

## What is the technical interview?

This interview generally takes place after the first round of elimination has occurred.  
The company generally has 3 to 4 candidates they are considering

The purpose of this interview is to determine the candidate's skill level, they want to see who is the most proficient

Not only do they want to know about your technical abilities they are also trying to determine:

- is the candidate a good fit for the team
- does the candidate have good communication skills – speaking, writing, listening
- is the candidate a team player

When you are in the technical interview, do not make assumptions. In the interview you may be asked simple questions, do not assume that the person asking the question is not at your technical level. It could be the individual asking the question is a senior level programmer.  
Generally every candidate is asked the same set of questions during an interview.

## Options during an interview

Some companies give a homework question or issue to solve before the real interview.  
Some give a test that covers basic skills of the job  
Some companies wait and ask technical questions during the interview.

The company may or may not give you time to prepare. Either way, try to be prepared and do the best you can. If the time limit does not extend to testing the project, be prepared to explain how you would test the code.  
The communication skills may outweigh anything you perceive as a lack of knowledge.

Be prepared to talk about your code afterwards. Be honest and professional

## You are selling yourself

Communication skills are the highest ranked for any job. Companies want to see how candidates think in real-time. And you will need to be able to communicate your skills quickly and concisely.

Practice how you want to present yourself. How will you dress? What does your social media say about you? Set up a professional social media account if necessary. Make sure your LinkedIn account is a professional representation.

Study the company – do the research. Find out as much as you can about the company and the people you will be meeting. You may be meeting with programmers who will grill you.  
Know the company – how it is organized, how many employees, what does the company do, who manages the company, projects the company has worked on.

## Whiteboarding

This has become a standard in interviews. Practice writing code legibly where it can be read in a large room. With covid, online interviews are common and you may be asked to share your screen. Be sure to read the Zoom Interview folder and make sure to keep your desktop clutter free.

During the whiteboarding (where you solve a coding problem on a whiteboard in a room or in a Zoom interview, using IDE), there will be no one to ask, nothing to refer to, no resources and in an in-person interview, no keyboard.

The problems will be simple, but they will be different from those you are used to. Time will be a factor. It doesn't matter if this seems fair or unfair, it doesn't matter. You do not have any input, the company gets to decide how it conducts an interview, so no complaints.

Navigating this step successfully can increase the chance of getting the job.

Hackerearth.com, codingbat.com – have coding practice sets to work on.

## **The Job Listing itself**

Employers spend a great deal of time constructing the listing. Read it over and over. Be prepared to talk about anything in the description.

Watch for key words like “independent worker”, stress the projects you've completed on your own. Be prepared to discuss any software you have used, this includes Office. A lot of companies use Outlook and they want prospective employees to know that software, along with Word, Excel and Powerpoint.

Summarize examples that show how you organize information and projects, handle revisions and collaboration and prioritize your tasks to meet deadlines.

## **Your application**

Craft your application carefully. Be sure to read and re-read it. Eliminate any spelling or grammar errors.

Make sure the application is company specific.

If the job posting asks for 5 years experience, and you have 4 – apply anyway but focus on your diversity and experiences rather than the years.

## **Fundamentals**

Know the fundamentals of programming languages, most of them operate the same. For instance, and if statement in one language works the same as an if in another language, just the syntax varies.

If you are well-versed in one language, brush up on the fundamentals in another language or two.

This is one point in the interview where knowing the “computer jargon” helps. So brush up on it if necessary.

During the technical interview know:

algorithms, data structures, class design, arrays, linked lists, binary search trees, hash tables, sets, graphs, sorts, etc.

The problem given to you could be a logic problem or a brain teaser. Use the practice tests available.

The interviewer will have used this question over and over for some time. So for them, it appears simple.

Don't rely on the “I would use a library” for an answer, if you do you have lost the interview.

## **After the Fundamentals**

You may be given open-ended questions that have multiple solutions. They are trying to see how you problem solve.

Surprisingly enough, think out loud. The interview “may” guide you.

Always ask questions.

Practice, practice, practice

If you have seen the question in practice, tell them. They may offer a second question or they may ask you to do it anyway. But if you don’t tell them and they find out you knew, then your chances are blown.

## **Portfolio**

If you don’t have a portfolio of your work, start creating one now.

Bring a portfolio of your work to the interview, or you may be asked to provide it before the interview.

The portfolio can be physical, github, samples of projects, anything that shows skills & experiences

The portfolio could include Code, network diagrams, proposals, solution designs

In the real world there are normally one or two senior programmers who review your code and make sure it works and merges with production. Get someone to review your code.

## **Prepare**

We all have good days and bad days. But on a technical interview, you need to be at the top of your game.

Mentally, be prepared.

The morning of the interview – get up early enough.

Go over your notes and terminology

Think about things you want to say to demonstrate your expertise

Think about what questions could be asked.

This might be helpful:

Cracking the Coding Interview

<http://www.crackingthecodinginterview.com/> 6<sup>th</sup> edition. About \$35 on Amazon. Well worth it.

Ask questions during the interview. It is fine to ask for clarification about a question. This buys time to make sure you understand and prepare an answer.

There is not necessarily a “right” answer to the problem or question, they are looking for your problem skills and how you resolve an issue

Companies are evaluating how you talk about what you’ve done in the past as well as thinking and solving problems.

## **What to do if the problem stumps you or you draw a blank?**

Don’t panic. Stay calm. Be honest and admitting that you are nervous is expected.

Admit that you are stumped and be honest about it:

“I just used that command last week, but it’s not coming to me right now. If I was on the job right now here is how I would find the answer”.

If you really don’t know the answer then be honest.

Don’t lie

If they catch you in a lie, then “stump the chump” becomes the game and you will be even more rattled by the next questions they ask.

Ask the interviewer to clarify or confirm anything you don’t understand.

## **Strong closing**

Use the last few minutes of an interview to:

- ask questions about the company
- ask questions about the culture
- ask questions about upcoming projects.

Let the interviewer know, in a professional way, that you are the right candidate for the job.

Bring up anything not covered – work history, skills, experience

After the interview, make notes immediately. Be sure to get the interviewer’s names, roles and contact information if you can. If you can’t get their email, you can probably guess at the email scheme the company is using. Or call the main company phone number and ask the person answering the phone.

## **Follow up and Thank you**

**Don’t skip this step.**

A lot of job-hunters omit this step. By following up and thanking the interviewers you will leave a great impression.

Be sure to send a Thank you note. Email is fine, but a hand written note leaves a huge impression.

Thank them by name and recall some of the high points of the interview.

Express your continued interest in the job and why you are the right fit.