



Job Interview Preparation

Research the Organization

- Explore the organization's history, as well as present initiatives and future developments. Then relate your strengths and abilities to the organization.
- If possible, speak with professionals within the organization to develop an inside look into the workplace.

Prepare Questions

- Compile a list of possible interview questions. This document includes common questions and appropriate answers.
- Create a list of questions you want to ask during the interview. For example:
 - What is the immediate need on your team that you are hoping to fill with this position?
 - What projects can I contribute to right away?
 - How does your organization define success?
 - How would you describe a typical day with this team?

Prepare Answers

- Research common salaries for your job in your location, decide how much you would like to make, and determine how little you are willing to accept.
- Set aside time to prepare answers to possible questions.
- Prepare three stories about yourself at former jobs that you can share if they come up during the interview.

Practice

- Practice the interview with a friend (or two).
- Take a test drive over to the interview location to get an idea of the route and traffic.

Interview Questions

The following interview questions are common across all fields. When interviewing, always be prepared to list and describe *specific examples* related to the question. Examples should relate to previous employment; however schoolwork and other extracurricular activities are also appropriate.

Introduce Yourself

- **Tell me about yourself.**

Have a short statement prepared in your mind, however be careful it does not sound rehearsed. Limit it to work-related items unless instructed otherwise. Talk about things you have done and jobs you have held that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Start with the item farthest back and work up to the present.

- **Describe your work ethic.**

This answer calls for more than *a strong work ethic*. One's work ethic involves their attitude, behavior, respect, communication, and interaction with their coworkers and their place of employment. Positive qualities include dedication, integrity, responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and quality. Explain your work ethic and give examples.



- **Describe your management style.**

Try to avoid labels. Some common labels such as progressive, salesman, or consensus could have several meanings or descriptions. The situational style is safe, because it says you will manage according to the situation, instead of one size fits all. Use examples.

- **What is your greatest strength and weakness?**

Numerous answers are good, just stay positive. A few good examples: Your ability to prioritize, Your problem-solving skills, Your ability to work under pressure, Your ability to focus on projects, Your professional expertise, Your leadership skills, Your positive attitude.

When talking about the weakness, don't be nervous. No one is perfect. However, you may want to make your weakness to be your strength. Give an example to explain it.

- **What do your co-workers say about you? (friend / professor)**

Be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work. For example: *Jill Clark, a co-worker at Smith Company, always said I was the hardest workers she had ever known.* It is as powerful as Jill having said it at the interview herself.

- **What would your previous supervisor say is your strongest quality?**

There are numerous possibilities: Loyalty, Energy, Positive attitude, Leadership, Team player, Expertise, Initiative, Patience, Hard work, Creativity, and Problem solver.

- **Why should we hire you?**

Point out how your assets meet what the organization needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison.

- **Explain how you would be an asset to this organization.**

Your answer gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. Give a little advance thought to this relationship.

- **What qualifications do you have that make you feel you will be successful within our organization?**

Give several skills you have and relate to the qualifications of this job. Be specific and provide examples of how these qualifications can benefit the organization.

- **What skills do you possess that you feel will be the most helpful to our organization?**

Give specific skills you have and relate to the job you applied.

- **Why do you think you would do well at this job?**

Give several reasons and include skills, experience, and interest.

- **If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?**

Remember the qualification of this job on the job posting and then combine with the qualifications you have.

Career Objectives

- **What motivates you to do your best on the job?**

This is a personal trait that only you can say, but good examples are: challenge, achievement, and recognition.

- **How would you describe the ideal job for you?**

Focus on realistic career driven answers. Share some criteria that is important to you -focusing on a positive work environment, opportunities to grow, progressive responsibility, etc.

- **What two or three things are most important to you in your job?**

Culture and company fit are key hot buttons these days for both the employer in selection as well as the job seeker in choosing a company. Identify 2-3 elements that really impact you and your career growth.

- **What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?**

Remember, although we all want to be paid a fair salary, more and likely it is not money that is the driving reward in your job/career. Think about what is really driving your passion with your career field and how do you see yourself continuing to grow and develop those passions.

- **How do you determine or evaluate success?**

This looks different for many. How do you feel an individual should be evaluated – results driven, team work, on budget with your projects, etc.

- **What are your long range and short range goals and objectives? How are you preparing yourself to achieve them?**

Determine goals for yourself with thought to how you will achieve them. Share how you are working toward these goals through continuing education, mentorship, employment, job shadowing, etc.

- **What do you see yourself doing five or ten years from now? What are your future plans?**

This can be a difficult question but be prepared to answer. Be confident but not unrealistic. Share concrete thoughts and not ambiguous comments. This shows you are planning for your future and have given it the attention needed to grow and develop yourself.

- **What are your long range career objectives?**

Share a couple ideas that are achievable, realistic and show solid growth and additional responsibility.

- **What do you expect to be earning in five years?**

Do your research on your career path. A valuable tool you can use is the Career Profile tool to help determine this. Follow the link to get started: <http://resources.greaterstcloudjobspot.com/career-profile-2/>

- **Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?**

Be honest if you do have a plan. Share what you expect to gain from furthering education. Do you anticipate doing this immediately, part time or at a later date? Employers like to hear interest in life-long learning but also in tandem with experiential experience

Past Experience

- **What have you learned from any of your part time or summer jobs?**

Possibly some business skills, such as communication, IT skills, and business writing. You could also mention prioritization of your day, teamwork, work ethic, etc.

- **What experience do you have in this field? How is your previous experience applicable to the work we do here?**

Speak about specifics that relate to the position you are applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can.

- **What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?**

Try to include improvement activities that relate to the job. A wide variety of activities can be mentioned as positive self-improvement. How are you illustrating lifelong learning?

- **Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?**

Employers want to see passion in your work and in the role you are seeking. Share your thoughts on why this career is of interest to you. In your preparation for your interview, you may discover key points on the company website that you can highlight which will resonate highly with the employer.

- **What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?**

Share specific project examples, successful collaboration with teams/individuals, cost saving solutions, a successful negotiation, project, or sales deal. Give some thought to why these successes are so important to you.

- **What positions of leadership have you held?**

It can be a leadership in a department, group or a project. For the students, it can be a leadership of a class project, in a student association or student government. You can also demonstrate leadership in volunteerism opportunities.

- **Are you a team player?**

You are, of course, a team player. Be sure to have examples that show how you perform for the good of the team rather than for yourself. Do not brag, just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. Specify which position you prefer (team member, leader) and explain why you prefer that role.

- **Why did you leave your last job?**

Stay positive regardless of the circumstances. Never refer to a major problem with management and never speak ill of supervisors, co-workers, or the organization. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to expand your responsibilities, or other forward-looking reasons.

- **What have you learned from past mistakes on the job?**

Make it small, a well-intentioned mistake with a positive lesson learned. An example would be working too far ahead of colleagues on a project and thus throwing coordination off.

- **What irritates you about co-workers?**

Be careful answering this question. Think real hard but fail to come up with anything that irritates you. A short statement that you seem to get along with folks is great.

- **Tell me about a problem you have had with a supervisor and how you resolved it.**

Avoid speak ill of your former boss on his/her personality or attitude. Be neutral, stay positive.

College Life

- **How has your college experience prepared you for your career?**

The answer can be an experience in a student association, a volunteer event, or a specific academic project or responsibility.

- **Describe your most rewarding college experience.**

Mention any awards, scholarships, or a leadership experience. Also mention experiential learning opportunities, partnerships you have gained, strong and helpful professors, etc.

- **Why did you select your college or university?**

Classes/major offered, strong organizations/groups, growth and forward thinking university, size of campus, etc.

- **What college subjects did you like best/least? Why?**

Determine 2-3 subjects. Make sure to discuss your reasoning – it is just as, if not even more, important. What did you gain from these classes?

Related to this Job

- **What do you know about our organization?**

Research ahead of time. Find out the organization's history, current plans and programs, company culture and future endeavors. What are current issues facing the organization and who are the major players?

- **Why do you want to work for this organization?**

This may take some thought and should be based on the research you have done on the organization. Sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals.

- **What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?**

Company reviews, feedback, market share, customer engagement, opportunities for growth, and annual sales, etc.

- **What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?**

Relate it to the organization's vision, mission, culture and value.

- **Are you applying for other jobs?**

It is o.k. to say "yes". Be honest but do not spend a lot of time in this area. Keep the focus on this job and what you can do for this organization. Anything else is a distraction.

- **What kind of salary are you looking to receive?**

Instead of answering this question, say something like *That's a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position?* In most cases, the interviewer, taken off guard, will tell you. If not, say that it can depend on the details of the job. Give a wide range if pressured to answer. Highlight that you are looking for opportunity and future company advancement as opportunities arise.

- **How long would you expect to work for us if hired?**

Specifics here are not good. Examples include, *I'd like it to be a long time—or—As long as we both feel I'm doing a good job. I would like to work my way up as the company feels I am ready to take on additional roles.*

- **In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?**

Talk about the advantages of both flexible and restrict environment. Choose one that best describe the company you are applying.

- **Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.**

You may say that you thrive under certain types of pressure. Give an example that relates to the type of position applied for.

- **Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?**

This is up to you. Be honest. Ideally offering to meet the needs of the position is the best answer.

- **Are you willing to travel?**

This is up to you. Be honest.

- **Would you be willing to relocate if required?**

You should be clear on this with your family prior to the interview if you think there is a chance it may come up. Do not say yes just to get the job if the real answer is no. This can create a lot of problems later on in your career. Be honest at this point and save yourself future grief. Discuss possible opportunities with your family.

- **Do you have a geographical preference? Why?**

If you do have, just speak up and tell your reasons.

- **Do you have any questions for me?**

Always have some questions prepared. Questions could include areas of how you will be an asset to the organization are good. How soon will I be able to be productive? And what type of projects will I be able to assist on? What types of opportunities on additional responsibility and advancement are available for me?

Additional Questions

- **What qualities do you look for in a supervisor?**

Be generic and positive. Safe qualities include knowledgeable, strong leader/manager, a sense of humor, fair, loyal to subordinates, and holder of high standards. All bosses think they have these traits.

- **What has disappointed you about a job?**

Don't get trivial or negative. Safe areas are few but can include: Not enough of a challenge, you were laid off in a reduction, or you weren't given enough responsibility.

- **What have you learned from participation in extra-curricular activities?**

Discuss qualities such as patience, team working, prioritization, organization, and other skills.