

# How to Crush Your Next Interview

A Master Guide to Interviewing

WHITE PAPER

## A BRIEF Introduction

Interviews can be stressful, but we're here to help make the interviewing process easier. Our team of professionals listened to the pain points of our candidates throughout their career journey and used them to form advice geared to ensuring your success.

Discover the latest industry insights, improve core competencies, and become well-equipped to interview for any role you pursue.



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## Interview Preparation Techniques

When preparing before an interview, you may be thinking about questions to ask your potential new employer, what you should wear, and what to expect. Follow these simple tips below to help your interview go as smoothly as possible and how to land the job.

### Select Your Attire

How you look is important in how hiring managers perceive you, so ensure your appearance is polished and professional. Select your interview outfit ahead of time – simple and classic is best. Take time to clean your outfit and ensure there are no major wrinkles, tears, or stains. Also, match your attire to the job. If you're interviewing for a warehouse position, nice pants and a basic polo or blouse are great. But if you're going for a professional or manager position, opt for a more business-centric look.

### Rehearse Your Introduction

Another key factor in forming hiring managers' first impressions of you is how you introduce yourself. Practice until it becomes natural – introduce yourself with a confident tone, make eye contact, smile, and give a firm handshake.

### Learn About the Company

Take some time to prepare and learn about the company you are interviewing with. A quick glance at their website can help inform you on the basics of what they do, locations, services they provide, products they make, and more. Being prepared for your interview by knowing a brief company background may set you apart from other candidates.

### Arrive Early

Being late to the interview can start it off on a negative note that can be difficult to overcome. Avoid being frazzled and having the hiring managers question your professionalism by taking precautions to be punctual. Find out the exact location, get directions and leave yourself an extra buffer of time to account for traffic or other issues. It is better to be way too early and wait outside than to risk being late.

### Brainstorm Questions to Ask

One of the most common end-of-interview questions is "do you have any questions for me?" Having a list of questions allows you to learn more about the position and the company. It shows that you took time to prepare, and you care about the job you're applying for.

Here are the best questions to ask at the end of an interview:

- ***How is success measured in this role? What have the top performers in this position had in common?***

This question shows that you are not focused solely on landing the job but are fully invested in being a top performer if hired. It also gives you a chance to provide examples of how you possess those traits



- ***How would you describe your management style?***

This is very important for you to know as a candidate since it will be a major factor in overall job satisfaction. However, asking about management style also shows the hiring manager that you understand the importance of cultural fit for long-term success and are thoughtful about assessing how well you would work under a particular management style.

- ***What is a typical workday like?***

Asking about the realities of the day-to-day workday can provide you the essential information you need to ensure you have a thorough understanding of the expectations and whether you would be happy in the role over the long term. Plus, showing interest in the typical workday makes it clear to hiring managers that you are enthusiastic about learning as much as possible about the opportunity.

- ***What do you like best about working for the company?***

Asking the interviewer what they like best about working for the company can give you a glimpse into what the company culture is truly like. Aligning with the company culture is crucial in a mutually beneficial arrangement – if you are a mismatch for the current culture, not only are you more likely to quit, but it could also hinder your overall performance and future there.

- ***Is there anything regarding my qualifications that makes you hesitate?***

It is a bold question, but if you are up to asking the interviewer about their concerns about you, it can empower you to address any potential issues upfront. It also makes it clear to the hiring manager that you are passionate about the role and want to do everything you can to land it.

- ***What is the expected timeline for making a final decision?***

End the interview by requesting the expected timeline for the employer to make a final decision. Not only does this provide you the necessary information to set your expectations accordingly, but it concludes the interview on a strong note in which you show the hiring manager that you remain enthusiastic about working for them.

Some additional end-of-interview questions that you may want to ask include:

- ***When are you looking to make a hiring decision for this position?***
- ***Do you feel as though I would be a good candidate for this role?***

## **Prepare Your Responses**

Be prepared to answer questions and provide scenarios during your interview that demonstrate why you would be a good fit for the position you have applied for. Provide real-life examples of how you have worked on projects, collaborated with others, and how you approach solving issues or errors. If appropriate for the position, bring any kind of portfolio you may have to show off your work.

## **Work With a Recruiter**

Why should you work with a recruiter? Because recruiters can give advice and guidance to help you with all aspects of the job search process. Everyone needs feedback, and job search applicants are no exception. The more feedback you receive, the better you can do.



## **Nailing a Video Interview**

Conducting job interviews via video, especially for preliminary screenings and initial rounds, helps hiring managers to save time and resources. Since you are not face-to-face, you may miss out on some of the confidence-building actions, such as giving a firm handshake, but there are video interviewing best practices that can leave a positive, lasting impression. Check out these tips for having a successful video interview:

### **Convey a Professional Appearance**

The interviewers may only be seeing a portion of you on video, but you still need to put in the same effort as you would in-person to convey a professional appearance. Wear a business casual outfit so you'll look put together and feel more confident.

### **Troubleshoot Your Tech**

Before your interview, make sure you are comfortable using the video platform and everything is working correctly. Practice using your webcam, checking your microphone sound, and logging into a practice meeting, so you know your tech is functioning.

### **Pick an Optimal Location**

Avoid distracting from your responses during a video interview and pick an optimal location for where you will participate in it. Select an area that is well-lit, quiet, and has a simple, clutter-free background.

### **Record a Trial Run**

Speaking while looking into a webcam can feel a bit awkward, so record a trial run to see if you have any issues to address. Practice responding to common interview questions and then review the video to see if you have any nervous tics, such as not looking at the webcam or using too many filler words.

### **Be Punctual**

Just like with an in-person interview, give yourself a buffer by showing up early. Get seated, prepare your webcam, and have your login screen pulled up about 10 to 15 minutes ahead of time - when the scheduled time arrives, you can click to connect.

### **Slow Down and Speak Up**

Do not forget to account for the potential audio and video lagging that can occur during video interviews. Slow down as you talk, and speak up so the interviewers can understand you, even if there is a bit of a delay. If you speak too quickly, even a short lag time could make some of your key points get lost.

### **Focus on Nonverbal Communication**

Video meeting software typically picks up the microphone of whoever is speaking at any given time, which can make it challenging to communicate the same short interjections that normally signal that you're actively listening (i.e., "Yes...", "Okay...", etc.) because it could cause you to take the sound away from the interviewer. Instead, focus on mastering your nonverbal communication - look directly into the webcam and nod, rather than speaking.



## How to Advocate for Yourself in a Job Interview

When you're interviewing for a job, the hiring manager's main objective is to gain a more detailed perspective of the type of employee you are. For instance, one of the most common job interview questions is to ask about your strengths and weaknesses. How do you respond in a way that will make the best impression? Learn more with these four tips for discussing your strengths and weaknesses in a job interview:

### Be Authentic

A lack of sincerity will reflect more negatively on you than an imperfect response, so always be authentic when talking about your strengths and weaknesses. Do not come up with answers you think the hiring manager wants to hear – always base them on reality. Pick an actual strength of yours that relates to the job, as well as a true weakness (not a thinly veiled strength, such as “I’m a perfectionist” or “I work too hard!”) albeit one that will not make the hiring manager question your ability to do the job.

### Provide Context Via Storytelling

When you are discussing your strengths and weaknesses, you can control the narrative and make your responses more compelling by adding necessary context via storytelling. Do not just state your strengths and weakness – instead, provide real-life examples to support them. For example, if your greatest strength is your problem-solving skills, talk about a time in which you were able to critically analyze a situation, and develop a solution that had a positive outcome. If your weakness is that you are not prone to sharing responsibility on a project, describe an instance in which you became burnt out from not sharing the load.

### Showcase Self-Awareness

It is not necessarily the actual content of your responses about your strengths and weaknesses that is important to hiring managers, it's often a way to assess whether you possess self-awareness. Employees who lack self-awareness tend to be defensive and not able to take feedback, accept responsibility, or grow professionally. Thoughtful answers to hiring managers' questions about your strengths and weaknesses will demonstrate that you're open to considering your behavior, motivations, and tendencies.

### Highlight Growth

When discussing strengths and weaknesses, in an interview, it is essential that you highlight your personal and professional growth regarding these traits/skills. Talk about how you discovered your natural strength in an area and how you have built upon it to become even better. With your weakness, communicate what you learned from your past mistakes, as well as what specific steps you have taken to improve in the area and/or prevent it from being an issue.



## Pain-free Approach for Responding to Tough Interview Questions

Sometimes interviewers will throw you a curveball that you might not be prepared to answer. The good thing is that it happens all the time, and in most cases the interviewer is not looking for the “right” answer, but to simply see firsthand how you respond to unexpected circumstances.

### Get Comfortable with Silence

When you are caught off-guard in an interview, there is often a natural tendency to start and keep talking to avoid “awkward” silence. However, taking a few moments to gather your thoughts before you respond can allow you to be intentional with your response, rather than just rambling. Practice getting comfortable with some silence by pausing and breathing before you talk – it may feel like an eternity to you, but it is not likely noticeable to the interviewer.

### Ask Questions to Clarify

If you do not know the exact answer to an interview question, it may be because you do not understand the question, or the interviewer was not being completely clear. In that case, aim to uncover more detail or the purpose of the question. Rather than responding right away, ask questions to clarify what insight the interviewer is hoping to learn from your response. For example, you could ask something like, “*Just to make sure we are on the same page, would you like to know...?*” or “*Are you looking for an example of when I....?*”

### Work It Out as You Talk

Sometimes interviewers may purposely ask challenging questions because they want to see how you go about solving problems. If you are asked a question, such as how you would handle a hypothetical situation (in which you have no direct previous experience doing), you can work out the answer as you talk. In this instance, you could utilize a chronological format (“*First, I would.... Next...Then...*” etc.) and essentially think aloud.

### Avoid Faking It

Sometimes you simply do not have the answer, such as if you are asked a technical question with a definitive right answer. Your integrity is more important to hiring managers than the “right answer”, so it’s best to be honest. Admitting you do not know does not have to be an interview killer – just have a statement ready, such as, “*I do not have experience in that area, so I am afraid I do not have the answer to that*” or “*I would need to do some research on that topic to best answer.*”

### Spin in a Positive Direction

Rebound from a question you do not know how to answer by spinning the topic in a positive direction. The fact you do not know about a particular subject matter or lack direct experience in an area can be an opportunity for you to demonstrate your enthusiasm for the role. Tell your interviewer that you are excited about the opportunity to learn more and gain experience if hired and that you are committed to professional development.



## How to Explain Your Reasons for Leaving a Job

### Stay Neutral Regarding Previous Employer

Saying anything negative about previous employers will make you come across as bitter to your interviewer. No matter how bad the circumstances were that caused you to leave, try to remain as neutral as possible when describing it. Try to keep it objective and without emotion, such as saying you were not right for the company culture instead of saying it was outright toxic.

### Be Honest, Without Oversharing

Transparency is important when discussing why you left your previous job but be careful not to give too much detail. This is especially important to keep in mind if you left under less-than-ideal circumstances (such as getting fired, laid off or quitting without having another job lined up). Be honest about why you left but be brief. If you start giving details, you are likely to overshare and say things you may regret.

### Highlight Your Positive Attributes

Use the answer as an opportunity to impress the interviewer by highlighting your positive attributes, rather than the downside of the previous workplace. For example, if you left a job because it was a dead end with no chance of advancement, you could tailor your response to mention your drive, work ethic, and dissatisfaction at staying in your comfort zone.

### Bring It Back to the Prospective Job

Once you have answered why a previous job was not right for you, include a brief explanation of why it sounds like this job would be a beneficial fit. For example, if you left a previous job because it ended up not being how it was originally described as, you could say something like, *"My skills were not effectively utilized in that role, but with this job, I would be able to use my experience to advance the company's goals."*





## Framework for Behavioral-Based Questions

### Structure Your Responses using the STAR Method

Job interviews tend to make most candidates at least a bit nervous but being as prepared as possible can help you handle them with confidence. Answering questions in a concise, yet informative manner can be challenging if you are anxious, but especially so when the interviewer is asking for you to describe an experience. However, utilizing the STAR method can help you structure your responses in a way to keep you from inadvertently rambling or not giving enough relevant information. Learn more about using the STAR method in a job interview:

- Situation** When the interviewer asks you to “Describe a time in which...”, first focus on providing the **background on the situation** you will be using as your example. This is the part where you talk about the necessary context the interviewer will need to understand the situation. Say **when** and **where** it occurred, **who else was involved**, and any other relevant details.
- Task** Once you have given the necessary background, transition into **explaining the task** for which you were expected to complete. Give a one to two sentence description of **your responsibility** in that example.
- Action** Then, describe **the actions you took** to accomplish the task. Be specific about the steps in the process.
- Result** Finally, conclude your response by **explaining the result** of the situation. This includes what you **learned** or **achieved**.

### Example response using the STAR Method

For example, if the interviewer asks about a time in which you made a mistake and how you handled it, you could describe the situation as such:

*“At my first sales job, I really wanted to prove myself, and so I did not like to ask questions. **(Situation)**.*

*I was told to contact a specific past client and schedule a demo of a new product **(Task)**.*

*I tried to figure out how to use the product on my own without asking for help and gave the presentation **(Action)**.*

*I ended up fumbling through the demo and not making the sale. I then realized that being afraid to ask for help was only going to hurt my performance and reputation. The next time I met with my boss, they answered all my questions. The next demo I scheduled with a client, I did much better and ended with a sale **(Result)**.*



## Summary

Don't just project confidence but believe that you are good enough. It's never too late or too soon to advance your skills, learn new things, and strive for what you deserve. At Nesco Resource, we make the personnel process personal. We care about the needs and wants of every candidate, aiming to create a positive impact on your life.

Interviewing can be daunting, but with the tips outlined above you will be well-prepared to take on the process with poise. Discover more of our resources and services tailored to making job hunting less overwhelming and fearful by visiting our website at [nescoresource.com](https://nescoresource.com).





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