

Before stepping into an interview, be sure to practice, practice, practice. A job seeker going to a job interview without preparing is like an actor performing on opening night without rehearsing. Are you prepared to impress recruiters? Use these simple steps and suggestions to prepare for a successful interview.

1. Research the company, industry, product lines, and competitors.

Research helps you decide whether you're interested in the company, and gives important data to refer to during the interview.

Research...

- Company, Position, Product, Competitors

Use the information when answering questions

Question: Why do you want to work for this company?

Answer: As I understand the job, there's plenty of opportunity to be involved in both the planning of marketing strategies and the actual selling. Besides using my communication skills and knowledge of chemicals in direct selling, I believe I'm creative when it comes to marketing.

Use the information when asking questions

Question: I am aware that you offer a comprehensive training program for new employees. What types of topics will be covered during training?

2. Prepare

- Prepare five or more "success stories"
- Make a list of your skills and key assets
- Reflect on your unique strengths
- Reflect on past experiences where you used your talents successfully

3. Image

- Dress the part: suit or business casual, depending on position & type of company
- Firm handshake
- Strong eye contact and sit upright
- Avoid those "ums..."

- Place yourself "inside" the stories you relate

4. Give Examples

- Provide examples to give concrete evidence of your strengths and skills
- You have 2-3 minutes for each question generally in most 30-minute interviews.
- Be concise
- DO NOT assume that the employer knows anything about you
- End every answer, including discussion on a weakness, with a positive spin
- Include concrete, quantifiable data. AVOID generalities! Think of examples as short, informative stories. Stories connect on a gut level & the employer will remember you.

STAR Technique: A guide to providing concise examples

- Situation:** Explain the background for the example you provide
- Task:** What was the project, assignment, or problem?
- Action:** What specific steps did you take to complete the action
- Result:** Explain the finished product (By creating a detailed training manual for new employees, I decreased training time by 33%)

5. Follow-Up

- Ask for a business card
- Write a thank you note, mentioning a key point in the interview so that the employer remembers you
- Use the thank-you note to reiterate your interest

Phone Interviews: Dos & Don'ts

Do's

- **Dress professionally**, even if the interviewer can't see you, as it may encourage a more professional attitude
- **Make sure your connection/reception is reliable** where you plan to take your interview call
- When you are finished with your answer, remain silent – the interviewer may be taking notes
- **Have notes** of your own - success stories, key talking points, etc., in front of you
- **Take notes** and jot down names for thank you notes
- **Speak directly into the phone**

Don'ts

- Don't take the call on speakerphone – it may seem helpful but can sometimes make it hard for the interviewer to hear or understand you clearly
- Don't multitask. Be sure to give your undivided attention the interviewer – they can tell when you aren't
- Don't give yes/no answers
- Don't talk too much. Sometimes even keeping a timer next to you can be helpful. The rule of thumb is typically any answer over 2 minutes is too long, unless you are being asked to elaborate further

Virtual Interviews: Checklist for Success ✓

- The same dress standards apply to a virtual interview as an in-person interview
- Make sure your technology is working ahead of time. Check your internet connection, camera, microphone, and any other programs you might be using (i.e., PowerPoint, or any other documents you'll need to share).
- Be sure you're in a place free of background noise or potential distractions
- Your background should be neat and not distracting to the interviewer
- Make sure you have plenty of light in front of you and not too much behind you (i.e., a bright window in the background can make it hard to see you clearly)
- Keep about 1.5 - 2 feet of distance between you and your camera
- Arrive to the meeting a few minutes early
- Greet your interviewer(s) with a smile and don't be afraid to use hand gestures like a wave or a thumbs-up when appropriate
- Try looking into your camera as much as possible when speaking
- Mind your mute – be sure that you are not muted before you start to answer/respond to a question
- Remember to take notes and jot down names for your follow-up emails/thank you notes

Sample Questions Asked by Employers & Students

Interest in Organization/Position:

- Why would you like to work for our organization?
- How did you become interested in this field?
- What interests you about this position?

Tip: Knowing why you are applying for the role and with the given company is important. Spend some time researching and thinking about what exactly would make working for this organization and in this position feel special to you.

Describing yourself, your skills, and your strengths:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this job?
- What skills have you developed that would prepare you for this job?
- In what ways could you make a positive contribution to our organization?
- What special skills could you contribute to our company?

Tip: Understanding what you “bring to the table” is crucial. Think about what sets you apart from other candidates with similar experiences and qualifications to your own. Remember, it’s important to emphasize how your skills will benefit their company/team.

Behavioral Interview Questions:

Past behavior predicts future behavior, so be specific!

- What was the toughest decision you had to make at a previous job?
- Tell me about the most difficult person you’ve had to communicate with.
- Tell me about a group project you were involved in. What was your role?
- Describe a recent work-related problem and the actions you took to solve it.
- What is the biggest challenge you’ve faced in college and how did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a conflict in a group situation.
- Tell me about a time when you followed through on a commitment, despite difficulties.
- Describe a situation where you had to do several tasks at the same time.

Put yourself on their team. Ally yourself with the prospective employer by using the employer’s name and products or services. For example, “As a member of _____, I would carefully analyze the _____ and _____.” Show that you are thinking like a member of the team and will fit in with the existing environment. Be careful though not to say anything that would offend or be taken negatively. Your research will help you in this area.