**How to Prepare for an Interview**

**Preparing for an interview**

Preparing for an interview primarily means taking time to thoughtfully consider your goals and qualifications relative to the position and employer. To accomplish this, you should perform research on the company and carefully review the job description to understand why you would be a good fit. Let’s look at the steps to preparing for an interview.

**1. Carefully examine the job description**

During your prep work, you should use the employer’s posted job description as a guide. The job description is a list of the qualifications, qualities and background the employer is looking for in an ideal candidate. The more you can align yourself with these details, the more the employer will be able to see that you are qualified. The job description may also give you ideas about questions the employer may ask throughout the interview.

**2. Consider why you are interviewing and your qualifications**

Before your interview, you should have a good understanding of why you want the job and why you’re qualified. You should be prepared to explain your interest in the opportunity and why you’re the best person for the role.

**3. Perform research on the company and role**

Researching the company you’re applying to is an important part of preparing for an interview. Not only will it help provide context for your interview conversations, but it will also help you when preparing thoughtful questions for your interviewers.

[Researching the company](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/the-complete-guide-to-researching-a-company) and role as much as possible will give you an edge over the competition. Not only that, but fully preparing for an interview will help you remain calm so that you can be at your best. Here are a few things you should know before you walk into your interview:

**Research the product or service:**
Even if the role isn't directly related to the company's product or service, you're still looking to be part of the team. It's important to learn all you can about the product or service the company produces and promotes. You don't necessarily need to understand each and every detail, especially if it's a technical product, and you're interviewing for a non-technical position, but you should have a basic understanding of the main products or services the company offers.

If possible, request a sample of the product to familiarize yourself with the customer’s perspective. The more you can tell them about the product from both a company and customer standpoint, the better you'll perform in your interview.

**Research the role**
It's important to read the job description carefully and make sure that you understand all the requirements and responsibilities that go along with it. This will not only prepare you with thoughtful, targeted questions about the position during the interview, but it will ensure that you're truly qualified and prepared to tackle the responsibilities if you get the job.

If possible, research similar positions and read reviews from individuals in those positions, so you can get an idea of what the day-to-day activities will be. During the interview, ask for clarification or details about the role, so you can be sure you're ready should you receive a job offer. Researching the role before an interview will also help you to decide whether or not the position is right for you.

**Research the company culture**
Modern companies usually have social media accounts and blogs that discuss their company culture and industry. This information can give you an impression of the tone and personality of the company, as well as what they value. No matter how good a job seems, it's important that you fit within the company culture and share a similar personality and values.

If you have questions about the workplace environment, culture, personality or values, be sure to ask during the interview. These questions can range from the software and tools used by the company, to their policies on vacation and sick time. Remember that the interview is just as much about you finding a good fit for your own work environment as it is about the company finding a good fit for the role. Knowing that your values align with the company ensures a happy professional life. This is also the perfect opportunity to find out more about the company and show the interviewer how you'll fit.

**4. Consider your answers to common interview questions**

While you won’t be able to predict every question you’ll be asked in an interview, there are a few common questions you can plan answers for. You might also consider developing an elevator pitch that quickly describes who you are, what you do and what you want.

There are some jobs that may involve a test or evaluation during the interview process. For example, if you are interviewing for a computer programming, development or analytics role, you might also be asked to write or evaluate lines of code. It might be helpful to consult with colleagues in the industry for examples of tests they’ve been given to prepare.

You should also prepare to discuss your salary expectations, just in case. If you’re unsure about what salary is appropriate to ask for the position you’re applying to, visit [**Indeed's Salary Calculator**](https://www.indeed.com/career/salary-calculator) to get a free, personalized pay range based on your location, industry and experience.

Here are a few examples of common interview questions:

**Why do you want to work here?**
The best way to prepare for this question is to learn about the products, services, mission, history and culture of the company. In your answer, mention the aspects of the company that appeal to you and align with your career goals.

**Example:** *“I’d love the opportunity to work with a company that’s making a difference. Finding a company with a positive work environment and values that align with my own has remained a priority throughout my job search, and this company ranks at the top of the list.”*

**What interests you about this role?**
Employers ask this question to make sure you understand the role, and to give you the opportunity to highlight your relevant skills. It can be helpful to compare the role requirements against your skills and experience. Choose a few things you particularly enjoy or excel at, and focus on those in your answer.

**Example:** *“I’ve been passionate about user experience design for most of my professional career. I was excited to see this company uses Adobe products because I’m well-versed in the entire suite. Also, I’m a huge advocate for applying agile workflows to design. I think it’s the most effective way to tackle large projects. I was able to successfully build and launch an agile process in my previous role as UX manager, and we saw considerable improvements in project speed.”*

**What are your greatest strengths?**
This question gives you an opportunity to talk about both your technical and soft skills. When an interviewer asks you to describe your strengths, share qualities and personal attributes and then relate them back to the role for which you’re interviewing.

**Example:** *“I’m a natural problem-solver. I find it rewarding to dig deep and uncover solutions to challenges—it’s like solving a puzzle. It’s something I’ve always excelled at, and something I enjoy. Much of product development is about finding innovative solutions to challenging issues, which is what drew me to this career path in the first place.”*

39 Strengths and Weaknesses to Discuss in a Job Interview

At some point during the interview process, you may be asked to describe your personal strengths and weaknesses. Many job candidates are unsure about how to approach this question. However, by establishing the appropriate context, you can give hiring managers an honest, thoughtful answer that highlights both your self-awareness and professionalism.

Preparing ahead of time for this question is a valuable use of your time before the interview. Even if you aren’t asked about your strengths and weaknesses specifically, scripting out your response to this common question will give you a candid yet compelling description of what you bring to the table and how you wish to grow in the future. With these talking points at the ready, you’ll be able to confidently answer many [common interview questions](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers).

In the sections below, you’ll find example answers, example strengths and weaknesses and tips on how to prepare your response.

**Related:** [**Interview Question: Tell Me About Yourself**](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/interview-question-tell-me-about-yourself)

**List of strengths and weaknesses**

**Example strengths**

If you aren’t sure about your strengths, ask some of your friends or colleagues what they see as your best qualities. Refer to any written feedback you’ve received in the past from peers or managers.

Some examples of strengths include:

* Action-oriented/entrepreneurial
* Attentive/detail-oriented
* Collaborative
* Committed/dedicated
* Creative
* Determined
* Disciplined/focused
* Empathetic
* Enthusiastic/passionate/driven
* Flexible/versatile
* Honest
* Innovative
* Patient
* Respectful

**Example weaknesses**

Because we all have weaknesses but rarely want to admit to them, it’s best to begin with a truthful answer and build your script from there. Select an answer that a hiring manager would not consider to be essential qualities or skills for the position as well as qualities that you are actively improving.

Some examples of weaknesses include:

* Disorganized
* Self-critical/sensitive
* Perfectionism (note: this can be a strength in many roles, so be sure you have an example of how perfectionism can be a problem to demonstrate that you’ve thought deeply about this trait)
* Shy/Not adept at public speaking
* Competitive (note: similarly to perfectionism, this can be a strength)
* Limited experience in a nonessential skill (especially if obvious on your resume)
* Not skilled at delegating tasks
* Take on too much responsibility
* Not detail-oriented/too detail-oriented
* Not comfortable taking risks
* Too focused/lack of focus

**“What are your greatest weaknesses?” example answers**

You may be asked about your strengths and weaknesses in one question, or you may be asked about them in two separate questions. In the event that you are asked about strengths and weaknesses at the same time, discuss your weakness first so that you can end on a positive note.

When addressing your weaknesses, draw upon examples relating to either skills/habits or personality traits. You may want to choose which to focus on depending on the type of job for which you’re interviewing. For example, discussing a skill or habit may be highly relevant for a technical position. For a sales or customer service role, your interviewer may be more interested in hearing about your personality traits. Neither choice is strictly wrong or right. Reread the job description for clues on what may matter most for this specific role.

The formula for your answer is easy to follow: First, state your weakness. Second, add additional context and [a specific example or story](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-prepare-for-a-behavioral-interview) of how this trait has emerged in your professional life. That context will give potential employers insight into your level of self-awareness and commitment to professional growth. In the example answers below, you’ll see the weakness followed by context sentences in italics:

**Example weakness 1: self-critical**

*“I can be too critical of myself. A pattern I’ve noticed throughout my career is that I often feel I could have done more, even if objectively, I’ve done well. Earlier in my career, this led to burnout and negative self-talk. One solution I’ve implemented over the last three years is to actively pause and celebrate my achievements. Not only has this helped my own self-esteem, but it has also helped me genuinely appreciate and recognize my team and other support systems.”*

**Example weakness 2: lacking confidence**

*“I’m naturally shy. From high school and into my early professional interactions, it prevented me from speaking up. After being a part of a workgroup that didn’t meet our strategic goals two quarters in a row, I knew I owed it to my team and myself to confidently share my ideas. I joined an improv acting class—it’s fun and has really helped me overcome my shyness. I learned practical skills around leading discussions and sharing diverse perspectives. Now, in group settings, I always start conversations with the quieter folks. I know exactly how they feel, and people can be amazing once they start talking.”*

**Example weakness 3: difficulty asking questions**

*“I default to believing that I can solve any problem on my own. This works well in some situations, but in many cases, I need the help of others to overcome factors beyond my control. In one instance last year, I was spearheading a client event that had a lot of moving parts. It wasn’t until after the event that I realized how narrowly I had pulled it off. I was trying to manage everything from the strategic plan down to the tiniest details, like table settings. I did a lot of self-reflection afterward. Since then, I’ve been training myself to take a step back before diving into problem-solving mode and identify people or groups that can be resources to me.”*

**Example weakness 4: lacking experience**

*“I’m not familiar with the latest version of [insert name of non-critical software]. Instead, I’ve focused on [insert name of preferred software] because user-centric design has become a strong passion of mine. In my last few jobs, that’s where I’ve spent time learning and growing.”*

**Example weakness 5: procrastination**

*“I’ve always been a procrastinator. I used to think it wasn’t such a bad habit because I was only creating stress for myself. But when I was working for XYZ Company several years ago, I was on a group project where I could see how my putting things off to the last minute created stress for everyone else. It was a wake-up call. I started creating daily schedules that hold me accountable to my team, and I broke the habit. It was hard at first, but using the Agile process was a real breakthrough in my workflow and mindset.”*

**Example weakness 6: perfectionism**

*“I tend to be a perfectionist and can linger on the details of a project which can threaten deadlines. Early on in my career, when I worked for ABC Inc., that very thing happened. I was laboring over the details and in turn, caused my manager to be stressed when I almost missed the deadline on my deliverables. I learned the hard way back then, but I did learn. Today I’m always aware of how what I’m doing affects my team and management. I’ve learned how to find the balance between perfect and very good and being timely.”*

**Example weakness 7: difficulty with an area of expertise**

*“Math wasn’t my strongest subject in school. To be honest, as a student, I didn’t understand how it would be applicable in my adult life. Within a few years of being in the working world, though, I realized that I wanted to take my career in a more analytical direction. At first, I wasn’t sure where to begin, but I found some free online courses that refreshed the important basics for me. In my most recent job, this new foundation has enabled me to do my own goal setting and tracking. Actually, getting over the math anxiety I had when I was younger has been incredibly empowering.”*

Of course, you’ll need to personalize the above examples according to your personal weakness and the ways that you’re adapting and improving yourself.

**“What are your greatest strengths?” example answers**

It’s surprisingly difficult for many people to talk about their strengths during an interview. It’s challenging to balance your humility with the need to project confidence. As with weaknesses, you can generally choose between skills/habits and personality traits. Use the job description as your guide as you select your strengths. Follow the same formula of strength + context and story. When providing context for your strengths, address the specific qualities that qualify you for the job and distinguish you as a candidate.

Here are some examples:

**Example strength 1: leadership skills**

*“I’ve always been a natural leader. With more than 10 years of experience in finance and sales, I’ve exceeded my KPIs every quarter and have been promoted twice in the past five years. I look back at those successes and know that I wouldn’t have reached them if I hadn’t built and led teams composed of highly skilled and diverse individuals. I’m proud of my ability to get cross-functional groups on the same page. I’ve regularly honed my management skills through 360 reviews and candid sessions with my team, and I know continuing to build my* [*leadership skills*](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/leadership-skills) *is something I want from my next role.”*

**Example strength 2: collaboration skills**

*“I’m very collaborative and have always preferred to work in groups. In the project teams I’ve directed, members work with a variety of people and are motivated by diverse creative tasks. Since I began managing my current team, I’ve increased productivity by 15 percent and retention by 25 percent over three years.”*

**Example strength 3: interpersonal skills**

*“I’m an empathetic person who’s skilled at relating to people and making them feel heard. In one memorable instance from earlier this year, I was on a support call with a customer whose contract we had terminated. Reinstating the service agreement would have increased her rates dramatically. She was understandably upset and felt trapped because she couldn’t be without car insurance for her and her family. It became clear very quickly that we couldn’t meet her needs but I wanted her to walk away with a favorable impression of the service we had provided. I talked her through some of her other options, even letting her know of other providers who might be able to offer her a lower rate so she could avoid a lapse in coverage. In the feedback survey from that interaction, she specifically mentioned that she would still be recommending our services to others. In my career in customer support, I’ve had many interactions like this—they are complex but end with the customer still feeling positive.”*

**Example strength 4: technical skills (software)**

*“I’m obsessed with the newest version of [insert name of new software]. I started pushing the boundaries of what it could do as soon as it was released. I’m excited about applying my passion and abilities to this position and pushing the envelope of this program for your company.”*

**Example strength 5: technical skills (writing)**

*“I have extremely strong writing skills. I’ve worked as a copywriter for eight years in several industries, and am committed to both creative excellence and performance metrics when it comes to my work. I’ve had to learn how to find the perfect balance between that creativity and analytics, and it’s a personal passion of mine to demonstrate what good writing can achieve for the bottom line—in advertising or otherwise.”*

**Example strength 6: persistence**

*“I’m thorough and tenacious. When I’m on a project, I keep track of the details. Because I have a comprehensive understanding of the components, I can spot the essentials and rigorously advocate for them to meet deadlines. I regularly see this reflected in my peer and management feedback.”*

**Example strength 7: organization skills**

*“I never miss a deadline. I’m highly organized, and I’ve applied my natural skill for organizing people and projects to all aspects of my work. After seven years of working as a project manager, I’ve had only one late product launch. From that experience, which took place three years ago, I learned a crucial lesson about trade-offs. I spent time addressing a crucial design need and that pushed everything else back. I wouldn’t trade the lessons I learned from that experience for anything—being sure to communicate to stakeholders about upcoming roadblocks chief among them.”*

As with the weaknesses examples, you’ll need to adjust your strength choices and responses according to your experience and [skills](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/best-resume-skills). When you write your script, keep in mind a few additional tips:

* Don’t list multiple, vague strengths. Stay focused on one or two key qualities that relate directly to the role and support them with specific, relevant examples.
* Don’t make jokes.
* Don’t be arrogant, inflate your strengths or lie about your abilities.
* However, don’t be too humble or underestimate yourself.

Remember, as you prepare your response to the “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” interview question, it’s important to:

* Ensure your strengths support the job description and set you apart as a candidate
* Not be overly humble
* Be specific in your responses

Though often one of the most dreaded interview questions, when you take time to prepare a thoughtful response, you can create a unique story about who you are and where you want to go. As you prepare your answers, turn weaknesses into challenges that you’ve overcome and strengths into the reason you’re a great fit for the job.

How To Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

**What is a Behavioral Interview?**

A behavioral interview is a popular interview technique employers use to assess job candidates based on their past behavior. For example, instead of asking hypothetical questions like, “How would you react if you were under a lot of pressure at work?” they would instead ask situational questions like, “Describe a time you were under a lot of pressure at work. How did you react?”

**Behavioral Interview Tips**

Here are some important tips to consider when preparing for your next behavioral interview:

* Study the job description.
* Review major projects you’ve worked on.
* Revisit previous job performance reviews.
* Make a list of your professional accomplishments.
* Use the STAR method to structure your response.
* Be open and honest in your answer.
* Practice your interview responses aloud.
* Keep your answers under two minutes.

With these kinds of questions, interviewers are usually trying to learn three things: First, they want to know how you behaved in a real-world situation. Second, they want to understand the measurable value you added to that situation. Finally, they are trying to learn how you define something like “pressure at work”—a concept different people might interpret differently.

Success in a behavioral interview is all about preparation. There aren’t necessarily wrong answers. These questions are aimed at getting to know the real you. The important thing is to be honest and to practice structuring your responses in a way that communicates what you have to offer.