

5 Steps Guide for Java Interview Preparation

By: HowToDoInJava.com

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Preface

First of all, thanks for being a part of HowToDoInJava.com. I really appreciate your contribution in making the blog better each day.

So, most possibly you are reading this book either an interview is scheduled in coming days or you think you could have done better in the last interview you appeared. Or simply you want to better prepare whenever you get your chance. In this book, I will try to put different thoughts related to different aspects of an interview.

Generally (worldwide) interviews have a definite procedure. Few companies follow their own procedures but somehow they all fit in same line. So, it becomes little easy to prepare for one interview and use that preparation for next interviews as well. It's good for us because we don't have to start over again from scratch.

I will suggest five steps preparation guideline. Pay attention and read carefully.

1) Do home work first - Know your enemy

It's always better to know the enemy. It makes the fight easier.

Always try to find as much information as you can - related to job you have applied. Dig into job description posted into your email or interview invitation etc. Contact your friends if you are going through referrals; or by luck, you have some friends in that company.

Understand clearly what the recruiter is looking for in a probable candidate. This is very important to know what they are looking for, because they will mostly try to measure you into that role or designation. If you already know their expectations, you know what you need to do or you may expect on judgement day.

In fact, having read your CV or application form, they also know how well you match their profile. If they are interviewing you, so you can be sure you're a good match to that profile. The purpose of the interview, then, is to probe more fully into those key areas. Focus on these key areas.

Make sure that:

1. you understand what skills, qualities and experience are required to do the job;
2. you know what skills, qualities and experience you have that match those requirements;
3. you can give examples of how, when and where you've demonstrated those skills and qualities;
4. you can present those examples concisely and confidently.

They are also looking for those harder-to-define skills and personal attributes that will ensure that you fit comfortably into the organization, and will be a useful member of the team and an asset to the company.

Like a top-rank lawyer presenting a case in court, you need to have your 'exhibits' ready:

- Exhibit 1: evidence that you meet their needs with regard to skills, qualities and experience;
- Exhibit 2: reassuring answers and satisfactory explanations for those areas of your CV where you don't quite match or where there might be some other problem;
- Exhibit 3: some knowledge of the industry or business sector, and the interviewing company in particular;
- Exhibit 4: sound reasons why you are applying for the job.

You now have a fully prepared case for your suitability with all your evidence at your fingertips, ready to bring into play at every opportunity during the interview. You know exactly what skills and experience are required to do the job; you know how your own skills and experience fit those requirements; you can give concrete examples of when and where you've demonstrated those skills, and when it comes to those areas where you might not be such a good fit, you are prepared with reassuring answers for the interviewer.

2) Prepare these most obvious questions

Interviewers start conversation usually with generally asked few questions. e.g. "Tell me something about yourself?" or "Why do you want to work here?". There can be so many of these questions, and some of them are listed below. Look at the ones here and consider how you would reply.

The answers given here are intended to get you thinking about your own particular circumstances. You don't have to learn them parrot-fashion; adapt them to your own style of speaking so that you can say what you want to say. They do, though, cover the main points that you will need to think about. They can help you plan your responses ahead of the interview so that you are rarely, if ever, caught unprepared.

-> 'Why do you want to work here?'

If you've done the preparation suggested in step 1, you should have a clear idea of how this job fits into your career plan and why the company is the right one for you. Good reasons to concentrate on are those things that allow you to work at your best. These include the company structure, reputation, conditions, management methods, opportunity, challenge, etc. Follow up with the positive things you will be able to contribute to the company under those conditions. e.g.

'I believe [company name] is a progressive company providing a challenging, stimulating and supportive environment for its employees and their achievements [or whatever else you value – the opportunity for rapid advancement, creative freedom or technical innovation]. I have x years' experience in [your field of work] and my time at [the company you work for] has shown me I have a talent for [a skill or ability highly relevant to the job you're applying for]. I think I've demonstrated that by [mention an achievement and what you've contributed]. I am now looking for the opportunity to continue to achieve at that level and beyond, in a company that will help me develop professionally. I believe your company offers just such an opportunity.'

-> 'What interests you most about this job?'

Concentrate on what you will bring to the job rather than what you believe you can get out of it. The interviewer needs to know you are enthusiastic about using your skills, abilities and experience to benefit the company. In answering the question, remind them of the skills that mean you can do the job and the personal qualities that mean you will do the job. Add your reasons for wanting to change jobs, and your reasons for wanting to work for the company if those questions haven't already been dealt with. e.g.

'I'm looking for a position where I can use my [one or two of your key abilities] to the full. I believe this job would allow me to make the most of those along with my [another skill or personal quality]. I see it as a natural development from [your experience and achievements]. I've enjoyed working in [your current job], especially [mention a key feature], but they're a small company and unfortunately there's no opportunity for advancement with them in the near future [for example]. I believe an expanding company [for example] such as yours offers a greater range of challenges and opportunities, in particular [a key responsibility or competency mentioned in the job description that you would like to develop further].'

-> 'Have your responsibilities increased while you've been doing your current job?'

Tell the interviewer about any extra tasks or responsibilities you've taken on and, especially, any promotions you've received. Even if your duties haven't increased officially, it's almost certain that you've taken on more responsibilities as you've got to know the job and become more confident. e.g.

'Yes, my responsibilities have increased substantially. When I first started, my supervisor [manager, boss] had to instruct me about every job and check my work at each stage. I made mistakes in the beginning, naturally, but it meant I learnt how to [do what you do] thoroughly, and I learnt how to work efficiently and to a high standard. With time, I became more confident about what I was doing and took responsibility for [list some of your tasks], and eventually [name something

you became responsible for]. These days, my supervisor just gives me the work schedule [or whatever] and I plan the work order and carry it out [for example]. I believe the confidence my supervisor now has in my ability shows how I've developed in the job, and that I'm now ready to take on greater responsibilities.'

-> 'Do you prefer working alone or with others?'

You will know from the job description whether the job involves primarily working alone or in a team, so tailor your answer accordingly. However, whatever job you do, you have to get on with others and there will be times, even as a team member, when you have to work on your own. Reassure the interviewer you'd be happy in either role and demonstrate your innate agreeableness and adaptability. e.g.

'I've worked as a team member in [give a specific situation], and I've worked on my own in [give another situation]. I'm happy to do either depending on the requirements of the job. I've found, though, that working in [whichever the job requires] allows me to [give some positive benefit of either working with others or alone].'

-> 'What were your reasons for leaving your last job?'

You must have a positive answer ready. If the interviewer asks you this question, they are trying to find out if there's anything that should sound alarm bells for them e.g. sacking, personality clash with your boss or a colleague or passed over for promotion or some similar reason.

Good reasons for changing jobs may be:

- a. **Challenge.** You want more demanding tasks and responsibilities which demonstrates your motivation and eagerness to contribute.
- b. **Reputation.** As long as you don't cast a slur on your present employer, applying to a more prestigious company is an acceptable reason for wanting to change jobs especially when you can demonstrate a better cultural fit. If you're proud of your skills, why not use them for the best in the business?

- c. **Promotion.** If the job you're applying for is a step up from your current one, naturally you'd go for it, especially if the structure of your present company doesn't allow you to develop further.
- d. **Opportunity.** You want the chance to work on something different or develop in a particular way with more opportunity for engagement and the chance of making a bigger contribution.
- e. **Security.** This can be a convincing reason for some jobs. There's no harm in wanting a more secure job with a more stable company especially when you can highlight your own steadiness and dependability along with your steadfast values.
- f. **Location.** If the company you're applying to is in a better or more convenient place, you could mention this as a contributing factor, but try not to make it your main reason.
- g. **Money.** Your salary may no longer reflect your experience or value to the company. Again, though, try not to give this as your main or only reason.

e.g. 'I've enjoyed working [where you work or what you do], especially the opportunity they've given me to [mention something you've achieved and/or contributed]. They're a small company, though, [for example] and unfortunately there's no opportunity for advancement with them in the near future [the promotion reason].'

3) Do some white board exercises

Be prepared to write code on a whiteboard and practice that skill. The interviewer may not ask you to do this, but it may be a good idea to start illustrating your thoughts on the board if there is one in the room. If there is no board, use your own notepad. Often interviewers are trying to judge how well you think and approach a problem more than how effectively you've memorized an algorithm, class name, or method arguments.

No need to rush. If you start writing a code fragment on a board, don't be afraid of making mistakes. Think aloud. It may be even beneficial for the interviewer to see how you can identify the wrong approach and then pick the right one.

Practice explaining little code fragments to your friends or relatives; they don't need to know Java to participate in these role-playing games.

For practice, try to solve these whiteboard questions -

- Design an API to handle the navigation history of a web browser (previous page, next page, list the 10 previous pages), and that can be reusable in many parts of the application.
- Draw for me on the whiteboard the design of the last project you worked on, without revealing me any sensitive detail.
- Count the number of nodes in a binary tree. (This question tests your ability to write recursive code).
- Write a function to reverse a singly linked list.
- Sorting algorithms.
- Draw system design of any application e.g. network adapter.
- Function to generate/print/store the first "n" prime numbers.
- Fibonacci sequence.
- Max/Min/distinct results based database queries.
- Design patterns.
- Multi-threading programs e.g. producer-consumer or thread pool.

Remember that nobody will be able to compile your code on paper. What they look for is your approach and attitude. If you got a problem to solve, and you even didn't tried it and surrendered - you have lost it already.

Always try to give your version of solution and logic behind it. And be ready to accept the critical feedback from interviewer. Thank him for learning new things today if he helped in solving the problem by giving hints. It will leave a positive image of you. It also means that you are open to new ideas and open to discussions as well. This is a must have character in any team member.

Remember you attitude and appoarch towards solving a problem is more important than solution itself.

Note: It does not mean that even if you do not have any clue about answer then also you have to pass time in whiteboard. Well in that case, tell honestly that you do not have the answer for this question right now, but you will find find out it's solution and discuss when you meet next time in future.

4) Sharpen your technical skills

Your home work about company, job and most obvious questions will only help in setting the stage for your selection by painting a positive image of you. But from there, you have to demonstrate your in-depth knowledge in java programming language.

Today java has become so vast and there are thousands of opensource projects deployed in production environments. You do not need to know about everything. Just focus on job description, skill set you mentioned in resume or additional skills they are looking for in suitable candidates.

In HowToDoInJava.com, I have already written lots of blog posts related to interview questions on core java as well as different java frameworks. Some such posts are linked below. Go ahead and read these questions.

- [Core Java Interview Questions - Part 1](#)
- [Core Java Interview Questions - Part 2](#)
- [Core Java Interview Questions - Part 3](#)
- [Collection Interview Questions](#)
- [Spring Core Interview Questions](#)
- [Spring MVC Interview Questions](#)
- [Spring AOP Interview Questions](#)

Apart from these specific blog posts, I will suggest you to revise all concepts posted under the category "[Interview Questions](#)".

Above questions only cover a very small part of java programming paradigm. You will need to find books related to subjects/topics you are expecting in interview. You will need to google a lot as well.

You may want to follow my "**Learn something everyday**" rule as discussed in "[10 life lessons](#)".

5) Your appearance matters

It's very popular dictum in India, "**Jo dikhta hai, Wo bikta hai**". Means **what looks good, sells good**.

You've done your research, got all your answers prepared and are ready for any question the interviewer might throw at you. You need to create the right impression from the very first moment of the interview. By the time you're sitting down answering questions, it may be too late. The interviewer will begin to form their opinion the second you step through the door, so make sure they get the right idea from the start.

Your appearance and behaviour should convey the same message that your answers to the interviewer's questions do – that you are intelligent, friendly, adaptable, competent and positive, that you have integrity and that you can do the job. Everything about you should support this message, from the clothes you wear to the way you sit.

Things like these will help to make you feel confident about meeting strangers and being judged by them. More importantly, they show that you've made the extra effort. Nothing impresses interviewers more than someone who's made an effort.

-> **How you dress**

Look as if you already belong to that company. Dress like a smarter, more polished version of the staff already employed there. The working environment is all about teamwork, so if you look like part of the team you're already ahead of the game. You'll need to do some research to find out what the dress code is. Do it.

-> **Posture and bearing**

Some people can wear the most expensive clothes and still give the impression they've just borrowed them for the occasion if they carry themselves badly. You

have to convey the idea that you're keen and capable, and project your confidence and interest towards the job. Think up and open – stand tall, head up, shoulders back. Look around you rather than at the floor – take in your surroundings. Meet people's gaze and make eye contact. and finally don't forget to smile.

-> Inside interview room

Before you even enter the room, take a moment to centre yourself. Stand tall, pull your shoulders back and your head up. Take a slow, deep breath and let it go. Smile as you enter. Close the door behind you. Make eye contact with the interviewer – and with anyone else in the room. Be ready to shake hands when they introduce themselves. Say 'Hello, very nice to meet you' or 'Pleased to meet you' or any other of the usual greetings. Sit down when invited to.

If the interviewer forgets, wait for a moment before asking 'May I sit down?' or 'Is it OK if I take a seat?'.

This is the interviewer's territory, so don't attempt to dominate it – hence the advice to wait before shaking hands and sitting down so that the interviewer can take the lead and remain in control. It's not just politeness; it's essential psychology.

-> During Interview

Keep the right impression going throughout the interview. You want to come across as confident, enthusiastic, responsive and energetic, as well as interested, alert and intelligent.

Sit well back in your chair rather than perching nervously on the edge. Sit upright with both your feet on the floor and your hands resting in your lap or on the arms of the chair. Avoid nervous or defensive mannerisms such as folding your arms, crossing your legs, fidgeting, tapping your feet, biting your nails, etc.

Let your gaze move around the interviewer's face – forehead, eyes and mouth – as you talk. This helps you maintain good eye contact while avoiding a fixed stare.

Nod intelligently while your interviewer explains things to you or asks you questions.

Remember to smile frequently throughout the interview.

-> At the end

Having established a good impression and maintained it throughout the interview, leave a good impression behind you when you leave the room.

Be alert to 'winding up' signals from your interviewer. They might say something like 'We'll be in touch early next week' and thank you for coming in to see them. Make eye contact. Smile and shake hands. Thank them for seeing you.

Final Thoughts

All above discussed 5 steps will play their roles in any interview you will attend in future. Their effect may vary differently on different days, but all will help you in preparing, attending and closing the interview process with positive effect only.

Good Luck !!