

# Participant Workbook



## Interviewing Techniques

**WORKSource**  
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# Table of Contents

Blank.....	3
Agenda.....	5
Your tasks as a job seeker.....	6
Words and emotions.....	7
S.T.A.R. storytelling.....	8
Behavioral interviewing.....	11
Types of interviews.....	17
Virtual interviews.....	19
In-person interviews.....	20
Preparing responses.....	21
Illegal questions.....	25
Military experience.....	26
Justice involvement.....	27
Non-verbal communication.....	28
References.....	28
Dos and Don'ts.....	29
Closing and thank you letter.....	31
Helpful forms and tips.....	32

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# Agenda

## At the end of this presentation, you will understand:

- How to see the interview from the employer's perspective
- The importance of researching the employer
- The value of being an engaging story-teller
- Behavioral interviewing techniques
- How to ace virtual and telephone interviews
- Formats of interviews
- Appropriate follow-up

- Think like the hiring manager and ask yourself during the interview, “**Why should they hire me?**”
- Do your answers make you the **best** candidate?
- Will you add **value** to the organization?
- Are you **enthusiastic** & **excited** about the job?

## Best Fit

- Think like the hiring manager and ask yourself during the interview, “*Why should they hire me?*”
- Do your answers make you the best candidate?
- Will you be the best fit for the job and will you add value to the organization?



## Your Tasks As A Job Seeker

1. Convince the employer you are an asset to the company.
  - Talk about the skills, how you fit in, how you add value, and what you will do for them.
2. Demonstrate you are passionate about the work.
  - What excites you about the work and the company? Develop your stories.



## Your Tasks As A Job Seeker

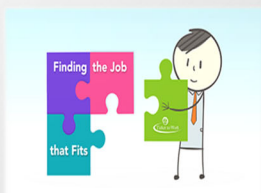
During your research of the company, you may identify a problem they are currently facing. How can you help solve that problem?

Also, during your research, you should have learned about their MISSION-VISION-VALUES and their CORPORATE CULTURE. How do you fit in?

Show passion: Passion can be demonstrated by your voice (volume, inflection, tempo), facial expressions, hand movements, etc....

Pre-interview research will only take you so far. The interview is your opportunity to either reinforce your decision that this is the right employer for you or to listen to the "butterflies in your stomach."

## Your Tasks As A Job Seeker



3. Show your enthusiasm for the organization.
  - Research the company. Know why you want to work for them. Practice your stories.
4. Determine if this employer is the right fit.
  - Use the interview as an opportunity to reinforce or debunk your pre-interview research.

## Words → Pictures → Emotions



Words trigger pictures, which  
bring out emotions



“dealing  
with”



Close your eyes. Picture in your mind “dealing with” something.  
Open your eyes.

It's likely that the picture in your mind was negative or problematic, thus resulting in a negative mindset.

Now, close your eyes. Picture in your mind “overcoming” something.  
Open your eyes.

Compare what you felt using the words “dealing with” vs “overcoming.”  
This is an important concept when choosing the words you use during an interview

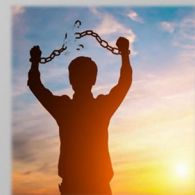
## Words → Pictures → Emotions



Channel the emotions you want



“overcome”





## Shine at your next interview using the S.T.A.R. Technique.

- Provide measurable content related to the new position.
- Detail the background. Provide a context: Where? When? What?
- Describe the challenge and expectations.
- What needed to be done? Why?
- Elaborate on your specific actions.
- What did you do? How? What tools did you use?
- Explain the results: accomplishments, recognition, savings, etc.... Quantify your answer.

**Note: Try to use examples closely related to the job for which you are applying. Use words that prompt the hiring manager to picture you performing the activities which you are describing. The employer will in turn picture you in their workplace.**

Share a STAR story to underline the power of the method.

For example, let's break down Kathy's story using the STAR method:

(S) Situation: Fabric sales were slow.

(T) Task: What could be done to improve sales? Change the display method...

(A) Action: Changing the manner in which the fabric was displayed increased sales by 200%.

(R) Results: Because of the impact Kathy's innovation had on her local store's sales, over 11K Walmart locations around the world adopted her display method.

The slide is titled "Story Telling" and is identified as "Workbook Page 9". It contains a table that defines the STAR technique for behavioral interview questions. The table has four rows: Situation, Task, Action, and Results. Each row includes a letter, a label, and a brief description of what to include in that part of the story. Below the table, the text reads "'STAR' Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions". A yellow arrow points to the left in the top right corner of the slide.

<b>S</b> Situation	Detail the background. Provide a context. Where? When?
<b>T</b> Task	Describe the challenge and expectations. What needed to be done? Why?
<b>A</b> Action	Elaborate your specific action. What did you do? How? What tools did you use?
<b>R</b> Results	Explain the results: accomplishments, recognition, savings, etc. Quantify.

'STAR' Technique to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions



# S.T.A.R. Method Checklist

**Worksheet D:** STAR (situation, task, action, and results) is used to map your course through behavioral interview questions. This type of interview question is based on the premise that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.

Employers establish behavioral questions by predetermining which skills and responses are necessary for the job and then ask very pointed, probing questions to determine if you possess the skills that will lead to job success.

Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to behavioral questions. The employer is simply trying to understand how you have handled a given situation. Your response will determine if there is a fit between your skills and the position the company is seeking to fill. Listen carefully. Be clear and detailed when you respond. Most importantly, be honest.

The STAR method will help you establish some possible scenarios for behavioral questions. Fill in the chart below and make additional charts as necessary to demonstrate how you have responded to situations and the skills/knowledge utilized to resolve the issue.

- Some behavioral questions for you to consider before building your STAR answers:
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance where you had to think on your feet to overcome a difficult situation.
- Give a specific example of a time when you used judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give an example when you had to make a difficult and unpopular decision that impacted yourself and others.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond your position's expectations in order to get the job done.
- Give a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Tell me about a time when you worked effectively and efficiently under an extreme amount of pressure.

Part of STAR method	Your response
<p><b>Situation:</b> Give an example of an instance you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.</p>	
<p><b>Task:</b> Describe the tasks involved in that situation.</p> <p>(What approach did you use?)</p>	
<p><b>Action:</b> Talk about the various actions (factors as well) involved in the situation's task.</p>	
<p><b>Result(s):</b> What results directly followed because of your actions?</p>	

When sharing your STAR remember to:

- Provide details about why, what, where, when, how, and with whom you were involved with during the entire process.
- If possible, use data, statistics or numbers to support your statements.
  - Example: "This discussion took just 15 minutes" or "the idea helped the company save \$10,000."
- Show the employer how your example relates to the position for which you are applying.
  - Example: "I know this position requires good communication and problem-solving skills, and the ability to work with a variety of individuals. I believe this example shows that I have these characteristics."

## Behavioral Interviewing

Tell us about a time you had a conflict with a co-worker.

Describe a safety situation that involved you & other team members.

Best predictor of future behavior is past behavior

Tell me about a time you struggled communicating.

Describe a time when you worked effectively under pressure.

Note: The indicator of a behavioral interview question is the phrase “Tell me about a time...” or “Describe a time...”

Even if the question is not phrased as a behavioral interview question, answer it as a behavioral interview question.

Here is an example: “Describe a time when you worked effectively under pressure.”

Notice that the focus is on what you did in the past which demonstrated your ability.

## Identifying Stories

Knowledge, Skill, Ability, Experience	Story To Demonstrate
Experience doing payroll	Bookkeeper at Kaiser with over 500 staff
Ability to lead and supervise a team	Military operation – Purple Kangaroo
Capable of learning new systems and software	COVID 19 WebEx utilization
Customer service experience in a business to business environment	Inside sales representative at XYZ Corp – Irate badminton account




- Your interview success is in part determined by how well you prepare.
- A critical component of preparation is referring back to the job posting to identify what is important to the employer.
- Researching the company is important to show the employer that you know about and understand the needs of the company.
- Preparing for common interview questions can help ease nerves and stress before an interview.

What to research:

- Needs, wants, desires, products, customers, future outlook, history...
- Does the Mission, Vision, Values, and Corporate Culture match your own values?

## What To Research

What would you want to know about a company before going to work for them?



# WorkSource Interview Preparation Worksheet

**Worksheet A:** Use the following charts and questions to prepare for your interview. If possible, start the process three days before you meet with the employer; this will give you time to review your answers and feel confident leading into the interview.

What has the employer listed as their priority position requirements?	What experience (knowledge, skills and abilities) do you have that fits these requirements?
1. Four years of customer service experience in a retail sales environment. Proficient Micro Soft & Excel Track record of resolving customer complaints	1. 5 years retail sales and customer service 8 years Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access Retail sales in high end fashion boutique, saleswoman of the year 2015 and 2017 Consistently met sales goals and increased business by 40%
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

Does the employer have any direct competition? If so, list the companies and fill in the following chart. To research competitors online, try accessing Workforce Explorer's *Find Employers* search through the following link: <http://www.workforceexplorer.com/aspdotnet/databrowsing/empMain.aspx?menuChoice=emp>

Competitor Company	Salary for Job Title	Benefits	Location(s)	Strengths	Weaknesses

# Researching the Company for Your Interview

**Worksheet B:** The more you know about the company, the better prepared you will be to answer questions and ask questions with a targeted focus. Fill in as much information as you can in the chart below using internet resources (Google, Bing, Workforce Explorer, etc.).

<b>Target Employer:</b>	
What are the mission statement and strategic goals of the company?	
How many employees does the company have?	
Have there been any recent layoffs or significant changes within the company's structure?	
What is the purpose of the organization? What does it do?	
How many divisions, subsidiaries, or departments does the company have? What are their roles in the company's structure?	
Is there any recent or pending litigation against the company?	
What is the average salary for the job title you are applying for in your region? Is the employer's pay above or below that average?	
Who are the company's major customers? What are their needs?	



What is the company best known for?	
What do you offer the company that fits their profile and will make you stand out at the interview?	
What is the company's history? Are they owned by another firm? Are they a public or private organization?	
Does the company have any direct competition in your area?	
What acronyms and language (key words, phrases, industry specific speak) does the company use?	

## Types Of Interviews

- One-on-one
- Panel
- Informal
- Progressive
- Group
- Behavioral
- Presentation
- Multi-stage

## Types of Interviews

### Panel or Committee

An interview with many stakeholders who are invested in hiring someone for this position are all in the same interview.

### Open Forums

These are often used for leadership positions or positions that will engage many different constituents. You will be evaluated both by the constituents and by how you interact with every person in the space.

### Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Some managers like to interview outside the office setting and get an insight on how you behave in more relax surroundings. They are watching how you treat the people around you.

### Group Interviews

You and other people who are applying for the same job are all in an interview together. These interviews test your style, your personality, professionalism, leadership skills and your ability to function in a group and under pressure.

#### Two General Types:

##### 1. Group Presentation/Questions:

Generally a panel of people present information about the organization

Ensures all candidates have the same information at the same time

Provides opportunity to observe candidates

##### 2. Group Behavior Interviews:

Work Simulation Exercises with Team Problem Solving Activities

### Multiple Interviews:

Depending on the size of the company or the number of stakeholders you may interview with multiple different people. You may have 1:1, panel, and possibly presentation interviews or open forums.

# Telephone Interview Tips



Dependable phone number and ensure a good connection



Location, quiet with no distractions – Have a cheat sheet



Listen, don't dominate conversation and regulate speech – don't rush



Smile, it comes through in your voice – take it serious, no second chance

## Telephone Interviews

Traditionally, telephone interviews were screening devices rather than final hiring decision interviews. A screening interview typically asks questions to screen out unqualified applicants. Be prepared to answer questions about your education, work history, and credentials. Look at the Job Description. The "requirements" are likely the focus of screening questions. The screening interview is typically the first of a multi-part interview process.

Think of a telephone interview as an "open book test." Since the person on the other end of the phone cannot see you, have reference materials handy. They should be organized so that you are able to find information quickly without the sound of shuffling papers through the telephone connection.

# Virtual Interviews



## Virtual Interviews

Make sure you have a strong internet connection BEFORE the interview starts. Learn the platform controls such as mute, your sound source and camera source. Video filters may be used to make you look better or to mask your background. Ensure unwanted filters are not in play. The differences of accessing the platform and controls depending upon whether you are using a computer, tablet, smart phone.

**Tripod:** The use of a tripod is important because it provides a stable picture (no Blair Witch Project). Consider camera angle (straight-on, above, below, etc.). Facial expressions become much more pronounced when the interviewer can only focus on your face. Pay attention to you the inflection and volume of your voice, which demonstrates personality and passion.

Know how to use the platform the interviewer intends to use. Find out what it is before the interview. Some platforms, such as WebEx, require that you download a version of the software prior to using platform. Platforms such as FaceTime require that you set up an account with a username, password, and profile picture prior to using the app. Make sure your profile picture is professional.

# In-Person Interview Tips



- Treat everyone you meet professionally and courteously
- Greet and acknowledge all interviewers
- When and where to sit?
- No cell phone
- Accept a beverage?



Workbook page 20

## In-Person Interviews

Once the Stay-at Home order is lifted and things start getting back to "normal," we are likely to see more in-person interviews.

## Prepare Your Responses

Tell me about yourself?

Why did you leave your last position?

What are your short and long term goals?

What accomplishment are you most proud of?

## Preparing Responses

Google "Sample Interview Questions" to find thousands of possible interview questions. "Tell me about yourself" and "Why do you want to work here?" are perfect opportunities to share your 30 or 60 second commercial, highlighting most important key professional points or past-present-future formats.

Be honest, without speaking negatively about your previous employer/coworkers. Briefly state the bad (if any), then focus on what you learned and how you will apply it to the future.

You can answer this from a variety of professional perspectives: the job you are applying for, career improvement with the company, further education, your professional goals, etc. If you are older, this is an opportunity to reinforce your intent to stay with this company for X# of years.

Make sure your example is relevant to the needs of this employer and what you will bring to the job.

## Prepare Your Responses

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

How would your co-workers describe you?

Why do you want to work for this company?

Why are you the best candidate for the job?



**Strength:** Select an attribute that is relevant to the job and that you have examples for. You want to not only tell them your strength but explain how you have practiced it. Be confident, but humble.

**Weakness:** Select a weakness related to the job that you have identified and explain what you have done to improve or overcome this weakness. Do not use "I work too hard" or "I am a perfectionist."

**Why shouldn't we hire you?** Used to see how self-aware the candidate is, what piece of the jigsaw puzzle they are, and whether they are honest and genuine. Example: "You shouldn't hire me if you are looking someone who thrives in an environment where management strictly prescribes how to perform each task. I work better when I'm given some general guidelines with the desired outcome and am then allowed some leeway regarding how I would carry out that task."

**How would your coworkers describe you?** Be honest and present yourself in a confident manner. Remember to include both hard and soft skills in your description. Revisit prior performance reviews if you have copies.

**Best candidate:** Let your confidence and excitement show. Present information that makes you stand out from others. This is not the same as a career commercial; it's how the position, the company and you are a perfect match.

**Salary expectations:** Research salaries-- Know what this employer's salary range is for this job as well as what the competition is paying. ([esd.wa.gov](http://esd.wa.gov)-labor market information, [salary.com](http://salary.com), [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com)), negotiable (I am prepared to discuss salary at the time of a job offer), avoid one specific salary range.

**Challenging personalities:** Show that you are flexible and can find ways to work with individuals who are different from you. If it's an ethics issue, explain how you would resolve the problem.

**Why this company:** This is where all your employer research will make you stand out. Explain why the company and the position excite you.



## Questions to Prepare and Rehearse Before the Interview

**Worksheet C:** To ease nerves and stress before an interview, use the following worksheet to prepare answers for commonly asked interview questions. Taking the time to think through your responses – including highlighting key experiences and accomplishments – will enhance your ability to answer questions comfortably and thoroughly during your meeting with the employer.

Employer's Question	Your Response
<p><b>Tell me about yourself.</b></p>	<p>(Hint: this is your 60-second commercial developed in Skills &amp; Abilities Workshop. Add any additional notes here that relate to the position you are applying for.)</p>
<p><b>Why did you leave your last position?</b></p> <p><b>Alternate: Why are you leaving your current position?</b></p>	<p>(Hint: be honest, without speaking negatively about your previous employer.)</p>
<p><b>What are your short term and long-term goals?</b></p>	<p>(Hint: you can answer this from a variety of perspectives – the job you are applying for, career improvement with the specific company you are applying with, your professional goals, etc.)</p>
<p><b>What has been your most significant career accomplishment?</b></p>	<p>(Hint: make sure your example includes significant details (see the STAR method); you can give more than one instance, especially if they show career diversity.)</p>

<p><b>What are your strengths and weaknesses?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> turn weaknesses into challenges and how you have worked to overcome them – give specific examples. Make sure to list strengths that correlate to the job for which you are interviewing.)</p>
<p><b>How would your last boss describe you?</b></p> <p><b>Alternate: How would your previous coworkers describe you?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> be honest and present yourself in a confident manner. Remember to include both hard and soft skills in your description. Revisit prior performance reviews if you have copies.)</p>
<p><b>Why are you the best fit for this position?</b></p> <p><b>Alternate: Why should we hire you?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> let your confidence and excitement for the job shine through. Present information that makes you stand out from others. This is not the same as the 60-second commercial, but rather how the position and you are a perfect match.)</p>
<p><b>What are your salary expectations?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> prepare a careful response. Stating a specific salary can lock you in to something below what the company was prepared to offer you. Conversely, your expectations may be much higher than the employer's. <b>Example:</b> I am prepared to discuss salary at the time of a job offer.)</p>
<p><b>What kinds of people are challenging for you to work with?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> show that you are flexible and can find ways to work with individuals who are different from you. If it's an ethics issue, explain how you would resolve the problem.)</p>
<p><b>Why do you want to work for this company?</b></p> <p><b>Alternate: What do you know about our company?</b></p>	<p>(<b>Hint:</b> this is where all your employer research will make you stand out; explain why the company and the position excite you.)</p>

## Illegal Questions



- **Race**
- **Age**
- **Religion**
- **Place of birth**
- **Disability**
- **Marital status**
- **Children**
- **Salary (in Washington)**

## Illegal Questions

Where are you from?

Is English your first language?

How old are you?

What year did you graduate?

You may be asked a “trick” question while you are interviewing. You must decide whether to answer the question directly, decline to answer, or answer what you think the interviewer was getting at with the question. This also becomes a tool to help you determine if this is the right fit.

## Military Experience

Military language to civilian terms

Military duties, contributions,  
accomplishments



Relate qualifications to new position

Technical skills, leadership, team player

Be proud of your service & your abilities

## Military Experience

Translate military experience and M.O.S. into civilian terms:

- <https://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator>
- <https://worksourcewa.com/OccupationSearch/OccupationSearch.aspx>
- <https://jobs.dvnf.org/military-to-civilian-occupation-translator/>

Talk about:

- Your military accomplishments
- How your experience relates to the new position
- What you have to offer the company

If you need further assistance with how to translate your military experience into civilian terminology, there are staff who work directly with veterans to assist them with this process at each WorkSource office.

## Discussing Justice Involvement History



- Affirmation speech – make it second nature:
  - Own it
  - State the positive changes you have made
  - State the positive changes you have made
- Be honest, responsible for your past actions, focus on the future.
- Remain positive in the face of adversity.
- Acknowledge employer concerns, address them openly and respectfully.
- Build a reliable professional network

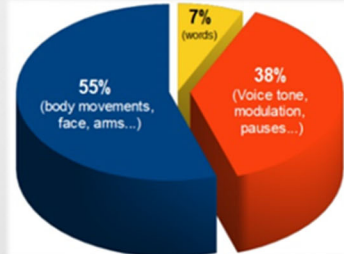
### Justice Involvement History

As someone who has been incarcerated, it is your responsibility to speak to your parole officer to be sure you understand any specific responsibilities you have to communicate your history with potential employers.

The state has a bonding program, which will protect a new employer from financial related losses for your first 6 months of employment.

You also may be able to bring the employer the benefits of Work Opportunity Tax Credit and Fair Chance Act 2018.

## Verbal & Nonverbal Communication



Eye contact  
Facial expressions

Voice  
Mannerisms  
Attitude

Posture  
Handshake

## Verbal & Nonverbal Communication

Consider: eye contact, voice, facial expressions, posture, mannerisms, attitude, and handshake

## Cultivate Your References



## References

The picture shows job references being “cultivated.”

Know the importance of :

- Notifying your references each and every time you intend to use them
- Getting permission in advance
- Matching the reference to the job
- Prepping the reference to help you stand out to the employer rather than just validating employment, job title, and employment dates

What if you know you will be given a bad reference from a former employer?

- Use an alternative reference if possible
- Speak to HR to determine what will be said
- Negotiate.

## Things To Bring

- Resume, cover letter, application, references
- Portfolio (if appropriate)
- Pen & paper for notes
- T-chart for review
- Questions to ask
- Directions and contact name
- Water bottle



## Things To Do

- Arrive 10-15 min early
- Contingency transportation plan
- A “dry run” in advance of the interview
- Treat everyone with courtesy and professionalism
- Dress to fit in



## Things To Say

Say the *right* thing  
at the *right* time  
to the *right* people

- Answer generic questions with behavioral examples
- Base stories on related situations
- Have an action plan for skill deficiencies
- Have a “How I learned fast” story



Coffee/water takes valuable time away from the interview. Also, coffee can stain your teeth and give you coffee breath. Bring your own water.

## Don't Do That

- Hypothetical answers to behavioral questions
- Take cell phone into the interview
- Give any indication you will not accept the job



- Accept coffee/water
- Badmouth a former employer
- Lie, exaggerate or mislead

## Things NOT To Ask About

- Pay and benefits
- Childcare



- Overtime
- How I did

- What does the company do
- When may I take vacation

## Asking Questions

It is important to have questions and it is OK to have them written out in advance. A lack of questions can be viewed by the interviewer as a lack of interest.

Could you describe what I might expect in a typical day?

The final question you ask should be regarding the timeline for the next step in the process.

## Asking The Employer Questions

- How would you describe the company's culture?
- What do you like best about working here?
- What do you see as the primary challenges for this position?
- What qualities make for a successful employee here?
- What is the next step?



Workbook page 30

## Asking The Employer Questions

- How would you describe the company's culture?
- What do you like best about working here?
- What do you see as the primary challenges for this position?
- What qualities make for a successful employee here?
- What is the next step?



Workbook page 30

## Next steps

Ask if a hiring decision will be made after this round of interviews? When? When will references be checked? Is there another interview?

Reference – If references were not part of the application packet, offer references.

## Interview Follow-up



- **Always send a thank you!**
- Thank them for their time
- Re-affirm your enthusiasm for the job
- Recap of your qualifications
- Prompt for the next step

Workbook page 31

Did you know that only **one in 20 jobseekers** sends a thank you letter after a job interview?



## Thank You Letter

Throughout the job search process, we discuss “standing out” in a positive way. The Thank You letter is another way to do this. Look at this statistic! A well-written thank you letter could tip the scales in the Hiring Manager's mind to hire you.

# Interview Checklist

**Worksheet E:** You've prepared your outfit and planned your appearance. You've reviewed the job listing and compared it with your skill sets and knowledge. You've researched the company. You've thought about answers to the employer's questions, using the STAR model and other tools to create responses. Now it's time to focus on

what you need to take with you, how you are going to get there, and what to do when you get to the interview location. Use the following checklist to prepare final pieces for the big day.

Interview Attire Preparation		
Description	Completed	In-Progress
Select appropriate outfit for the interview: professional (suit), semi-professional (shirt and slacks), or business casual (polo and khakis).		
Analyze clothes. Check for: wear, damage, animal hair, stains, and odor.		
Try outfit on to make sure it fits appropriately (not too tight or too loose).		
Dry clean or wash outfit; store in plastic/garment bag to keep odor free.		
Appraise condition of shoes. Check for: damage, wear and shine.		
Polish shoes to rid of scuffs; take to cobbler if necessary.		
Make sure nylons/tights to be worn with skirt/dress are not damaged. Pack extra pair in case of snag/run on way to interview.		

Dress a step above existing company employees doing a similar job. Research to see what they are wearing.		
Notes:		

Things to take to the interview...	Completed
Several copies of your resume – including one for yourself that is highlighted to reference during the interview. Make sure the resume you are printing is the one that was originally submitted to the employer.	
A copy of your references with up-to-date contact information for all individuals listed.	
A pad of paper and a pen to take notes during the interview.	
Highlighted research that you completed on the company that can be referenced during the meeting.	
Directions to the interview site, including the employer contact for the meeting.	
Copy of the job description that you have highlighted and reviewed.	
A copy of the completed application, resume and cover letter that you submitted to the employer for the position.	
Make clean and neat copies of reference letters that you can leave with the potential employer that demonstrate the successes and achievements you've had earlier in your career.	
Make sure that your portfolio or sample work documents are prepared and organized. Make additional copies for the employer if you feel comfortable leaving samples of your work behind (and won't interfere with your intellectual property, copyright, or patent).	
Proper I-9 documentation if they ask you to fill out hiring documents on site.	
Borrow or purchase a brief case or business file (any clean undamaged material is fine).	
If you have prepared business cards, bring enough copies to pass around the interview site.	

<b>Build Confidence</b>		
<i>Description</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>In-Progress</i>
Practice approaching the interviewer and shaking hands.		
Commit to memory your work skills, personal qualities and qualifications that relate to the employer and the job opening.		
Remember things you want to get across about yourself from your 30 or 60-second commercial. Practice in front of a mirror and to others who will listen in person or by phone.		
Practice answering likely interview questions out loud. Do this with someone who will give you honest feedback or monitor yourself in a mirror.		
Review job announcement; highlight key areas that you want to address during your meeting.		
Monitor your body language, tone of voice, and eye contact in front of a mirror or ask for feedback from a friend.		
Review your resume, items in your portfolio, cover letter you wrote to the employer, and other documents submitted to the employer to refresh your memory.		
Clean and neat copies or originals of any documents that the employer has asked you to bring with you (certifications, driving abstract, school transcripts, etc.).		
Leave chewing gum at home. Take a breath mint that will dissolve before the interview instead.		
If driving, make sure that you have enough fuel to get to the interview and home.		
Leave emergency snacks in your car in case the interview process involves a long testing period as well. Keep your energy levels up. Bring along a bottle of water to quench any thirst.		
Grooming tools (comb, makeup, stain remover tool, lint brush, tissue, etc.)		
Other:		
Notes:		

# Reflection-on-Action (ROA) Activity Sheet

**Worksheet F:** For possible future reference, it is important to log what occurred during your interview with the employer. These notes can help you in further interviews with the employer as well as interviews for other positions. Reflection-on-Action (ROA) is the art of learning from our experiences. Please use the chart below to recreate, reflect upon, and analyze your overall interviewing experience.

Experience / Reflection	Improvement / Change / Positive Outcome

# Top 10 Interview Questions

(with examples)

## 1. Tell Me About Yourself

This means: "Give me a broad overview of who you are, professionally speaking, before we dive into specifics." You should **prepare about a one-minute answer** that summarizes where you are in your career and what you're especially good at, with an emphasis on your most recent job. **Keep your personal life out of it;** your interviewer isn't asking to hear about your family, hobbies or where you grew up.

*Sample Answer: I am a law enforcement professional with a degree in criminal justice and active Top Secret security clearance. My qualifications include fifteen years of experience in international and homeland security and outstanding leadership capability managing large security teams. My experience also includes knowledge of patrol, search and rescue and investigative and criminal procedures. I am a sharpshooter with expert marksman qualifications as well. I have a passion for law enforcement/security would like to discuss how I can bring these skills and experience to your company.*

## 2. What interests you about this job?

Focus on the substance of the role and how it interests you. **Don't talk about benefits, salary, the short commute or anything else unrelated to the day-to-day work you'd be doing,** or you'll signal that you're not particularly enthusiastic about the work itself. Companies like to hire people who will be **good at the job – and enjoy what they do.** Clearly communicate both your interest and ability. Interviewers want to hire people who have carefully considered whether this is a job they'd be glad to do every day, and that means **focusing on the work itself – not what the job can do for you.**

*Sample Answer: Well, I have great respect for your company's software products and I would welcome the opportunity to work with the best in the business. My research found that your company respects employees and how you create a great environment for rewarding innovation. I think my qualifications and proactive style would fit in really well here — especially in this particular role.*

## 3. Why are you thinking about leaving your job? Or: Why did you leave your last job?

**Don't discuss conflicts with your manager or co-workers,** complain about your work or badmouth employers. Job seekers are commonly advised to say they're seeking new challenges only if you can discuss those challenges. If you left **involuntarily, state the facts, don't tell a story.** It's also fine to cite things like a recent or planned move, financial instability at your organization or other **reasons that are true.**

*Sample Answer 1: I have been at my company for three years now and have learned a lot from working with some amazing salespeople. I worked my way up to regional sales manager 18 months ago and my region has beat our sales projections by at least 25% each quarter since. However, I am starting to feel like I need some new challenges. This position really appeals to me because it would allow me to manage a bigger team and sell more innovative products.*

*Sample Answer 2: After some management changes, it became clear that the new department director had new expectations for the role that didn't really mesh with my*



strengths. Ultimately, she decided to bring in someone from her previous organization who had more sales experience.

The experience taught me that my real talent is in customer service and I know I would be a major asset in a role like this one, which focuses on improving the customer experience.

#### 4. Tell me about a time when ...

Good interviewers will ask about times you had to exercise the skills required for the job. These may be situations **when you had to take initiative, deal with a difficult customer or solve a problem** for a client. Prepare for these questions so you're not struggling to think of real examples. Brainstorm the skills you'll likely need in the job and what challenges you'll likely face. Then think about examples from past work that show you can meet those needs. It can be difficult to come up with a good example on the fly — and even more difficult to describe in concisely in a way that presents you in a favorable light. **When constructing your answer, discuss the challenge you faced, how you responded and the outcome you achieved. This is why it's important to prepare an example in advance using the S.T.A.R format. (Situation/Task, Action/Approach, Result)**

*Sample Answer: I was managing the creation of our new corporate brochure and we were on a very tight deadline because we had to have brochures printed in time for a big upcoming trade show. I was in charge of delivering on time and I had to manage team members from Marketing, Sales, Graphic Design, and Product Management. The designer that was assigned to the project was very talented, but unfortunately missed a deadline that I assigned. When I approached him about it, he blew up at me. I was taken aback by his response, but I remained calm. I acknowledged that the deadlines were tight and explained again the reasoning and the importance of having the brochure ready for the trade show. He relaxed a little when he saw that I wasn't attacking him. He told me about all of his other competing projects and how overwhelmed he was. I asked him if there was any way that I could help him come up with a solution. Eventually, we agreed that it would help if his manager had a better understanding of how important and time-consuming this project was. We decided we would speak with her together. She ended up assigning some of his other projects to another designer, which took some of the pressure off of him. As a result, the designer was able to focus on the brochure and meet the deadlines. He apologized for his blow-up and thanked me for my help. We successfully completed the brochure in time for the trade show and received numerous compliments from both our own sales reps and potential customers. Our trade show presence led to \$300,000 in new sales leads and I believe the new brochure played a key role in that.*

#### 5. What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?

##### **Strength:**

Think about what others have said about you when you're trying to come up with a list of your strengths. Remember, **always back up your points with an example**. Pick strengths that align with the company's culture and goals. **The most important factor when choosing which strengths to highlight is to make sure they relate to the position your applying to.** For example, if you're applying for a human resources position, talk about your interpersonal skills. *Sample Answer: I think one of my greatest strengths is as a problem solver. I have the ability to see a situation from different perspectives and I can get my work done even in the face of difficult obstacles. Recently my project lead was detained in an airport and would not be able to make an important presentation to a client. I was able my copies of the*

the presentation and set up a web meeting. The data was presented using SKYPE while the client followed the copies. The project was a success.

### **Weakness:**

The weakness question is always the hardest to answer. **Don't give a clichéd answer such as you work too hard or you're too much of a perfectionist.** Try your best to stick to the truth and make sure you mention the steps you take to counter the weakness. Put a positive spin on the weakness but make sure it doesn't sound too practiced. An example of weaknesses can be impatience *Sample Answer: I would say that public speaking is an area that I could work on. I tend to get nervous when asked to present to a large group of people. In small team meetings, I'm the first one to stand up and present. But put me in front of a big group and I can get flustered.*

*I took an internal presentation skills class and attended some meetings of Toastmasters, with some practice, I have started to feel more comfortable. Last month, I even volunteered to represent our team at a division-wide town hall. I only had to present for 10 minutes, but I did it and got great feedback! I really enjoyed the experience. I plan on continuing to seek out opportunities to improve in this area.*

### **6. What Salary Are You Looking For?**

Then you should be as open as possible. Do your research on the position and company, **have a range of pay in mind for your skills, abilities and experience.** Be careful not to box yourself in by giving a specific amount and always consider benefits.

*Sample Answer: I did some research and based on my skills, abilities and experience; I would consider in the range of X to Z. This would also depend on the benefits offered.*

### **7. Why should we hire you?**

Be prepared for this question because **this answer will sell your story.** Know clearly what you bring to the organization such as your knowledge, skills, experience, education/training and personal qualities that demonstrate why you are the best person for the job. Be able to show how you add value to the company. **Always qualify your answers with quantifiable results you have achieved in previous jobs or assignments.** This will add tremendous credibility!

*Sample Answer: I think I am a great match for this position. My degree in management coupled with more than 10 years of experience managing 100+ employees and delivering top notch training, helped me to improve staff productivity by 30% and reduce employee turnover. My passion is demonstrated by my skills and abilities. I believe with my skills, abilities and passion I will be a great addition to your organization.*

### **8. What would you say are your greatest achievements so far?**

**Use the S-T-A-R method** to help answer this question. Set up the **situation** and the **task** that you were required to complete to provide the interviewer with background context but spend the bulk of your time describing what you actually did, the **action** and what you achieved, the **result**.

*Sample Answer: In my last job as a junior analyst, it was my role to manage the invoicing process. In one month, I streamlined the process, which saved my group 10 man-hours each month and reduced errors on invoices by 25%.*

## 9. Where Do You See Yourself in Five Years?"

Keep your answer fairly general. **Make your answer truthful, but broad enough that it doesn't raise doubts** about whether you would be a good fit for this position at this organization. **Stress your interest in a long-term career** especially if you have short job tenures on your resume. Your interviewer wants to know that you're ready to settle in and grow with the firm. **The truth is that anything can happen.** The company could go out of business, they could lay you off, or you could be lured away for a better opportunity. **You must at least show an honest intention to stay long enough to be a good investment.** However, remember that the organization is going to be investing considerable time, energy, and money in hiring and training someone for this job. **If you have some "job hopping" on your resume, it's particularly important to make the case that you're now ready for a long-term role.**

*Sample Answer: I am driven to be the best at what I do and I want to work somewhere where I'll have opportunities to develop my skills, take on interesting projects, and work with people I can really learn from. Some of the most innovative thinkers in the industry work here and that's a big reason why I would love to build a career here."*

## 10. Do you have any questions for me?

You need to prepare questions to ask your potential employer about the position, your boss, and the company in order to be sure that this is the right job for you.

**You must prepare 2 – 5 questions that demonstrate your interest in the position, your drive to excel in the role, and the fact that you've done some homework; researched the company, industry, and department. Avoid yes or no questions and avoid questions that are so broad that they are difficult to answer.** You don't want to stump the interviewer when you're trying to make a good impression and develop rapport.

### **Sample Questions & Why to Ask Them:**

#### **Can you tell me more about the day-to-day responsibilities of this job?**

*By learning more about the day-to-day tasks, you will also gain more insight into what specific skills and strengths are needed and you can address any topics that haven't already been covered.*

#### **What are the biggest challenges facing the company/department right now?**

*This question can help you uncover trends and issues in the industry and perhaps identify areas where your skills could save the day.*

#### **What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department fit in?**

*You need to know about the future of the company you plan to spend several years of your life working for. It doesn't have to be this exact question. For example, you might want to ask about the company's future plans for new products and services or any planned market expansion. Of course, you've done your own research, but nothing can beat an insider's observations and insights. This also shows you've done your homework and are serious about this company.*

#### **'Fast-forward a year, and imagine that you're looking back on this hiring decision. The two people you hired have exceeded your highest expectations. What did they do that impressed you most?'**

*It demonstrates that you have extremely high standards and are motivated not only to succeed, but to contribute above and beyond the call of duty. It shows that you are thinking about the employer's perspective instead of just your own. It challenges the*

employer to think about what they value most in employees. Finally, it encourages the employer to highlight the specific behaviors that matter most.

**What are the next steps in the interview process?** This is your closing and the most important question to ask at the end of the interview. Take the lead and set a plan for follow-up. You'll also be able to gauge the company's enthusiasm with the answer. Don't forget to ask for your interviewer's direct phone number and the best time to call. This question shows that you are eager to move forward in the process. It will also help you gain important information about the timeline for hiring so that you can follow up appropriately.

# Reasons for leaving your job

## Recommended

## Not recommended

### **LAID OFF**

Company cutbacks  
Company downsized  
Company merger  
Company restructured  
Company went out of business  
Completion of temporary job  
Job was outsourced  
Laid off  
Position eliminated  
Position ended  
Reorganization  
Seasonal position

### **TERMINATED/ FIRED**

Mutual Separation  
Involuntary Separation  
Job Ended  
New Management  
Temp Job / Completed Temp Assignment

### **QUIT**

Voluntary separation  
Accepted a new job  
Offered a permanent position  
Career change / Change in career path  
Limited growth at company  
No advancement opportunities  
Seeking more responsibility  
Company moved / Relocated / Long commute  
Company changed schedule, unable to accommodate  
Opportunity to take some time off  
Retired  
Became a caregiver  
Summer job / Temp job  
Going back to school  
Hours reduced / Not enough hours

### **TERMINATED/ FIRED**

Attendance issues  
Let go for tardiness  
Let go for harassment  
Let go for misconduct  
Injured on the job  
Lost childcare  
Issues with co-worker / management

### **QUIT**

Involuntary separation  
About to get fired  
Bad company to work for  
Bored at work / Hated my job  
Job was too difficult  
Job wasn't a good fit  
Not enough work  
Needed a full-time position  
Not compatible with company goals  
Didn't get along with co-workers  
Boss was a jerk / stupid; hated my boss  
Passed over for promotion  
No transportation  
Didn't like the schedule / Flexible schedule  
Didn't want to work evenings or weekends  
Didn't want to work as many hours  
Overtime was required  
Arrested / in jail  
Family circumstances / reasons  
Family illness  
Getting married  
Maternity leave / Pregnancy  
Stayed home to take care of family  
Childcare issues  
Rocky marriage  
My mom made me quit  
Health reasons / Illness / Injured

Street Address  
City, State, ZIP Code

*(Date of Writing)*

Alexandra Blank, President  
XBlank Consultants, Inc.  
900 State Street  
Chicago IL 00000-0000

Dear Alexandra Blank,

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the \_\_\_\_\_ position on Friday, *(Date of Interview)*. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about your company. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to learn more about XBlank Consultants, Inc. and am very interested in the employment possibility.

*Optional paragraph(s) – (see suggestions below for possible applicable paragraphs.)*

This position offers an incredible opportunity and I am confident that with my experience and education, will significantly contribute to your company. Also, I am excited about the challenge this position presents and look forward to possibly working with you.

Again, thank you for the time and courtesy you extended toward me. I appreciate the opportunity to be a candidate for the \_\_\_\_\_ position. Please contact me at (555) 555-0000 if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

*(Handwritten Signature)*

Your Name Typed

Enclosure