**How to Impress Recruiters in Your Initial Interview**

* **First impressions matter**: Recruiters like Sydney from Google value energy, preparedness, and clear communication.
* **Tell your story effectively**: When asked “Tell me about yourself,” keep it under three minutes. Focus on your journey, your relevant experience, and why the role and company are a great fit.
* **Use the job description**: Pull two to three key responsibilities or qualifications from the role and align them with your background to shape a compelling pitch.
* **Craft a career identity statement**: Highlight your professional background and core skills to clearly convey who you are and what you bring to the table.
* **Do your homework**: Show that you’ve researched the company, team, and position. Unpreparedness signals disinterest or lack of effort.
* **Keep it concise**: Recruiters often have limited time—so be succinct, direct, and organized in your responses.

**Interview Tips from Karan, Security Engineering Manager at Google**

* Karan has interviewed hundreds of candidates, including many who made it into Google.
* Increasingly, candidates come from non-technical backgrounds like recruiting and sales, showing diverse paths into security.
* Interview prep can be divided into technical and non-technical areas.

**Technical Preparation:**

* Focus on networking fundamentals and information security concepts to understand how systems work and relate.
* Always ask clarifying questions to uncover the root of the problem and what the interviewer really wants.
* Don’t rush into solving problems without clarifying details.
* If you don’t know an answer, it’s okay to say so — follow up with how you would approach the problem.

**Non-Technical Preparation:**

* Practice interviews with a friend or partner to identify where you might stumble and to build confidence.
* Be kind to yourself during this process.
* Bring your whole self to the interview: demonstrate teamwork skills, leadership in projects, and any collaboration experience (including open source).
* Soft skills are critical even in technical security roles.

**What Karan Looks For:**

* Curiosity and drive to learn about the field.
* Candidates don’t have to know everything but should ask the right questions and show how they work with others to solve problems.
* Responses like “I don’t know, but here’s how I would figure it out” are impressive.

**Final Advice:**

* Don’t fear rejection — finding your first role can take time (Karan applied hundreds of times before landing his first job).
* Apply even if you don’t meet all preferred qualifications — if you meet the minimum requirements, it’s worth trying.
* Keep applying and stay persistent.