

The Interview Preparation Guide

Walk in prepared, and leave them remembering you.

By Brent Morrell · BrentMorrell.com

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Grab it, use it, pass it to someone with an interview coming up.

An interview is a conversation about whether you and the job fit each other. Preparation decides how well your side of that conversation goes. **Here's how to get ready.**

Before the interview: do the homework

Deep research shows you want this job at this company, and it lets you speak to what they care about.

- ✓ Start with the company's website and blog. Learn the mission, the products, and what they announced lately.
- ✓ Read recent news and press releases to see where the company stands in its market.
- ✓ Scan an industry report or two so you know the trends the company is up against.
- ✓ Look at its social media and culture pages for how employees describe the place.

Know your resume cold

Your resume earned you this interview. Now it's your script.

- ✓ Prepare a story for each role you list: the challenge, what you did, and how it turned out.
- ✓ Don't memorize the stories. A recited answer feels different from a conversation, and interviewers notice.
- ✓ Bring numbers wherever you can. Percentages, dollar amounts, and team sizes make your work concrete.
- ✓ Expect detailed questions on anything you wrote down, and be ready to answer them.

Practice out loud

I recommend at least two hours of practice for every hour of interview.

- ✓ Rehearse your answers out loud, alone or with a friend. Practice in your head leaves out the hard part.
- ✓ Record yourself and watch it back. Check your pacing, your filler words, and your body language.
- ✓ Take a moment to think before you answer. A short pause beats a filler word.
- ✓ Look up the company's interview process on a site like Glassdoor so the format is no surprise.
- ✓ Open with a firm handshake, eye contact, and a smile. Then treat it as a conversation.

Answer with START

Many interviewers use STAR to structure their questions and their notes: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Add a second T for Takeaway and you also show how you think and grow.

- **Situation.** Set the scene in a sentence or two.
- **Task.** Name the challenge and what you were responsible for.
- **Action.** Walk through the steps you took.
- **Result.** Share the outcome, with numbers where you have them.
- **Takeaway.** Say what you learned and how it changed your approach.

The takeaway is the part most candidates leave out. It tells the interviewer you learn from your work.

Interview the company too

The questions you ask show what you care about. They also tell you whether the job fits you.

- ✓ Ask what challenges the team is facing and how success in the role gets measured.
- ✓ Ask about recent projects and how the company expects the role to change.
- ✓ Ask how people on the team develop and how good work gets recognized.
- ✓ Need more? My list of 70 Interview Questions to Ask an Employer is free at BrentMorrell.com.

Dress the part

- ✓ Find out how people dress there. A startup may run business casual. A traditional corporate office may expect a suit.
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- ✓ When in doubt, overdress slightly. It's easy to take off a blazer. It's tough to create one out of thin air.

After the interview

A timely follow-up keeps you in mind, especially when other candidates interview after you.

- ✓ Get every interviewer's name and contact information. Write names down during introductions and confirm the spelling on LinkedIn.
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- ✓ Send a thank-you note within 24 hours.
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- ✓ Thank them for their time, mention something specific from your conversation, and say why the role excites you.
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- ✓ Send each interviewer their own note. If you met a panel and have one contact, send one note that names everyone.
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- ✓ Email is the norm for speed, and a handwritten note stands out. I default to handwritten, and I've written plenty of them in the post office parking lot right after the interview.
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- ✓ If the timeline they gave you passes with no word, send a short, polite email asking where things stand.

Do the homework, tell your story, and send the thank-you note. That last step gets skipped more often than it should.

Shared freely by Brent Morrell. Use it, adapt it, pass it along. This is general guidance, and every employer runs its interviews differently. Views are my own and do not represent my employer, past or present.