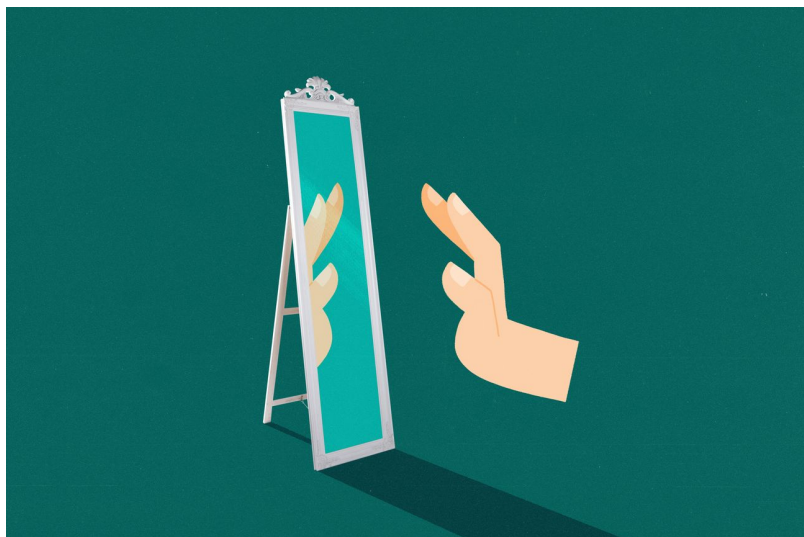


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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-to-prepare-for-a-job-interview-11605107862>

MANAGEMENT & CAREERS

Job Interview Preparation Tips to Help You Stand Out



Practicing job interview answers in front of a mirror helps you to identify anything that might distract from the substance of what you have to say.

PHOTO: TAMMY LIAN AND JAKE ZUKE

By [Deborah Acosta](#)

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In brief

- To prepare for an interview, study up on the role so you can explain how you meet each of the job requirements.
- Be prepared to address your biggest weaknesses, such as gaps in your résumé.
- The best way to learn how to interview is by practicing your Q&A with someone you trust, on camera or in the mirror.

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would fit in with your potential team. If you do your homework, you will be prepared for anything the interviewer throws at you.

1. Study the job description.

Get into the right mind-set by reminding yourself what the job entails and reading the employer's mission statement, if it has one. Make a list of reasons why this job may be the right fit for your career journey, such as the skills, experience and network you would gain. Focusing on how this job will help you achieve your career goals is a good way to get excited about the role—even if it is not your dream job. This will help you to express why you want the job and to convey enthusiasm during the interview.

Think about what makes you the best candidate for this job. Look at your résumé, and pick out which parts of it align with the job requirements. Write down examples of how you tackled particular projects or problems in your previous experience at work, school or elsewhere in your life that demonstrate you have the skills the employer is looking for. As you work through the job description and mission statement, make a list of your proudest accomplishments that could be used as examples. If you are suffering from imposter syndrome, this can also help you recognize why you are the right person for the job.

2. Prepare to address gaps in your background.

Make a list of anything in your background or résumé that makes you feel nervous and prepare explanations for gaps you may have in your experience. “If there’s something that freaks you out, sit down and...think about how you’re going to present it in the best possible way,” says Pamela Skillings, chief executive of BigInterview.com, an interview training website.

If there is a gap of time in your résumé when you weren’t employed, think about what you gained during that time. Perhaps you learned important life skills or experienced personal growth, which you can present as assets. For example:

If you were traveling, you could talk about what you learned from exploring new cultures, and how you would bring those insights into your job.

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— Pamela Skillings, BigInterview.com

Prepare to address any gaps in your knowledge or experience. If the job description mentions anything that you are not fully familiar with, read up on the subject until you are comfortable discussing it at length. If there are requirements in the job description you don’t have direct professional experience with, think about what you have done at work or elsewhere in your life that demonstrates you have the skills required. If a job requires previous management experience and you have never been a manager in title, perhaps you have led a project, mentored and trained colleagues or filled in for your boss while they were away.

If, after carefully considering your work experience, you still have a gap you can’t fill, acknowledge it and prepare to talk about how you would learn this skill on the job.

“Redirect and reframe. Bring up some of the positives that will ease any concerns,” Ms. Skillings says.

3. Practice your interview question responses ahead of time.

Study some of the [top interview questions](#) that may be asked of you.

“Practicing is key,” Ms. Skillings says. “A lot of smart people don’t do it because it feels awkward, but it makes such a huge difference.” Practicing talking about yourself is important at any level of your career. Even senior executives who are “great communicators” sometimes struggle to talk about themselves, she says.

You have already compiled a list of all of the reasons you are a great fit for the role. Now it is time to synthesize and communicate them. If you can’t find someone to practice with, do it in front of a mirror or record a video of yourself. If you don’t like to talk up your own

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Top tip: Observe the way you present yourself. If there is anything you are not fully comfortable with, now is the time to address it. If it is your posture, practice sitting up straight. If you notice a distracting habit, like playing with your hair or fidgeting, be aware of it and try to avoid it. Find an alternative place for your hands, such as on the table.

Be authentic. A May 2020 study found that people who behave authentically during a job interview do better overall than those who try to cater to an interviewer's interests and expectations. This is because it takes a lot of mental energy to try to be someone you are not, which ultimately increases anxiety and could ruin your efforts to create a positive, authentic connection with your interviewer.

4. Make your final job interview preparations.

Write down some thoughtful questions, and be prepared to ask them during or at the end of your interview.

Plan how you are going to show up to the interview. Keep your outfit classic, clean and comfortable so the focus remains on what you are saying, not what you are wearing.

To help combat nerves, visualize a successful interview. Many top athletes use this technique before a big game to focus and reaffirm their positive outlook. Some CEOs have also credited the technique with helping them achieve their goals.

5. Keep the conversation going after the interview.

Sending a thank-you email after the interview can set you apart from other candidates. It is also your opportunity to reiterate why you would be a great fit for the role.

If your interviewer agrees and you receive a job offer, first congratulations! Next, pause and consider whether the offer meets your expectations. Do your research, know what is important to you—from salary to vacation time to other benefits—and counter the offer. Use our guide on the do's and don'ts for a successful negotiation.

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