

15 technical interview life hacks

from EPAM Anywhere's
certified interviewers



If you are like most people, the idea of being interviewed makes you nervous. You sweat, overthink, and panic 15 minutes before showtime. But here's some good news: you aren't alone.

Technical interviews test both hard and soft skills with a series of questions. At EPAM Anywhere, this consists of a background check, core knowledge test, soft skills review, and a Q&A session to ensure everyone's questions are answered.

Technical interviews can be stressful. So to help you out, we will leverage the knowledge of our certified technical interview experts:



Serhii Kamenkovych

Lead Software Engineer,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere



Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere



Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

Below, you'll find **15 technical interview life hacks** you can use to bring your best self to the interview.



Relax before your interview



“Try to calm down by finding a quiet room and give yourself some time before the interview to relax.”

Serhii Kamenkovych

Lead Software Engineer,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Think back to the feelings you had in the moments before your last interview. Did you feel nervous? The answer is probably yes, which is normal.

When you lose focus, this leads you to the main enemies of potential candidates:

- **Passivity or reservation**
- **Irritability**
- **Nervousness**
- **Talking too much**

Being nervous makes you forget your strategy and all that knowledge you know you have. So take some expert advice:

Floyd “Money” Mayweather, one of the world’s best boxers, is known for chilling just before major matchups. While you could cram before the last 15 minutes, take his quote home:



**“I’m either
ready, or
I’m not.”**

Floyd “Money” Mayweather

Did you prepare?

If yes, go out there, execute, and don’t stress. If one of the world’s greatest boxers stays calm before the main event, you can too.

Be honest during the technical interview



“During the interview, provide clear and honest answers. With this, 50% of your success will be in the bag.”

Serhii Kamenkovych

Lead Software Engineer,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Honesty is the best policy. At least, that’s what your parents always said. But does this apply to interviews? Short answer: yes.

For example, it might be tempting to claim you have experience managing teams to sound more impressive, but when your interviewer calls upon those skills, failure to deliver will live with you forever.

Honesty benefits you in two ways:

- It allows your future team to train you in areas you struggle in.
- It enables you to apply the skills you have.

Truthfulness gives you the best opportunity to grow. Keep this in mind when looking for the position that fits you best.



Check your connection before starting the interview



“Join the call several minutes before to ensure everything works smoothly and avoid issues with your computer.”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Video conferencing is a staple of the modern technical interview process. With it, interviewers can gauge the effectiveness of employees from anywhere, which is necessary for remote work. But technical issues can put a sour taste in the mouth of an interviewer. Sometimes, they make the interviewee look unprepared. So rather than risk this situation, enter the room early and test your equipment before the interview.

You should also be sure your internet meets bandwidth requirements for high-quality images. Check if you have at least 1 Mbps upload speed. Ask others to put their activities on hold during the interview if you share the internet.



Refresh your knowledge before the interview



“Keep your knowledge of the basics fresh.”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Technical interviews are an excellent way to display your knowledge. However, the best display of knowledge is a firm understanding of fundamentals. Study up on the best practices of your field before the interview. People who conduct interviews look for consistency and knowledge of those practices.

Don't worry about obscure facts unless they're vital to the project. It isn't trivia night; it's a professional interview where knowing the basics is crucial.

Be confident: Never say, “I don’t know”



“Never say, ‘I don’t know.’ If you don’t know something, reply that you haven’t faced the situation. You should try and use context clues to gain understanding. In the worst case, state you will check in about the subject after the interview to show your eagerness to learn and grow.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

There will be questions you come across that you don’t have an answer to. This is fine; it allows you to grow for further interviews. However, answering a question with “I don’t know” is an immediate red flag.



Returning to our earlier point about honesty, you should acknowledge your knowledge gaps. Ivan has this to say about those gaps:



“Don’t try to do something when you have no idea how to. Better to say ‘I know this about that topic, but am not familiar with the question asked.’”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere



However, saying you haven’t come across the situation and sharing your intent to educate yourself affirms your willingness to learn. Keep these challenging questions in mind for later interviews.

Clarify questions if necessary



“Don’t be afraid to paraphrase or clarify the question if you’re unsure you heard it right. It will help you to align with the expectations and make sure you are answering the question that was initially asked.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

Have you ever had that moment when you try to answer a question, only to veer far off-topic? This happens to the best of us, even when the question is first asked. To avoid answering questions incorrectly, clarify the question in one of two ways:

- Ask them to repeat the question (once).
- Paraphrase the question back to them.

Both indicate a willingness to understand before answering. Good interviewers will see this as a positive quality. Active listening is a huge part of communication skills.



Use professional terminology



“Don’t forget to use specific terminology showing your professional knowledge of the industry.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

When talking about your job with friends and family, you tend to “dumb it down” a bit. But when discussing your job with someone else in the field, using specialized terminology shows your familiarity.

You don’t have to go too far. Pulling obscure terms from a now-defunct programming language won’t help you. General usage of industry terms is enough to demonstrate your experience.

Talk to people in your industry about different topics to mentally prepare yourself. It can be about anything; just be sure it is specific to your work. Speaking with those in your industry keeps you prepared to communicate using the correct terminology.

Avoid a chaotic self-introduction



“Be able to share the highlights of your professional experience in a couple of minutes.”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Your self-introduction should be quick, simple, and straightforward.
Stick to these topics:

- Your job title
- Roles played
- Business domains
- Experience
- Education
- Key skills
- Responsibilities

Allowing your introduction to veer off course tells the interviewer you aren't disciplined. The recruiter doesn't want to know your autobiography; they want to know (in the shortest way possible) whether you are a good fit.





“Making an efficient and structured self-introduction sets the mood of the whole interview. If you provide irrelevant information like ‘I finished school in 2010’ or ‘My hobby is football,’ you move the conversation in the totally wrong direction.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere



Ask questions about the project or company



“Place yourself into the place of an interviewer. Would you want to work with someone with no interest in the project or company who doesn’t ask questions?”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

Questions tell the interviewer that you are interested in the project or subject. A willingness to learn more about the subject displays passion. Beyond passion, it also indicates that you (as the interviewee) are thinking about your place in the team. Here are a few example questions you can ask:

- What learning opportunities are available at your company?
- Which software development methodologies are most commonly used on your projects?
- What is expected from a professional in this role?

Asking questions about the structure, process, and stakeholders tells the interviewer you think strategically. For those seeking long-term work, this will lead to continuous career growth.



Manage your stress levels throughout the interview



“Too much stress can kill the most successful interview. When you’re under stress, your thoughts begin to mix and it’s hard for the interviewer to understand you.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

Here are some quick tips you can use to reduce stress in the middle of your interview:

- Focus on breathing slowly throughout the interview.
- Boost your confidence by presenting your achievements during the opening interview.
- Rationalize your stress into excitement for the new position.
- Remind yourself it is just a conversation.

Preparation and practice before the interview will help. So practice your interview skills with friends, eat a good breakfast the day of, and relax just before the interview by taking a walk or listening to music.



Share personal experiences and refrain from saying “we”



“When answering questions during the interview, focus on what you did and how you did it.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

A big mistake many interviewees make is focusing on team contributions. Because your interviewer is hiring you, focusing on what you bring to the table is crucial.

It's great that a project you contributed to doubled a company's profits. But what did you do for the project that made it successful?

When you focus on team contributions, interviewers see you doing very little. Using the word “we” in an interview isn't great. Instead, use “I” statements that highlight how your personal skills or ideas contributed to the project's success. Show specific examples of your contribution whenever possible.



Use the STAR method to enhance your answers



“Try to use the STAR method in your answers to provide more context for your experience and balance both the theoretical and practical parts of the question.”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

The **STAR** interview method is a four-stage process for answering interview questions. It is an acronym that breaks your questions into four sections:

- **Situation:** What was going on
- **Task:** What your responsibility was
- **Action:** The steps you took to handle the task
- **Result:** The positive outcomes of your action

Following this four-stage process for answering questions gives an interviewer everything they need to understand your expertise. By standardizing the way you answer questions, you don't have to think about it. This reduces your stress levels and assists the interviewer in making an informed decision.



Listen, answer, and pause



“Try to listen and answer questions. Do not speak nonstop and overexplain details on the topic.”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

It's understandable for you to be eager to share your experience. However, a big part of good communication skills is listening.

The best way to listen is to stop talking. It's natural for you to consider a question for a couple of seconds. The temporary pause is less awkward than you think.

For questions with less obvious answers, listening and considering are important. Having strong technical knowledge is only part of most technical jobs. Creativity and problem-solving skills are often just as crucial (if not more).

Propose solutions to task issues



“Propose rational solutions for the given situation. Don’t overdo it and take extra steps to look more impressive.”

Ivan Baulin

Software Engineering Manager,
Certified Technical Interviewer, EPAM Anywhere

Sometimes the answer to troubleshooting questions is as simple as “turn it off and on again.” While this might be an extreme example, it’s good to avoid trying too hard.

Programming jobs have well-defined and rigorous systems for solving problems. Knowing the best practices can help, and sharing specific examples of you solving these problems can provide context.

Avoid saying “it depends,” because everything is situational. Giving these “depending on” answers indicates a lack of problem-solving skills.



Focus on both tech and soft skills



“Large part of your success depends on soft skills. If you’re not a team player, how will you contribute to the whole project?”

Anastasiya Belskaya

Business Analysis Team Lead,
Certified Technical Interviewer and Mentor, EPAM Anywhere

You can be the most technically gifted student, but that won’t matter to interviewers if you can’t communicate. You will run into questions about challenging work situations. In some cases, you might have to communicate with clients or customers. When speaking to someone who lacks a complete understanding of your position, getting them to see your point of view can be difficult.

Here are some soft skills that most interviewers are looking for:

- **Communication**
- **Analytical thinking**
- **Ability to learn**
- **Teamwork**
- **Leadership**
- **Stress resistance**
- **Emotional intelligence**
- **Problem-solving**





5 red flags for technical interviewers

Interviewers look for specific behaviors to disqualify potential candidates. To make sure that your interviewer sees the best of you, avoid these situations:

- 01** Don't stick to practice-based answers only; show your theoretical knowledge as well.
- 02** Don't talk badly about past clients.
- 03** Avoid proving the interviewer wrong or pointing out faulty questions.
- 04** Don't Google answers after being asked a question.
- 05** Don't be lazy or look for excuses to avoid tasks.

Pay particular attention to number one and number two on the above list.

It's good to know the best practices in ordinary situations. But displaying your experience in theoretical cases can help you go beyond textbook knowledge. Analytical skills are considered soft skills, making them in high demand.

You also might have had a bad experience with previous employees, but blaming the process or client for the problem doesn't look great. It shows a lack of ownership and a focus on negative aspects of an experience.

Paint negative experiences in a way that focuses on self-development. Owning a past mistake and taking steps to correct it is a vital sign of ownership. Mentioning this willingness to grow in the interview bodes well for your hiring prospects.



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