

The background is a solid red color. It features several overlapping circles of varying shades of red, creating a layered effect. On the right side, there are several parallel white lines that curve slightly, resembling a stylized 'S' or a series of parallel paths.

ASK Helps You Be An Interview Pro

ASK Staffing, Inc.
3805 Crestwood Parkway | Suite 260 | Duluth, GA 30096
(O) 678.813-8947
(F) 770.813.8376
www.askstaffing.com



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Researching the Company

1. Start with the job description

Check it thoroughly and gather information on the department or function area that you are interviewing for. Highlight your skills and experience that match the job description.

2. Use the Internet

Go to the organization's website and read up on it. Browse other sites - like news sites and social networks - for other mentions of the company. What is it known for? What is its reputation? Where is it heading? Or what does it have planned for the next five years.

Look at your interviewers' profiles on the company website and social networking sites. What are their responsibilities within the business? Is there anything relevant in their career background? What projects do they lead? Which business areas are they interested in?

3. Read the small print

While visiting the organization's website, check out Investor Relations and the sitemap. You can find useful information on there. See how the company is performing and what the turnover / share price is.

4. Research your interviewer through LinkedIn

Use LinkedIn to find people within the business and see what they do. Check your own connections and even your shared connections for greater access to people.

5. Watch the news

Look for mentions of the organization or your interviewers in the press. Where has the organization been mentioned, what for and with whom? What are the latest developments in the business and which areas are they focusing in on?

If your interviewers are quoted anywhere, what do the quotes reveal about them? How does the article describe the interviewers' roles within the company? Does it tell you anything about their background history?

By doing some proper research, you'll go into the interview prepared, feeling more relaxed and confident. The interviewers will not only pick up on the fact that you've done your homework, but also that you're interested in the company as well as the position.

Know Thyself

Know your resume intimately and be prepared to answer questions without glancing. Have at least two stories prepared for each item on your resume that capture what you did and how you did it.

When you are telling an interviewer about your background, don't ramble - keep your answer within 2 minutes. The interviewer only wants to hear the most important part of each of your experiences.

Approach to telling the interviewer about yourself

1. Speak about your professional experiences, starting with your most relevant one.
 - Highlight only one thing about each job position that represents the most value to the company.
 - Share the one or two lessons or qualifications you received from each item.
 - Do not skip any of your experiences. If the experience is listed on your resume, it should be one that you are proud of and that taught you a valuable lesson about yourself and your career.
2. Speak about your interests and any awards received.
 - This is the part of your response that makes you a person—not just a candidate.
 - You and your interviewer might find that you have similar interests, which is the best way to create a memorable impression with the interviewer.
 - Interests are a way to anchor you in the mind of the interviewer. On your follow up email, you can speak about the common ground you two share.

Dress For Success

According to a recent survey at Image Dynamics, 55% of another person's perception of you is based on how you look. The attire guidelines below will provide you with the basic attire guidelines:

Women's Interview Attire

- Solid color, conservative suit
- Coordinated blouse
- Closed toe - moderate shoes
- Limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Tan or light hosiery
- Sparse make-up & perfume
- Manicured nails



Men's Interview Attire

- Solid color, conservative suit
- White long sleeve shirt
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Very limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Go easy on the aftershave
- Neatly trimmed nails



Items to Bring to Interview

1. **A current resume.** Showcase specific responsibilities that match the job you are interviewing for. While you already provided your resume when you applied for the job, you also want to bring hard copies to the interview. Make sure you use high-quality resume paper and that your ink cartridge is fresh before printing this important document.
2. **A cover letter.** While it may seem counter intuitive since you already landed the interview, including a cover letter with your resume can add value. First, if possible, find out the name and title of the person or persons with whom you will be interviewing and customize your inside address and salutation. Then, create a fresh, brief introductory message that emphasizes your enthusiasm and interest, plus the value you'd bring to the position. Keep in mind the research you've performed recently on the company and/or the hiring decision maker, and tie that in using custom language to hook their interest.
3. **Your references.** Having references on hand is good, even if you choose not to hand them off during the first job interview (gauge where you are in the process at the end of the meeting and determine whether the timing is right to distribute them). If you DO decide to offer references, you want them to be up-to-date and meaningful. For example, make sure that all of the references you've listed know that you're interviewing.
4. **A strategic plan.** Depending upon the particular interview situation, you may also want to arrive bearing a strategic plan that will further "wow" the employer with your preparedness and initiative.
 - For example, if you're applying for an IT Manager role, you may be privy to the fact that the team you'll be leading is demoralized, has high turnover, and declining performance. You can provide a 90-day action plan that highlights your plan for the role. This will make you stand out and leave a memorable impression for the interviewer.
 - The 90 day plan should cover three things: 1.) a quick overview/assessment of the current, deteriorating situation. 2.) Action steps you'd employ to begin turning the ship around. 3.) Measurable objectives that you're committed to meeting by the end of that time period.
5. **Your portfolio.** Content may include testimonial letters and emails from bosses, clients, colleagues, and vendors. Sometimes, sliding in a one-page biography that blends your professional and personal story into a concise narrative adds value. This assortment of wins and career advocacy documents should focus on the professional you, with a twist of personality.

You won't get a second chance at this first impression, so heightening your presentation at the interview is important. Outfitting yourself with these five items may not guarantee you the job, but they will assure you that you've done all you can to put your best interview foot forward.

Arrival at the Interview

1. If you are not familiar with the interview location, drive there the night before to scout out where your interview will be located.
2. Arrive 10 minutes early for the interview.
3. Know who you are interviewing with and their title.
4. When you are greeted, stand and make eye contact, be confident and offer a firm handshake.
5. Introduce yourself to the interview and any colleagues with them.

During the Interview

1. Use good body language; sit upright in your chair; don't fold your arms and show enthusiasm with your responses.
2. Keep answers limited to what you have been asked. Try not to go off on tangents but offer a complete answer.
3. If you have misheard a question or are unsure of what is being asked, ask the interviewer to repeat the question for clarification.



Phone Interview Techniques

Prepare for a phone interview just as you would for a regular interview. Compile a list of your strengths and weaknesses, as well as a list of answers to typical phone interview questions (phone interview questions section). In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.

1. Keep your resume in clear view, on the top of your desk, or tape it to the wall near the phone, so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions.
2. Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review.
3. Have a pen and paper handy for note taking.
4. Clear the room - evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.
5. Unless you're sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line.

Talking on the phone isn't as easy as it seems- it's helpful to practice. Conduct a mock interview and record it so you can see how you sound over the phone. You'll be able to hear your "ums" and "uhs" and can practice reducing them from your conversational speech.

During the Phone Interview

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink.
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer.
- Take your time - it's perfectly acceptable to take a moment or two to collect your thoughts.
- Remember your goal is to set up a face-to-face interview. After you thank the interviewer ask if it would be possible to meet in person.

Phone Interview Questions and Answers

It's important take time to review the typical phone interview questions you'll be asked and to prepare answers. In addition, plan on being prepared for a phone conversation about your background and skills.

Commonly Asked Phone Interview Questions & Answers

Here are some commonly asked phone interview questions that you should be prepared to answer:

Q. Name of company, job title and job description, dates of employment.



- A. Be prepared to tell the interviewer the names of the companies you worked for, your job title, your starting and ending dates of employment, how much you earned and what your job entailed. Refresh your memory prior to the interview by reviewing your resume, so you can speak about your prior work history in detail and accurately.

If you aren't sure of your dates of employment at the companies you worked for, you can determine your employment from Social Security by completing a Request for Social Security Earnings Information form. You will receive detailed information about your work history including employment dates, employer names and addresses, and earnings. The Social Security Administration charges a small fee for detailed information based on the length of time for which you would like to receive records.

- Q. What were your starting and final levels of compensation?

- A. Be prepared to tell the interviewer how much you earned at each of your prior positions. Make sure that what you tell the interviewer matches what you listed on your job application. Don't exaggerate or inflate your earnings. Many employers will check references and confirm your salary history prior to making a job offer. A discrepancy between what you reported and what the employer says could knock you out of contention for the job.

- Q. What were your responsibilities?

- A. It's important to be specific and to be positive about what you did in your previous position(s). The best way to respond is to describe your responsibilities in detail and try to tie your responsibilities in with those listed in the job description for the new position. That way, the employer will see that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job.

Focus most on your responsibilities that are directly related to the new job's requirements. It's also important to be honest. Don't embellish your job, because you don't know who the hiring manager will be checking with when they check your references.

- Q. Why are you leaving your job?

Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances. Regardless of why you left, don't speak badly about your previous employer. Practice your responses so you sound positive, and clear, about your circumstances and your goals for the future.

If you were fired from your job, laid off, or resigned, the answers below will provide you with some guidelines:





A. Resigned:

- There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.
- After several years in my last position, I'm looking for a company where I can contribute and grow in a team-oriented environment
- I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my technical skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in the past.
- I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.
- To be honest, I wasn't considering a move, but, I saw this job posting and was intrigued by the position and the company. It sounds like an exciting opportunity and an ideal match with my qualifications.

A. Laid off:

- I was laid-off from my last position when our department was eliminated due to corporate restructuring.
- I am seeking a position with a stable company with room for growth and opportunity for advancement.
- This position seemed like an excellent match for my skills and experience and I am not able to fully utilize them in my present job.
- The company was cutting back and, unfortunately, my job was one of those eliminated.

A. Fired from previous job

- Certain personal problems, which I now have solved, unfortunately upset my work life. These problems no longer exist and I'm up and running strong to exceed expectations in my new job.
- I wanted my career to move in a different direction, and I guess my mental separation set up the conditions that led to my departure. But by contrast, the opportunity we're discussing seems to be made for me and I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility.
- I outlasted several downsizings but the last one included me. Sign of the times, I guess.
- I was desperate for work and took the wrong job without looking around the corner. I won't make that mistake again. I'd prefer an environment that is congenial, structured and team-oriented, where my best talents can shine and make a substantial contribution.

Q. What are your salary expectations?

- A.** Do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. If you're asked what your salary requirements are, say that they are open based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you'd like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary.

Before you start talking pay (and salary negotiations) with a prospective employer, you need to find out how much the job (and you) are worth. You will need to take the time to research

salaries. Another option is to give the employer a salary range based upon the salary research you've done up front.

Phone Interview Questions to Ask

When you are invited for a phone interview, in addition to reviewing the typical phone interview questions you'll be asked, it's important to have a list of questions ready to ask the interviewer. Be prepared to ask three to five questions and be prepared to elaborate on what you are asking.

Remember employers make judgments about you based on the questions you ask.

So try to ask intriguing questions that will not only show that you have done your research but also set a memorable impression in the interviewers mind.

It is always a good idea to have a list of questions to ask the interviewer. This will demonstrate your interest of in the position and your desire to learn more about the organization and its culture. The below sample questions can serve as a guideline for good questions to ask during the interview.

1. What is the organization's plan for the next five years, and how does this department fit in?
2. How does upper management view the role and importance of this department and this position?
3. Could you describe your company's management style and the type of employee who fits well with it?
4. How and by whom will my performance be reviewed? Are there specific criteria upon which I would be evaluated? And how frequently is formal and informal review given to new employees?
5. What are the day-to-day responsibilities of this job? Once you ask this question, listen intently to the interviewer's response and follow-up with specific examples of how your previous responsibilities match up to what they are asking for
6. What can I tell you about my qualifications? This will give you an opportunity to highlight your experience and discuss some of your accolades.

DO's & DON'TS for Phone Interviews

Don'ts

- Do not ask questions that are clearly answered on the employer's web site and/or in any literature provided by the employer to you in advance. This would simply reveal that you did not prepare for the interview, and you are wasting the employer's time by asking these questions.
- Do not ask about salary and benefits issues until those subjects are raised by the employer.
- Do not ask a question if you are not truly interested in the answer; it will be obvious to the employer.

Interview Questions & Techniques

Do's

- Ask open-ended questions (they cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no”). This will allow the interviewer to elaborate on their response and it will also show that you have given some thought to your questions.
- Do arm yourself with answers that directly relate to the job you are interviewing for and demonstrate value. For example, before your call, write three specific situations in your current or previous jobs when you effectively solved problems or attained company goals.
- Do sound confident in your answers and wear a smile during your phone interview. Smiling improves your state of mind and gives your voice a cheerful boost.
- Send a follow-up thank you note to the interviewer and include some details about what you learned in the interview.



Commonly Asked Interview Questions & Answers

Remember, being interviewed is a skill, and if you do the preparation you should ace it every time.

The list below provides some of the most common interview questions and answers to help guide your response.

Samples of how to ask great interview questions:

Example 1:

Not good: Does your organization value its employees?

Good: How will your organization show it values its employees?

Better: What are things your organization has done recently to show how it values its employees?

Example 2:

Fair: Are you planning to open an office in Spokane?

Good: What are the plans for opening an office in Spokane?

Better: I read a news story about the possible opening of an office in Spokane. Knowing that a news article does not always capture the full story, I wondered what factors are under consideration for this decision. (Notice this isn't technically a question, but a series of statements showing your interest and inviting conversation.)

1. So, tell me a little about yourself.

This question usually sets the stage for the interview and it gets you talking. Be careful not to give the interviewer your life story here. You don't need to explain everything from



birth to present day. Relevant facts about education, your career and your current life situation are fine.

2. Why are you looking (or why did you leave you last job)?

This should be a straightforward question to answer, but it can trip you up. Presumably you are looking for a new job (or any job) because you want to advance your career and get a position that allows you to grow as a person and an employee. It's not a good idea to mention money here; it can make you sound mercenary. And if you are in the unfortunate situation of having been downsized, stay positive and be as brief as possible about it. If you were fired, you'll need a good explanation. But once again, stay positive.

3. Tell me what you know about this company.

Do your homework before you go to any interview. Has this company been in the news lately? Who are the people in the company you should know about? Do the background work, it will make you stand out as someone who comes prepared, and is genuinely interested in the company and the job.

4. Why do you want to work at X Company?

This should be directly related to the last question. Any research you've done on the company should have led you to the conclusion that you'd want to work there. After all, you're at the interview, right? Put some thought into this answer before you have your interview, mention your career goals and highlight forward-thinking goals and career plans.

6. If your previous co-workers were here, what would they say about you?

Ok, this is not the time for full disclosure. If some people from your past are going to say you're a boring A-hole, you don't need to bring that up. Stay positive, always, and maybe have a few specific quotes in mind. "They'd say I was a hard worker" or even better "John Doe has always said I was the most reliable, creative problem-solver he'd ever met."

7. Do you work well under pressure?

Once again, there are a few ways to answer this but they should all be positive. You may work well under pressure, you may thrive under pressure, and you may actually PREFER working under pressure. If you say you crumble like aged blue cheese, this is not going to help you get your foot in the door.

8. What's your greatest strength?

This is your chance to shine. You're being asked to explain why you are a great employee, so don't hold back and stay do stay positive. You could be someone who thrives under pressure, a great motivator, an amazing problem solver or someone with extraordinary attention to detail. The interviewer is looking for work-related strengths.

9. What's your biggest weakness?

If you're asked this question, give a small, work-related flaw that you're working hard to improve. Example: "I've been told I occasionally focus on details and miss the bigger picture, so I've been spending time laying out the complete project every day to see my overall progress."



10. Tell me a suggestion you have made that was implemented.

It's important here to focus on the word "implemented." There's nothing wrong with having a thousand great ideas, but if the only place they live is on your notepad what's the point? Better still, you need a good ending. If your previous company took your advice and ended up going bankrupt, that's not such a great example either. Be prepared with a story about an idea of yours that was taken from idea to implementation, and considered successful.

11. Tell me about any issues you've had with a previous boss.

The interviewer is testing you to see if you'll speak badly about your previous supervisor. Simply answer this question with extreme tact, diplomacy and if necessary - in short, you've never had any issues.

12. What would you like to be doing 5 years from now?

The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded as a true professional and team player. "I have always felt that first-hand knowledge and experience open up opportunities that one might never have considered, so while at this point in time I plan to be a part of [e.g.] operations, it is reasonable to expect that other exciting opportunities will crop up in the meantime."

13. So, explain why I should hire you.

Responding with, "because I'm great" or "I really need a job" are not good answers here. This is a time to give the employer a laundry list of your greatest talents that just so happen to match the job description. Focus on yourself and your talents, not other people's flaws.

14 Finally, do you have any questions to ask me?

Please refer to the common questions asked in interviews. This directly relates to the research you've done on the company and also gives you a chance to show how eager and prepared you are. You'll probably want to ask about benefits if they haven't been covered already. A good generic one is "how soon could I start, if I were offered the job of course." You may also ask what you'd be working on. Specifically, in the role you're applying for and how that affects the rest of the company. Always have questions ready, greeting this one with a blank stare is a rotten way to finish your interview.

Behavioral Interview Questions & Answers

Behavioral interviewing is a technique to evaluate a candidate's potential for success by assessing performance in similar situations. Behavioral interviews match the candidate's skills and competencies with the requirements of the position.

What is the advantage of behavioral interviewing?

It allows the interviewer to:

- Gain detail job-related examples
- Assess a candidate's past performance
- Assess a candidate's competencies



- Get in depth understanding on the candidates background beyond a ‘canned’ response

Can you prepare for a behavioral interview?

Yes! Although, you will not know which questions will be asked, you think about your answers to common questions and think about what competencies employers are looking for (listed in competencies section).

Typically a company determines skill sets by doing an analysis on the position they are hiring for. It's very helpful to ask yourself some questions such as:

- What are the necessary skills to do this job?
- What makes a successful candidate?
- What would make an unsuccessful candidate?
- What is the most difficult part of this job?

Once you ask yourself these questions, you can get a feel of what to include in your behavioral interview responses.

How to answer a behavioral interview question successfully?

- #1. **Think like an employer** - put yourself in their shoes
- #2. **Understand what they are asking you** - they don't want your whole life story, they want to know the results from what you have achieved
- #3. **Be knowledgeable about the job you are interviewing for** - try to respond with examples that highlight the skills they are looking for
- #4. **Practice!** Think about your responses and how they would sound to an employer

Competencies to highlight your value

Different job types require specific competencies. Organizations will explore these core competencies in the job interview by asking behavioral interview questions. The 12 core competencies identified for job success include:

- *Judgment/decision-making* - Ability to make sound decisions based on information gathered and analysed. Consider all pertinent facts and alternatives before deciding on the most appropriate action.
- *Teamwork /interpersonal* - Ability to interact with people effectively. Able and willing to share and receive information. Cooperate within the group and across groups. Support group decisions.
- *Quality Orientation/work standards* - Maintain high standards, attention to detail, accuracy and completeness. Show concern for all aspects of the job.
- *Work Ethic/motivation* - Energy and enthusiasm in approaching the job. Commitment to putting in additional effort.
- *Reliability* - take personal responsibility for job performance. Complete work in a timely and consistent manner. Keep commitments.

- *Problem Analysis/problem solving* - gather and organize all relevant information. Identify cause-effect relationships. Come up with appropriate solutions.
- *Adaptability* - adapts to changing work environment, work priorities, organizational needs. Able to deal with change and diverse people.
- *Planning /organizing* - plan and organize tasks and work responsibilities to achieve objectives. Set priorities. Schedule activities. Allocate and use resources properly.
- *Communication* - express ideas effectively. Organize and deliver information appropriately. Listen actively.
- *Honesty/integrity* - share complete and accurate information. Maintain confidentiality. Adhere to organizational policies and procedures. Meet own commitments.
- *Initiative* - take action to influence events. Generate ideas for improvement, take advantage of opportunities, suggest innovations, do more than required.
- *Stress tolerance* - emotionally resilient and able to withstand pressure on an on-going basis. Deal with difficult situations while maintaining performance. Seek support from others when necessary. Use appropriate coping techniques.

Responding to Behavioral-based interview questions

Employers ask behavioral interview questions because they think that past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

Employer is looking for how you:

- handled pressure
- worked with difficult co-workers
- creatively solved problems
- proposed a solution to a team
- went above and beyond on a project
- failed, but learned from your errors

Interviewers are looking for answers that fit the STAR response format

SITUATION → TASK → ACTION → RESULT

Situation = Circumstances or state of events

Task = Tasks needed to deal with situation

Action = Actions you took to complete the each Task

Result = Outcomes as a result of your actions.

- Think of a specific example that answers the question
- Think of an example that is work-related, if possible (use professional organizations, or volunteer activities; avoid church and personal, unless related to the organization)
- Think of an example that is current - not more than 2 years old whenever possible
- Try not to use the word 'we' too often - the interviewer wants to know what YOU have accomplished specifically.
- Give an answer that is 2-3 minutes long.
- Give specific information in your answer, such as names, dates, dollars, clients, etc.



- There is no “right” answer; the interviewer wants to learn about how you might work as a future employee.

Why is the STAR method a good interviewing skill?

Think of interviewing as telling a story. The STAR method helps you tell your story in an organized manner that is clear to the listener. It helps you organize your thoughts and answers to explain what you’ve done in the past. By using this technique, you’re explaining your work history in a way that a prospective employer can fully understand the situations, challenges, and actions you took. Most interviewers ask questions on functions and tasks necessary to the job, and the STAR provides answers about your behavior as well as your skills and expertise.

Example Behavioral Questions:

Give me an example of a time when you were working on a project that was going smoothly and you were on schedule. However, partway through the project, you realized that if you changed something, it’d be more work, but you’d have a better outcome.

Weak answer:

In the past when I’ve been in that situation, I have demonstrated that I can go above and beyond to enhance a project. I have worked extra hours, negotiated for additional resources on my projects, and utilized technology to save time and money. I always have strived for the best possible result, even if it meant extra work on my part. I feel it’s worth it to kick in the additional effort in order to have a project outcome that will benefit the company. You’ll find that I’m constantly looking for ways to get the best result possible.



STAR answer:

SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
<p>When I joined ABC company two years ago, I was given the task of developing a training module for our XYZ product for the sales reps. The product was ready to launch and everyone was eager to have the orientation developed and delivered immediately. There was lots of pressure to get this project done quickly.</p>	<p>During my first week, I worked really hard to get the module created. I collaborated with the other trainer, Jack, a lead developer on the project, Joe, and my manager to ensure that what I was preparing was what was needed. I was on schedule. By chance, I overheard in the lunchroom that the XYZ product was going to be launched early in Japan and that the development staff was scrambling to get the help manual translated into Japanese as soon as possible.</p>	<p>I requested help from Jack as to how to get our materials translated as well as extra resources from my manager. With Jack's help I was able to locate a qualified translator quickly. My manager approved extra funds so that the translator could begin work as soon as I had each section created and approved.</p>	<p>Fortunately, the training materials were ready in Japanese right when they were needed by the Japan sales reps. If we hadn't heard about the early launch and I hadn't requested the resources, we would have had a delay in launching our product in Japan. My manager was very pleased with our efforts and the timeliness of our delivery.</p>



Interview Questions & Techniques

Below are generic samples of behavioral questions. These could easily be tweaked into department or job specific questions. Use a few of these questions to practice your response and remember to think like an employer.

Q. What are your biggest accomplishments?

The employer is really asking - what have you done in the past that that can benefit from. In answering this question, think like the employer and what skills you can highlight that would really showcase your value.

A. Use STAR. Keep your answers job related. Don't exaggerate accomplishments. You might begin your reply with: "Although I feel my biggest achievements are still ahead of me, I am proud of my involvement with . . . I made my contribution as part of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line."

Q. Do you prefer working alone or with others?

The employer is really asking - what is your working style and how does it fit with the needs of the position and the culture of the company. Use your research that you've done on the company to find out their working style.

A. "I'm quite happy working alone when necessary. I don't need much constant reassurance. But I prefer to work in a group--so much more gets achieved when people pull together."

Q. What was the most difficult decision you had to make?

The employer is really asking - how you deal under pressure. The question looks for information on two fronts: How do you define difficult? And, how did you handle the situation? Think about the type of position that you are interviewing for. If it's a manager role - try to exemplify the leadership skills that you used to make a decision.

A. Attempt to relate your response to the prospective employment situation. Use STAR to demonstrate your most difficult decision. You must have a story ready for this one in which the situation both was tough and allowed you to show yourself in a good light. Avoid talking about problems that have to do with co-workers. You can talk about the difficult decision to fire someone, but emphasize that once you had examined the problem and reached a conclusion you acted quickly and professionally, with the best interests of the company at heart.



Questions & Answers

Prepare for behavior-based interview questions by thinking of about six stories from the accomplishments on your resume. Most likely, you can use the same story to answer more than one question (but not to the same interviewer); you can focus the point of the story to a) the technical skills you used, b) the team interaction dynamics during the project, 3) the way you handled stress, 4) how you led or mentored others, 5) your communication skills, or 6) how you planned the project. Below are some additional questions that you can use to practice your STAR response.

1. What specific capabilities/skills do you bring to the job that would be helpful? Why?
2. This job primarily will manage a series of projects. Tell us about a project you've managed and outline your philosophy of project management.
3. Give an example where you showed leadership in a challenging situation.
4. Tell me about a time you had to cope with strict deadlines or time demands. Give me an example and explain how you handled it.
5. Tell me about your technical skills and the projects or applications you have implemented?
6. Tell me about a time you had to solve a time-sensitive technical problem in the field. Tell me what you did and how you handled it.
7. This job requires expert data management skills. Tell us about databases you've designed and managed.
8. This job will require you to spend a large amount of time talking to clients and customers. How do you define "good interpersonal skills"? Give us an example of a time when you demonstrated good personal skills.

How can I practice the STAR method?

1. Make a list of past accomplishments in your work history.
2. Jot down and describe the accomplishment with S T A R.
3. Revise/edit these notes until they're complete and comprehensive.
4. Keep these notes on paper or note cards.
5. Review before each job interview.

Post Interview Assessment

Follow-up

Immediately send a thank-you letter to each of your interviewers. Sending thank-you letters is professional and courteous, and will help to make you stand out in the minds of the interviewers.

Email is perfectly acceptable these days, and the quickest way to get your thank-you letters in front of interviewers. Whether you send it by email or regular mail, observe professional business-letter standards.

Be prepared to attend two or three interviews at the same company. If you're called back for another interview, it means that they're interested in you. But, they're also narrowing the competition, so continue to provide professional answers that will set you apart from the other candidates.

Thank you Notes

In addition to thanking the person you talked with, the thank you note reinforces the fact that you want the job. Use your letter to address any issues and concerns that came up during the interview. You can also view the thank you as a follow-up "sales" letter. In other words, restate why you want the job, what your qualifications are, how you might make significant contributions, and so on.

This letter is also the perfect opportunity to discuss anything of importance that your interviewer neglected to ask or that you neglected to answer as thoroughly, or as well, as you would have liked. Keep in mind though, that the thank you note should be brief and to the point. A couple of brief paragraphs are sufficient.

Finally, remember to proofread - proofreading is just as important in email as it is in other correspondence. Be sure to check spelling, grammar, typos, etc. Also, keep a copy in your Out mailbox or cc: yourself so you have a copy of each message you've sent.

Group Thank Yous

If you are interviewed with several people, send individual messages to each person you interviewed with. Modify your message so each interviewer gets a unique thank you note. Ask for a business card at the conclusion of each interview - that way you'll have the contact information for your thank you letters.

Sample Email Thank You Message

Your thank you note should speak to your capabilities and reiterate your interest in the position. A sample thank you letter is below.

Dear [Interviewers Name]:

It was very enjoyable to speak with you about the [insert position name] at the [insert company name]. The job, as you presented it, seems to be a perfect match for my skills and interests. The technical approach to java development that you described confirmed my desire to work with your company.

In addition to my enthusiasm, I will bring to the position strong [insert particular skills that the job is requesting] skills, and the ability to manage projects on time and within budget parameters. My background as a [insert particular positions that match the current job you are interviewing for] will help me to work with the team and provide insight to help the team enhance its effectiveness.

I neglected to mention during my interview that I had worked as a volunteer for two seasons as a [insert any previous positions that would highlight your skills]. This experience helped me to develop my communication and project management skills. I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working for you and look forward to hearing from you about this position.

Sincerely,

[insert your signature]

Formulate an Acceptance

Finally, all your hard work has paid off and you have received a job offer. It is tempting to accept your first offer, but there are many important factors to consider. Gather as much information as possible before you make a decision. This is a big decision; it is important that you take your time and make the choice that is best for you.

Once you have accepted a job offer, you have a professional obligation to work for the employer. Reneging on an offer, accepting an offer and then changing your mind and rejecting it, is unacceptable and unprofessional. If you renege, then you harm your reputation, and you run the risk of having a second offer withdrawn because of your unethical behavior. If you find yourself in a situation, which may force you to renege on a job offer, please speak to a recruiter immediately.

Salary

There are several resources available to check what your salary should potentially be. Before accepting an offer, understand the complete package of what they are offering (benefits, vacation, compensation, training opportunities, 401k...etc.). Sometimes the whole offer package could be very attractive even if the salary is lower than what you are expecting.

Salary Resources

www.salary.com

www.glassdoor.com

www.payscale.com

Prep for Success

1. **Figure out the best way to get to and from work.** Getting to and from work can be expensive and take a long time. An unreliable commute can also be stressful and cause you to miss or be late for work.
2. **Dress for success every day.** How you dress for work can make a big impression. If you are not sure what type of clothing is appropriate for your job, try to contact the person who hired you and ask them if employees dress formal (e.g. wear suits), business casual (skirts or dress pants and nice shirt or sweater) casual (khakis, casual pants or skirts, and nice shirt) or very casual (jeans or shorts). Never wear clothing that is too informal for the job.
3. **Prepare to exceed your employer's expectations.** If you're serious about succeeding at work then it is important to think about what skills and qualities your employer expects from employees and try to exceed those expectations.

YOU'RE
HIRED!

Employers have certain expectations about the skills and qualities their employees need to be successful at work. It's important for you to figure out and try to meet your new employer's expectations.

During your first few weeks at work begin to think about what skills and qualities your new employer expects from someone in your position. Try to get

a sense of who is already doing a great job and then ask them what they think are the key skills and qualities they have that helps them to do their job well. You may want to request some time to talk to your new supervisor to understand their expectations up front.

Be Punctual - show up for work on time (better yet, a few minutes early!)

Be Dependable - Employers want someone they can depend on. If you're supposed to be somewhere for work at a certain time, be there. If you're supposed to do something for work within a given timeframe, do it. Try not to take a lot of sick days or show up late for work. If you have to take a day off or come in late be sure to communicate your needs ahead of time (if you can) and come up with a plan to make up for the missed time so that your employer knows you are dependable. If you have a legitimate medical reason to miss work, be sure to request an appointment with your Supervisor or Human Resources department to explain the circumstances ahead of time.

Be a Team Player! Employers expect you to work cooperatively with your colleagues. Even in **jobs** that encourage competition between employees (for example some sales jobs) employers expect you to be a team player, to respect your colleagues, and find ways to maximize your strengths as well as the strengths of your colleagues.

Be open to feedback! Employers expect you to be open to learning and receiving feedback that can help you to do better at your job.

Offer Solutions! - Employers don't appreciate employees that are constantly complaining or identifying problems and not coming up with solutions. If you have identified a problem at your job, try to come up with possible solutions before bringing up the problem to your supervisor.

Be Enthusiastic and Have a Positive Attitude! These qualities can help you to be more productive and are qualities that other people - including employers and employees - like to be around. If you are working in a field you enjoy and are good at you are more likely to be enthusiastic and maintain a positive attitude.

Go Above and Beyond - employees that not only do what is asked of them but also seek opportunities to learn more and do more are often the employees that get promoted and move up the career ladder the fastest.