

Preparing for the Interview

Interviewing Tips from ESP

Everyone knows a successful interview is critical to getting a job offer and preparation is the key, but how do you prepare for an interview in order to make it a success?

Do your Homework

Research the company

Check out the company's website and read the "about us" and "history" sections. Look for any recent developments or changes within the company. Then be sure to leverage what you know during your interview, complementing specific aspects of the company or asking questions like, "I noticed your company recently____, how has this change impacted the day to day here at____?" This will demonstrate your enthusiasm and help you stand out from the crowd. But don't do this halfway, an employer can see through faked enthusiasm or surface level knowledge.

Understand the position

Talk with your recruiter about the details of the position—the requirements and responsibilities— for which you are interviewing. Consider where you would fit within the organization, who you will report to, and if applicable, who will report to you. Make comparisons to roles you've held formerly, or to your dream role.

Prepare your Answers and Examples

Although you can't know the exact questions an interviewer is going to ask you, interviewers follow patterns in their question asking so you can prepare answers and stories that will demonstrate your strengths and eligibility for the position for which you are interviewing.

"Tell me about a time when..."

Before you interview, write a list of your professional accomplishments and think about your strengths. Then consider which of those would translate well to the position you're interviewing for and practice telling those accomplishments as stories, focusing on your strengths, and what uniquely enabled you to accomplish the task. Interviewers want to know how you'll manage a tricky or challenging situation or how you'll deal with a difficult co-worker; most importantly, they want to see how you work within a professional environment. Often a story about an accomplishment can be used to answer a variety of questions—so preparing a few stories beforehand can prepare you more for an interview than thinking of answers to 20 common interview questions.

"Tell me about yourself..."

This question is a terrific opportunity to take charge of the interview and talk about your strengths, qualifications, and why you'd be good at the job while also expressing who you are personally and professionally to your interviewer. Take advantage of this opportunity. Don't go too long. Practice a three minute bio before going to your interview.

"What is your greatest weakness?"

While, you may not be asked this at an interview, it is a question worth preparing for—it is asked often enough that it should never catch you off guard. The best thing to do is answer honestly. Share a weakness that isn't essential to the job, but isn't fluffy or entirely irrelevant either. Then, talk about the ways you have overcome or are working to overcome this weakness. This demonstrates to the interviewer that you are self-aware and willing to acknowledge mistakes and weaknesses, but also shows that you seek ways to improve yourself and overcome obstacles.

Prepare Questions to ask your Interviewer

Always have a number of insightful questions to ask your interviewer that will reflect back positively on you.

Questions about working for the Company

Asking if there are opportunities to advance within the company or if they offer training opportunities to their employees demonstrates that you would like to stick around for a while and are interested in further developing your skill set. Don't be afraid to ask your interviewer what they enjoy most about working for the company or if they can tell you about the company culture. These questions will not only help you understand if the company is a good fit for you, they will also show your eagerness to understand what it would be like to work there.

Questions about the Job

Asking about work flow, distribution of tasks, and if you'll primarily be working independently or as part of team are also great question areas during the interview. Be prepared in all instances to offer an anecdote from your professional background to emphasize your abilities and suitability for the role. You may also want to ask, "Who would the ideal person for this job be?" Often, your interviewer will realize that the person he or she is looking for is the person sitting across from them.

Practice with your ESP recruiter

The IT recruiters at ESP are happy to help you practice and develop your interviewing skills. They'll offer feedback based on their professional expertise and analysis of the impression you make in an interview. Consider his or her advice carefully as you further prepare for your interview.

Interviewing is a practiced art—if you can master the art of interviewing, you'll have success in your job search