

INTERVIEWS: PREPARATION TIPS & COMMON QUESTIONS

Preparation

1. Research the company and industry. Read company news. Be knowledgeable of industry trends. If you know the interviewers' names, review their LinkedIn profiles (you may find some common topics to talk about). Check if the interviewer has Ted talks, etc.
2. Think about your goals, values and skills and how they match the job.
3. Prepare and [practice](#) your responses to common interview questions ([see Next page](#)) including "Tell me about yourself" and "why do you want to work for us?" Describe your experience using storytelling and show how the work relates to the job you are interviewing for. ***Your answers should sound natural not rehearsed.***
4. Prepare for technical interviews by practicing whiteboarding. For online coding practice tools, use Leetcode, HackerRank, etc. For hardware design practice, use HDLBits.
5. Prepare a list of questions for the interviewer ([see Next page](#)).
6. For virtual interviews, check microphone and camera ([see Next page for additional tips](#)). For in-person interviews, plan travel route and add in extra time.

Day of Interview

1. Wear business attire ([for video interviews as well](#)).
2. Be on time (plan on arriving 10-15 minutes before your time slot so you don't feel rushed; for virtual interviews, sign in a few minutes early).
3. Turn off all mobile devices prior to the interview.
4. For in-person interviews, give a firm handshake when you meet the interviewer.
5. If you want to take notes during the interview, let the interviewer know at the start.
6. Build rapport with the interviewer - find a way to connect. Be genuine and authentic.
7. Listen carefully. Make sure you are [answering the question](#) the interviewer is asking. Ask for clarification if the question is unclear.
8. Provide [strong examples](#) with specific details (***tell stories***). Make yourself memorable.
9. When working through a problem, explain your thought process (interviewers want to hear how you think to assess your critical thinking skills). Ask questions as needed.
10. Talk clearly and succinctly. Moderate your speaking pace (avoid talking fast) and avoid ending your sentences on a high note.
11. Be engaged throughout the interviews (maintain eye contact and good posture) and be enthusiastic (show that you want the job).
12. At the end of the interview, thank the interviewer, ask if you can connect with them on LinkedIn and email them a thank you note (within 24 hours of the interview).

Common Interview Questions (Tell stories when possible; QUANTIFY results)

- Tell me about yourself (or walk me through your resume)
- Why do you want to work for us? (try to explain where the interest stems from)
- What skills do you bring to the job? Why should I hire you?
- Why did you decide to go to Columbia?
- Describe your recent jobs or projects (based on what's listed in your resume)
- What are your strengths (should be relevant to the job you're applying for)? Weaknesses (a weakness NOT relevant to the job)?
- What are your long-term and short-term career goals?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- Tell me something about yourself that is NOT on your resume or something else that you want me to know about you.
- **Behavioral Questions**
Can you give me an example of a time that... 1) you had to deal with conflict on a project; 2) you faced a challenge; 3) you dealt with a difficult client; 4) you made a mistake; 5) you had to make a decision with limited data.

Virtual Interview Tips

- Prior to the day of the interview, check your microphone and your camera setup. The camera should be adjusted to show your head and the upper part of your torso.
- Make sure the background is neat and appropriate. Remember the interviewer will see everything behind you.
- Check that your face is well lit (there should be no bright light behind you).
- Choose an interview time when you know there will be no background noise (e.g. construction, etc.) or any other interruptions.
- Dress in full business attire for the interview (not just the top half)
- During the interview, look at the screen when the interviewer is talking, but look at the webcam when you are talking in order to simulate direct eye contact.

Questions You Can Ask Interviewers

- What are the main day-to-day responsibilities? What does a typical week look like?
- Will I have an opportunity to collaborate with other employees (or interns)?
- Can you describe the company culture?
- What is the best part of working for this company? the least favorite part?
- For full-time roles:
 - Can you describe the onboarding process?
 - What are the expectations for me in this role? What metrics will my performance be evaluated against?
 - What is the biggest challenge that you expect the new candidate to tackle?
 - What does professional development look like? What types of learning & development opportunities are available?
- For internships:
 - Will I be assigned a mentor for the summer?
 - Will I be working on a live project?
 - Does your internships typically convert to full time offers at the end of the summer?