

ACE THE INTERVIEW PREP GUIDE

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1. Keep in mind that this interview is about what they want, not what you want. You want to make sure they know that you can, and how you can, resolve their needs. Identify the top 4-5 qualifications/experience required in the job description.
2. For each, write out 2-3 complete sentences that describe your achievements that illustrate to the hiring manager that you fulfill his/her qualifications. Yes, complete sentences. This will help you organize your thoughts in advance and help prevent rambling, the interview curse of so many people.

The results of this exercise will form the basic framework for your interview and will help you answer nearly all their questions. Make sure your achievements are relevant to what they need. The criteria of relevance and recency should prevail. And be sure to know your resume...be able to describe any and all work on your resume (no matter how old the experience).

3. Prepare to answer the following questions by writing out your answers as above. Some of these are redundant but are different ways of asking the same question. You may not get asked some/most of these questions. However, if you are prepared to answer these, you'll probably be able to answer almost any that you are asked. Of course, technical questions for your specific field/industry that are more detailed are another matter. You should also anticipate and prepare for those.
 - Tell me about yourself. *Reference #2 above. This is the information you want to provide if asked this question.*
 - What are you looking for? *Obviously this should directly match the job for which you are interviewing.*
 - Why should we hire you? *This is practically the same question as Tell me about yourself.*
 - What are your 3 greatest strengths? *These strengths should correspond to the achievements you described in #2 above, making this question very similar to Tell me about yourself and Why should we hire you.*
 - What are your weaknesses? *I do not believe in giving the interviewer any ammunition to reject you. I don't believe this question should be asked in an interview as the answer has little or no value in the decision making process. However, you should be prepared to answer it. Describe an area in which you've overcome a weakness. Or describe a characteristic that has no bearing on the particular job.*
 - What would you like to improve? *Describe a characteristic that has no bearing on the particular job.*
 - Walk me through your resume. *Start with the end of your resume, your earliest experience that you have included on your resume. For each position, describe an achievement that is related to the job for which you are interviewing...even if most of your work was something else. Just as you wrote in your resume, spend less time on the older positions. Describe each transition as a positive move into the new company/position rather than a negative move from the old one. Obviously, if you were part of a group layoff, you may say so.*

- Why are you leaving your current/previous job? *As with everything you convey in an interview, do not say anything negative about your current or any of your previous employers. Talk about what you want to gain by making a move.*
- What is the most challenging aspect of your current / previous position? *For this and similar questions, as well as #2 above, keep in mind that relevance and recency are important.*
- What are your greatest accomplishments in your current / previous position?
- Tell me about a time when something went terribly wrong and what you did about it.
- Describe a situation where you made a mistake and what you did about it.
- Describe a situation where you significantly changed something (the old way of doing things).
- Describe a situation where your views conflicted with others' views and what you did about it.
- Describe a situation where you had to explain something to someone who didn't understand.
- Describe your most important success and why it was important.
- Describe a situation where you had to reconsider your initial strategy and change it and why.
- Describe a situation where you took leadership and showed initiative.
- What do you like best about your job? Least?
- What are you most proud of? *Your answer should be related to the job, not a personal achievement...or your children, etc, as wonderful as they may be.*
- Do you have any questions for me? *It is my contention that interviewers can tell as much from the questions you ask them as from the answers you provide to their questions. Do your research and ask questions that are directly related to the job. By prefacing your question with something you know about the job/company, you will indicate that you have done your homework and understand what the interviewer is looking for. Do not ask any questions about benefits, work style, company culture, career growth, etc, and do not ask any questions or bring up any issues that might indicate a negative reflection of the company or interviewer. You want to first make sure that they have "fallen in love" with you.*