**Part 1**

**Know about Amazon**

**About Amazon:**

When Amazon.com launched in 1995, it was with the mission “to be Earth’s most customer-centric company.” What does this mean? It's simple. We're a company that obsesses over our customers. Our actions, goals, projects, programs and inventions begin and end with the customer top of mind. In other words, we start with the customer and work backwards. When we hit on something that is really working for customers, we double-down on it with hopes to turn it into an even bigger success. However, it’s not always as clean as that. Inventing is messy, and over time, it’s certain that we’ll fail at some big bets too.

You'll also hear us say that at Amazon, it's always "Day 1." What do we mean? Our approach remains the same as it was on Amazon’s very first day — to make smart, fast decisions, stay nimble, innovate and invent, and focus on delighting customers.

“We continue to aspire to be Earth’s most customer-centric company, and we recognize this to be no small or easy challenge. We know there is much we can do better, and we find tremendous energy in the many challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.” – Jeff Bezos

**Meet a few of our** [**Amazonians**](https://www.amazon.jobs/amazonians) **and explore our various business teams below.**

#### **Amazon Devices and Services**

Amazon introduced the first Kindle in 2007 — at that time, it offered 90,000 eBooks and sold out 5.5 hours after the announcement. Since then, we have expanded to become the best-selling e-reader family in the world. We have gone beyond Kindle with our powerhouse Fire tablets, built for work and play with our Fire operating system. For streaming media lovers, we have created Amazon Fire TV, Fire TV Stick, and Fire TV Edition with voice search. Fire TV devices come with access to 500,000 movies, TV shows, and tens of thousands of channels, apps, and Alexa skills. Most recently, we introduced Amazon Echo and Alexa, the voice service that powers Echo and other devices so customers can play music, control their smart homes, and get information, news, weather, and more using just their voice.

#### **Amazon Marketplace**

Shoppers think of Amazon.com as the place where they can buy most anything they need to live their lives, but shoppers aren’t Amazon’s only customers. Small businesses rely on Amazon as a trusted partner to enable them to reach millions of customers worldwide and help them grow their businesses, while also providing them with a safe place to sell their products. We have teams at Amazon responsible for finding, engaging, working with, and innovating on behalf of small businesses to help them be successful — on and off Amazon.com. In 2017, over 300,000 U.S. based small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) were selling on Amazon, and during Prime Day customers ordered more than 40 million items from SMBs worldwide, growing their sales by more than 60 percent over Prime Day 2016.

#### **Amazon Web Services**

Amazon Web Services (AWS) is a secure cloud services platform, offering compute power, database storage, content delivery and other functionality to help businesses scale and grow. Millions of customers currently leverage AWS cloud products and solutions to build sophisticated applications with increased flexibility, scalability and reliability. Tens of thousands of customers use a broad range of AWS services. This has accelerated AWS’ pace in machine learning, artificial intelligence, internet of things, and serverless computing.

#### **Business Development**

The Business Development and Entertainment team includes Prime Video and Studios, Amazon Music, IMDb, Worldwide Advertising, Amazon Registry Services, and Corporate and Business Development. These teams drive new businesses that innovate in new or emerging market segments.

#### **eCommerce**

When customers shop on Amazon.com, they expect a safe, simple and consistent experience. A large number of systems and services contribute to that experience, from identity services to massive data warehouses and innovations, specifically focusing on managing the incredible scale and complexity of operating one of today’s most successful businesses. eCommerce Foundation (eCF) owns the core systems, services and infrastructure behind Amazon.com, delivering key aspects of the Amazon shopping experience, managing hosting for Amazon websites worldwide, and creating the services that technology teams across the company use to develop and run their systems.

#### **Kindle, Digital Content and Publishing**

With a mission to make every book ever written available in minutes, the Kindle, Digital Content and Publishing teams have pioneered services like Kindle Direct Publishing to empower independent authors to reach new audiences, and Kindle Unlimited subscription reading for avid eBook readers. Innovation doesn’t stop there, this team continues to build new tools for authors to publish and distribute their work, and readers to access a growing variety of content on any device, anywhere in the world.

#### **Retail**

From a garage-based start-up in 1995, to one of the world’s most respected brands today, Amazon has grown to become an integral part of customers’ lives. Amazon’s Retail organization is at the center of that evolution. We’re the people behind the Amazon.com website and customer experience, beloved programs like Amazon Prime, Amazon Go, Whole Foods, private label products, and all of Amazon’s retail categories. Whether it’s technical teams pushing the boundaries of what is possible using machine learning, or business teams launching new voice ordering capabilities, employees innovate on behalf of customers at a massive scale — and we’re just getting started.

#### **Worldwide Operations and Customer Service**

Amazon’s mission is "to be Earth’s most customer-centric company”, and our Operations and award-winning Customer Service teams are at the heart of that mission. Supported by innovative world-class technologies, our global network of FCs, delivery stations and customer service teams are dedicated to supporting customers worldwide. Together, we create, we build, and we take ownership for what we do — whether we’re developing new technology in-house, launching a new Amazon Fulfillment Center, or delighting our customers by delivering packages directly to them. We’re constantly creating the ideas, services, and products that make life easier for millions of customers.

**Part 2**

**Let's prepare for your in-person interview**

**Culture:**

Before we get into the details of your in-person interview, take some time to learn [**about Amazon,**](https://www.amazon.jobs/about-amazon) get to know our business teams, and “meet” a few [**Amazonians.**](https://www.amazon.jobs/amazonians)

**Leadership Principle:**

Next, dive into our Leadership Principles. We use our Leadership Principles every day, whether we're discussing ideas for new projects or deciding on the best approach to solving a problem. It is just one of the things that makes Amazon peculiar. All candidates are evaluated based on our Leadership Principles. The best way to prepare for your interview is to consider how you’ve applied the Leadership Principles in your previous professional experience.

#### **Customer Obsession**

Leaders start with the customer and work backwards. They work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust. Although leaders pay attention to competitors, they obsess over customers.

#### **Ownership**

Leaders are owners. They think long term and don’t sacrifice long-term value for short-term results. They act on behalf of the entire company, beyond just their own team. They never say “that’s not my job".

#### **Invent and Simplify**

Leaders expect and require innovation and invention from their teams and always find ways to simplify. They are externally aware, look for new ideas from everywhere, and are not limited by “not invented here". As we do new things, we accept that we may be misunderstood for long periods of time.

#### **Are right, A Lot**

Leaders are right a lot. They have strong judgment and good instincts. They seek diverse perspectives and work to disconfirm their beliefs.

#### **Learn and Be Curious**

Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. They are curious about new possibilities and act to explore them.

#### **Hire and Develop the Best**

Leaders raise the performance bar with every hire and promotion. They recognize exceptional talent, and willingly move them throughout the organization. Leaders develop leaders and take seriously their role in coaching others. We work on behalf of our people to invent mechanisms for development like Career Choice.

#### **Insist on the Highest Standards**

Leaders have relentlessly high standards - many people may think these standards are unreasonably high. Leaders are continually raising the bar and driving their teams to deliver high quality products, services and processes. Leaders ensure that defects do not get sent down the line and that problems are fixed so they stay fixed.

#### **Think Big**

Thinking small is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Leaders create and communicate a bold direction that inspires results. They think differently and look around corners for ways to serve customers.

#### **Bias for Action**

Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking.

#### **Frugality**

Accomplish more with less. Constraints breed resourcefulness, self-sufficiency and invention. There are no extra points for growing headcount, budget size or fixed expense.

#### **Earn Trust**

Leaders listen attentively, speak candidly, and treat others respectfully. They are vocally self-critical, even when doing so is awkward or embarrassing. Leaders do not believe their or their team’s body odor smells of perfume. They benchmark themselves and their teams against the best.

#### **Dive Deep**

Leaders operate at all levels, stay connected to the details, audit frequently, and are skeptical when metrics and anecdote differ. No task is beneath them.

#### **Have Backbone; Disagree and Commit**

Leaders are obligated to respectfully challenge decisions when they disagree, even when doing so is uncomfortable or exhausting. Leaders have conviction and are tenacious. They do not compromise for the sake of social cohesion. Once a decision is determined, they commit wholly.

#### **Deliver Results**

Leaders focus on the key inputs for their business and deliver them with the right quality and in a timely fashion. Despite setbacks, they rise to the occasion and never settle

**Behavioural Based Interviewing:**

Our interviews are rooted in behavioural-based questions which ask about past situations or challenges you’ve faced and how you handled them, using Leadership Principles to guide the discussion. We avoid brain teasers (e.g., “How many windows are in Manhattan?”) as part of the interview process. We’ve researched this approach and have found that those types of questions are unreliable when it comes to predicting a candidate’s success at Amazon. Here are some examples of behavioural-based questions:

* Tell me about a time when you were faced with a problem that had a number of possible solutions. What was the problem and how did you determine the course of action? What was the outcome of that choice?
* When did you take a risk, make a mistake, or fail? How did you respond, and how did you grow from that experience?
* Describe a time you took the lead on a project.
* What did you do when you needed to motivate a group of individuals or promote collaboration on a particular project?
* How have you leveraged data to develop a strategy?

Keep in mind, Amazon is a data-driven company. When you answer questions, your focus should be on the question asked, ensure your answer is well-structured and provide examples using metrics or data if applicable. Reference recent situations whenever possible.

**STAR Answer Format:**

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioural-based interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result of what you're describing. Here’s what it looks like:

**SITUATION**

Describe the situation that you were in, or the task that you needed to accomplish. Give enough detail for the interviewer to understand the complexities of the situation. This example can be from a previous job, school project, volunteer activity, or any relevant event.

**TASK**

What goal were you working toward?

**ACTION**

Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail, and keep the focus on you. What specific steps did you take? What was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don’t describe what the team or group did when talking about a project. Let us know what you actually did. Use the word “I,” not “we,” when describing actions.

**RESULT**

Describe the outcome of your actions and don’t be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Provide examples using metrics or data if applicable.

Consider your own successes and failures in relation to the Leadership Principles. Have specific examples that showcase your expertise, and demonstrate how you’ve taken risks, succeeded, failed and grown in the process. Keep in mind, some of Amazon’s most successful programs have risen from the ashes of failed projects. Failure is a necessary part of innovation. It’s not optional. We understand that and believe in failing early and iterating until we get it right.

**Tips for great answers:**

* Practice using the STAR method to answer the behavioural-based interview questions listed above, incorporating examples from the Amazon Leadership Principles.
* Ensure each answer has a beginning, middle, and end. Describe the situation or problem, the actions you took, and the outcome.
* Prepare short descriptions of a handful of different situations and be ready to answer follow-up questions with greater detail. Select examples that highlight your unique skills.
* Have specific examples that showcase your experience, and demonstrate that you’ve taken risks, succeeded, failed and grown in the process.
* Specifics are key; avoid generalizations. Give a detailed account of one situation for each question you answer, and use data or metrics to support your example.
* Be forthcoming and straightforward. Don't embellish or omit parts of the story.

**Prep for technical interview:**

* Interview preparation for tech roles (e.g. software development engineer, technical program manager) can be found [**here.**](https://www.amazon.jobs/in-software-development-topics)
* Unsure if you're interviewing for a technical role? Reach out to your recruiting point of contact.

**Tips before you head in:**

* Be prepared to explain what interests you about the role you’re interviewing for and the team (or teams) you’ll be meeting with.
* When answering questions, be concise but detailed. We realize it’s hard to gauge how much information is too much versus not enough. An effective test is pausing after your succinct response to ask if you’ve provided enough detail, or if the interviewer would like you to go into more depth.
* Follow-up if you need clarification. If you are asked a question, but are not given enough information to provide a solid answer, don’t be shy about asking for more information. If additional context is not available, focus on how you would attempt to solve the problem given limited information.
* For some roles, we may ask you to complete a writing sample. Why? At Amazon, we don’t do PowerPoint or any other slide oriented presentations. Instead we write narratively structured memos and silently read one at the beginning of each meeting in a kind of “study hall.” These papers generally range from one to six pages and articulate the project goal(s), approach to addressing it, outcome, and next steps. Given this unique aspect of our culture, and the impact these papers have on what decisions we make as a company, being able to articulate your thoughts in written format is a necessary skill.
* We aim to hire smart, thoughtful, and customer-obsessed people. Reflect on what motivated you to pursue a career with Amazon, and be prepared to share your thought process. Although “Why Amazon?” is a standard question, it’s not a formality for us. We genuinely want to understand what inspired you to explore an opportunity with us so we get a better sense of who you are.
* We try to leave a few minutes at the end of each interview to answer questions you might have, but if we don’t get to all of them, please don’t hesitate to ask your recruiting point of contact.

**Interview Day:**

* **Check in:** Arrive 15 minutes early, and check in for your interview. Have your government-issued photo ID ready (e.g. driver’s license, passport).
* **Location:** Detailed instructions will be sent to you via email. Some of our offices are dog-friendly. Let us know if you need any accommodations or have allergies.
* **Dress code:** Comfortable and casual; while some positions in our fulfillment centers may limit certain clothing for safety reasons (such as the need to wear closed-toed shoes), most of our offices are filled with people wearing everyday clothes. We're interested in what you have to say, not what you are wearing.
* **What to expect:** Interviews will be a mixture of questions and discussions regarding your previous experience and challenges you've encountered. Be ready with detailed examples — concise, structured answers are ideal.
* **Interviewers:** Depending on the role, you will meet with anywhere from two to seven Amazonians. They will likely be a mix of managers, team members, key stakeholders from related teams, and a “Bar Raiser” (usually an objective third party from another team). All interviewers will assess potential for growth beyond the position you’re interviewing for, and focus on evaluating how well your background and skills meet core competencies, along with how they relate to Amazon’s Leadership Principles. We recommend approaching each of your interviews the same way, rather than trying to tailor answers to the interviewer’s role. Interviewers will often be taking notes on their laptops. It’s important that they have precise notes of their time with you to share with other interviewers.
* **Resume or CV:** Interviewers will have a copy, but feel free to bring one as well.
* **Duration:** Each interview session usually lasts from 45 minutes to an hour.
* **Lunch:** We will provide lunch if your interview is scheduled during the lunch hour. Let recruiting or your lunch buddy know if you have any dietary preferences.
* **Amazon Non-Disclosure Agreement:** All candidates must sign our standard Non-Disclosure Agreement. If you're unable to print and sign prior to your arrival, we'll have a copy available for you.
* **Technical roles:** If you're interviewing for a technical role, be prepared to white board.
* **Virtual interviews:** If you've been asked to do a virtual interview, you will likely need to [**download Amazon Chime,**](https://chime.aws/trial/) our tool for video conferencing (step-by-step guide [**here**](https://www.amazon.jobs/amazon-chime-instructions)). If you're presenting, you will need to [**download Chime**](https://chime.aws/trial/) to your desktop. The meeting ID# will be emailed to you by your recruiting point of contact. For optimal sound quality, use a headset with a microphone.

**Before and after interview:**

* Some teams at Amazon incorporate role-specific exercises or online assessments into the interview process. You will be notified if the role you’re interviewing for requires one of these.
* Book arrangements if your interview requires travel. Your recruiting point of contact will put you in touch with our travel agency to coordinate travel details and hotel stay.
* Expense reports should be submitted after your visit. Your recruiting point of contact will provide details regarding where and how to submit. Fill in your form clearly, and ensure scanned receipts are legible — this will help prevent reimbursement delays.
* If you need an [**accommodation,**](https://www.amazon.jobs/disability/us) or have questions or concerns, please reach out, as we ensure reasonable accommodations for all individuals.
* After your interview, be on the lookout for a quick post-interview survey via email. It is important for us to know how we did so we can continually improve our process and we value your input.
* Expect to hear back from recruiting within five business days following your interview. If you don't, feel free to give us a nudge.

**Part 3**

**Software development topics**

## What technical topics should you be prepared to address?

Before you dig into the technical topics you may be asked about during your interview, connect with your recruiting point of contact to understand the subjects/skills you’ll most likely be discussing and demonstrating. In general, our technical interviews typically require you to perform coding and system design white boarding exercises. Also keep in mind that invention is in our DNA, and technology is the fundamental tool we wield to evolve and improve every aspect of the experience we provide our customers. When reviewing the below topics, keep the customer top of mind.

## Technical topics

## Programming Languages:

We do not require that you know any specific programming language before interviewing for a tech position. However, familiarity with a prominent language is generally a prerequisite for success. You should be familiar with the syntax of languages such as Java, Python, C#, C/C++, or Ruby. You should also know some of the languages’ nuances, such as how memory management works, or the most commonly used collections, libraries, etc.

## Data Structures:

Most of the work we do involves storing and providing access to data in efficient ways. This requires a strong background in data structures. You’ll need to understand the inner workings of common data structures and be able to compare and contrast their usage in various applications. You will be expected to know the runtimes for common operations as well as how they use memory.

## Algorithms:

Your interview will not be focused on rote memorization of algorithms. However, having a good understanding of the most common algorithms will likely make solving some of the questions a lot easier. Consider reviewing common algorithms such as **traversals, divide and conquer, breadth-first search vs. depth-first search and understand the trade-offs for each.** Knowing the runtimes, theoretical limitations, and basic implementation strategies of different classes of algorithms is more important than memorizing the specific details of any given algorithm.

## Coding:

Expect to be asked to write syntactically correct code—no pseudo code. If you feel a bit rusty coding without an IDE or coding in a specific language, it’s a good idea to dust off the cobwebs and get comfortable coding with a pen and paper. The most important thing a Software Development Engineer does at Amazon is write scalable, robust, and well-tested code. These are the main evaluation criteria for your code. Make sure that you check for edge cases and validate that no bad input can slip through. This is your chance to show off your coding ability.

## Object Oriented Design:

Good design is paramount to extensible, bug-free, long-lived code. We know it’s possible to solve any given software problem in almost limitless ways, but when software needs to be extensible and maintainable, good software design is critical to success. One way to build lasting software is to use object-oriented design best practices. You should have a working knowledge of a few common and useful design patterns, along with how to write software in an object-oriented way. You likely won’t be asked to describe the details of how specific design patterns work, but expect to have to defend your design choices.

## Databases:

Most of the software that we write is backed by a data store. Many of the challenges tech people face arise when figuring out how to most efficiently retrieve and store data for future use. Amazon has been at the forefront of the non-relational DB movement. We have made Amazon Web Services such as DynamoDB available to the developer community so that they can easily leverage the benefits of non-relational databases. While we don't expect any particular level of expertise with non-relational databases, you should be familiar with broad database concepts and their applications. The more you know about trade-offs between relational and non-relational databases, the better prepared you will be.

## Distributed Computing:

Systems at Amazon have to work under very strict tolerances at a high load. While we have some internal tools that help us with scaling, it’s important to have an understanding of a few basic distributed computing concepts. Understanding topics such as service-oriented architectures, map-reduce, distributed caching, load balancing, and others, will help you formulate answers to some of the more complicated distributed architecture questions you might encounter.

## Operating Systems:

You won’t need to know how to build your own operating system from scratch, but you should be familiar with some OS topics that can affect code performance (e.g. memory management, processes, threads, synchronization, paging, and multithreading).

## Internet Topics:

We expect our engineers to be familiar with the fundamentals of how the internet works. Brush up on how browsers function at a high level, from DNS lookups and TCP/IP, to socket connections. Having a solid understanding of the fundamentals of how the worldwide web works is a requirement.

## General Machine Learning & Artificial Intelligence:

Expect to be asked about data-driven modelling, train/test protocols, error analysis, and statistical significance. For example, given a problem definition, you should be able to formulate it as a machine learning problem and propose a solution, including ideas for data sources, annotation, modelling approaches, and potential pitfalls. Understand the basic AI/ML methods and algorithms – revisit your favourite ML and AI textbooks.

We understand this was a relatively long list of topics to review. Know that your interviewers won’t be evaluating your ability to memorize all of the details for each of these topics. They will be looking for your ability to apply what you know to solve problems efficiently and effectively. With (sometimes) limited time to prepare for a technical interview, we recommend reviewing computer science fundamentals and practicing coding outside of an integrated development environment. This will likely yield the best results for your time.