

DID YOU KNOW?

Interviewers often know if they want to continue with an applicant during the first couple minutes of the interview.

Practice your introduction to help make a strong first impression.

KEY POINTS

Making a positive impression in person or remotely can be the difference between being offered the job or falling short. Use this guide to prepare for your interview and to make the best possible impression.

VARIATIONS

IN-PERSON

- Dress according to the company culture.
- Know where to go and plan to arrive 15 minutes early.
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication. Introduce yourself with a firm handshake and smile. Sit up straight. Be calm.

PHONE

- Practice talking on the phone if you're not comfortable with this form of communication.
- Use a reliable line. Arrange a land line if possible, or find a location with a consistent wireless signal.
- Choose a quiet location where you can focus without distraction.

VIDEO CONFERENCE

- Prep your tech: Download the appropriate software, confirm reliable internet, and test the mic and camera ahead of time.
- Be aware of your surroundings. What will be in camera view?
- Make eye contact with the camera lens, not the screen.
- Keep your cool amidst potential technical difficulties.

CAREER ADVISOR

TIP:

Copy/paste and save the job description in case it is removed from the organization's website before your interview.

PREPARATION

KNOW YOURSELF

- What sort of tasks do you like to do in a work environment?
- What values are most important to you with regard to a job?
- What are your 3 proudest achievements in work, school, or community scenarios?
- What are your top 3 strengths?
- Why are you interested in applying for this job at this particular employer?

KNOW THE EMPLOYER

- Read the organization's website to learn about their mission, vision, and what they do.
- Read reviews websites like Glassdoor.com.
- Search for articles about the organization on various news media outlets.
- Talk to alumni or mutual contacts who have worked there. Search LinkedIn or Handshake for individuals you can reach out to.

KNOW THE ROLE

- Read and re-read the job description, focusing on the tasks and requirements for the role.
- Write and then practice talking about times you have done these tasks or demonstrated these skills in previous jobs or co-curricular activities.
- Talk to alumni or mutual contacts who have held this or a similar role.

THE 6 QUESTION TYPES

1. INTRODUCTORY

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why did you apply for this role?

Give an overview of your background and any ongoing relevant experiences. Tie these experiences to your interest in this role and organization.

2. BEHAVIORAL

- Tell me about a conflict you've dealt with at work.
- Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself and how you worked to achieve it.

Use the STAR method to shape your response. The employer wants to know how you behave in typical work scenarios.

3. SKILL ASSESSMENT

- How would you describe your experience with [Excel, Adobe, etc.]?
- Tell us about your customer service experience.

These questions are directly related to relevant skills and are most likely to come up in roles that require concrete skills. Give examples from experiences that are on your resume.

4. WORKPLACE PREFERENCES

- In what environment do you work best?
- Describe your ideal supervisor.

Respond thoughtfully and honestly. You want to land in a role where you are comfortable in the work environment. These types of questions help your interviewer know if this is a good place for you. If your answers don't line up with their environment, then it may not be the kind of place where you would thrive!

5. CASE STUDY

Most often used by consulting firms, case studies are designed to evaluate your analytical, problem-solving, and "soft" skills. These questions provide a challenging business scenario for which you must propose a solution.

6. TECHNICAL INTERVIEW

If you're applying for computer science roles, you will typically be asked to describe the solution to a problem or code. Be prepared to talk through your solution while writing on a whiteboard or in a Google doc that the interviewer can evaluate to assess your technical knowledge.



Use the STAR method when you're giving an example in an interview:

SITUATION

Describe the relevant context:

- When** was it?
- Where** were you?
- Who** were you working with?

TASK

- What needed to be done?
- What was the challenge or inciting incident?
- What prompted the issue?

ACTION

- How did **you** address the task?
- Provide details that illustrate your thought process.

RESULT

- What was the outcome?
- What would you do differently next time?

Practice!

Have a mock interview with a career advisor! Schedule an hour-long appointment via Handshake:

[PugetSound.JoinHandshake.com](https://pugetsound.joinhandshake.com)

KEYS to Answering Questions

Your response will vary depending on your style. But ideally, your response:

- 🔑 **Specifically answers the question.**
- 🔑 **Is relevant to the audience.**
- 🔑 **Lasts 1-2 minutes. (Aim for 90 seconds.)**
- 🔑 **Is 100% honest.**

THE 4 MOST COMMON QUESTIONS

Employers will ask a variety of questions to learn about you and to find out how you respond to certain situations. As you review these examples, write down ideas for examples from your life.

Q ● What experience do you have that prepares you for this role?

Talk about:

- ◆ Your background and qualifications
- ◆ Recent or current relevant endeavors
- ◆ Why you're interested in this role and employer

Q ● What strengths do you bring to the role?

Consider, which strengths...

- ◆ are they looking for?
- ◆ can you describe about yourself?
- ◆ do you want to use most in a job?

Q ● What is an area of weakness for you?

Remember:

- ◆ Everyone has weaknesses. Be honest in describing one of yours.
- ◆ Demonstrate your self-awareness. Talk about how you're addressing the weaknesses.
- ◆ Avoid a weakness that may be critical to this role.

Q ● What questions do you have for us?

You are intelligent, enthusiastic, and interested in the role. Use the opportunity to gather information that will help you determine if this is a good fit for you.

Ask questions that aren't answered on their website.

Sample questions to ask:

- ◆ What will make your new hire successful?
- ◆ What kind of projects would I be working on?
- ◆ What challenges would I face in this role?
- ◆ What do you like best/least about working here?
- ◆ What is the atmosphere in the office like?
- ◆ What type of training would I receive?
- ◆ What professional development programs does your organization offer?
- ◆ When do you plan to make a hiring decision?

CAREER ADVISOR

TIP: Sites like [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) list questions that are often asked by specific employers.

?! HANDLING THE UNEXPECTED...

When you're surprised by a question:

"That's a good question, let me think about it for a moment."



Take a few seconds to collect your thoughts.



"How many windows are there in New York?"
"Why is a tennis ball fuzzy?"

They don't expect you to know the answer.
They want to hear your thought process in coming up with one.

No matter the situation, be calm, don't hesitate to ask for clarification, and always try your best!

REMEMBER TO FOLLOW UP!



After the interview, make sure to:

- ◆ Send a thank you to each interviewer; send emails within 12 hours followed by handwritten notes to each primary decision-maker.
- ◆ Let your references know how it went and provide a timetable for when they might be contacted (if you know).
- ◆ Call your contact if you haven't heard back within the expected decision time to ask about their timeline.



Let your contact know if you choose not to continue in the interview process.

INTERVIEW-PREP CHECKLIST

- Research the organization and the role.**
- Assess your skills, knowledge, and accomplishments.**
- Practice communicating the value that you bring.**
 - Need: What does the employer need or want?
 - Action: How have I demonstrated this skill?
 - Benefit: What was the positive result?
- Prepare the questions you will ask.**
- Select and prepare your interview attire.**
- Rehearse your greeting and introduction.**
- Obtain details about the interview in advance.**
 - Who will conduct the interview?
 - How many interviews will there be?
 - How long should I plan for the interview?
 - Directions to the location and parking availability.
- Gather necessary materials.**
 - 2-3 copies of your resume
 - Paper/notepad & pens — choose items that convey professionalism
 - Padfolio to keep your paperwork organized
- Make a travel plan.**
 - Where am I going? (Yes, review again!)
 - How will I get there?
 - When should I leave? (Add 30 minutes or so to account for the unexpected.)
 - How early do I need to wake up that day?

NOTES