



Interview Prep Guide by ML6

How to Rock Your Interview

You've got an interview lined-up for your dream job – congratulations! Now, let's go over how to make sure you land the offer. Here are a few tips:

Research - Company and Individual:

Prior to any interview, it's important to research the company, as well as the interviewer. Starting with the company, you should be able to identify the following:

1. Year founded
2. Company's Mission and Values
3. Size (number of employees, locations, revenue)
4. The company's growth trajectory
5. Recent press (good or bad)

You should also spend some time learning about the person interviewing you. If this person *is not* going to be your immediate supervisor, that information should include:

1. Their job title
2. Tenure at the company
3. General scope of their responsibilities

If the interviewing *will be* your immediate supervisor, you might want to also know:

1. If they have recently joined the company, where they came from
2. Their designations (if applicable)
3. Their education
4. Their path through the company, i.e. if they have been promoted or moved through departments

To gather some of this info, use LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Indeed, Google, etc., and search for the company's name, as well as it's founder's or CEO's name. Having this information when stepping in to an interview will allow you to engage in meaningful discussion about the organization and the people, and will allow you to give more meaningful answers about why you are looking to join.

Resume Review:

This is a step that is often overlooked and is a common pitfall for candidates, even at senior levels. Often during an interview, a candidate will be asked a variation of "It says here on your resume you did X" and equally as often, the applicant will say "It does? I don't remember writing that," and then pull out a copy to check - which is a horrible impression to make.

As such, review your resume in detail before your interview. Do not skim but read the fine print. Be sure to look at it critically and anticipate any place that an interviewer might be confused or require clarification and then prepare accordingly.

We understand that, likely, your resume was written weeks or months ago, or that it has been an evolving document that you have added to or subtracted from over time. It is natural to forget what you wrote or how you phrased things in the past. Despite this, you should be able to answer detailed questions about your resume without needing it in front of you.

A final piece of advice: do not read from your resume. While it is perfectly acceptable (or encouraged) to bring a spare copy of your resume with you as a courtesy, do not recite lines from it. This gives the impression that you don't know your own history and calls into question the validity of everything listed, as well as the quality of your candidacy.

Study the Role:

Equally as important as knowing the ins and outs of every character on your resume, is sharing the same deep knowledge of the role you are interviewing for. You should review the job description (as well as any additional information you were provided about the role) line by line to ensure you have a strong understanding of the requirements, and be able to effectively answer related questions in the interview.

A great exercise to do prior to the interview is hold your resume and the job description side by side and match what parts of your experience relate to listed role requirements. Once you've done this, you can start formulating some general answers in advance of the interview that you will be able to draw upon, without having to come up with them on the spot. This will also elevate your confidence heading into the interview, as you'll know that you've got the skills and experience to do the job!

Questions to Ask:

In most interviews there will come a time when the interviewer will turn things over to you and ask you if you have any questions for them. This is a critical – it is a forum for you to showcase why you are right for the position, and for you to determine if you want it. Having meaningful questions prepared is necessary. Prepare at least ten well thought out questions ahead of time - and take the time to physically write them out. Too often, applicants enter the interview full of questions they plan on asking and 45 minutes later forget them. Don't let this happen to you; write out your questions ahead of time – it is even ok to bring your written-out questions to the interview if you're worried you might forget them.

Ten questions might seem excessive, but in our experience, it is the right number to ensure you have questions left to ask when things are turned over to you. Generally, the initial conversation will answer many of your questions for you, without you having to ask. Questions can and should range from the big picture (what is the direction of the company?) down to the specific (what metrics do you use to define success in this role?)

Here are some examples of the types of questions to ask during an interview:

1. How will this role contribute to the company's success over the next year?
2. What are the top 3 things you are looking for the individual stepping into this role to accomplish in their first 6 months?
3. What are the top 3 challenges the company is currently facing/you foresee the company facing over the next year?
4. What are the top 3 challenges you foresee the individual stepping into this role facing in their first 6 months?
5. What characteristics/skills, beyond what is listed on the job description, do you feel makes someone successful at the company/in the role?

Anticipate Areas of Difficulty

Finally, in preparing for an interview it is helpful to take a full and clear picture of what areas might arise as potentially difficult and plan for them ahead of time. It is uncomfortable work to review your career and resume through a critical lens but doing so will prevent you from having to give a poorly thought out answer during the interview.

Here are some examples of potentially difficult areas to discuss:

- A period of unemployment
- A boss/manager/owner you did not get along with
- Incomplete education or stalled credentials
- Multiple short stints at multiple companies
- Jumping in and out of a company several times
- Repeatedly being stalled a certain point in your career without promotions

These are normal and common occurrences in many professional careers and having them is not a sign of poor performance or poor judgement - although they can be, which is what your interviewer will be attempting to determine. Help them to understand these periods by preparing how you want to talk about them. Always be honest and forthright with the interviewer but be prepared. Take some time out the night before your interview to think about how you want to frame certain issues or discuss them. Try imagining what might be asked and practice your answer. Although we all have difficult times in our careers, your interviewer will be listening to hear how you recovered from those periods, and how you discuss the people involved. Be positive and forward thinking in your responses.

Interview Best Practices

A few things to keep in mind, regardless of who you are interviewing with and what level you are at in your career:

1. **Always speak positively** of past employers and colleagues. If you trash your last company, the interviewer will be concerned that you'll do the same thing about them.
2. **Be concise** in your responses. Your answers should be no more than 30-60 seconds (excluding responding to follow-up questions).
3. **Relate your responses to the job requirements.** Every answer you give to a question should highlight something you've done over the course of your career and should relate to a requirement of the role you are applying for.
4. **Assume the dress code is business formal** – it rarely hurts to over dress but being under-dressed can leave a bad impression.
5. **Be 5 minutes early** to the receptionist desk of where you are interviewing. Being earlier than this can cause inconvenience and any later causes concern that you might not be showing up.
6. **Turn your cell phone to silent and keep it tucked away** for the duration of the interview. Do not put it out on the table while you are interviewing or check it during the interview.



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