions you’d like to ask (ideally targeted to each person with whom you will be interviewing)

Meditate, Relax, and Visualize to Win

Sample Interview Questions and Tips

General tip: be prepared to provide specific examples to support your answers.

If you were terminated from your last role, work with your coach to prepare a response you feel comfortable with that is positive and highlights the achievements you made and your career trajectory/aspirations as part of answering the question.   For example, at [company], I accomplished [XYZ] and it was a highly rewarding experience.  In the end, we decided to part ways, which gave me a chance to [XYZ].

**How do you handle conflict?**

*Tip: Take ownership, don’t blame others, and identify ways you worked to find positive solutions.*

**What are your strengths?**

*Tip: Use a version of your value proposition to answer this question. Stories are better than a list of adjectives.*

**What are your weaknesses?**

*Tip:* *This question is focused on gauging your self-awareness and honesty. Share something that you struggle with, but are working to improve, and give examples of how you are addressing the example you share.*

**What is the most important thing you learned at a previous job?**

*Tip: Most companies are looking for employees who have the ability and desire* *to learn. Answer this question with examples and stress your commitment to learning and professional growth.*

**Who was your most challenging former co-worker/supervisor and why? How did you manage your relationship with that person?**

*Tip: Share what you learned from the differences in your styles or the challenges you faced with that employee, and give examples of your willingness to be open-minded to other perspectives.*

**What are your long-range career goals? Where do you see yourself in five/ten years?**

*Tip: Share realistic expectations about your career that are consistent with what the organization you’re interviewing with can offer you.*

**Why did you leave your last position or want to leave your current company?**

*Tip: Share objective, career-focused or personal reasons for leaving or wanting to leave rather than challenges you had with your former organization. Frame things in a way that shows you’re eager to take on new opportunities and that the role you’re interviewing for is a better fit for you.*

**Why do you want to work for this company?**

*Tip: Do your research and point to something that makes the company unique that appeals to you; for example, talk about how you’ve watched the company grow and change since you first heard of it; focus on the organization’s opportunities for future growth and how you can contribute to it or share what’s gotten you excited from your interactions with employees so far.*

**Why were you laid off?**

*Tip: Be brief, and neutral. Do not disparage your former employer or colleagues. Assume the layoff was not personal and present the facts calmly.*

*Facts may include poor economic conditions, structural changes, outsourcing functions, your compensation level, the number of others laid off, etc.*

**Why did you quit?**

*Tip: Don’t disparage your former employer, boss, or colleagues. Talk about your career aspirations and your desire to focus your efforts on your next role rather than staying in a role that was not consistent with your aspirations.*

Questions You Can Ask

*Questions about the role*

* What is a typical day in this role?
* What are the biggest challenges that face this role?
* What are the immediate expectations for someone in this role?
* What are the most important things to accomplish in the first 90 days?
* What metrics or goals is performance evaluated against?
* What are the biggest challenges that I might face in this position?
* Do you expect the main responsibilities in this position to change in the next 6-12 months?

### *Questions about the team*

* What types of skills are important for success as part of the team this role is assigned to?
* Can you tell me about the team and stakeholders with whom the role will be working?
* Can you tell me about the direct reports assigned to this role? What are their strengths and the team’s biggest challenges?

### *Questions for your potential boss*

* What do you enjoy about leading a team at this organization?
* What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support achieving those goals?
* What gets you most excited about the company’s future?
* How would you describe the company’s values? How are they demonstrated?
* How has the company changed over the last few years?
* How would your direct reports describe your leadership style?
* How do your direct reports know if they are performing well or not meeting expectations?

### *Questions about the culture*

Answers to questions about culture need to be interpreted carefully. It’s unlikely the interviewer will tell you the culture is unwelcoming, or even toxic. These questions can help you understand company culture without explicitly asking and can help uncover unexpected elements about your potential new workplace.

* How do you typically onboard employees so they understand the company culture? *If the position will be remote, ask specifically about how remote employees are integrated into the company culture.*
* What do new employees typically find surprising after they start?
* What happens here that doesn’t happen at any other company?
* How committed is the entire leadership team to promoting company values? Do they all practice what they preach?
* Tell me about a time when people didn’t walk the talk here. How was their behavior addressed?
* Who gets hired/fired/promoted here? Why?
* Do people enforce company values when leadership is not watching?
* Is there a culture statement you can share with me?
* What is work/home balance like here? If there are flexible working arrangements, who has them and how are they granted? How is after-hours work handled and how often is it required?
* What is prioritized here?
* How are decisions made?
* How and what information is communicated?
* Who is respected and has the most status/influence?
* How is success defined?
* How is poor performance handled?
* Can you give me an example of time you made a mistake? How was it handled?
* How are employee opinions solicited? Can you provide examples of suggestions that were adopted?
* Is there anything that I should read or know before starting that would help me have a shared understanding with my colleagues?
* When was the last time you were happy about something at work and what was it?
* What’s your favorite office tradition?
* What do you and the team usually do informally (lunch, for example)?
* How are team values established and reinforced?
* How are mistakes handled, and how are achievements recognized?
* Do you ever hold joint events with other departments or teams?
* What’s different about working here than anywhere else you’ve worked?
* How has the company changed since you joined?

### *Questions about professional development, career paths, and future opportunities*

* What learning and development opportunities are available to this role?
* How does the team continue to grow professionally?
* Are there examples of a career path beginning with this position?
* How are promotions typically handled?
* Where have successful employees moved on to?

### *Closing questions*

* What am I not asking you that I should?
* Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful?
* Is there anything I clarify for you about my qualifications?
* What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Interview Follow Up

**Thank-you Notes**

Send a personalized thank you, electronically or in writing, to every person with whom you interviewed. Highlight something you discussed in your interview and how you can contribute to the team. Re-emphasize your interest in the role and your excitement about the next step in the recruitment process. If there’s something you forgot to mention during the interview, this is a great opportunity to bring it up.

If the company hasn't told you anything about the next step, consider waiting at least a week before you follow up. If you've sent a thank-you note and the decision date the hiring manager indicated has come and gone, it’s time to follow up.

**How to Follow Up After an Interview**

Start by following up with the person who said they'd be in touch with you. That could be the recruiter, recruiting coordinator, or hiring manager. Email is the best way to follow up without appearing pushy.

Here are a few pointers:

1. Mention the job title of the role you're following up about and the date you interviewed to refresh their memory
2. Confirm that you're still interested in the position and that you are eager to hear about next steps
3. Finally, ask for an update

Most likely, you'll get an email back saying they are still working on the decision or that they are still interviewing. Of course, you might not get a response. In either case, you've reminded them you're still interested.

If they respond but don't have a decision yet, respond with a message that will allow you to follow up again, if necessary.

If the company doesn't respond to your initial follow-up email, send a second email to the same person after another week or two has passed. Do this by replying to your original follow-up email so that your entire correspondence is included in this second email.