

Novoresume's

JOB INTERVIEW MASTERCLASS



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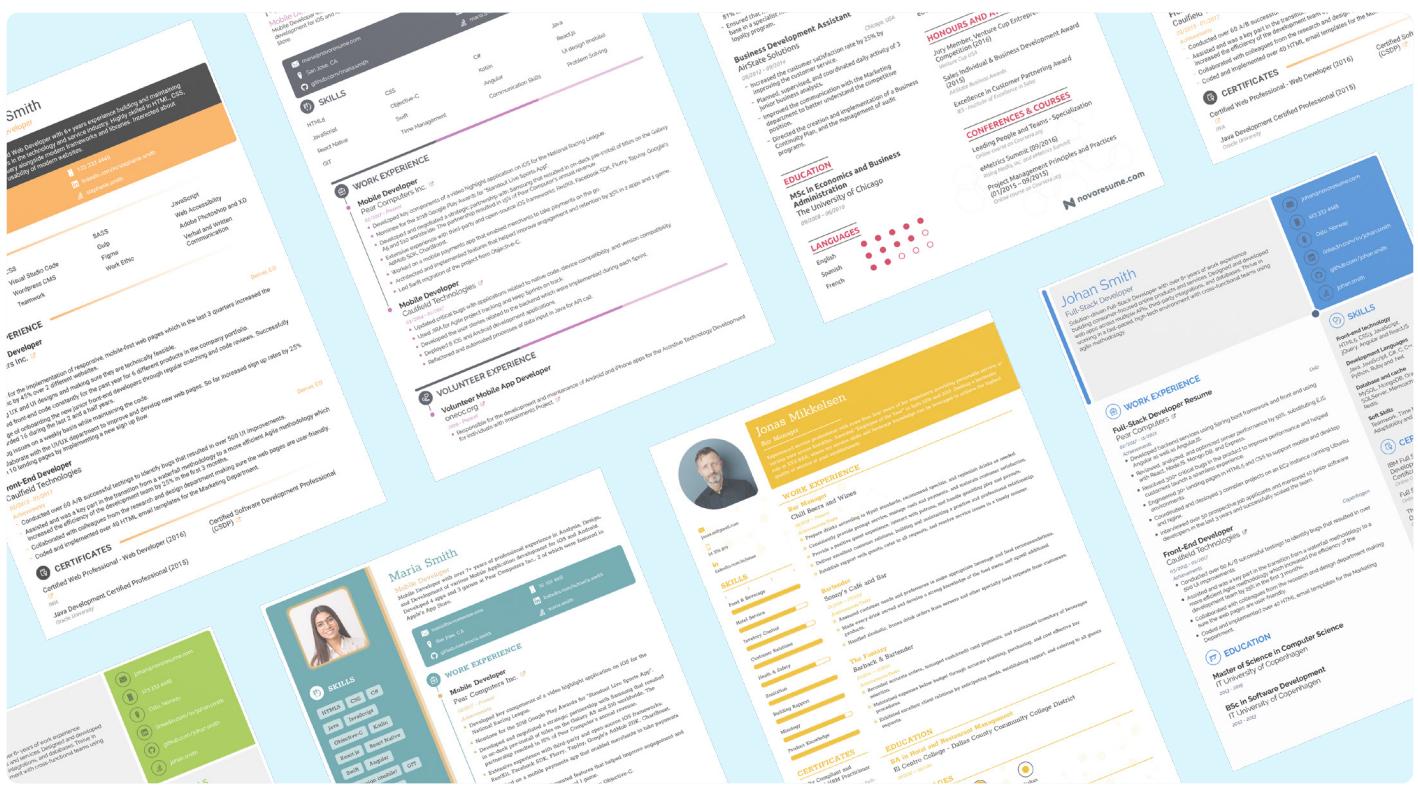
An intro to Novorésumé

Hey there, thanks for buying the book!

If you're reading this, you're probably already a Novorésumé user who purchased the book from our website. In case you came across this book elsewhere, though, like at a conference or an event, here's a small introduction to who we are, what we do, and what this book is all about. At its core, Novorésumé is a resume builder company. We help our users create cutting-edge resumes and cover letters with our online platform:

A screenshot of the Novorésumé software interface. On the left, a color palette tool shows a grid of 16 color swatches. The main workspace displays a resume for "Melissa Bernal" as a "Digital Marketing Specialist" in New York. The resume includes sections for "Marketing ...", "My Content", "Switch Template", "Color", "Font", "Theme", "Layout", "Settings", "Optimizer", "Download", "My Documents", and "Background". The resume content includes contact information, education, work experience, certificates, and languages. A secondary panel on the right shows a "Background" section with various design patterns and a checked checkbox for "Apply color to Background".

During the company's inception, the founding team spotted a very common problem among professionals: Some of the brightest and most accomplished among them, as well as students just starting out in their careers, both struggle with finding a job that matches their talents. After digging deep, we realized that, in a lot of cases, this had nothing to do with the applicant being inexperienced or lacking skills. Rather, the culprit was their resume. Oftentimes, the resume does not reflect the bright, ambitious individual who crafted it in the first place. And so our mission was set – to create a resume builder that makes the process of creating a resume so simple that even an absolute beginner can use it to land their dream job. Fast forward a few years, if you've seen how our resumes look, you'd probably agree with us on this one...



We absolutely nailed it – the resumes created using our resume builder are well-designed, easy to skim, and make the candidate stand out. Helping our users create amazing resumes, however, was just one part of the equation. The resume might get your foot through the door, but you still have to impress the interviewer with your charm and get the job offer.

Which brings us to this book! As part of our vision to fight galactic unemployment, we set out to create the most comprehensive book on job interviews out there. This book covers just about everything you need to know about interviews from A to Z, including how to answer the most common interview questions, how hiring managers evaluate candidates, how to act during interviews, and much more.

But that's enough with the introduction! Once again, thanks for buying the book, and we hope it's going to be a game-changer for you and your career. Let's dig in.

Interviews 101

What you need to know

Let's start with the interview basics – what exactly are hiring managers looking for when interviewing candidates? This section aims to give you an inside view of what's going on in the interviewer's head during the interview. The very first thing you need to keep in mind here is this: Interviews happen once the hiring manager has already reviewed your application. They've assessed that you meet the basic requirements for the position (e.g., enough years of experience, the right skills, etc.) and that you don't have any obvious red flags in your resume.

Now, during the interview, the hiring manager wants to:

- Get further insight into the candidate's experience and achievements. Is the candidate someone who excelled at their previous roles or someone who just does the bare minimum?
- Meet the candidate in person, get a feel for what kind of person they are, and see whether the person reflects their resume.
- See if the candidate shows personality red flags. Is the person agreeable? Are they capable of working in a team?
- Spot any signs of inconsistencies. Did the candidate lie about something major on their resume?
- Learn more about the candidate and their work habits. Are they someone who'd get along with other employees in a day-to-day work environment?
- See if the candidate's long-term goals align with the company. If the candidate is looking for a short-term gig before moving on to something completely different, then they're probably not the right choice.
- Decide whether the candidate is a good culture fit or not. E.g., if the company's management style is self-governing, then the employee has to be a self-starter (and their background needs to reflect that).

So, interview questions are meant to help recruiters understand whether or not the candidate meets the criteria mentioned above. If the candidate DOES meet the criteria, then there's a very good chance that they'll get the job. In this book, you'll learn all about the types of questions interviewers ask to determine whether you meet these criteria, and what you need to learn to answer correctly.

Pro Tip

You're probably surprised that we left out "**confidence**" or "**interview prowess**" from the list of things HRs look for in candidates. Well, that's for a good reason. Confidence during an interview is good, but it's not mandatory. Unless you're applying for a management position (or something client-facing like sales or tech support), your personal charm or confidence is **not** that big of a factor.

If you meet all the other criteria, then chances are, you'll still get the job! So if you're the type who overthinks how they act during an interview, this news should come as a big relief.

CHAPTER 1

BEGINNER'S

GUIDE TO

INTERVIEWS



Beginner's guide to interview etiquette – What you need to know

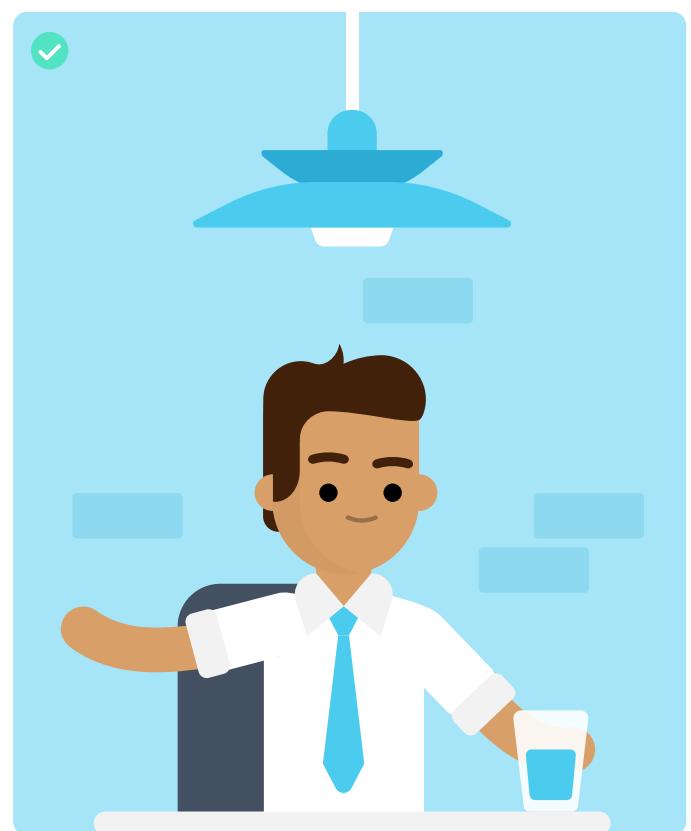
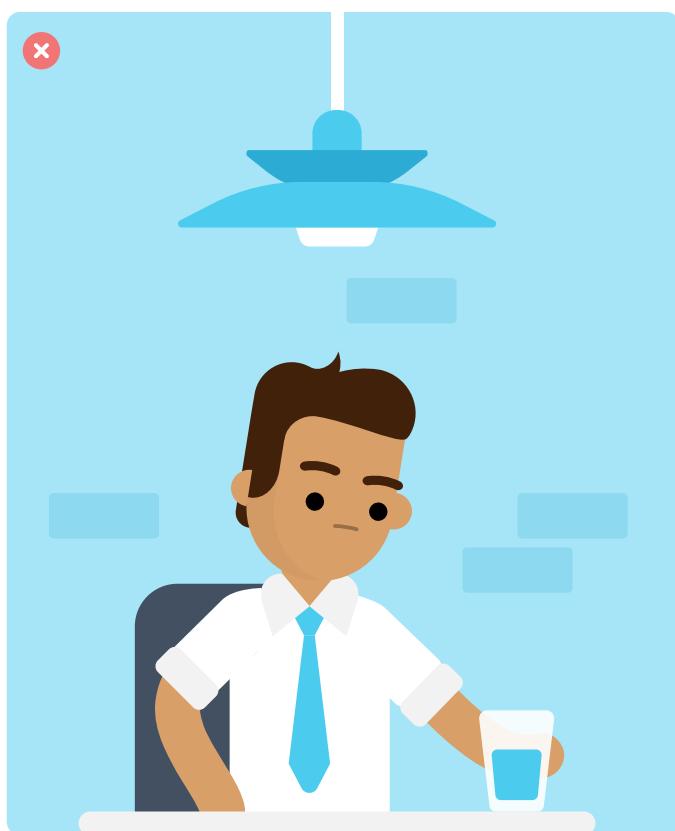
A big chunk of the book is about specific interview questions and how to answer them. Before we can get to that point, though, we need to cover some groundwork. In this chapter, we'll teach you the basics of job interviews, including:

- Beginner's Guide to Interview Etiquette
- How to Dress for Any Interview
- How to Research Potential Employers
- What to Do on the Day Before the Interview

1. Smile and be friendly

It goes without saying that you should take on the interview with a smile and friendly attitude, and not like someone's sentenced you to life imprisonment. After all, the hiring manager isn't just looking to hire a capable employee, but also someone who is a pleasure to work with and can cooperate well with other team members. And yet, keeping a smile on and being friendly can be tough if you're naturally introverted or if interview nerves get the best of you.

What can be helpful to remember here is that recruiters are people too and are all too aware of pre-interview anxiety or any other factor that can hinder your communication and social skills. If you're feeling particularly anxious, you can just be honest about it, saying something like "I'm sorry, I'm feeling a bit anxious." The recruiter will be more than understanding, and the small gesture might even help establish rapport between you.



2. Make eye contact

Keeping eye contact with the person you're talking to shows that you're paying attention and that you're invested in the conversation. This can be extremely helpful during a job interview, as it can show the interviewer that you're focused, attentive, and present in the moment. If you usually have issues focusing or making eye contact, first, make sure to get rid of any possible distractions, such as your cell phone.

Additionally, try to keep the recruiter's gaze for 4 to 5 seconds at a time and, instead of looking down when you break eye contact, look to the side and then resume it.

3. Actively listen to the interviewer

Active listening is more than just silently listening to the interviewer and nodding here and there. You need to actually be proactive with your listening. What this means is, when the interviewer says something interesting like this:

Example

This job is client-facing and involves talking to a lot of customers on a daily basis...

You should add to it by asking questions like these:

- How many customers, on average, would I talk to per day?
- How do you measure a successful interaction with a customer? What's the KPI?
- Is the interaction mostly on the phone or also face-to-face?

First and foremost, asking such follow-up questions allows you to learn more about the job and helps you decide if it's something you'd actually like to do.

Bonus points – it also shows that you're actively engaged in the conversation and that you really care about the job you're interviewing for. Other than the questions, you can even mention your personal experiences with the topic, such as:

Example

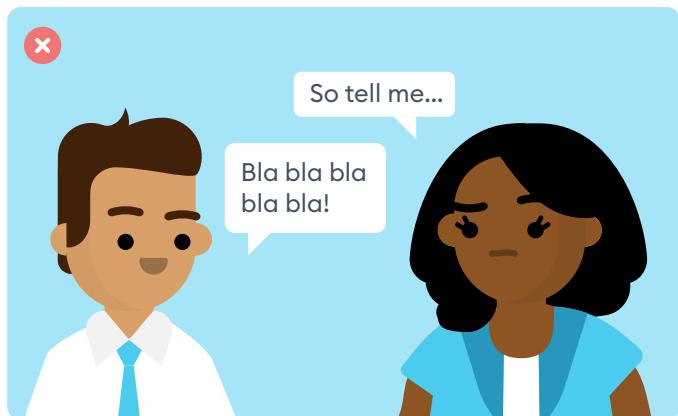
That's actually great! I love working with people. In fact, my biggest issue with my last role was that I didn't get to interact as much with our clients...

Some other ways you can practice active listening during the interview are:

- **Requesting clarification.** E.g., "So for the cold calls, the main KPI is scheduling offline meetings, correct?"
- **Summarizing what the interviewer** said. E.g., "So basically, the role is remote, the minimum KPI is 50 calls a day, and there's barely any face-to-face meetings..."
- **Asking probing questions.** E.g., "What about cold email outreach? You mentioned a lot about cold calling, but not much about email..."

4. Don't interrupt the interviewer

Interrupting someone mid-speech is impolite, but interrupting an interviewer is much, much worse. On top of coming off as impatient, recruiters will surely think you know nothing about the very basics of communication. There's not much to practice here, really; just remember to make sure the interviewer has finished their sentence before you answer, typically by letting two or three seconds pass before you start speaking.

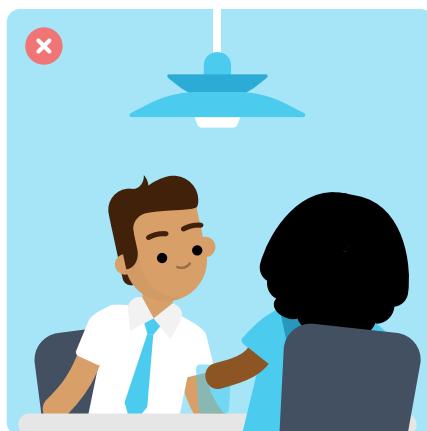


5. Pay attention to your body language

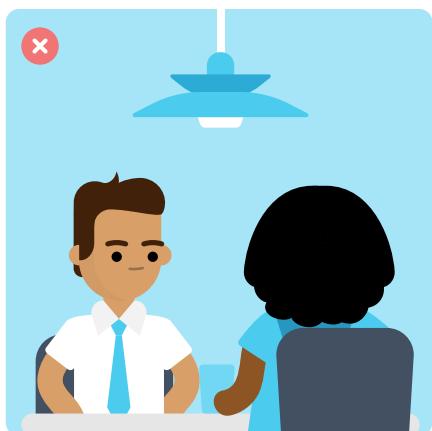
Body language can be just as important as words, so don't take yours lightly. Although you don't need to be a body language expert to ace your interview, you DO need to know about the type of body language you should avoid:



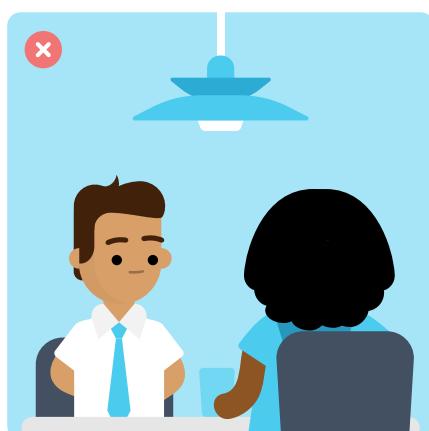
This stance makes you look defensive, so try to keep your arms on your sides.



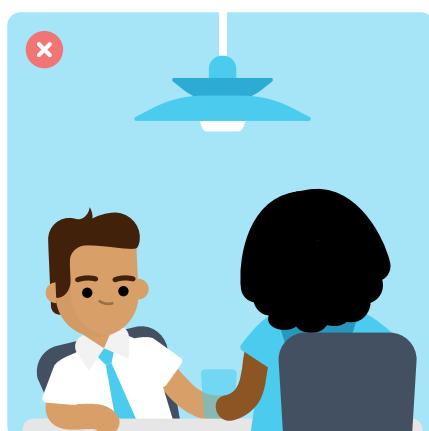
Leaning forward makes you look aggressive, so aim for a natural posture.



This is another aggressive posture you should try to avoid.



This gesture can make you look rigid and unnatural.

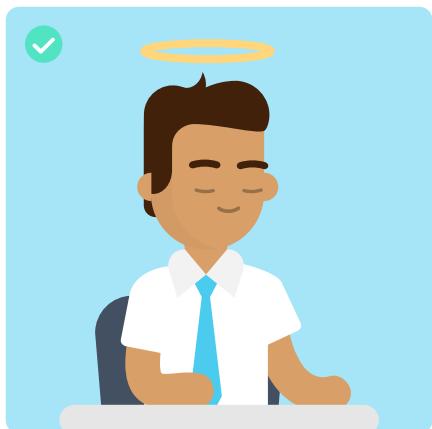


Being relaxed is good, but being too relaxed makes you seem uninterested in the conversation.

6. Always be honest

Nothing – and we really mean nothing – beats honesty. No matter what your red flags are (long employment gaps, frequent career changes, being fired from your previous job, etc.), remember that lying about them **won't** help you. It might save you from the momentary discomfort of having to answer, but chances are your supervisor or the hiring manager will find out sooner or later and won't be happy about it.

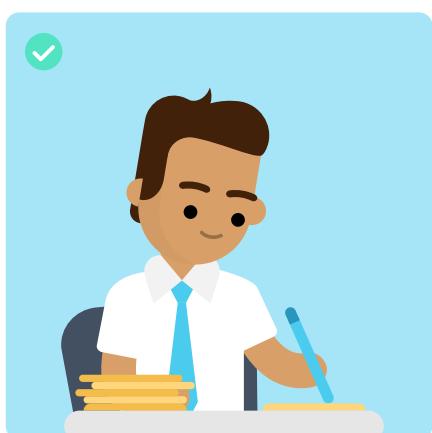
To avoid the consequences of that happening, acknowledge your weaknesses and prepare to answer them in earnest (we show you exactly how to do so in the second chapter of this book).



7. Take notes

If you brought a notebook with you to the interview (and we advise that you do), make good use of it by taking notes. Taking notes will not just prove that you're interested, focused and that you care about the job. Additionally, it can also give you something to do with your hands if you're in the habit of fidgeting, or moving them when you speak.

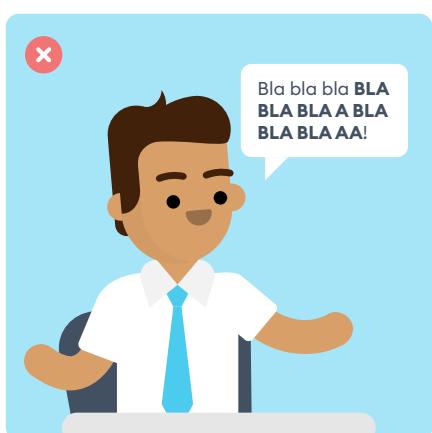
Not to mention, you can use the notes to write down important information, like the names of the people you'll be reporting to, answers to any questions you may have, and any information you might want to look up after the interview.



8. Don't talk too fast or loud

Speaking too fast can give away your nerves and can also make you look unnatural and as if you're reading off a script. Whereas speaking loudly is plainly impolite – and a little annoying, if we're being honest. So, make sure to be mindful both of how fast and how loudly you speak during the interview. Optimally, you should catch a break every now and then and allow the interviewer to ask any questions, if they need to.

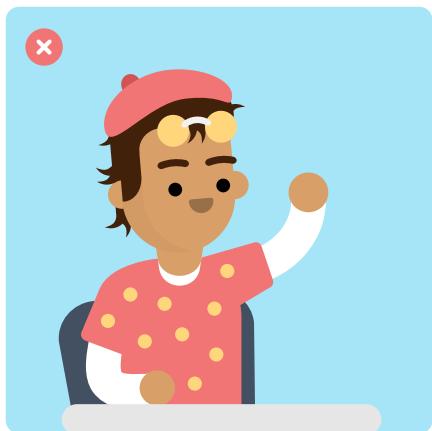
That said, you shouldn't be too quiet either – you should be speaking just loud enough that the interviewer doesn't have to lean forward to hear you or tell you to raise your voice.



10. Dress for the position

We cover the interview dress code in detail in the next section, but we still have to reiterate how important it is to tailor your interview outfit to the position. Applying for a corporate job? Opt for a suit or a business casual outfit. Applying for a job in a summer camp and doing the interview somewhere outdoors? A pair of unflashy shorts and a plain T-shirt should do the trick!

What's important is that your outfit is not exaggerated and that it doesn't distract the interviewer from what you have to say.

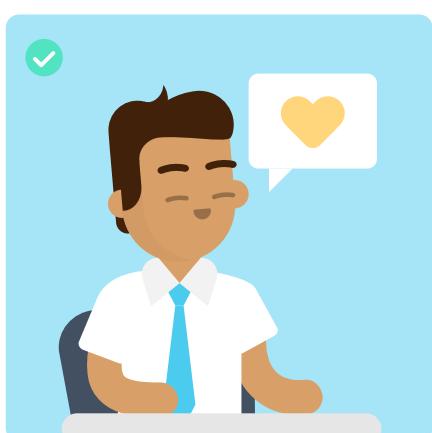


10. Show passion

Passion drives people to do great things and hiring managers know that. As shown in a 2015 Talent Attraction Study, recruiters' #1 concern is hiring candidates that lack passion and commitment. So, try to show enthusiasm when you speak and phrase your answers less like this...

✗ Incorrect example

"Journalism seemed to be the easiest major at university so that's why I decided to go for it. It's an OK industry, I can't complain – although I wish there was more money to it."



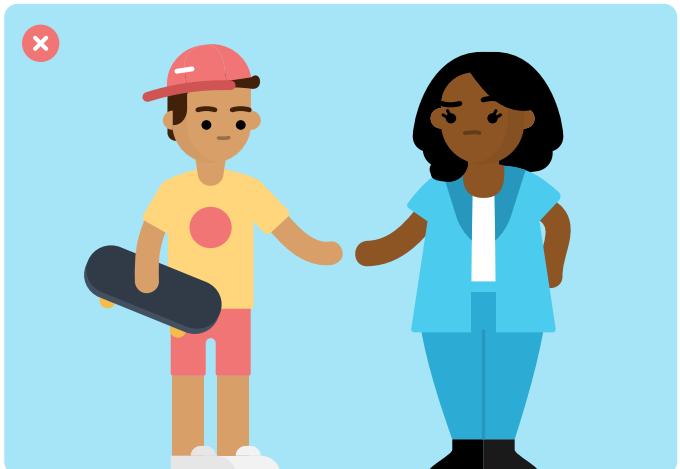
✓ Correct example

"I didn't dream of becoming a journalist from a young age but I really found my calling while I was in college and took some classes in Media Ethics and Investigative Journalism. The work of renowned investigative journalists around the world inspired me to do the same, and it still does, despite all the problems the industry is facing right now."

How to dress to impress for any interview

Let's be honest – first impressions matter and how we dress, whether we like it or not, is a big part of that. So, what you wear on your job interview matters too – especially if you don't want to end up in a situation like this:

Spending some time thinking about your interview clothes can show the interviewer that you pay attention to detail, that you're good at presenting yourself, and that you're serious about the job. In this section, we'll teach you the top 6 tips you should follow to make sure your outfit is impeccable:



1. Find out the company's dress code

Now, the first thing you have to do is research to find out what's the dress code at the company you're applying to. Some companies have a strict and professional dress code, while others might have none at all. As such, knowing the dress code at a specific company is relevant and can really help steer your choice of interview attire in the right direction.

So, before deciding on what to wear on your big day, look up the employer online (e.g., their website, social media, etc.) and see how they present themselves. If they're a young, trendy startup, chances are, they won't care much about what you wear. If it's a bank with hundreds of years of history, though, then your options will be limited to suit and tie or business casual.

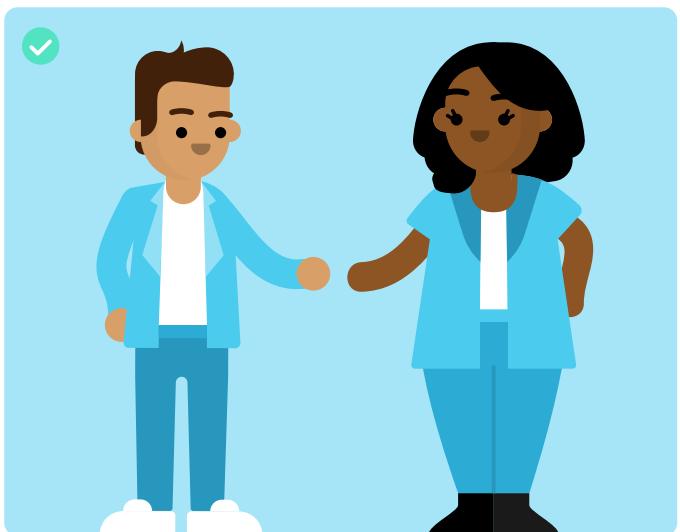
Pro Tip

If you know someone who's already working at the company, you can just ask them about the dress code and about what they were wearing when they had their interview.

2. Dress for the position

When deciding what to wear on the interview day, in addition to considering the company dress code, you should also keep in mind the job you're applying for. For example, let's say you're applying for a managerial role at a local tourist information center. While the organization itself is not too formal, you as a manager will be expected to dress more formally than the other employees. Your choice of interview outfit should reflect this.

So, instead of dressing like the person on the left. Dress more like the person on the right.



3. Prepare your outfit in advance

Last-minute solutions are never a good idea and that's especially true when it comes to finding the perfect clothes to wear to your interview. The day before the interview, decide on your interview outfit, try it on, and put it aside. This way, all you'll have to do the next day is to get dressed and head out.

This allows you to avoid awkward situations, such as:

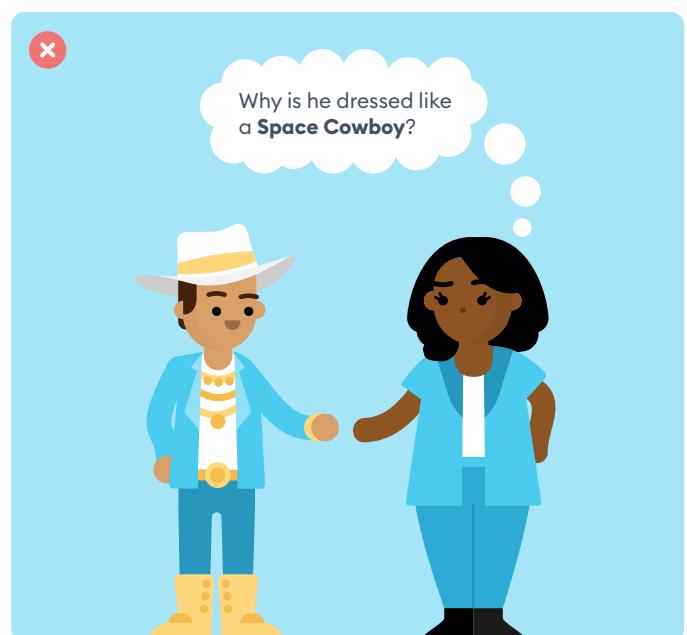
- Realizing something doesn't fit you anymore.
- Spending an hour deciding what fits (and showing up late for the interview)
- Finding stains on your usual interview attire.

4. Don't overdo the accessories

Unless you're applying for a job in the fashion industry, a general rule of thumb is to be modest in your choice of accessories, makeup, and even hairstyle. You might view your choice of accessories as a way to express yourself, but, in fact, that can work against you by distracting the interviewer from what you have to say. That's especially true if you go for bright and flashy bracelets or heavy makeup. The same applies to your choice of belt, tie, and even briefcase.

Pro Tip

Another thing you should be subtle about is your choice of perfume. If you don't have a natural, light perfume to use, then don't use perfume at all. The interviewer might have an allergy or, even worse, find a heavy scent a tacky choice for an interview!



5. Make sure you are comfortable

When it comes to your interview attire, always choose comfort over fashion. Think about it. What good is going to come from wearing a designer suit in which you can't breathe? Or wearing your favorite "classy" shoes that really hurt your feet? Sure, you'll look sharp, but the discomfort is bound to throw you off your interview A-game and will do you more harm than good.

6. Do a final check

Last but not least, always run a final check before entering the interview room. That way, you can do damage control in case there's a stain on your clothes, something stuck on your teeth, or a strand of hair gone wild, and start the interview confident that you look just as good as you feel.

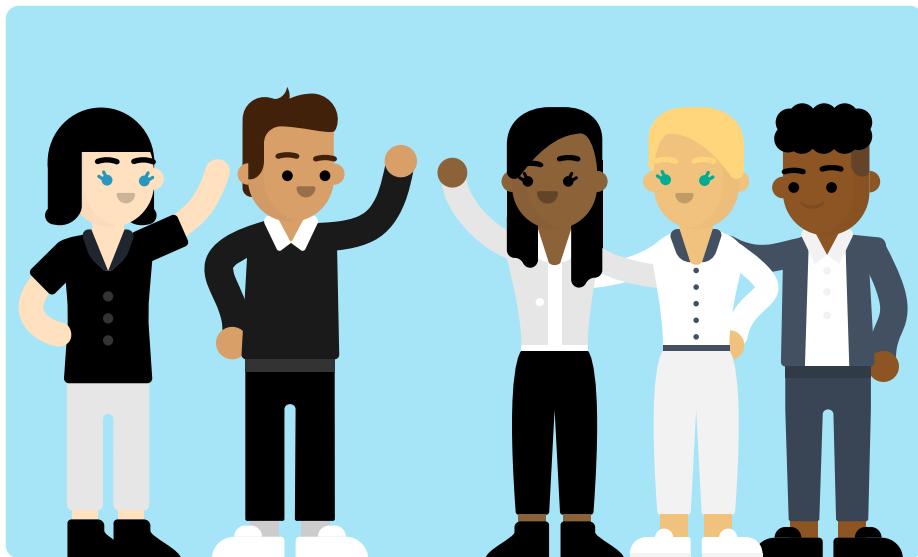
Interview attire cheat sheet



Formal outfit

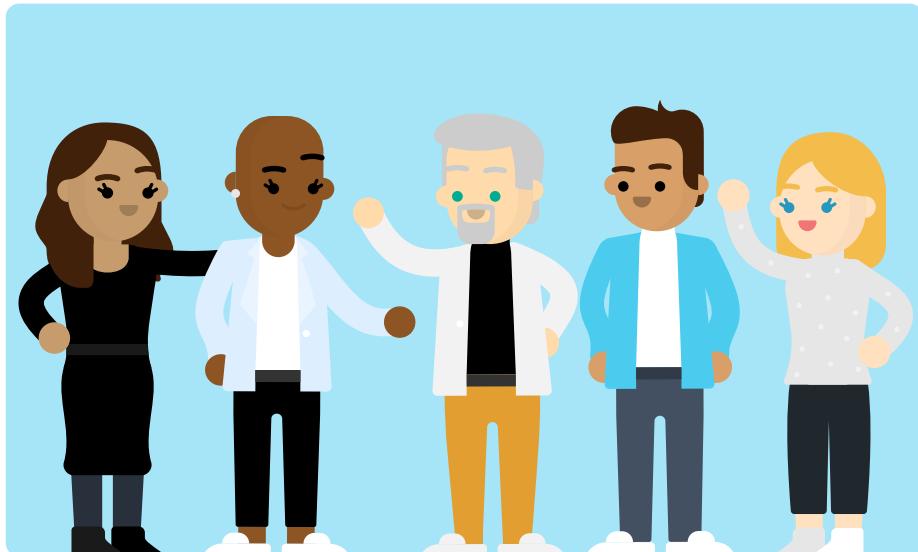
You can choose from the classic suit and tie, black or white shirt/blouse, or go for light blue or pink. Combine that shirt/blouse with a pair of stylish trousers or skirt and you will have a very classy professional look on your interview. Footwear should be smart, polished and comfortable. Dress like this for:

- Jobs in the Legal industry : e.g, Lawyer, Paralegal, Legal Secretary
- Jobs in the Banking industry: e.g, Loan Officer
- Senior Roles
- Management & CXO Roles



Business casual

This style is more relaxed than formal business attire. For instance, you can choose a neutral color for the sweater of your choice, like grey, brown, or black, since these match with smart shirts/blouses of just about any color. If you want to add a bit of elegance to your style, go for a classy silky or cotton blouse with a dress, pants, or a skirt. Shirts should be one color only and without any patterns, apart from a brand logo. You can complete this classy look with a matching-colored light blazer or sweater.



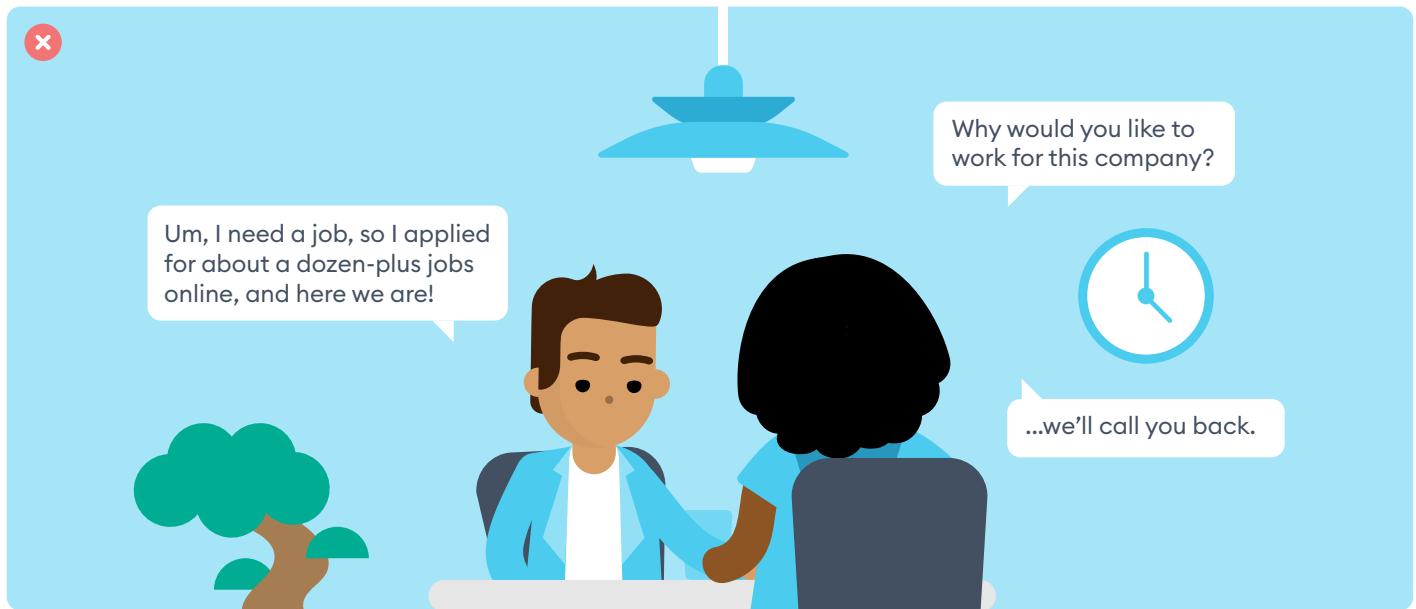
Causal interview outfit

A light colored jacket or a blazer is less formal than a black formal suit jacket but it still has a very stylish feel to it. If you enter the interview room and see that you're a bit overdressed, just take off the jacket. It is okay to wear a smart, one-colored t-shirt, shirt, or blouse, with either pants or a stylish dress. Footwear should match your outfit and style, and be comfortable, too.

How to research employers (to impress interviewers)

When evaluating you as a candidate, one of the most important factors an interviewer considers is how knowledgeable (and passionate) you are about the job or the company you're applying for.

If you're this guy, for example:



You're most probably not getting a callback. To be fair, there's nothing wrong with applying for a job just for the salary – it's just not something you mention in an interview. If, on the other hand, you've done your research about the company, you can give a much more impressive answer.

Correct example

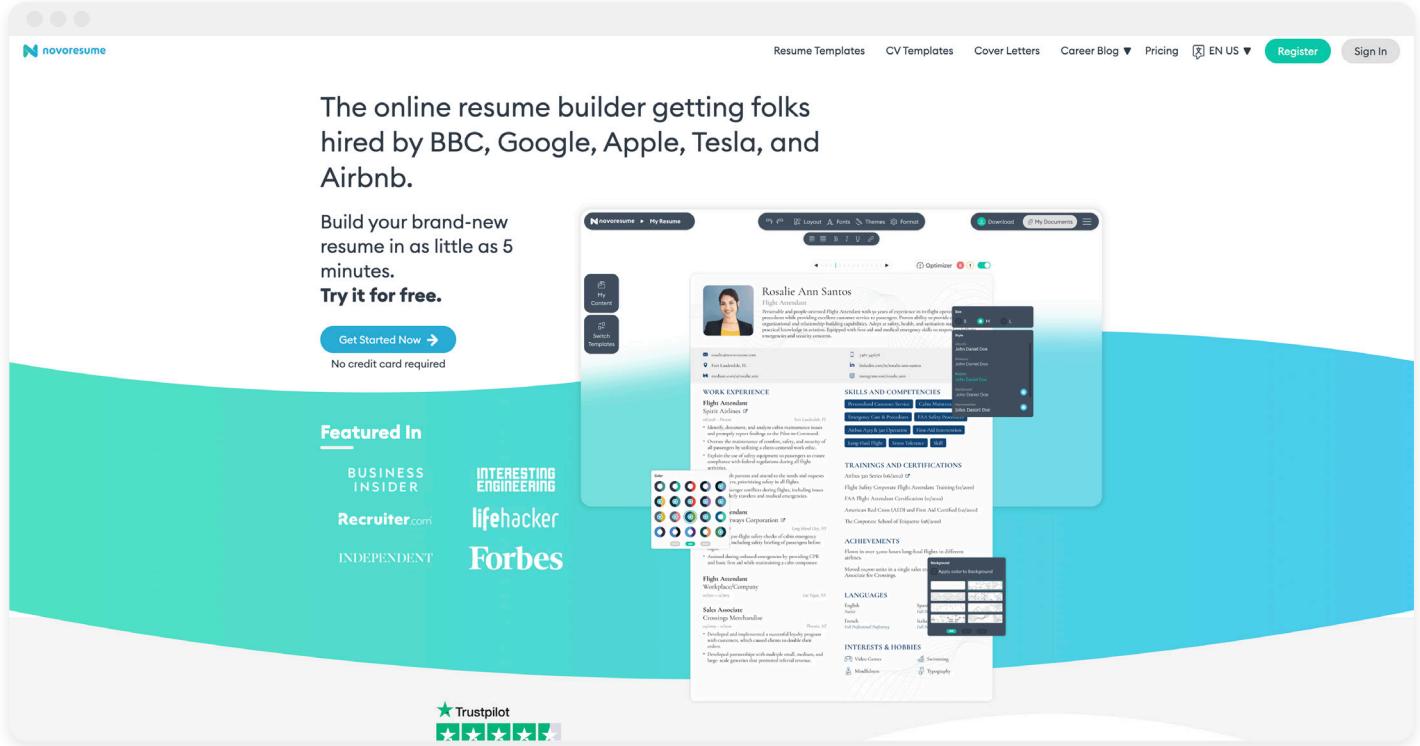
"I've read reviews on your company on GlassDoor and several other websites and I think I match the company culture. I've heard that the work style is very autonomous, which is an environment I really thrive in. In my previous role, I performed well with almost zero supervision or micro-management from my manager, which is something I enjoyed."

But this begs the question: what if you don't know anything about the employer (in fact, you only heard about them while looking for jobs to apply to)?

Well, in that case, you should do your research in advance and find things you like about them. On the following page is a step-by-step guide on how to do that:

1. Check out their website

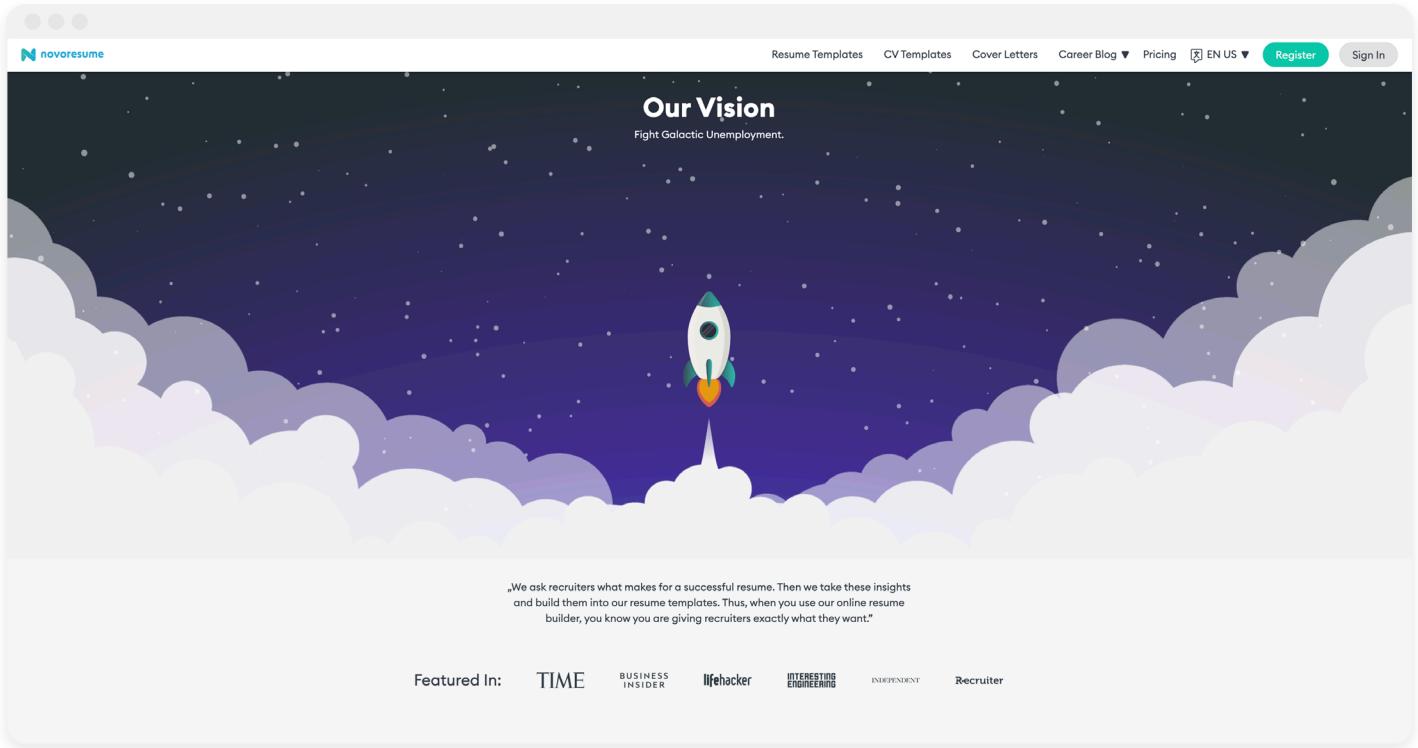
The first place where you can learn about an employer is their website. If you were to research Novorésumé as an employer, for example, you'd first learn about our product and that our clients have been hired by top companies around the globe:



You'd also find out that we have a very comprehensive career blog that teaches our readers how to build a resume, ace their interview, network effectively, and so on:

The screenshot shows the 'Personal Development' section of the Novorésumé career blog. The top navigation bar includes links for 'All Articles', 'Resume & CV Writing', 'Cover Letter Writing', 'Examples', 'Personal Development', 'Inspiring Stories', 'Interviews & Find A Job', and a menu icon. Below the navigation, there are two main articles: '99+ Stores That Give Student Discounts in 2022' and '101 Career Paths for Every Personality [2022 Guide]'. Each article has a thumbnail illustration, a title, a date (4 January or 20 September), a read time (13 min or 10 min), and a brief description. Below these are three smaller articles: '25+ Surprising Networking Statistics [Relevant in 2022]', 'Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace (Information and Tips)', and '6 Guaranteed Ways to Improve Work-Life Balance in 2022'. Each of these smaller articles also has a thumbnail, a title, a date, a read time, and a brief description. Social sharing icons for LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Email are present under each article.

And finally, if you were to check our “About Us” page, you’d learn a lot about our values as a company:



All this information would give you a lot of ammunition to brag about how well you know Novorésumé as a company. So let’s say you’re interviewing with us and we ask you about what you know/like about the company. Here are some ways you could answer:

Answer examples

- *“I really like your resume builder; as you saw, I even used it to make my own resume. It’s very intuitive and saves a lot of time compared to conventional resume builders.”*
- *“I love your career blog! I’ve read some of your most popular posts about resumes, interviews, and so on, and they really helped me upgrade my job-search skills.”*
- *“The “About Us” page on your website resonated with me. I had the exact same problem you mentioned – I had the skills to land a good job, but didn’t know how to present myself right on a resume. I really believe in your mission and I’d love to help young people around the world learn how to get better at job hunting.”*

2. Look them up on GlassDoor

If you want to learn more about an employer from an outside perspective (as opposed to what the company writes about itself), the best place to go is GlassDoor.com. The site allows former (and current) employees to review their employers in regard to company culture, wages, benefits, and so on.

You can then use this information to:

Checklist

- Impress the employer with your knowledge.** E.g., “I’ve read online that you have small, tight-knit teams. I really love working in smaller teams as opposed to larger corporate departments.”
- Spot red flags.** If an employer has predominantly negative reviews, you’ll want to steer clear of them.
- Decide if a company is the right fit.** You might, for example, read that their teams are micro-managed and if that’s not something that you enjoy, you can just cancel the interview and save both you and the company some time.
- Negotiate the right salary.** With GlassDoor, you can see how much the company paid employees in similar positions. You can use this information to negotiate the right salary (we’ll teach you how in Chapter 4).

3. Read news about the employer

If the employer was recently featured in the news, that’s another good opportunity to show off your knowledge about the company. Simply look up the company name on big media websites (e.g., TheNextWeb, Business Insider, Forbes, etc.) and see what pops up. So, if the interviewer is interested in what you know about the company, you’ll be well prepared. If you would look up Novorésumé in the news, for example, you’d find out that Business Insider featured our Elon Musk resume example sometime back in 2016.

So, if you were interviewing with us, you’d be able to use this knowledge to your advantage:

Correct example

I’m actually super excited to be interviewing with you guys! I saw your Elon Musk resume on Business Insider and was super impressed by how compelling the resume is. It inspired me to create my own resume in the same format, as you already saw.

Elon Musk

Aiming to reduce global warming through sustainable energy production and consumption, and reducing the risk of human extinction by "making life multi-planetary" and setting up a human colony on Mars.

Work Experience

Chairman, SolarCity 06/2006 - Present San Mateo, USA

Accomplishments
Created a collaboration between SolarCity and Tesla to use electric vehicle batteries to smooth the impact of rooftop solar on the power grid.
Provided the initial concept and financial capital.

CEO and Product Architect, Tesla Motors 07/2004 - Present Palo Alto, USA

Accomplishments
Helped define the company's product strategy – including the design, engineering and manufacturing of more and more affordable electric vehicles for mainstream consumers.
Insisted on using carbon fiber composite materials in the hull to minimize weight, develop the battery module and even some exterior design, like the headlights.
Received Global Green 2008 product design award for Tesla Roadster design.

CEO and CTO, SpaceX 03/1999 - 10/2002 Hawthorne, USA

Accomplishments
Plans to reduce space transportation costs to enable people to colonize Mars.
Oversee the development of rockets and spacecraft for missions to Earth orbit and ultimately to other planets.
Developed the Falcon 9 spacecraft which replaced the space shuttle when it retired in 2011.

CEO, X.com and PayPal 03/1999 - 10/2002 San Jose, USA

Accomplishments
Involved in the development of new business models, conducted a successful viral marketing campaign, which led to a rapid increase in a user base of over 10 million users.
Created a method of securely transferring money using a recipient's e-mail address.

Co-founder, Zip2 California, USA

Accomplishments
Created a platform where newspapers – including credible ones as New York Times – could offer their customers some additional commercial services.

Bachelor of Science in Economics 09/1992 - 06/1995 Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Bachelor of Science in Physics 09/1992 - 06/1995 Penn's College of Arts and Sciences

Skills & Competences

Thinking through first principles
Micromanaging
Goal oriented
Future focused
Critical thinking
Resiliency
Verbal and written communication
Leadership
Creativity
Time Management

Achievements & Certificates

IEEE Honorary Membership (2015)
Gives to people who have rendered meritorious service to humanity in the IEEE's designated fields of interest.

Businessperson of the Year by Fortune Magazine (2013)
Prize received for the following companies: "SpaceX", "Tesla Motors" and "SolarCity".

FAI Gold Space Medal (2010)
One of the highest honors in the aerospace industry, shared with prominent personalities like Neil Armstrong and John Glenn.

Honorary doctorate in Design from the Art Center College of Design

Honorary doctorate (DUniv) in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Surrey

Honorary doctorate of Engineering and Technology from Yale University

Languages

English Afrikaans

Interests

Physics | Sustainability | Philanthropy | Extraterrestrial life | Alternative energy sources | Space engineering | Reading | Video games

novoresume.com

4. Leverage your network



Finally, using LinkedIn, you can check if you know anyone who works at the company you're interviewing for. You can reach out to the person and ask for a quick video call (or just a chat online). From there, you can ask questions about the employer, the benefits, the culture, and so on. If you've previously worked with this particular person, you can even ask for a recommendation!

What to do on the day before the interview

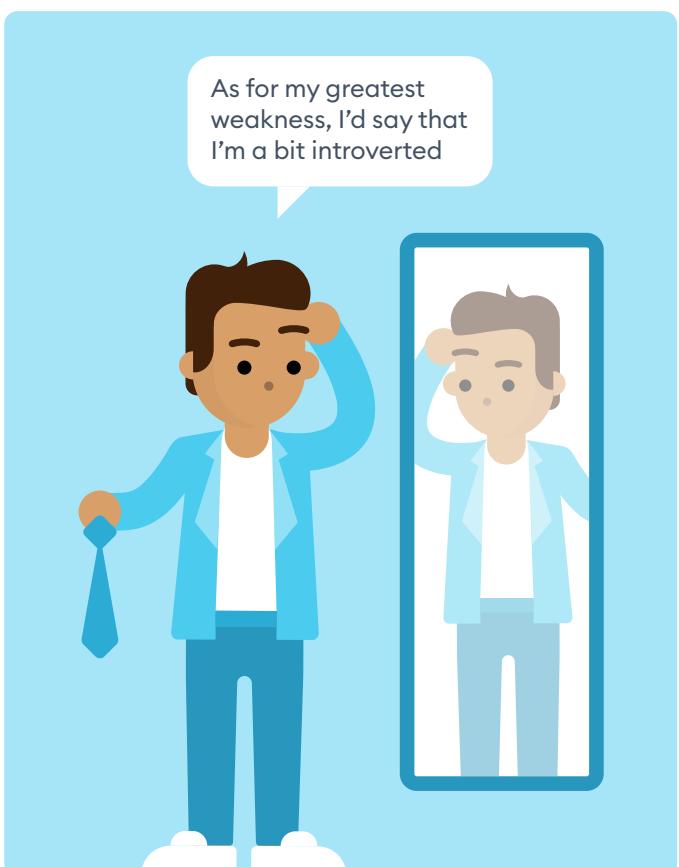
So, tomorrow's your interview. You've picked out the perfect outfit, researched the company from A to Z, and read up as many articles on job interviews online as humanly possible. In this section, we'll cover everything else you can do to make sure you're fully prepared for the upcoming interview.

1. Rehearse the questions

When it comes to answering interview questions, practice makes perfect. While you shouldn't simply memorize your answers to the common interview questions, having a general idea of what you're going to talk about can really help your performance during the interview.

Here's how you can do this:

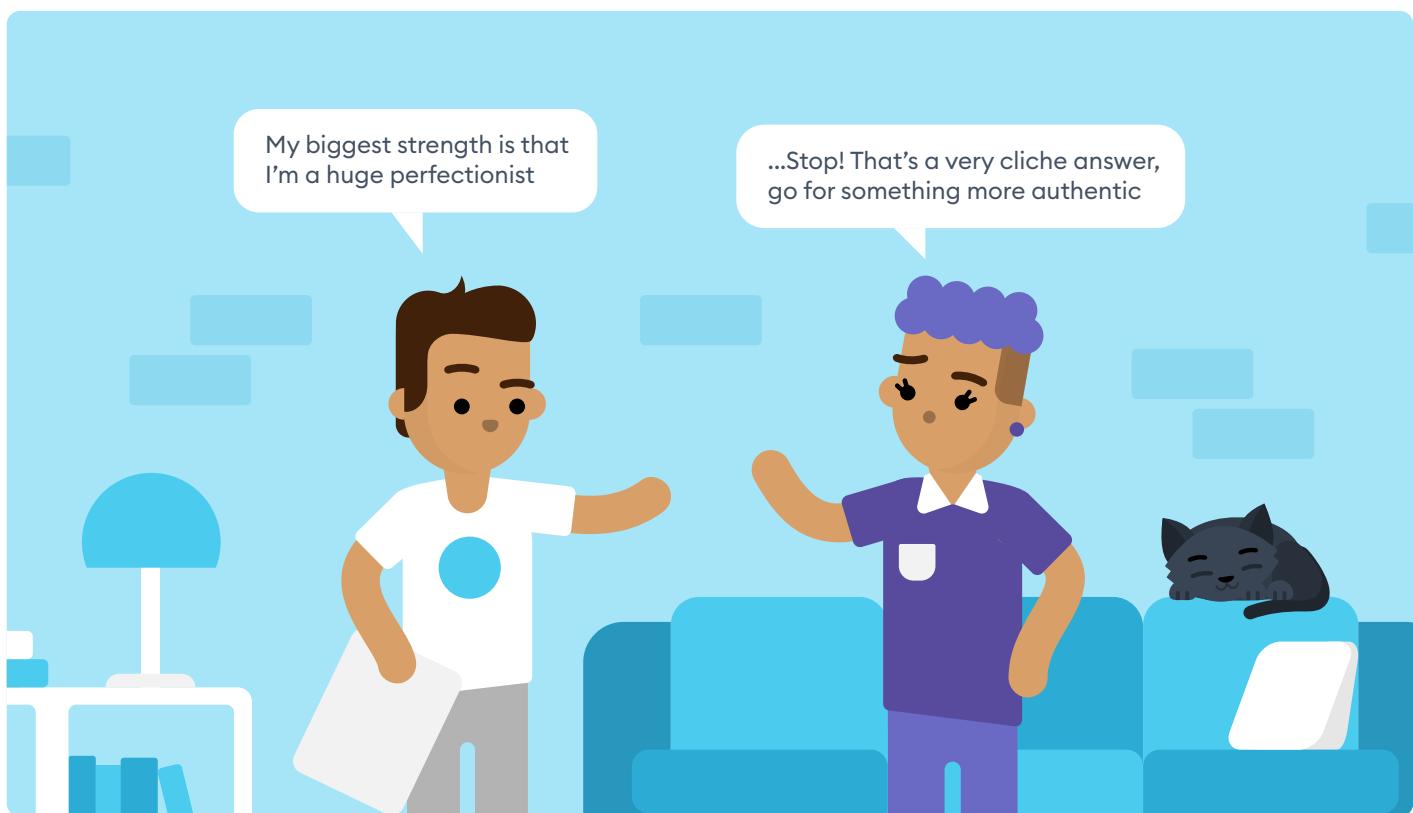
First things first, go through the most common job interview questions we cover in Chapters 2 and 3. For each question, come up with one to two answers of your own.



However, don't try to memorize these answers word-for-word. That'll make it seem like you're reading off a script, being rather robotic.

Second, do a mock interview. If you're still in college, there's a good chance you can book one with your career center.

- If not, a mock interview with a friend can also do the trick. In such a case, make sure that: The friend in question is not your BFF (chances are, they won't be objective).
- They've read this book (or just know a lot about interviews). The mock interview is somewhere that's outside your comfort zone (no, your living room won't do).



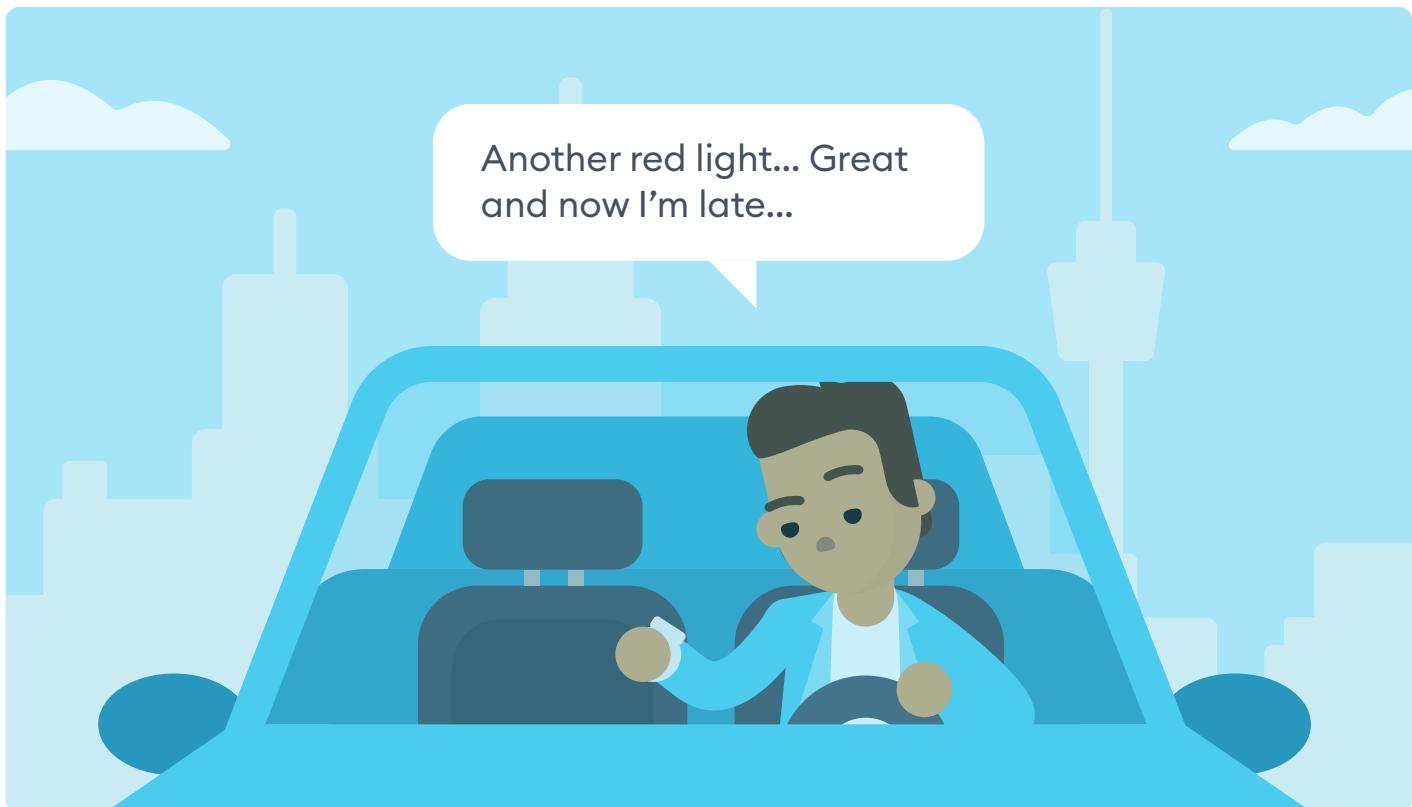
And finally, the day before the interview, go through the common interview questions yourself and rehearse your answers in your head. The cheat sheet freebie that comes with this book is going to be very helpful here!

Pro Tip

If you're really struggling with interviews, you can even hire a professional mock interview coach online. While not cheap, sometimes a professional's feedback can count for so much more!

2. Check where the interview takes place and plan your route

Before the day of the interview, make sure to check where the interview is going to take place. If the interviewer hasn't mentioned this in the email, make sure to ask for clarification. Then, plug the interview location on Google Maps and figure out the most effective way to get there. Planning your route a day before can save you from surprises on your big day, such as realizing that the bus line that used to take you to the area no longer runs. If you're planning on going by car, make sure to also account for possible traffic delays...



3. Get some sleep, and don't overdose on caffeine

You might be tempted to spend the night before your job interview like an all-nighter leading to a particularly difficult college exam – pumped up on coffee or energy drinks, high on sugar, and maniacally practicing your answers till the sun comes up.

There's only one thing we can say in regards to that:

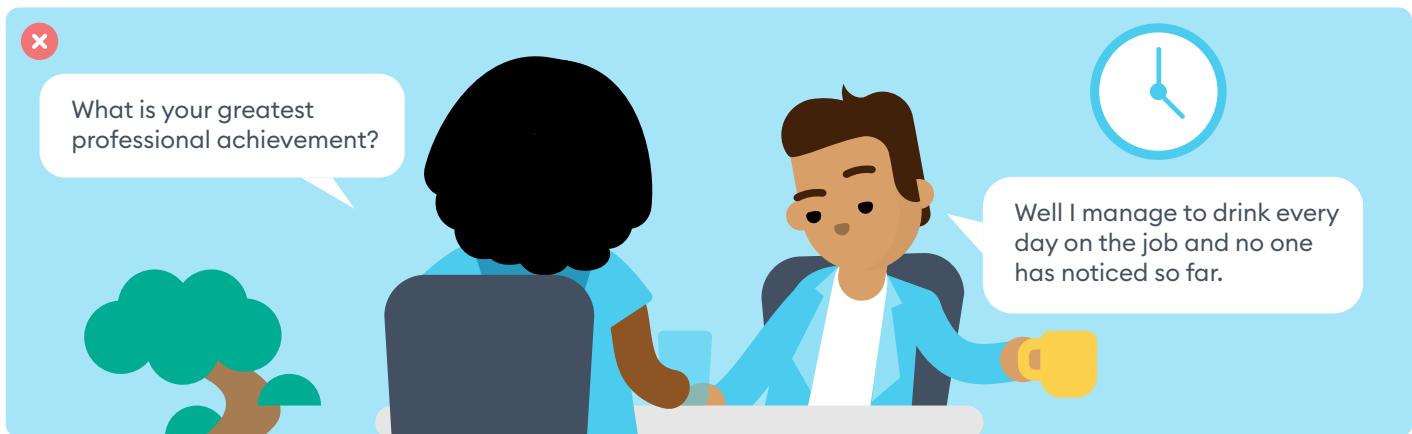
Don't!

We strictly believe all-nighters should begin and end with the college experience – if you start practicing them as an adult, you might be heading for burnout. Pulling one for your job interview is no different. You'll end up going to your interview tired, jittery, and not looking your best.

Instead, follow these tips to make sure you bring your A-game to the interview:

- Don't drink coffee after 5 PM on the day before the interview to make sure you can go to sleep early.
- Avoid staring at your cell phone or computer one hour before bed. It's known to negatively impact your sleep.
- Have a healthy, nutrient-rich breakfast (or lunch) before your interview.
- Have one coffee before heading out to the interview. If you're prone to getting jittery from coffee, you can opt for green tea instead.

4. Review your top achievements



During the job interview, the interviewer is bound to ask you questions about your top achievements. If you don't want to put yourself on the spot, it's better to review your top achievements before the interview.

So – look back and come up with five of your top achievements that you think have had the biggest impact on your work. From these five, pick one or two that you think would be more relevant for your new role. Keep in mind that relevance is key. A particular achievement might have been impressive for your previous job, but completely useless for the one you're currently applying for. Finally, follow these tips to really make your top accomplishments stand out:

- Identify the department's success outcomes. E.g., in sales, those indicators would be sales revenue, cost reduction, customer satisfaction, etc. Make sure that the accomplishments you mention in the interview are the ones that show an impact on these exact indicators.
- Use power words. E.g. If you're talking about how you caused a positive impact, use words like "reduced", "enhanced", "added", "minimized", etc.
- Describe how you did it. Explain how you made your achievement happen to give the hiring manager the full story.
- Back up your achievement with data. Don't just say you "improved sales" – say that you "improved sales by 20% over 2 years by creating additional sales materials."

So, if you're applying for a customer-facing role in a company that really values communication and problem-solving skills, your achievement should sound like this:

• **Correct example**

"In my previous role, I was in charge of carrying out retention calls with unsatisfied customers. On a regular basis, I managed to convince around 20% of them to continue using our software by addressing their issues."

5. Know your weak points (and prep answers)

If you have any red flags on your resume, such as:

- Being fired
- Changing jobs too often
- Having gaps in your employment history

Then there's a very good chance that the interviewer will ask you about them. As such, the best course of action here is to prepare your answers in advance. If answered right, even the biggest red flag (like getting fired) can actually play into your advantage.

For example

"I was let go for underperforming at the job, which was my fault completely. This was my first job right after university, so I was not used to working in a professional environment. That said, I asked my direct supervisor for their feedback and actively worked on improving myself. Three things I believe I've really improved are my personal productivity, work ethic, and mindset."

Or, say, if you changed jobs too often:



CHAPTER 2

MASTERING

THE INTERVIEW



And that's about it with the basics! It's time to talk about job interview questions. While no two interviews are the same, more often than not, interviewers are going to ask at least some of these ten common interview questions. In this chapter, we're going to cover what they're all about and teach you how to answer them in the best way possible!

1. Tell us about yourself

Tell us about yourself is usually the first (and most common) interview question. Consider this as a sort of an ice-breaker question – you get the interview going, while the interviewer gets a better understanding of the person behind the resume.

When the interviewer asks this question, they expect you to:

1. Summarize the most important parts of your resume.
2. Adequately introduce yourself professionally (and to a small extent personally).

If you get these two key points right, there's no messing up this interview question. That said, here are some common mistakes interviewees make answering this specific question:

- ✖ **Overdoing it with the details.** The answer should be brief and to the point, not the introductory paragraph of an autobiography.
- ✖ **Memorizing their answer and coming off a bit robotic.** The vibe of the answer should be “having a casual conversation,” not “reading from a cheat sheet.”
- ✖ **Going off-topic.** Talking too much about yourself and not your professional experience is a no-go.

Sample answer

“Sure! My name’s Zoe and I’ve been doing copywriting for about 6 years now.

I’ve worked at Company X and Company Y, where I’ve handled email copy, landing page copy, blog posts, and several other types of content.

I’ve managed to improve conversion rates for a landing page of Company X by over 5% compared to control.

I graduated with a bachelor’s degree in journalism at Boston University, which I believe really helped shape my writing abilities.

I’m very excited to learn more about your company and the position. From what I’ve read from the job description, the job seems right up my alley – I’ve always wanted to focus a bit more on email marketing, but my previous roles did not give me such an opportunity.”

2. What are your biggest strengths?

And now, for the most stereotypical interview question: What's your greatest strength?

When asking this question, the interviewer is looking to learn:

- ✓ Whether you understand what your strengths are.
- ✓ If your strengths are actually related to the role you're applying for.
- ✓ If you're realistic about your own capabilities.
- ✓ Whether you can back up your strengths with experiences.

It goes without saying that your answer to the question should convey these four key points. Luckily, there's a very easy way to do this – just follow our tried-and-tested formula!

1. Decide on one or two strengths to mention.
2. State those strengths.
3. Provide real-life examples of how you applied these strengths to your work.

In-Demand Strengths in 2022

Not sure which of your top strengths to mention? Here are some of the most in-demand ones in 2022:

- Critical thinking
- Analytical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Attention to detail
- Leadership
- Management
- Communication
- Persuasion

And here's the formula applied in practice:

Sample answer

"My biggest strength is that I can think on my feet during high-pressure situations, something that's been very useful to me as an event manager.

When I was working for Tech Company X, I was in charge of organizing an annual training session for the development department. It basically consisted of inviting a lot of influential tech people to give training sessions on emerging technologies.

Back in 2019, out of nowhere, three of the speakers canceled with very short notice, around a week before the event.

We had to think on our feet and decide on how we were going to proceed, and whether we'd need to cancel the event altogether. Instead of giving up, though, we decided to work overtime to make the event happen. We got in touch with all the speakers and figured out a date that worked better for everyone (including the speakers that confirmed attendance), we re-arranged their flights, hotel reservations, and so on, all with very short notice.

The event happened around a week later and everything worked out like a charm."

3. What are your greatest weaknesses?

On the other side of the coin, there's this question. And no, your answer should definitely **not** be one of the following:

✗ Incorrect example

- “I don't have any weaknesses.”
- “I used to have weaknesses, but I worked hard on them, and now I don't have any.”
- “My weakness is that I'm too much of a perfectionist.”

Those are the most cliche and weak answers you can possibly give, and there's a very good chance you'll get an eye roll from the interviewer if you actually mention them. Such answers only show that you're out of touch with yourself. Of course, you have some weaknesses – we all do. The question is, are you conscious and honest about them?

Why do interviewers ask this question?

- ✓ To see if you're aware of your weaknesses.
- ✓ To understand whether your weaknesses are something that'll prevent you from doing the job right.
- ✓ To check if you actively work on your weaknesses (and how).

So, how can you answer this interview question in such a way that meets the interviewer's expectations?

First off, pick a weakness. Make sure that it's not a required skill for the position. E.g., if you're applying for an advertising role, you probably shouldn't say that your weakness is a “lack of creativity.”

Then, give some context around your weakness. Is it something that you're actively working on? How? Here's an effective sample answer:

✓ Sample answer

“I'd say that my weakness is that I'm a bit introverted. I don't particularly enjoy working with other people, and I like it when my job involves just zoning in and getting things done. That's partially the reason I ended up becoming a writer in the first place – I like being an individual contributor without having to work too much with a team.”

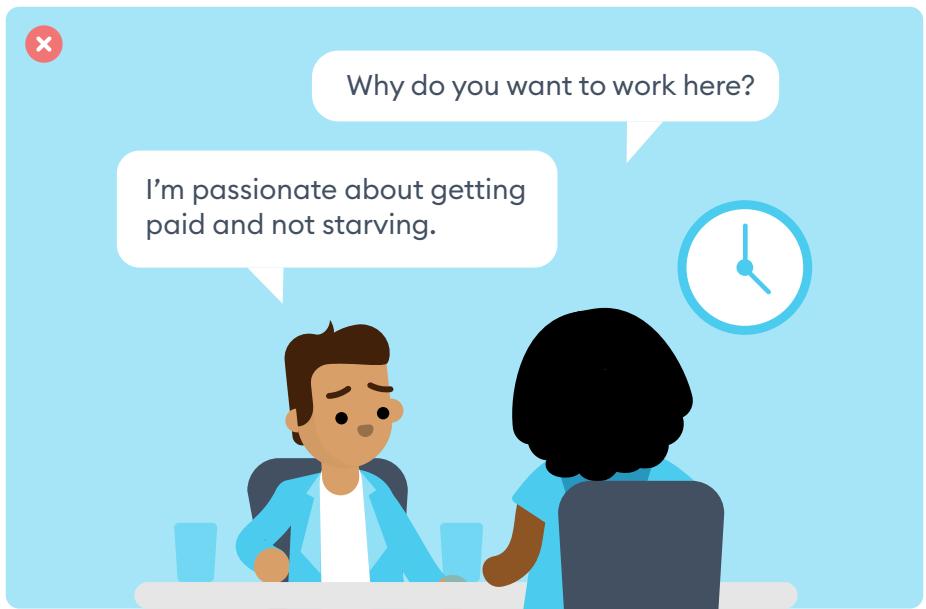
“I do try to actively work on my social skills, though, going out of my way to socialize whenever I can. That said, I still prefer a more individual-oriented role that does not involve working too much with coworkers.”

The above sample answer is effective because:

- ✓ The weakness does not prevent the candidate from doing their job effectively.
- ✓ The candidate is honest about their weakness.
- ✓ The candidate also explains how they're working on their weakness whenever they can.

4. Why do you want to work here?

When asking this interview question, the recruiter wants to know whether you're applying for the position for all the right reasons. The following answer, for example, is very wrong:



Of course, making a living is one of the most important motivators for applying for a job. That, however, doesn't mean you should mention it during your interview, as you'll most likely come across as superficial. When asking this question, the interviewer wants to know why you're applying for this role and at **this company specifically**. Here are some potential ways you can answer this question:

- You like what the role is about (e.g., it involves using a skill you possess, want to learn, or develop further).
- You're passionate about working on a specific project, product, or service.
- You're interested in working at this specific company (relevant if the company is relatively famous).

And here's a well-thought-out sample answer:

Sample answer

"Right, so, I want to work here for two main reasons.

One, I've always wanted to work in the video game industry. I've played most of the games you've developed in the past, and I'm especially a fan of the RPGs.

Two, I'm looking forward to getting more practical experience with Tech Stack X. While I do have some experience with it, my previous role involved more work with Tech Stack Y."

5. Why should we hire you?

When the interviewer asks “why should we hire you,” they basically mean “sell yourself.” If you’re applying for a client-facing role, for example, then the interviewer might ask this question to understand how good you are at sales. If you’re applying for any other role, then the interviewer simply wants to know, from your point of view, why you’re a good fit for this particular role.

Six tips on how to answer this question

- **Be practical.** Focus on highlighting exactly how you’d excel at the role and deliver value for the company.
- **Don’t oversell yourself.** Otherwise, the interviewer might think you’re exaggerating your skills and experiences.
- **Keep it brief.** Stick to the main reasons you think you’re a good fit for the role without going too much into your background.
- **Mention the numbers.** It’s one thing to say “I have past experience doing sales” and it’s something else entirely to mention how you “managed to hit and exceed Q1 KPIs by 30%.”
- **Show enthusiasm.** Employers love candidates who are passionate about the job/company they work for. So, in addition to mentioning how you’re a good fit in terms of skills and experiences, also try to enthusiastically show why you’re excited about the role.
- **Be honest.** Finally, be honest about your skills and experiences. If you lie, chances are, the interviewer will find out sooner or later.

⌚ Sample answer

“First off, I’ve got the right skills for the job. I’ve developed 10+ websites at my previous agency, all of which turned out to be very good-looking, mobile-friendly, and fast. Haven’t had a client that wasn’t happy with my work so far.

I also have industry experience. I’ve worked in two agencies before and I know how to perform well with tight deadlines in a high-pressure environment.

I’m also very excited about working with you guys specifically. My friend Mark who works in marketing mentioned a lot of great things about the company, and I’d be very happy to be a part of it.”

6. What is your greatest professional achievement?



There's no hidden intent behind this question – the recruiter just wants to know what your top achievement is and how it relates to the role you're applying for. So, the key here is to make sure the achievement you mention is related to the role. Let's say you're applying for a job as a marketing specialist, for example.

Compare these two sample answers:

✗ Incorrect Example

"When working as a customer support specialist at Company X, I exceeded my KPIs by over 50% for the year."

That's a decent answer – it's a good achievement and it shows you're hard-working. That said, it's not something that proves you'll perform well as a marketing specialist.

Rather, go for something like this:

✓ Sample answer

"When working at Company X, I completely revamped their Google Ads setup. I changed the target keywords, improved the copy, and experimented with different ad budgets, all of which led to a decrease in cost per user acquisition by over 40%."

This, on the other hand, is great. It includes the results you've driven and the actions you took, and most importantly, it shows that you know exactly what you're talking about.

Now, relevance aside, it's also important to frame your achievements the right way. Take this sample answer:

✗ Incorrect Example

"I managed to drive news sales for the company."

You drove sales – that's great! But this answer only opens doors to more questions:

- Did you improve sales by one, or 100?
- Did it happen in a month or a year?
- Was it related to something you did personally or was it a team effort?

An answer like this, on the other hand, is a lot more compelling:

✓ Sample answer

"I managed to drive 100 new sales during my first six months of work, which is about 40% higher than what was expected of me. I did so by utilizing my experience with email marketing automation from my previous role, which is not something they had experimented with a lot in the company."

Much better, right? This answer includes the results, the timeline, the actions you took, and a benchmark ("40% higher than expected").

If your answer looks like this, then the hiring manager will instantly be able to tell that you're an A-player!

7. Where do you see yourself in five years?

With this question, the interviewer wants to know if your long-term plans align with that of the company. Namely, they want to know if you're planning on sticking around for a while or just want to use the job/company as a stepping stone. As such, your answer should show that you want to grow within the company and, optimally, outline how you plan to do that.

✓ Sample answer

"In the short term, I'd like to further develop my skills as a recruiter and get promoted to Senior recruiter within 2-3 years.

As for the long term, I'd like to eventually become a talent acquisition team lead at the company and manage my own team."

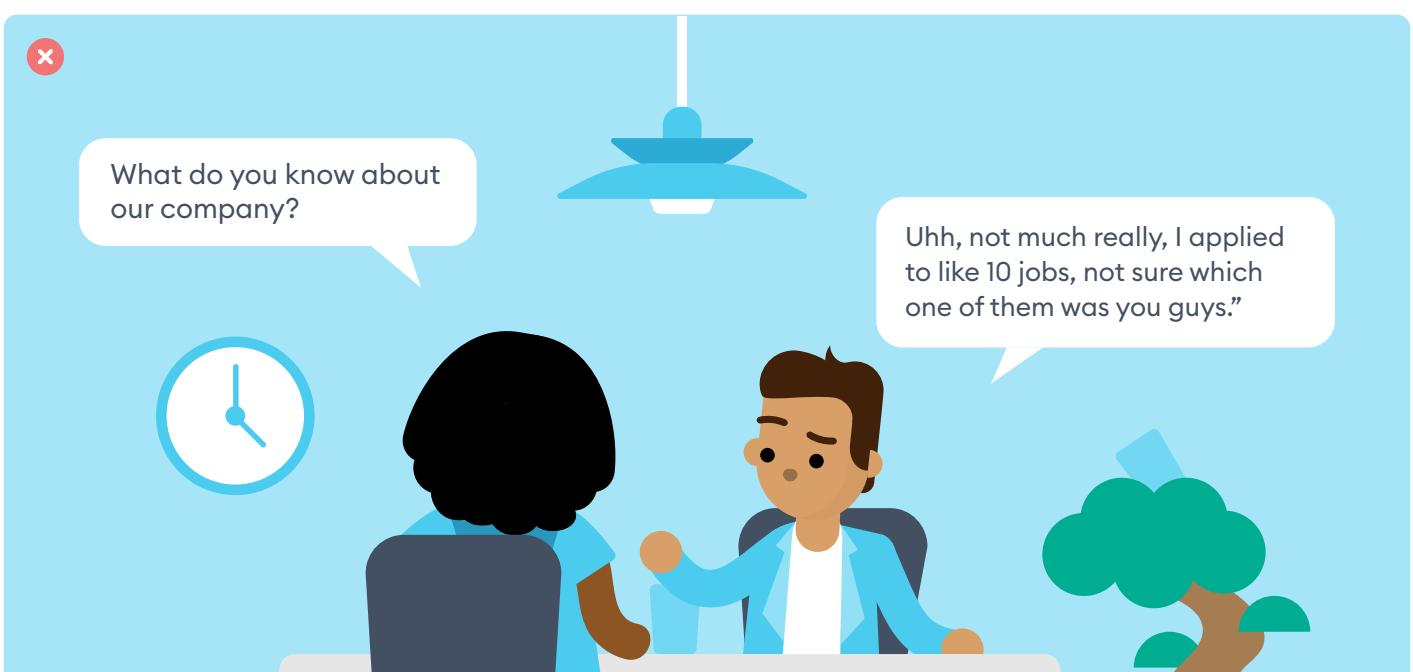
The answer above is good because it shows that:

1. You're looking for a company you can grow in.
2. You're ambitious with a good idea of how you can grow as a professional.

8. What do you know about our company?

If you're applying for a job at a household name, there's a very good chance that the interviewer will ask this question. The goal here is to understand whether you did your research about the employer and whether any of the projects they work on resonate with you.

As such, there's no wrong way to answer this question, maybe except for:



Other than that, simply stating a couple of things you know about the company or the role is good enough.

✓ Example answers

1. “I’ve personally used your products in the past and I’m a big fan because [Reasons].”
2. “My friend, John Doe, works here and he’s mentioned a lot about the company...”
3. “I’ve been following your company on Twitter for a while now, I know about [Recent Company Events].”
4. “I know that you guys develop [Types of Products].”
5. “I’ve read a bit about you on [Media], I learned that [Details], which I find very interesting.”
6. “I know a bit about the [Industry]. Your competitors are [Names], but I feel like you really differentiate yourself by [Details]...”

Now, in case you don’t know much about the company, that’s fine – you can do your research online. You can find information on the company website, their social media profiles, or on different news outlets if they’re particularly big.

So – prior to the interview, look up the following information about the employer:

- What’s their product/service?
- What will your job involve?
- How many employees does the company have?
- When was the company founded?
- Who are their competitors?
- What’s their mission statement?
- Was the company in the news lately? What was it about?

9. Why did you leave your last job (or why were you fired)?

This one can be tricky, especially if you were fired. When asking this interview question, the interviewer is trying to understand:

1. The reason why you decided that it was time to move on and look for a new role/employer.
2. Whether you were let go, and, if you were, whether the reason behind it is something the new employer should be worried about.

If the first case applies to you, then the answer is relatively straightforward. You should simply give a truthful answer on why you decided to leave, such as:

✓ Example answers

1. *"I realized that there was not a lot that the company could offer me in terms of career growth, so I decided to look for other opportunities."*
2. *"I wanted to develop my skill-set in a different direction, as my previous role didn't offer many opportunities to use Software X."*
3. *"I finished the project I was managing, and I wasn't particularly interested in the one I was offered afterward."*

✗ Incorrect Example

1. *"My manager was the worst, micro-managing my work the entire time."*
2. *"I didn't particularly get along with the team, they all seemed to be part of a cult or something."*
3. *"The projects the company was working on didn't make sense and were bound to fail."*

Now, answering this question correctly gets a bit more tricky if you were fired. For starters, you should still be honest. The interviewer **WILL** find out that you got fired one way or another.

The key here is to convey that you understand why you were let go and how you treated the entire experience as an opportunity to grow. For example:

✓ Example answers

"I was let go from my previous role because of a mismatch in terms of skills. When I was originally hired, I had the impression that they were looking for someone that's a junior quality assurance specialist. However, within the first month, I underperformed at the job and realized that they were looking for someone with a bit more experience."

10. Do you have any questions for us?

This one's a tad tricky. You might be tempted to just say, "no thanks, everything is very clear" and be off on your merry way... But that's not the best course of action here. Don't get us wrong - there's nothing wrong with having no questions to ask, especially if you did a lot of research about the company you're applying to. However, asking questions during a work interview is a great opportunity for you to show enthusiasm and curiosity for the job.

Mind you, though, this doesn't mean that you should ask random questions just for the sake of asking questions. That'll just make you seem underprepared for both the role and the interview. Rather, you should ask questions about topics that haven't already been covered during the interview, or things that aren't mentioned in the job description.

✗ Incorrect example

"What are the main responsibilities of this role?"

✓ Correct example

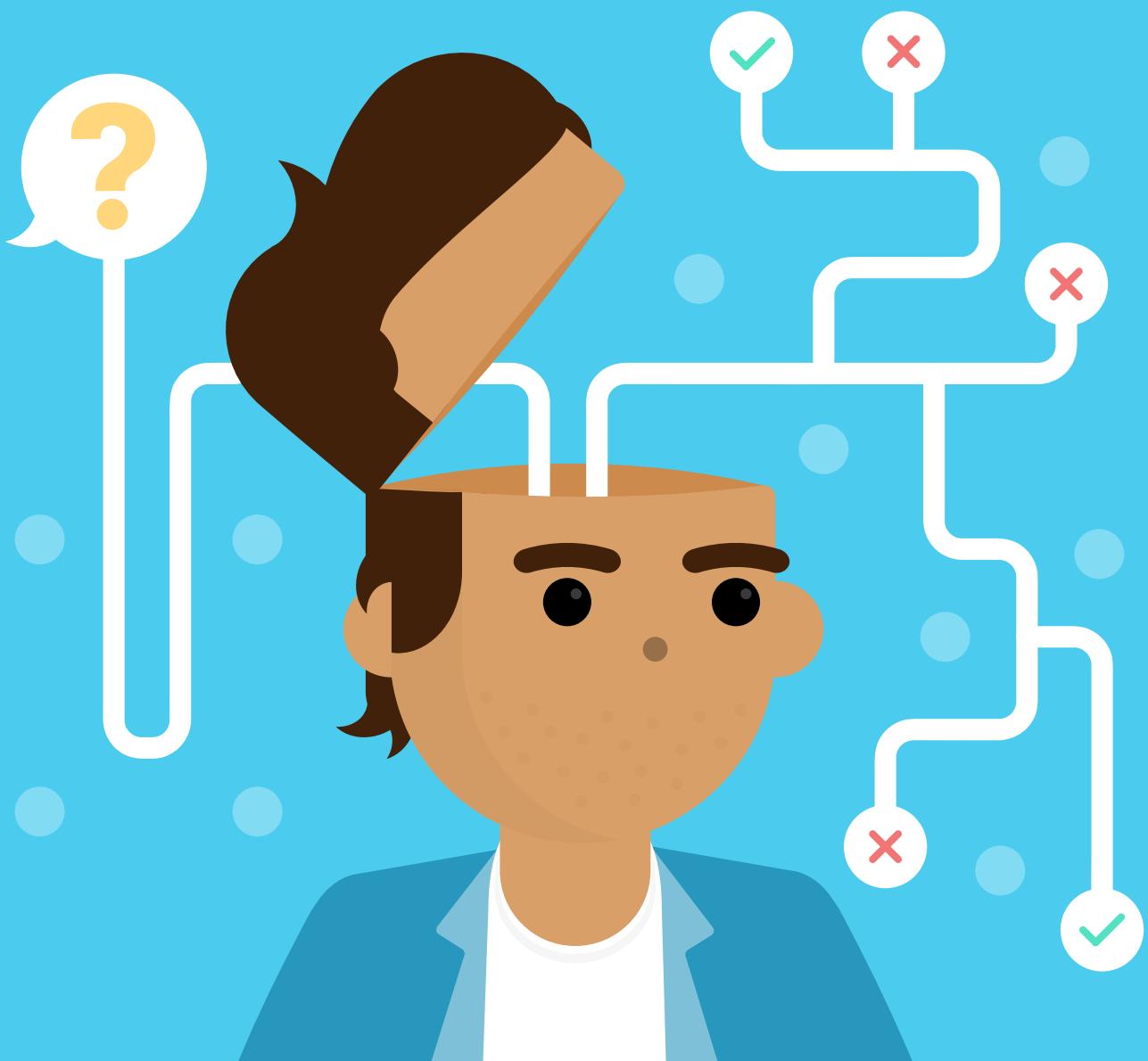
"What's the company culture here like?"

✓ Questions you should ask:

- "What do you (the interviewer) like most about working at the company?"
- "What's the culture like here at (company)?"
- "What would you say is the greatest thing about working for this company?"
- "What's the worst thing about working at this company?"
- "What kind of career development opportunities do you offer at this company? What are the qualifications for a promotion?"
- "What's the next step in the interview process?"
- "Who would I be reporting to and working with on a daily basis?"
- "What are your expectations of me for the first 30 days of employment? 90? Year?"
- "What are the main challenges that this company is currently facing?"
- "What are the KPIs for success for this position?"
- "What will my day-to-day tasks look like?"

CHAPTER 3

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



You've answered every standard interview question with flying colors, effectively impressing the hiring manager... But just when your confidence is at an all-time high, the interviewer throws you a curveball: "Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond your job responsibilities." And you freeze up – what gives? You don't particularly remember such a case, so you stutter, giving a weak answer. These kinds of questions are called behavioral interview questions and they're actually quite common in job interviews. In this chapter, we'll teach you all you need to know about such questions (as well as how to answer them right every single time). Let's dig in!

What are behavioral interview questions (and why interviewers ask them)

A behavioral interview question is a type of question that requires a very relevant and concrete example of how you acted in a specific type of situation.

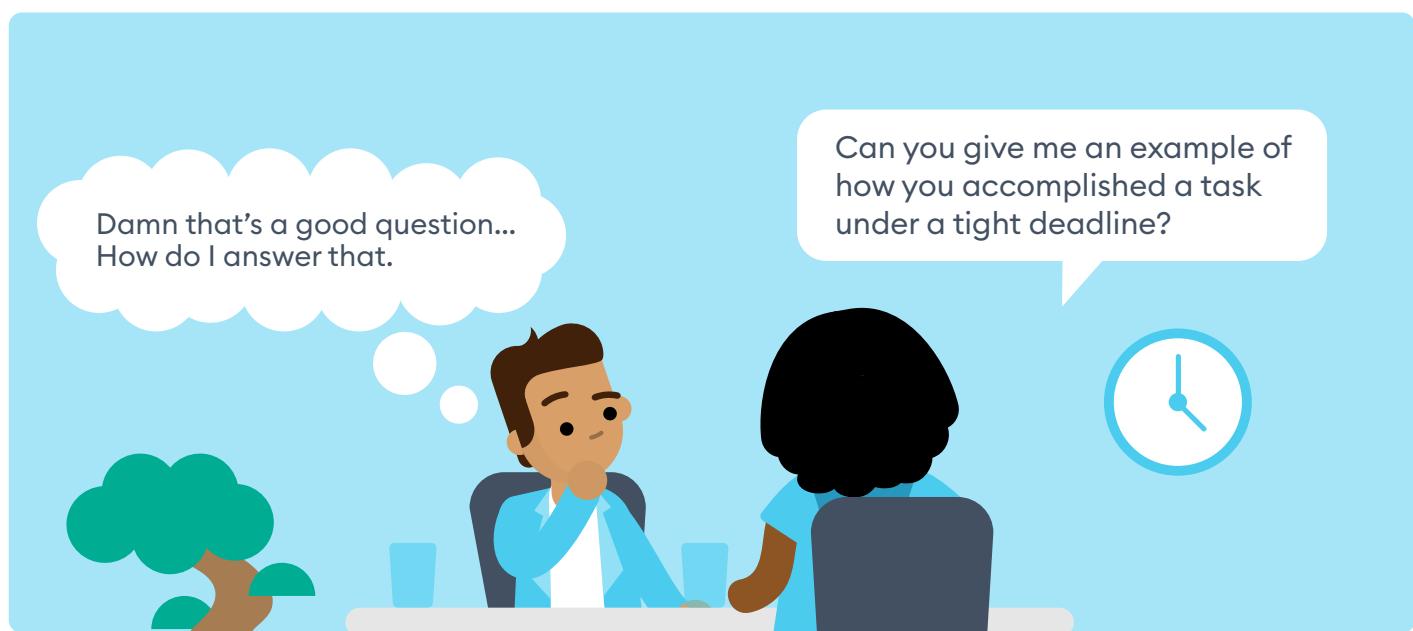
So instead of asking:

"What are your strengths?"

The interviewer asks:

"What's your greatest strength and provide an example of how you've applied it to your previous role?"

And just like that, a (relatively) straightforward interview question became much more complicated. Now, you must back up your answer with a concrete example. The reason interviewers ask these questions is pretty straightforward. Anyone can say "I'm a great leader!" but not everyone can put their money where their mouth is.



How to answer behavioral job interview questions using the STAR Method

Getting good at answering any behavioral question is a two-parter:

- **First, you need a framework** to help you answer these questions the right way.
- **Second, you need to learn the most common types** of behavioral questions and rehearse your answer for each of them.

In this section, we focus on the framework, also known as... **the STAR method**. This framework helps you answer the questions as comprehensively as possible, and goes something like this:

STAR

S - Situation. Give the context of the situation you were in.

T - Task. Describe the task that you had to tackle.

A - Action. Talk about the actions you took in order to complete your task.

R - Results. Describe the results you managed to achieve with the actions you took.

Now, let's see how effective the STAR method is in practice. Let's say the interviewer asked about a **time when you handled a conflict or disagreement well**. An answer based on the STAR method would look something like this:

Example answers

S - Situation

"During my internship at Company X, my team was supposed to brainstorm talent sourcing ideas for a client. The client was a corporate name with a new branch located in quite a rural area, so sourcing new talent was proving to be a problem for them."

T - Task

"Our task as a team was to have daily meetings, brainstorm, and come up with three ideas for sourcing talent. However, after about a week of daily meetings our ideas were not that great – not great enough to confidently present them to the client, that is. Well, some team members wanted to present to management what we had so far and be done with it, whereas another team member and I wanted to give it some more thought and come up with something truly novel. There was a lot of tension and the other team members were shutting down any idea we were proposing. Meanwhile, the deadline was closing in and we had to figure out a way forward."

A - Action

"After giving it some further thought, I realized that if we continued like this we'd never move forward. We wouldn't agree with their approach and they wouldn't agree with ours. So, I decided to bring in an unbiased third party who wasn't emotionally involved in the discussion. So, we held a longer meeting without any time constraints and let the third party act as a mediator. On top of that, we made sure that whenever someone pitched a new idea, they backed it up with as many facts and arguments as possible, otherwise, it wasn't valid."

R - Results

"In turn, this really helped bring something new to the table. The mediator gave us some honest feedback on all the bad ideas and infused us with some much-needed new energy. Most importantly, after two hours we ended up coming up with three new ideas that we all agreed on. As a result, the client implemented one of our ideas, which resulted in four new hires."

See the value of the STAR method? As a candidate, it helps make it much easier to quantify your impact at your previous job. For the interviewer, on the other hand, the STAR method helps paint a much clearer picture of the candidate's skills, saving them from having to ask a ton of probing questions.

Note:

Recruiters always ask behavioral questions for the same reason – they want to make sure you can back up your claims with facts. As such, we won't go into much detail about why they ask each question. What's important here is to always remember to:

- Follow the STAR method.
- Give examples that are relevant to the job you're applying for.
- Have a few examples ready before heading out to the interview.



The 10 most common behavioral job interview questions

(with sample answers)

1. How do you accomplish tasks when under a tight deadline? Give me an example.

This one's very common when applying for a job with tight deadlines and a fast-paced work environment. The hiring manager wants to see if – and how – you can deal with the pressure based on your previous experiences. Here's a sample answer that's based on the STAR method:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"Typically, I plan my tasks a week in advance so that my performance doesn't suffer when the deadline approaches. However, in my previous role as a sales manager, I had to transition the team to a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software because the one we were using changed its pricing model to something we couldn't afford."

T - Task

"So, I had to find a new CRM that met our needs before they applied the new pricing model, while also maintaining my own sales numbers. On top of that, the new software had to be intuitive and easy to transition to."

A - Action

"To meet this deadline while performing all my usual duties, I had to be very careful with how I managed my time. For starters, I consulted our sales associates about all the things that didn't work with our old CRM and took those into account too, while looking for the next one. Then, I dedicated one or two hours daily to research, and once I found the next CRM, I migrated all the company's data. In the process, I removed any old or irrelevant contacts, updated some of our leads' data, and tried to bring the team up to date with all the new features in the CRM. To get all this done, I had to spend a couple of after-work hours working from home."

R - Results

"In the end, we managed to fully transition to the new CRM only one week after the deadline. All the while, I didn't fail to fulfill any of my daily responsibilities. The team adapted easily to the software and I finished the quarter 7% ahead of my KPIs. By planning ahead and working systematically on a daily basis, everything worked out in the end."

2. Describe a long-term project you managed. How did you make sure everything was running smoothly?

If you're applying for a job that requires long-term commitment and results, you'll likely be asked this question. Additionally, if you're applying for a management position of any kind, the recruiter will want to know what your management style is and how you approach project management. As such, you've got to make your example count. Here's how:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"A few years back, I was working as a project coordinator at Company X. The project I was working on was funded by the government and lasted for over a year. Its aim was to provide counseling services, tutoring, and academic guidance to teens and high-school seniors coming from low-income families."

T - Task

"My main duties were to coordinate every activity that the government had approved in our project proposal, provide the necessary documentation that proved things were going smoothly, submit monthly reports to the designated government representatives and my direct supervisor, and assess the project's short-term success."

A - Action

"To ensure that everything would run smoothly over the course of one year and four months, I created a rock-solid assessment foundation for the project. I scheduled weekly meetings with all the external experts that were hired to carry out the project's activities. I kept physical and electronic records of every receipt and document handed to me and double-checked whether I was missing anything on a daily basis. I made sure to visit at least three or four project activities each month personally and kept in touch with the program beneficiaries, both in-person and virtually. On top of this, I asked the experts to submit short, weekly reports of their activities and conclusions, which I shared with government representatives for transparency purposes."

R - Results

"As a result, I managed to successfully complete the project without having to cancel or change any activities, or otherwise receiving any complaints from the participants, experts, or my supervisors. The most telling proof of the project's success, however, is that 21 out of the 30 program beneficiaries managed to get accepted into their university of choice."

3. Sometimes, it's almost impossible to get everything done on your to-do list. What do you do when your list of responsibilities becomes overwhelming?

Hiring managers know that sometimes anyone can end up in a situation where they physically don't have enough time to finish up all their tasks. That's absolutely normal! What's important, however, is for the professional to keep their cool, prioritize their tasks effectively, and get the important ones done. This behavioral job interview question tries to understand whether you're this type of candidate. Here is our sample answer:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"Before receiving a job offer from one of the first companies I worked for, I was an unpaid intern there for almost six months. Although it wasn't an ideal situation, I was OK with it because I liked the company and believed in their mission."

T - Task

"At the beginning of my internship there, I didn't have a direct supervisor, so I was constantly assigned different tasks by different team leads. Soon enough, all my to-dos from three different departments stacked up and became too much to even think about, let alone handle."

A - Action

"That said, I was young and professionally inexperienced, so I didn't want to seem as if I wasn't up for the challenge. To tackle all those tasks, I realized I needed a strong sense of organization and discipline. First off, I decided to focus on every task that required less than half an hour of work to be completed. After I cleared my to-do list from the easy and less time-consuming tasks, I organized everything that was left into high-, mid-, and low-priority tasks. To do that, I had to consult each supervisor, something which was a challenge in itself considering that each of them said their tasks were a high priority. Eventually, though, I had a clear idea of what I should focus on first and what could wait, as well as a visual aid that helped keep me in check and remind me what I need to work on ASAP."

R - Results

"In the end, I managed to complete every high-priority task on time and still had enough time to concentrate on the less important tasks. My supervisors were all happy with the work, and I eventually ended up getting an offer from the company for a full-time role."

4. How do you handle a disagreement with your colleagues? Give me an example of when you successfully persuaded someone to see things your way at work.

Team spirit, collaboration, and understanding are important in every work environment. When the hiring manager asks this question, they want to see how good you are at communicating with your teammates, as well as how you handle disagreements. Here's a good sample answer that shows off the candidate's communication and persuasion skills:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"For sure, disagreements with colleagues happen every now and then. Typically, I try to keep an open mind, listen to their point of view, and meet them in the middle by finding a solution that works for both of us. That said, sometimes, you just end up in a situation where your coworker's argument just doesn't really hold up. About a year ago my team was assigned to do a photo shoot at a farm. The client had given us very specific instructions about how they wanted the photos taken, including their quality, the style, the lightning, and many other parameters. The client made it clear that they simply wanted us to follow their requirements to the T."

T - Task

"That week, I was paired with a young photographer who was very talented but not very experienced. I realized this when I saw he was not meeting the criteria the client had given us for the photos."

A - Action

"At first I tried suggesting that he use different camera settings and follow my example. This lead to a lot of tension, though, as my coworker perceived these notes as personal criticism. So, I realized that I have to take the time and explain WHY I'm giving him these suggestions. I showed him the sample photos the client had sent as an example of what they wanted and compared them to the photos I had taken so far. I explained what settings I used to get that similar effect and he agreed with my approach. Then, I also added that HIS style of nature shots was amazing and asked him to teach me more about it after we were done with the photo shoot."

R - Results

"Ultimately, he was grateful for the constructive feedback and the honesty. We actually managed to finish the work much faster after that and our collaboration gave us some amazing photos that made the client very happy. They praised the quality and fast work we had done. And to boot, I also learned a lot about nature shots from my coworker afterward – tips and tricks that I still use today."

5. Have you ever had to work under someone who wasn't very good at communicating? What happened?

How you address your superiors (and their shortcomings) matters. When asking this question, the hiring manager wants to understand several things:

- How you communicate with your superiors.
- Whether you are confident enough to speak up for yourself.
- Whether you can deal with disagreements with your superiors in a diplomatic but effective way.

Here is a great sample answer:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"Yes, in my previous position I just so happened to work under a supervisor that wasn't very good at communicating. I think they were a great supervisor, but they just assumed that we could read their mind when it came to the process of completing the project, instead of giving us clear instructions on how they wanted things done."

T - Task

"I realized this during one of the first tasks they assigned to me. They wanted me to improve our sales presentation to make it more "effective." I did as much as I could, but after I delivered my work, the supervisor told me that it did not match their expectations. It turns out that they didn't want me to re-do the entire thing, but to specifically improve on specific parts, which they hadn't initially mentioned."

A - Action

"I took this as a learning opportunity. From then on, I kept in mind that my supervisor was not super detailed in their communication, so I always made sure to ask a ton of probing questions whenever they assigned me a task."

R - Results

"From this experience, I ended up getting much better at communication myself! From then on, I ended up performing well at most tasks that the supervisor would assign to me."

6. Can you tell me about a time you gave a presentation that was particularly successful? Why do you think it went well?

If your position involves public speaking, giving presentations, and otherwise communicating with clients, customers, or stakeholders, then the hiring manager will want to make sure you know what you're doing – both in theory and practice. Here's how you can show that by following the STAR method:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"One of the most successful presentations I've given was in university. I was a Junior and this was a 300-level philosophy course."

T - Task

"We had to present our term paper – which was more than 3,000 words – through a 10-minute oral presentation. Before this, I had presented to a room full of people only once or twice and I was nowhere near close to being comfortable or calm about it. On the contrary, I was extremely anxious, even though I knew most of the people in the class and I really loved the course. I knew that in order to deliver a quality presentation, I'd have to practice a lot."

A - Action

"I started by reading up on as many public speaking tips as I could find online. Then, I wrote down my script in advance and created a PowerPoint presentation based on that. Finally, I practiced the presentation thoroughly in advance in front of my friends, just to get a feeling of what it's like to present to a crowd. During the presentation, I followed all the tips I'd read online: told jokes, made eye contact with the crowd, asked questions to keep the audience engaged, and so on."

R - Results

"Although I wasn't entirely sure about how it went, I got very good feedback from the audience on the spot. I also got an A for the presentation and very good feedback from the professor. I had several other presentations after this, but I believe this one was one of my best, as I'd practiced A LOT and finally got rid of my fear of public speaking!"

7. Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone completely different from you. How did you adapt to collaborate better?

You're bound to work with all kinds of people during your career. With some, you'll get along nicely, you'll be able to easily understand each other, and the teamwork will just come naturally. With others, though, things just won't click. You'll simply be too different from each other, and you'll need to actually put a lot of effort into getting along with them. So, it's very important that you have the social skills to successfully work with someone different from you. As such, hiring managers are often likely to ask this behavioral interview question. Here is how you can answer it:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"At my last job as a barista, one of my coworkers was very unmotivated and got barely any work done. While I and the other team members were trying to deliver quality service during peak hours, the coworker in question was taking it very slowly, staring at their cell phone, or taking a break."

T - Task

"Despite feedback from the rest of the team, the coworker kept doing low-quality work. So, I decided to personally do something about it."

A - Action

"I asked the coworker to talk to them one-on-one and explained how we felt about the situation. I tried to be as practical as possible, without directly criticizing them or their work. I explained how whenever he slacked, other people had to cover him and do the work instead of him."

R - Results

"The coworker felt really bad about the situation, apologized profusely, and ended up performing significantly better in the coming weeks."

8. Clients can be difficult to work with sometimes. Can you describe a situation when a client was wrong and you had to correct them?

By asking this question, the hiring manager most likely wants to assess how diplomatic and successful you can be in telling a client that they're wrong. It goes without saying that they'll also want to make sure that you're not someone who will react overly emotionally to a difficult client. Here's a strategic answer that follows the STAR method:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"An example I can remember happened back when I worked as a recruiter at Company X. I recommended a candidate to a client but the hiring manager rejected them based on their resume. They argued that the candidate was too much of a beginner for the profile and that he lacked experience with some of the hard skills required for the job."

T - Task

"After going through my notes and the candidate's resume several times, I was still completely sure the candidate was a great match and that this was a mistake on the client's side. However, I had to let them know this without looking as if I was telling them how to do their job."

A - Action

"So, I first contacted the candidate and got thorough information about their experience with those specific hard skills. I put this all down in an email, and calmly and professionally, highlighted for our client's hiring manager exactly how the candidate was qualified. I made sure to pinpoint all the projects and other resume details pointing to their qualifications. In the end, I kindly asked them to review the candidate's application and rethink their decision."

R - Results

"The hiring manager responded, agreeing the candidate had the necessary skills for the job and that it was an error on their side. In the end, they invited him for an interview. Although he didn't get hired, I was glad to be able to give him a chance."

9. Can you give me an example of when you had to adapt to a new and sudden change in the workplace? What happened?

To successfully answer this question, you have to show that you can adequately adapt to changes in the workplace and that they don't affect your performance. Here is our sample answer to inspire you:

✓ Correct examples

S - Situation

"This happened during my first job as a reporter. I started the job working under a senior journalist that wasn't in the habit of micro-managing entry-level journalists at all. He'd assign us tasks and deadlines and he didn't really care about how we went about tasks, as long as we finished them in time and did well."

T - Task

"After a while, however, I was assigned to work under another journalist. Their style was much different, in the sense that he had to micro-manage every part of my work process, know where I was and what I was working on at all times, and receive frequent reports about what I was learning and where I was struggling. This was quite a big and unexpected change for me, especially since I'm a self-starter and I've always prided myself on being able to work independently."

A - Action

"At first, I became completely hopeless because of the situation; I even considered quitting the job at the newspaper altogether. After giving it some thought, though, I realized I'd soon regret taking such a decision. Not only did I love the job, but I could also see that my new supervisor's style wasn't ill-intentioned, just different from what I knew. So, I decided to be honest and meet them somewhere in the middle.

I sat down with them and asked them for their opinion on what I was doing well and where I could improve. I suggested that they grant me more autonomy with the things they knew I could do well and carefully review and micro-manage the areas where I could improve more. I explained to them that I didn't perform that well under close supervision and that if they were willing to try out my method for a short period, they'd be convinced. If they weren't, I agreed to follow their method until they thought I'd deserved my autonomy as a journalist."

R - Results

"This one-on-one conversation gave great results and we managed to meet somewhere in the middle. I got more freedom to do work more autonomously, but at the same time, the supervisor jumped in to give me guidance and feedback where I underperformed."

10. Can you tell me about a time when you had to perform a task or work on a project you had no previous experience with? How did you approach this situation and what did you learn?

Employers want candidates who are constantly growing and who aren't afraid to take on new challenges. By providing a relevant enough example to this question, you can prove you are this type of candidate. Here's our two cents on what makes a great answer:

Correct examples

S - Situation

"A couple of years ago I was working as a writer for Company X. This was a content creation company that offered content writing services for different purposes, like branding, sales, SEO, etc. Right after closing an extremely important client that needed SEO-focused content, the senior writer who was supposed to deliver the content quit."

T - Task

"Not entirely convinced that other entry-level writers could handle such an important client, the company's head of content asked me to take over the client as the most senior writer in the company. That, however, required getting the hang of SEO copywriting, on-page SEO principles, interlinking, and other specifics that a writer needs to know to produce valuable content. Not to mention, it also required some practice, especially since no two types of writing are the same."

A - Action

"I agreed to take on the client and got into learning everything I could about SEO. Specifically, I read articles explaining the basics of SEO and SEO copywriting, I researched all the things other SEO articles do right, and I even asked for feedback from the other entry-level writers who had more SEO knowledge than me. Additionally, I researched the new client and learned as much as possible about their niche, their digital marketing needs, their short- and long-term goals from leveraging SEO, and more."

R - Results

"After about four months, the client agreed on a two-year contract with the company, being satisfied with the content and the SEO results we had delivered for them."

CHAPTER 4

BEYOND THE

JOB INTERVIEW



Up to this point, we've covered just about everything you need to know to prepare for your interview (and ace it with flying colors).

In this chapter, we'll cover everything that happens after the interview, including:

- What to do After the Interview – Complete List
- Salary Negotiation 101 – How to Get the Best Possible Offer
- How to Reject a Job Offer (Without Burning Bridges)

Let's go!

What to do after the interview – Complete checklist

Once the interview is done, you might feel like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders... But you're not done just yet! There are several things you can do after the interview to influence your chances of getting hired! Here's our complete checklist of things to do after the interview:

Checklist

1. At the end of the interview, ask the hiring manager what the next steps are. Are there going to be follow-up interviews? When will they make the final decision?
2. Assess your own interview performance. Review your answers to each of the questions and think about whether they impressed the interviewer or not. Write down the questions that you think you failed to answer and figure out a better way to answer them next time.
3. Send a thank-you email to the interviewer. Not a lot of job-seekers do this, so if YOU do it, you'll instantly stand out from the crowd.
4. If the hiring manager is taking too long to respond, send a follow-up email asking where they're at with the decision-making process.
5. Connect with the hiring manager on LinkedIn. Again, not something a lot of job-seekers do, so this is bound to leave a good impression. Worst case scenario, if you don't get hired the hiring manager might eventually get in touch with you for a different position.
6. Send any follow-up material that you discussed during the interview (such as work samples).
7. Don't stop applying for jobs. You might think you aced the interview and you're a shoo-in for the role, but you never know – there might just be a more qualified candidate around the corner.

Salary negotiation 101 – Get the best possible offer

Salary negotiation is one of the trickiest parts of an interview. When the interviewer asks “What’s your desired salary,” you need to suggest an amount that’s just right. On one hand, you don’t want your number to be too high. The main reason is that if your number is much higher than the company’s budget, they won’t even try to negotiate with you – they’ll straight up reject you. On the other hand, you don’t want to say a conservative number that leads to you getting low-balled either. This brings us to the main point of this section: teaching you all you need to know to get the most out of your salary negotiations.

First things first, you should get a rough idea of how much you’re worth. For this, you’ll want to factor in your:

- **Location.** Some cities pay more for specific roles than others. E.g., if you’re looking for a job in tech, you can get paid twice as much in San Francisco than in a small town in North Carolina.
- **Experience level.** This one’s self-explanatory. The more experience you have, the better chance you have at securing a higher salary.
- **Skills-set.** If you have any rare skills that add to how well you can perform at the role, this can be a good argument for a higher salary.

If you live in a small city or aren’t particularly sure where you stand in terms of skills-set or experience, you can simply ask for a 20–30% higher rate than whatever you’re getting paid at your current job.

Pro Tip

You can also use any of these websites to check salaries for various employers, jobs, professions, or industries:

- GlassDoor
- PayScale
- SalaryExpert.com
- Salary.com
- MoneyGeek’s Salary Calculator

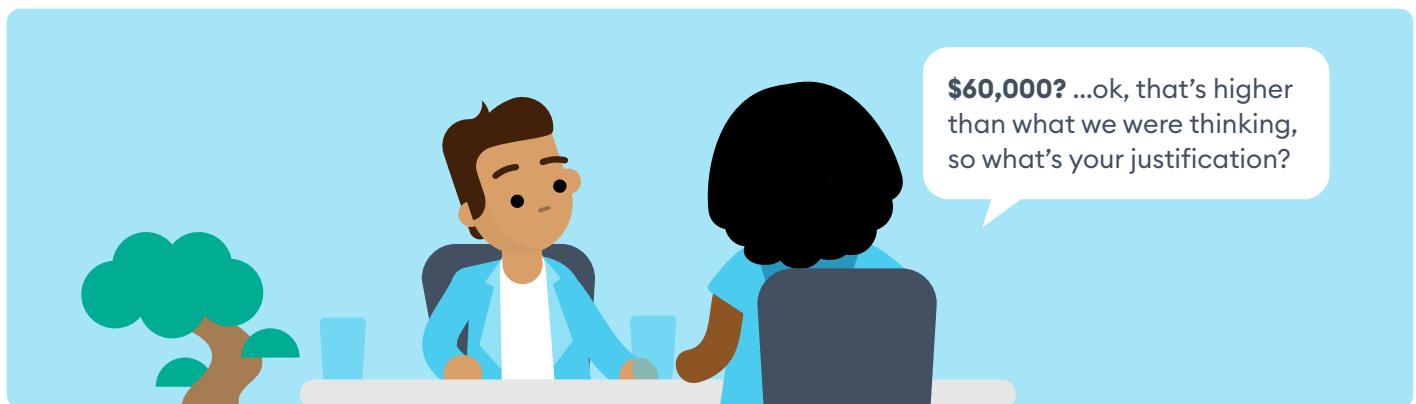


So what's next?

Once you have a number (or range) in mind, you need to let the hiring manager know what it is. Usually, you can do this at the end of the interview, when they ask for your desired salary. You don't want to just state the number and sit there with a blank face, though... You need to actually justify your answer. Why do you think that is a good rate for someone with your experience and skills-set? One way you could justify your number is...

Example

I'm looking for a salary of \$60,000. Considering I have all the desired skills for the role, as well as past experience in the industry, I think that's an appropriate sum for someone at my level.



What if they say no?

If the interviewer rejects your number, two different things might happen:

- They reply with a counter-offer.
- They straight-up reject you.

If the second happens, no harm no foul. The company simply doesn't have the budget to hire someone of your skills/experience and you're better off looking for another job. If they reply with a counter-offer, though, then you can proceed in one of the following ways:

- **One:** If the number still works for you, and you want to be risk-averse (or need a job ASAP), you can simply accept the offer. Chances are, the number they're going to give you won't be more than 5-10% lower than whatever you proposed.
- **Two:** If you're 100% confident in your skills/experience, then counter their counter-offer. For example:

Counter offer example 1

Thanks for the offer, however, the lowest I can go is \$57,000. I actually have a job offer from Company B for a bit higher than that, but since I like your company a lot more, I'm willing to compromise a bit with the number.

Counter offer example 2

Thanks for the offer, but the lowest number I'm ok with is \$57,000. What you offered me is only slightly higher than what I was offered at Company B, and when I started working there I was nowhere near as good at Java as I am now.

That said, you guys really left a great impression on me during the interview, and if we can agree on \$57,000, I would love to work with you.

Or alternatively, if you're very confident about your rate, you can take the gamble and simply hold your ground.

Hold your ground example

Thanks for the offer, but unfortunately, it doesn't work for me. Considering my skills, experience, and history in the industry, I believe that a fair pay for me would be \$60,000.

Pro Tip

When evaluating whether an offer works for you, don't forget to factor in the benefits. Sure, the salary might be lower than what you asked for, but they might, for example, offer a \$500 education credit here, a \$400 travel allowance there, and overall, it might add up!

What to do after the interview – Complete checklist

Is the employer's offer simply not what you're looking for? Or maybe you just got a better opportunity somewhere else? Either way, you should reject the job offer without burning any bridges or leaving a bad impression.

You never know what might happen in the future:

- ✓ You can end up applying for a job at the same company years later.
- ✓ The hiring manager might get back to you with a better offer once the company has a bigger budget.
- ✓ You leave a good impression on the recruiter, who reaches out to you once they have a more relevant opportunity for your skills.

And more! None of these are going to happen if you simply ghost the company or reply rudely to their offer, though. So, how do you reject a job offer with grace? Just follow these three steps:

Step 1 - Show appreciation

You might've received an offer that's simply too low for you, or maybe you just got a better offer somewhere else. Either way, you should start off your rejection email by showing appreciation for the hiring manager who worked on your application process. The hiring manager or recruiter working on your application put a lot of work into the interview process, which is something to show appreciation for even if you didn't make for a good match. So, reject the job offer by starting off as follows:

Example

Thank you so much for the opportunity, as well as for a fast and efficient job interview process.
Unfortunately, though, I don't think we're a good match.

Step 2 - Give a reason

After rejecting the offer, you should give a reason for it. Keep in mind that you don't have to justify your actions, rather, just give your thoughts on the company, their application process, and why you decided to accept a different offer. It's helpful for the employer to know why you don't want to work at the company and what they can do to potentially remedy the situation for other potential candidates.

Some reasons you can mention for rejecting the offer are:

- Their offer did not meet your salary expectations
- You got a better offer from another company
- You don't think you're a good culture fit
- You had a family emergency and cannot focus on work at the moment

Example

While I really liked the position you're hiring for, and I do think we're a good match in terms of culture, your offer simply did not meet my salary expectations.

Step 3 - Offer to stay in touch

Finally, let the company know that you're open to staying in touch in the future in case they have any other opportunities. You can never know where the next stepping stone in your career may come from. Wrap up your rejection email by saying something like this:

Example

Thanks again for the opportunity, and I'd love to keep in touch for any other potential opportunities in the future.

Best,
John

Thanks for reading Before you go...

If you read the book cover to cover, you'll know everything it takes to ace your upcoming interview by now! Once again, thanks for buying this book, which we hope was helpful in upgrading your job-search know-how. Before you go, here's a summarized checklist of everything you should do before, during, and after your job interview:

The final checklist

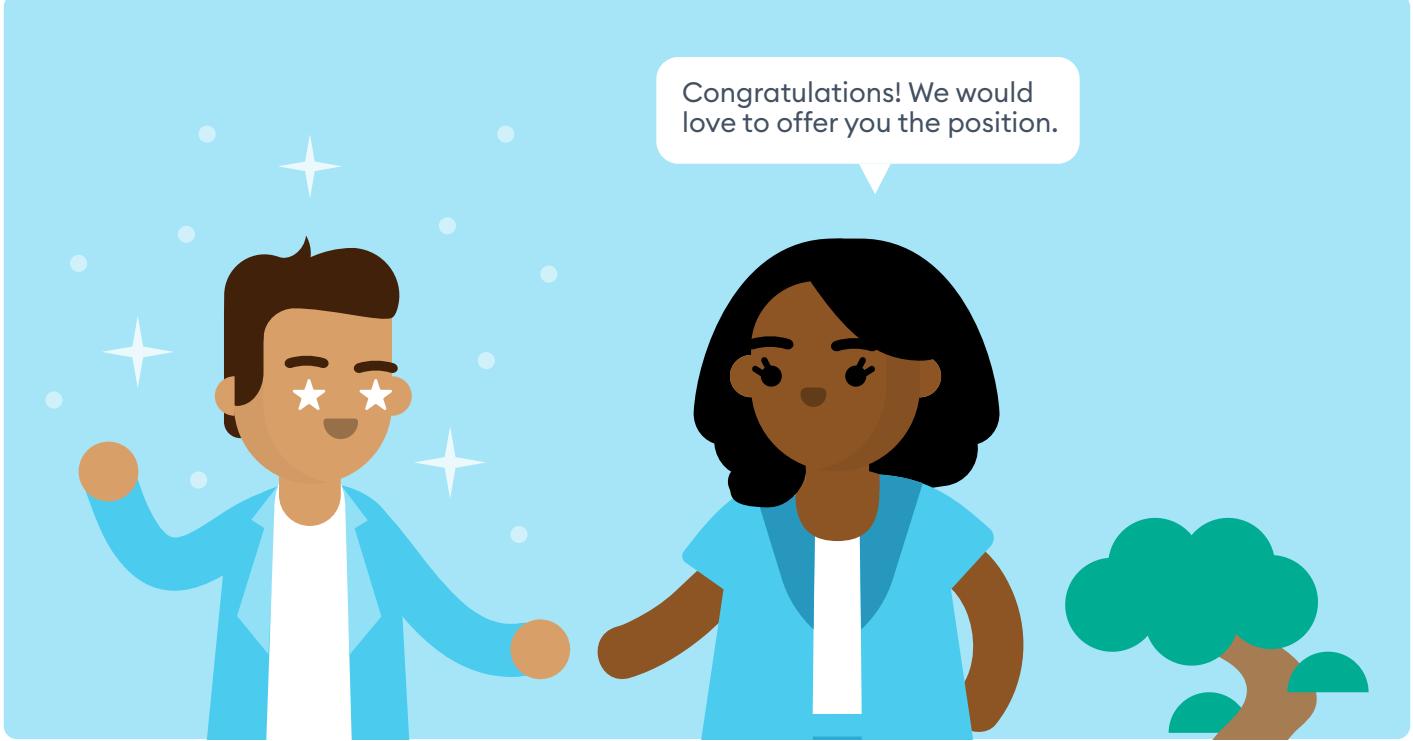
1. Figure out what the company's dress code is and make sure to adhere to it at the interview.
2. The day before your interview, find out where it will be held and figure out the most effective way to get there (and how long it'll take you). Try to get to the interview 10–20 minutes before the scheduled time.
3. Before the interview, skim through the Interview Q&A Cheat Sheet that came along with this book. It covers just about every popular interview question you might get asked! Instead of memorizing the answers, try to have a general idea of what you want to convey through them.
4. Do a mock interview with your friend(s). After all, practice makes perfect!
5. Make sure to charge your cell phone the night before the interview.
6. Don't overdose on caffeine on the day of the interview. It won't make you more self-confident, just jittery.
7. Do some research on the employer and get a good understanding of their average pay rates, what kind of work culture they have, and so on.
8. Look out for employer red flags during the interview, as they might help you dodge a bullet (check out our freebie document on the topic to learn more).
9. Look back on your career and come up with a list of your top achievements. This will seriously help you answer behavioral interview questions.
10. Don't talk about the salary during the interview (you'll come across as if you're only in it for the money). You can, however, discuss and negotiate the salary at the end.
11. Remember: salaries are (most of the time) negotiable. Whatever offer you get from the company, chances are, you can ask for 10–30% higher.
12. Last but not least, don't give up! If you don't leave much of an impression on your very first interview, don't worry – that's normal. Practice makes perfect! Just keep applying for jobs, attending interviews, and soon you'll be acing interviews left, right and center!

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