Amazon Interview Tips

General Information for Your Interview

Computer Science Fundamentals – Amazon evaluates Software Engineers based on their fundamentals rather than technology or domain specific knowledge. Spend most of your time focusing on the three core fundamentals of data structures, algorithms, and object oriented design.

Practice – The technical interview can feel awkward and unnatural because it is awkward and unnatural. We completely understand that as an engineer you are not accustomed to writing code by hand on a whiteboard. Spend some time leading up to your interview practicing both coding and design problems with a pen and a piece of paper in order to build your comfort level with this. I would even encourage you to use Google to look up coding and design problems that you can practice on your own time.

Optimal Solutions – During the technical interview, you are going to be evaluated on how optimal your coded solutions are. Your interviewers are not interested in seeing pseudo code or brute force solutions. They will be looking for clean and maintainable code that is as close to production-ready as possible. Be sure to call out edge cases and check for bugs. *Exception: There may be scenarios in which, due to time constraints, brute force is the only means of delivering a workable solution. In such a case, simply explain to the interviewer "I know this is not the most optimal solution, and this is not how I would go about it in the real-world, but I am going to use brute force so I can deliver a workable solution to you before our time is up."*

Ambiguity – Interviewers will often purposefully give you a problem or set of instructions that seem vague or lacking important information. It is your responsibility to deal with such ambiguity by gathering additional requirements and asking clarifying questions before diving headfirst into coding.

Coachability – Whether you find yourself struggling with a particular problem or you have come up with a workable solution that the interviewer nevertheless deems sub-optimal, he/she may offer you guidance. Take their feedback and work with it. Amazon engineers spend their workdays dealing with technical challenges of mindboggling scale…so if they offer you guidance that takes you in a direction you are unaccustomed to or that feels counterintuitive, just trust that they know what they are talking about and start implementing the feedback they offer. Coachability is something we value highly in developers.

Leadership Principles –Spend time familiarizing yourself with the Amazon Leadership Principles, and use them as a guide to choose the stories and anecdotes from your career that you decide to share during your interview. For example, one of our Leadership Principles is Ownership…knowing that, it would be unwise to share an anecdote about a situation in which you chose not to take action on something because it was "outside your job description" or "not your responsibility".

Personal Experience - We really want to get an understanding of how you think, how you solve problems, what you're passionate about, what you want to do, etc., so as much as possible, try to talk things out and 'think out loud.' And whenever possible, try to give as much detail as possible about *your* specific contributions and what *you* owned. We love team players, but we also have to get a solid understanding of what it is *you* delivered.

Data Driven - Amazon is a very data-driven company, so try to provide examples using metrics/data. There's nothing better than supporting a success story with a great data point.

Customer Focus - Above all, think about customer impact. It's why we all come to work every day and is the reason we even have jobs in the first place. We are truly obsessed with our customers.

Additional Tips

- Don't be put off if interviewers are typing on laptops or taking notes during your interview as we will be trying to capture everything you're saying as accurately as possible.
- Please do some research on the Amazon teams you will be interviewing with. Be prepared to answer the question "Why Amazon?".
- Hopefully (time-permitting) each interviewer will try to give you a few minutes at the end to ask questions, so please have different questions ready for each interviewer.