

The Scouted Guide to Interviews

We've consolidated our best advice from decades of industry experience to help you crush your interviews.

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Scouted.

Do Your Research

Always go into an interview having researched:

The industry and where the company fits into its marketplace and the competitive landscape.

The people you'll meet and members of the team for which you're interviewing. If you know people in common with the interviewer or team, reach out to them in advance for intel. Plus, sharing that you have a mutual connection with an interviewer is an easy way to establish common ground.

The values of the senior leadership and company as a whole. How do their values affect their decision-making?

Leadership and senior staff at the firm. If you're meeting a senior executive, try to find them in podcasts, videos, and articles to get a sense of how they communicate and what they're like.

The product or user experience, if applicable. Be able to provide feedback on what it is like for a general user to interact with whatever they are selling or offering.

The interview process. Don't hesitate to email your hiring manager or interviewer and ask, "What can I expect during this interview so I can prepare?"

On average, you can expect 3 interviews before an offer. ¹



You should be familiar enough with the company that you are prepared to ask good questions.

As a benchmark, be able to mention something about the company, product, or role that excites you – **something that, ideally, the average person might not know.**

Do your research - it will make all the difference.

Tell Your Story as it Relates to the Job



Recruiters take an average of **6 seconds** to scan a resume. ²

**Your resume.
Your story.
Your narrative.**

An interview is your opportunity to share your story beyond your resume. You have the freedom to drive your narrative. **Think about the most important moments or accomplishments that you want to communicate** about yourself, be sure to have **concrete examples** to support those attributes, and be able to explain how they are relevant to the job at hand.

Know your resume

If it's on your resume, you should be able to explain it. Have specific examples of what you did during your previous experiences and be prepared to share **why** you accepted certain opportunities and left others. Be able to not only talk about what you accomplished at each job but also **what you learned from them**.

Pro tip:

How do you answer, "Tell me about yourself?"

Always ask: **"What is the question behind the question?"**. Interviewers are trying to understand who you are: what makes you tick, what you value, how you think. This is an opportunity for you to control your narrative and to tell the interviewer points that are not on your resume.

Many answer this question by listing accomplishments. While you can use your previous experience as signposts to guide your story, **try to think more broadly about the formative experiences and examples you want to share about yourself or help illustrate your values and motivations**. This will help you craft a story that's not only memorable but also applicable to the job.

Prepare to Answers These Standard Questions



Pro tip:

Don't just answer the question *literally*, recognize the question *behind* the question that is being asked, and take every question as an opportunity to share something meaningful about your story.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Can you please walk me through your resume?
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake/failed.
- What motivates you?
- Why do you want to leave your current company?
- Why have you had so many jobs in such a short period?
- Why do you want to work at this company/industry?
- What do you want out of a job?
- What is your dream job?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What are the latest books you've read?
- What are three things your former manager would like you to improve?
- Tell me about an accomplishment you are most proud of.
- Tell me how you handled a difficult situation.
- How would you deal with an angry or irate customer?
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss.
- Share a time when you went above and beyond requirements?
- What role do you play on a team?
- What are some of your leadership experiences?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- What can you offer us that someone else cannot?
- Why should we hire you?
- How do you handle high-pressure situations?
- What do you want me to know that you haven't already told me?
- What questions do you have for me?

Beyond the specifics above, it goes without saying that for most early interviews, you should **be prepared to answer why you are looking for a new job, what you are looking for in a new company or job, and why you're interested in this specific opportunity or company.** Many companies want to understand how this decision fits into your broader career path and goals and understand why it makes sense for you.

Questions to ask about DEI during an interview

- How diverse is the executive team?
- Where do you think the company needs to improve the most?
- What does the promotion and evaluation process look like?
- How do you foster an open, communicative environment for your employees?
- What tangible goals does the organization have surrounding DEI?
- What leadership training programs do you offer?

Ask the Right Questions

- What are the company's long-term goals objectives?
- How does this team/department fit into the broader company structure?
- How does this role fit into the company?
- How does the company culture come alive to you?
- Why did the last person who held this role move on?
- What is the company's management style?
- Where do you think management can improve the most?
- What are the key performance indicators (KPIs) that I should care about?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the company or department right now?
- What does a typical day look like?
- What do you like most/least about working here?
- What leadership training programs do you offer?
- How do you foster an open, communicative environment for your employees?
- How do you celebrate a diversity of ideas and people?
- Who does this position report to?

Ask yourself what each question says about you.

Asking questions during an interview shows that you're interested, you've done your research, and you're willing to go the extra mile.

If you don't have questions, it makes it seem like you are simply going through the motions and would accept any job. Even more importantly, **hiring managers view questions as representative of what you value and what's important to you.**

So, when thinking about what you want to ask, take a moment to ask yourself what each question says about you.

Pro tip:

Don't be afraid to ask the same questions to different people - this can be a great way for you to triangulate across different viewpoints.

Remember, you are interviewing the company, too, so make sure you are getting the information you need to make an informed decision on whether or not this is a good fit for you.

Avoid certain questions early on in the process:

- What are the salary and benefits for this role?
- How many hours a week do people typically work?
- How much vacation time do you offer?
- How soon will I be able to be promoted?

Bring Your Passion to the Interview

Apparent lack of excitement is the #1 reason qualified candidates get turned down after an interview.

What excites you about this opportunity?

You are going to be asked what excites you about an opportunity or the company, and if you can't answer this question with specificity and genuine passion, you will fail to get the job. Really. People care deeply about their work and want to know that you will care, too.

Interviewing at a startup:

Enthusiasm for a company is especially important when you are interviewing with startups where you are joining a group of people banding together to achieve the impossible.

In many cases, and especially in the startup world, a quality interview should feel more like a deep, dynamic dinner table conversation with colleagues than a cross-examination. You don't want to come off overly rehearsed or robotic; just be yourself.



The average person will spend 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime.

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The “airport test”

Companies look to hire people that are not only qualified to perform the job requirements, but who are also people they would want to spend an extended amount of time with, so connecting with your interviewers is important. Take the time in the beginning to engage in small talk, break the ice, and ask them how they are doing.

Pro tip:

Be in the moment - don't worry about every detail or the logistics you'll have to worry about after you get the job. Just do your best and if you get the job, you can figure that all out later.

Know what role you're interviewing for, but also keep an open mind. It's common for an interviewer to consider your candidacy holistically. If they think you're a good fit for the company, they might also want to consider you for other viable opportunities, beyond the role for which you applied.

Send a Thank-you Note

A thank you note can be a lot more than a simple formality. It gives you another chance to be top of mind for the interviewer, reiterates your interest, and even addresses a mistake or something you forgot during your interview. Some hiring managers will even only consider candidates who send thank you notes, so be sure you're on the list of those who do.



Thank-you note guidelines:

- Keep it brief.
- Send separate notes to each of your interviewers, addressing them by name.
- Reiterate your interest in the position.
- Address anything you feel you left out of your interview.
- **Send within 24 hours of your interview.**

Pro tip:

Companies value candidates who are proactive and take initiative.

Post-thank-you-note, don't be afraid to follow up with the company to check in on your candidacy. How frequently you follow up can vary depending on the situation, but every other week up to once a week tends to be appropriate.

80%

of managers said they take post-interview thank-you notes into account when deciding who to hire. ⁵

How to use a thank-you note to fix an imperfect interview:

- Acknowledge missteps but then add color to your previous answers to strengthen your candidacy.
- Elaborate on any points of interest from your conversation.
- Maintain a positive tone, avoiding phrases like "I forgot" or "I didn't".

In-house Interview Checklist



1. Dress to feel confident

When it comes to dress code, a good rule of thumb is to dress a bit more formally than your interviewer which is often a signal you are taking your interview seriously.

2. Bring paper and a pen

It is not ok to take notes on your phone during an interview. Keep it old school. Turn your phone off when you get to the office.

3. Arrive early

And leave time to get through security.

4. Deal with logistics

Know the address, how to get there, and who you're meeting when you arrive so you know who to ask for and where to go.

5. Engage respectfully with front-desk employees

Of course, this applies to anyone you meet, but often-times hiring managers will ask administrative personnel for their impressions of your behavior.

6. Remember who you meet

Write down the names of everyone you meet so you can send them a thank you note, reference them in future conversations and even connect with them on LinkedIn.

7. Bring an ID and a copy of your resume

Be sure to bring a copy of your resume for each person interviewing you.

Etiquette

Regardless of the environment, be professional - don't use profanity or overshare about personal issues. It might sound obvious, but it can be easy to be carefree (or unfiltered) when you feel comfortable with an interviewer and it can show immaturity and lack of discretion.

Pro tip:

Options have inherent value, so don't do anything that might prevent you from getting an offer. This includes pre-emptively removing yourself from an interview process. You owe it to yourself to get the opportunity to turn the job down.

Virtual Interview Checklist



When it comes to virtual interviews, all of the same advice applies as if you were going to an in-house interview. But, there are a few specific items one should keep in mind.

Pro tip:

If you want a slightly more “polished” look during your Zoom call, simply go to **SETTINGS > VIDEO > TOUCH UP MY APPEARANCE** for a laptop, or on your phone go to **SETTINGS > MEETINGS > TOUCH UP MY APPEARANCE**.

1. Equipment

- Test your equipment ahead of time.
- Keep your internet tabs and running programs to a minimum.
- Put your call on ‘gallery view’ so you can see all the parties.
- Have the camera level with your face.
- Make sure head and shoulders are in frame.

2. Set the Scene

- Pick a quiet room with minimal distractions.
- Be sure pets are outside the room, fed, and happy.
- Dress appropriately for a job interview.
- Have enough light and don't be backlit.

3. Prepare

- Have a copy of your resume handy, printed or on your computer.
- Take notes.

4. Additional tips

- Don't forget your personality.
- At the end, ask for a timeline and next steps.
- Don't forget the thank-you note!

Pro tip:

If you tend to be introverted, you might need to amp your energy level a bit so that it comes through via video. Many recruiters say to amp your energy level 10-20%.

Citations

1. MRI Network | 2017 Recruiter Sentiment Study
2. The Latters | Eye-Tracking Study 2018
3. Robert Half | A Little Thanks Goes A Long Way
4. Gettysburg | How much of your life is spent at work?