

# Preparing for a Traditional Interview

(case interviews and behavioral interviews are not covered in this resource)

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# Interviews are for you to...

## Convince the Interviewer(s) to make you an offer...

Convince the reader of 3 things:

1. You want this job specifically at their organization
2. You have the skills and knowledge to do a great job
3. You're a fit for the job and the organization

**Practice a convincing 1-2 minute “speech” about the three things above.**



## Learn whether you want the opportunity....

- Does the opportunity offer what you're seeking? (use your skills?, align with your values?, etc.)
- Will you fit in and be happy? (location, office culture, work-life balance, etc.)

**Prepare 3-4 questions about the two things above to ask the interviewer(s).**



# Preparation Tips

## Do your research on:

1. The organization
  - Thoroughly review the Web site
  - Talk with people who work there
2. The job/internship/fellowship opportunity
  - Review the job description
  - Review the LinkedIn profiles of those who have had this position
  - Know what the pay range is for this job (*and* similar jobs at other organizations)
3. People who will interview you and/or people on the team

## Review:

1. Your application materials and identify experiences demonstrating your qualifications
2. Your 1-2 minute introduction that broadly covers your relevant experience and why you're interested in this opportunity



# Answering Questions Succinctly but Thoroughly in Three Parts

Example: What is your biggest strength and a weakness?

Part I: Answer Briefly	Part II: S.T.A.R. an example	Part III: Summarize
<i>I have a very strong sense of responsibility so when I commit to something, I get it done, but my weakness is that I am tempted to take responsibility for things I shouldn't.</i>	<i>I just worked on a group project where analyzing... (situation). I volunteered to... (task). When one of our group members didn't do her part, I worked with her to ensure it got done... (actions). Ultimately... (results).</i>	<i>My sense of responsibility ultimately ensures that projects get done well... and I've learned to communicate with team members so that I don't take responsibility for others' work.</i>



# Interview Questions to Prep

Motivation	Skills, Knowledge, Abilities	Fit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why are you interested in this position?</li><li>• What do you know about our organization?</li><li>• Re: the position description, what excites you most?</li><li>• Re: the position description, what are least interested in?</li><li>• Why are you leaving your current position?</li><li>• What is your five-year and ten-year career goal?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell me about a time you used the skills/knowledge necessary for this position.</li><li>• What is your experience with....</li><li>• Give an example of how you've approached learning something new.</li><li>• What would your supervisor say about your ability to...</li><li>• Why should we hire you?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What role do you play on a team?</li><li>• What are your strengths and weaknesses?</li><li>• What is your ideal work culture?</li><li>• What do you expect from colleagues and your supervisor?</li><li>• How would others describe you?</li><li>• Do you prefer to work autonomously or on a team?</li><li>• Talk about a challenge you've overcome.</li></ul>

# Sample Questions to ASK

The questions you ask should:

1. Let the interviewer know what is important to you. Examples:
  - Are there opportunities for professional development?
  - How does this position work with the other units of this organization?
  - What does a typical day/week look like for this position?
2. Give you an opportunity learn more about what the interviewer is looking for (and an opportunity to respond). Examples:
  - What traits do you think are necessary to be successful in this position? *After the interviewer answers, you can follow up with an example demonstrating that you have those traits.*
  - What deliverables would you expect of this position in the first 6 months? *After the interviewer answers, you can follow up with an example of how you've done something similar within a short timeframe.*
  - Do you have any concerns about my ability to do this job? *Respond with examples to address any concerns.*
3. Help you decide whether this is the job for you. Examples:
  - What are the best and most challenging things about working at this organization?
  - Why did the last person in this position leave?
  - How long do employees typically stay with this organization and is there a culture of promotion?

Do not ask about:

1. Salary or benefits.
2. Anything you will try to negotiate once you get the offer (start date, vacation time, etc.).





# Besides the interview questions...

- Wear business attire (unless they have told you to do otherwise). It's better to be overdressed than too casual.
- Bring extra copies of your resume and a notepad with your questions.
- Make sure you know where you are going and how long it will take you to get there (do a pre-interview drive to ensure you know how to get there and where to park). Arrive 10-15 minutes early.
- Watch your nonverbals!
  - Take your greeting cues from the interviewer; if they offer you a handshake, make sure you give a firm handshake.
  - Smiling is very important. It helps you connect with the interviewers and helps you relax!
  - Make eye contact throughout the interview.
  - Planting both feet on the ground and lacing your fingers in front of you can help ensure you don't fidget, tap your foot, play with your hair or pen and that you generally don't let your nerves get the best of you.
- Share your business card and ask for their business cards (you'll want their email addresses for your post-interview thank you emails).







# Post-Interview Thank You

Send an email (or hand-written thank you if can get it there quickly) to everyone with whom you interviewed.

- If you don't have email addresses for everyone, send one email to your contact and ask them to send it to those with whom you met (list their names).
- Reiterate why you're interested in the job citing things that you learned while interviewing.
- Identify the things you think are most important for the job (based on what you heard in the interview) and reiterate why and how you are prepared for these things.
- Thank the interviewers for sharing more about the job and the organization and for their interest in your qualifications.
- Let them know that you look forward to hearing back from them about next steps in the process.



Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the \_\_\_\_\_ position with *Organization Name*. I enjoyed meeting with you and your colleagues and learning more about the opportunity and your work. I am especially excited about... and am confident that my XYZ skills will be an asset to your team.

I appreciated learning what you think are the most important traits for someone in this position. Related, I realized that I didn't have the opportunity to share that I recently wrote a paper on \_\_\_\_\_ and in doing so, I learned about \_\_\_\_\_, honed my data analysis skills, and..., all skills I look forward to using to help your organization do....

I look forward to hearing from you about next steps in your selection process.

Post-Interview Thank You Example