

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW?

Our top pre-interview tips.



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Human Capital Solutions

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Preparing for an interview involves much more than simply Googling a list of common interview questions (although you should be prepared for those). It requires making a strong first impression (avoid wrinkled suits and arriving late), gaining knowledge about the company, its products, and its mission, and articulating why you are an ideal fit for the job.

To assist you in your preparation, we have assembled a comprehensive list of our top pre-interview tips. These tips encompass everything from strategizing for challenging questions to ensuring you have everything you need in your bag. We provide you with 30 strategies to help you bring your best to the interview.

1. Research the company.

Dedicate several hours to thoroughly researching the company from various sources. Connect with individuals in your network to seek insights from current and former employees, review recent news releases, and utilize online resources, including search engines like Google. Often, candidates limit their research to the information provided on the company's official website and social media profiles, overlooking the value of deeper exploration. By gathering information from multiple sources, you will gain a comprehensive understanding of the company, including any potential challenges, enabling you to articulate your reasons for wanting to join and the value you can bring.

2. Thoroughly Understand the Open Position.

Before demonstrating to your interviewer why you're an excellent fit for the role, it's essential to grasp their specific requirements. Fortunately, most organizations outline their expectations for job applicants in the job posting. Revisit the job description you reviewed prior to applying. Identify the skills and experiences they emphasize and the challenges this hire will be expected to address. These are the aspects you should emphasize during your interview.

3. Familiarize Yourself with the Company's Product or Service (if Possible).

If the company you're interviewing with offers a product or service that you can realistically experience, take the opportunity to try it out before your interview, preferably multiple times. If you were to be hired, your objective would be to add value to the product's users, and becoming a user yourself is a crucial first step. Additionally, it demonstrates to the hiring manager your genuine interest in the role.

4. Research the Interviewers (Respectfully).

If you haven't been provided with information about your interviewers, it's perfectly acceptable to inquire. For each interviewer, take the time to understand their role within the company and prepare questions that are tailored to them. You can inquire about their specific responsibilities, engage in discussions about current industry developments, or even bring up shared interests that you've discovered (while ensuring these interests are publicly available, such as in their company bio or LinkedIn profile). The key is to be respectful and avoid crossing the line into invasive territory.

5.Determine the Interview Format and Prepare Accordingly.

Different companies employ various interview formats, so it's advisable to inquire about the format you can expect. For instance, some companies conduct one-on-one interviews with multiple individuals from the organization, while others opt for group interviews or require candidates to deliver interview presentations. Additionally, some interviews may be conducted over the phone or via video. Asking the recruiter or HR contact about the interview format in advance is entirely appropriate. Once you have this information, invest time in becoming familiar with the chosen format, as it can significantly impact your interview preparation and performance.

6.Highlight Your Qualifications for the Role.

Even if you're highly skilled at interviewing, it's crucial to dedicate time to carefully consider which skills, achievements, and interview responses will resonate most with your interviewers in the context of this specific job. Are your management abilities a standout feature? Or perhaps your creativity sets you apart? Refer back to your research to identify the qualifications that make you the strongest fit.

7.Prepare to Articulate Your Background.

For every interview, it's essential to have a well-crafted response to the question, "Tell me about yourself." Tailor your response to the job and company, ensuring it's ready to deliver. This question, or a similar one like "Walk me through your resume," is frequently used to initiate the conversation. Therefore, it's crucial to make a positive first impression.

8. Understand Your Interest in the Role and Company.

You're likely to be asked why you're interested in both the position and the company. (If you can't answer this question, you shouldn't be in the interview!) To ensure you can provide a compelling response, identify a couple of key factors about the job and the organization that align with your strengths, interests, and work style and genuinely excite you about the position. Even if this question isn't explicitly asked, you can use this knowledge to inform your answers to other interview questions.



9. Conduct Salary Research.

Even if you're not yet prepared to engage in a discussion about compensation, you may still be asked about your salary expectations. To prevent being caught off guard and providing (or agreeing to) an unexpectedly low figure, it's essential to conduct some salary research in advance so that you can respond confidently.

10. Prepare Your Anecdotes.

Most interviewers will pose behavioural questions, inquiring about your actions and reactions in various scenarios. While you can't anticipate every possible question, you can prepare several anecdotes from your previous work experiences that you can adapt as needed during the interview.

11. Acquaint Yourself with the STAR Method.

When responding to interview questions using anecdotes, it's crucial to ensure that your stories are well-structured and convey a clear takeaway. The goal is to provide your interviewer with sufficient context to understand the situation while responding to the question clearly and succinctly. One effective method for this purpose is the STAR method, which stands for:

- **SITUATION:** Provide a brief description of the scenario, offering enough detail for the interviewer to grasp the context and stakes.
- **TASK:** Explain your role in the situation.
- **ACTION:** Describe what you did and your reasoning behind your actions.
- **RESULT:** Share the outcome of the situation and the lessons you learned.

Note that for certain questions, you may need to adjust this structure slightly. For instance, if discussing a time you demonstrated leadership skills, consider first defining your understanding of leadership before delving into the situation. Nonetheless, the STAR method will ensure your stories consistently have a well-defined beginning, middle, and end.

12. Jot down important numbers and details.

Gather relevant data such as revenue figures, engagement numbers, budget sizes, team sizes, time saved percentages, or any other quantifiable metrics that can demonstrate your impact. Having these numbers at your disposal will help you communicate your accomplishments effectively during the interview.

13. Brush up on your interview skills.

Beyond answering questions, focus on improving interview skills such as active listening, small talk, and empathy. These skills can leave a positive impression on the interviewer and provide insight into your potential as a colleague.

14. Practice your answers to common interview questions

Familiarize yourself with common interview questions but avoid memorizing your responses verbatim. Instead, jot down key points or bullet points to guide your answers. Practicing your responses aloud, even in front of a mirror, can help you refine your thoughts and boost your confidence.

15. Think about body language.

Pay attention to the non-verbal cues you convey through your body language. Maintain good posture and avoid closed-off gestures like crossing your arms or legs. If the interview is conducted via video, consider your camera placement and non-verbal cues to show engagement and active listening without interrupting the conversation.

16. Try some mock interviews.

Conducting mock interviews with a friend or loved one can be incredibly helpful. Practice will make you more comfortable with common interview questions and help you refine your body language and gestures. It's an excellent way to build confidence and prepare for the real interview.

17. Write down questions you'll ask them.

Be prepared with thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer when they inevitably ask if you have any questions. You can start with a list of general interview questions to ask, but also tailor some questions specifically to the job and company. Have more questions prepared than you think you'll need in case some of them are already addressed during the interview.

18. Plan for unexpected situations

While you can't predict every question or scenario, prepare for handling unexpected moments. If you're caught off guard by a question, buy yourself some time with a thoughtful response like repeating the question or acknowledging it as a great question before providing your answer. This strategy can help you remain composed and deliver a well-thought-out response.

19. Prepare for technical interviews or skill tests.

If you're facing a technical interview or a skill test, start your preparation early. Utilize prep books and sample questions related to your field to practice and develop problem-solving skills. Being well-prepared will boost your confidence and performance during technical assessments.

20. Figure out what to wear.

Dress appropriately for the interview. Research the company's dress code by checking their social media profiles or Muse profiles. When in doubt, opt for business casual attire, or dress slightly more formally than the company's typical dress code.



21.Look appropriate and professional.

Pay attention to the details of your appearance. Ensure your outfit is clean, well-ironed or steamed, and fits properly. Shine your shoes, check for loose hems, and maintain well-groomed fingernails. Consider grooming and self-care to boost your confidence and overall appearance. If you're on a tight budget, explore options like thrift stores or services that offer free or discounted interview attire for job seekers in need.

22.Print out copies of your resume.

For in-person interviews, bring enough printed copies of your resume for each person you'll be meeting, plus an extra one for yourself. Even for phone or video interviews, having a hard copy of your resume can be helpful for reference.

23.Prepare a reference list.

Create a reference list that includes names, titles, organizations, phone numbers, email addresses, and brief explanations of your relationship with each reference. Having this list ready, whether you're asked for it or not, demonstrates preparedness. Consider having a printed copy for in-person interviews and an electronic version to share quickly for later rounds.

24.Test any needed tech.

If your interview will be conducted online or over the phone, ensure that all necessary hardware, software, and network connections are functioning correctly. Use headphones with a microphone if possible and ensure they are connected and working before the interview begins.

25. Pack your bag ahead of time.

Prepare your bag the night before the interview. Ensure it's large enough to hold your essentials, including extra resumes and a notepad. Additionally, create an emergency kit with items like Band-Aids, a stain stick, an umbrella, and breath mints in case of unexpected situations. Keep your bag organized, so you can easily access what you need without rummaging through clutter.

26. Figure out where you're going and how you're getting there.

Plan your transportation method in advance, whether you're driving or taking public transportation. Look up your route, find parking if needed, and ensure you have any necessary tickets or fare loaded onto your transportation card. Allow extra time for potential traffic or transit delays.

27. Prepare your environment (if remote).

For remote interviews, create a quiet and distraction-free environment. Organize your workspace, have any relevant materials laid out in front of you, and ensure you have a notepad, a working pen, and a beverage within reach. For video interviews, pay attention to your background, choose a neutral setting, and ensure good lighting and minimal clutter.

28. Fill in an interview cheat sheet.

Create a personalized interview cheat sheet that includes important details, notes on what you want to say and ask during the interview, and a checklist of essential items to bring. Review this cheat sheet the morning of the interview to ensure you haven't missed anything.



29. Get a good night's sleep.

Prioritize a full night's rest before the interview. Adequate sleep is essential for maintaining focus and composure during the interview.

30. Calm your nerves and get psyched.

Manage your pre-interview jitters and get yourself in the right mindset. Find relaxation techniques that work for you, whether it's deep breathing, visualization, or talking to a supportive friend. Use whatever methods help you feel confident, calm, and ready to perform your best.