



HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Prepping for the interview is important, regardless of how many interviews you have had. Well-prepped candidates are more confident and provide more thoughtful answers. If you know how to prepare, you worry less and are able to be more thorough in your responses and ask better questions. Thoughtful preparation improves the odds that you will be assessed fairly, especially if the focus of the interview is on detailed discussions about your major accomplishments.

Following are some key points you should consider when prepping for the interview:

Step 1: Make sure you can honestly identify your strengths and areas that can be improved (or areas for continued growth).

Jot these down for yourself by asking honestly, “What am I best at and most confident about?” and “What areas can I improve in?” Interviewers and search committees are not expecting perfection; rather they appreciate honesty and transparency. As you make note, include a short, one-paragraph example of an accomplishment using each strength. With the weaknesses, explain what you want to develop or overcome. You probably won’t be asked these questions verbatim but preparing for them gets you thinking and better prepares you to talk about yourself comfortably.

Step 2. Prepare to give examples.

Providing examples when you give answers is a crucial part of preparation. For each major area of responsibility in the position description, be prepared to explain what you have done (or have not done) relative to that. The bulk of the interview will be questions about what you have done and learned, so be prepared to talk about real life, personal examples.

Step 3: Prepare notes for your two to three most significant accomplishments.

Each of these should be two to three paragraphs in length, but no more than half a page each. Most candidates get a little nervous in the opening stages of an interview, which can result in temporary forgetfulness. The write-ups will allow for better recall of this important information should this happen to you. Feel free to openly refer to your notes if you need to. Interviewers value preparation.

Step 4: Come to the interview with prepared questions and evidence you have researched the organization or institution.

Interviewers generally appreciate candidates who ask good questions, so make sure you have a list of questions to ask. Be organic; ask what you really want to know and get as specific as you want to. Ask your questions during the interview if that feels more natural. But be prepared with a couple of questions for the end of the discussion just in case you need them and ask at least one. Some general questions to consider include:

- What does the person in this job need to do to be considered successful?
- What are the highest priorities I should know about coming into this role?
- What are the biggest challenges that needs to be addressed right away?
- Please tell me more about the culture of “fill in the blank.”

Research the institution or organization and weave the information you gain from your research into the interview to demonstrate your interest level and thoughtful preparation.

Step 5: Ask for the job if you want the job.

At the end of the interview, tell the interviewer or committee that you are interested in the job if you are. Show your enthusiasm if you feel enthusiastic! Ask about next steps and timing if you are unclear on these matters.

Step 6. Write a tailored and timely thank you email or note.

Last but not least, either via email or snail mail, expressing your appreciation for the interview and expressing your continued interest (if you remain interested). Be careful to proofread your note before sending it on its way. Do this as soon as you return from the interview.