

INTERVIEW PREPARATION TRAINING

ACE Your Interview

A Leadership Guide to Interview Excellence

90 minutes | AGMs, GMs & Supervisors | Interactive Training

Today's Agenda

1	Why Interview Skills Matter	5 min
2	The ACE Framework	15 min
3	The STAR Method Deep Dive	20 min
4	Strengths & Weaknesses	15 min
5	"Why This Position?" & "Why Now?"	10 min
6	Additional Frameworks — CAR, PAR, SOAR	10 min
7	The Two-Way Interview	10 min
8	Putting It All Together	5 min

Total: ~90 minutes | Interactive with practice exercises

01

Why Interview Skills Matter

5 minutes

Interviews Are a Leadership Competency

- Every promotion, lateral move, and external opportunity starts with an interview
- Your technical skills got you here — your interview skills get you there
- Bad interviews cost: the wrong hire costs 30% of their annual salary
- As leaders, you interview AND get interviewed — both require preparation
- Today: frameworks you can use tomorrow, whether you're in the hot seat or behind the desk



The Cost of Poor Interview Performance

The Cost of Poor Interview Performance (%)



02

The ACE Framework

15 minutes

ACE — Answer, Cite, Explain

A

ANSWER

Lead with a clear, direct answer to the question asked. No preamble.

C

CITE

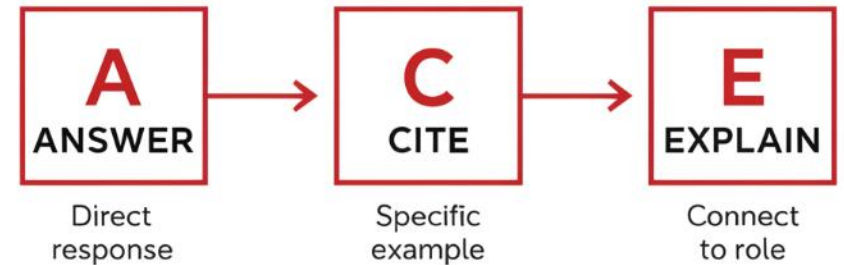
Back it up with a specific, relevant example from your experience.

E

EXPLAIN

Connect the example to the impact and the role you're pursuing.

ACE Interview Framework



Best for: direct questions, competency questions, “Tell me about yourself” |
Target: 60–90 seconds

ACE Breakdown — Each Step in Detail

A

ANSWER

Direct response. No preamble, no throat-clearing, no “That’s a great question.” Get to the point.

Tip: Start with “Yes” / “No” / “My approach is...”

C

CITE

One specific story. Name the situation, what you did, the outcome. Quantify whenever possible.

Tip: Use numbers — “reduced by 22%” beats “improved significantly”

E

EXPLAIN

Link it back. Why does this matter for THIS role? Show you understand what they need.

Tip: “That’s the same approach I’d bring to this [role]...”

A

ANSWER:

Direct response
No preamble

C

CITE:

One specific story
Quantify

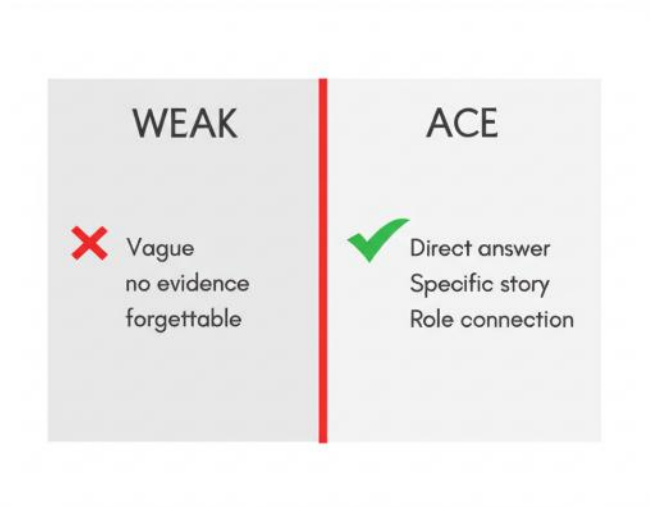
E

EXPLAIN:

Link to THIS role
Show self-awareness

ACE in Action

"Are you a strong leader?"



WEAK RESPONSE

"Yeah, I think I'm a good leader. People like working for me and I try to be fair. I've been a manager for a few years now."

No evidence, vague, forgettable

ACE RESPONSE

A: "Yes — I lead through ownership and follow-through."

C: "At my last DC, I inherited a team with 34% turnover. I built 1-on-1 cadence, restructured shifts, and launched peer recognition."

E: "Turnover dropped to 12%, throughput up 18%. That's the impact I'd bring to this GM role."

Specific, proven, connected to the role

PRACTICE 1

ACE Your “Tell Me About Yourself”

- 1 Think of a leadership accomplishment you're proud of
- 2 Write a 3-sentence ACE response (Answer → Cite → Explain)
- 3 Keep it under 90 seconds when spoken
- 4 Share with a partner and get feedback

5

MINUTES

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Starts with a direct answer (not “Well, so...”)

Includes a specific example with a number

Connects back to the target role

03

The STAR Method Deep Dive

20 minutes

STAR — The Gold Standard for Behavioral Questions

S

SITUATION

Set the scene briefly. Where were you? What was happening?

T

TASK

What was YOUR specific responsibility?

A

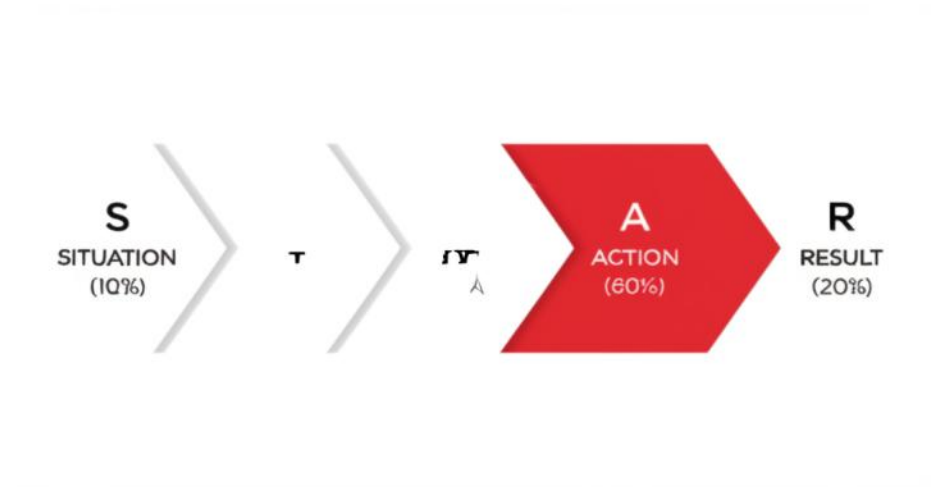
ACTION

What did YOU do? Not the team — YOU. Be specific.

R

RESULT

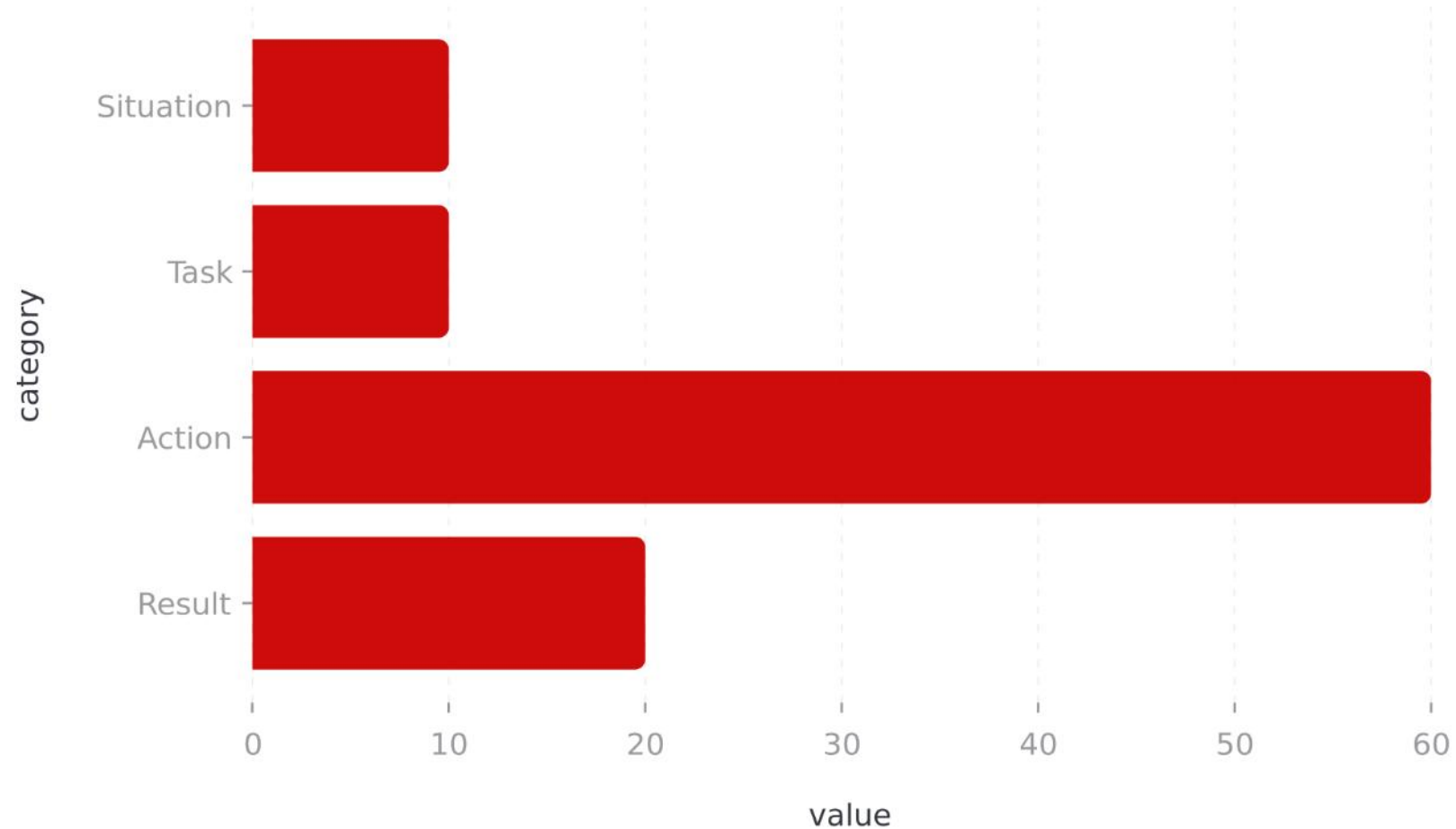
What happened? Quantify. What did you learn?



Use when: “Tell me about a time when...” or “Give me an example of...” | **Target length:** 2–3 minutes

The STAR Time Split

STAR Method — Time Split (%)



Strong STAR vs. Weak STAR

WEAK STAR

S

"We had a problem at the warehouse"

T

"I had to fix it"

A

"We all worked together and figured it out"

R

"It worked out fine"

Vague, uses "we" not "I", no metrics

STRONG STAR

S

"In Q3, our Greenville DC was running 15% behind on daily ship targets for 3 consecutive weeks"

T

"As AGM, I was responsible for diagnosing root cause and getting us back on track"

A

"I analyzed shift data, identified a pack station bottleneck, added 3 associates during peak, implemented 15-min shift overlaps"

R

"Hit 102% of target in 2 weeks. The overlap model was adopted by 2 other DCs"

Specific, quantified, shows individual contribution

The 5 Most Common STAR Mistakes

1

Too long on Situation

Spending 2 minutes on context, 30 seconds on action. Flip the ratio.

2

Using “we” instead of “I”

Interviewers want YOUR contribution, not the team’s. Own your actions.

3

No numbers

“It improved” vs. “It improved throughput by 22%.” Always quantify.

4

Picking the wrong story

Choose stories relevant to the role, not just your most impressive moment.

5

No lesson learned

Great candidates show growth, not just results. What did the experience teach you?

5 Common STAR Mistakes

- ✗ Too long on Situation
- ✗ Using we instead of I
- ✗ No numbers
- ✗ Wrong story for the role
- ✗ No lesson learned

Build Your STAR Story Bank

- Prepare 8–10 stories that cover the most common behavioral themes
- Each story can be adapted to multiple questions
- Theme categories: Leadership, Conflict, Problem Solving, Failure, Innovation, Teamwork
- Write each one out. Practice out loud. Time yourself.

One great story, well-told, beats five mediocre ones.

Story Bank — Cover These 6 Themes

1

LEADERSHIP

A time you led a team through a challenge or change

2

CONFLICT

A time you resolved a disagreement or difficult conversation

3

PROBLEM SOLVING

A time you solved a complex operational problem

4

FAILURE

A time something went wrong and what you learned from it

5

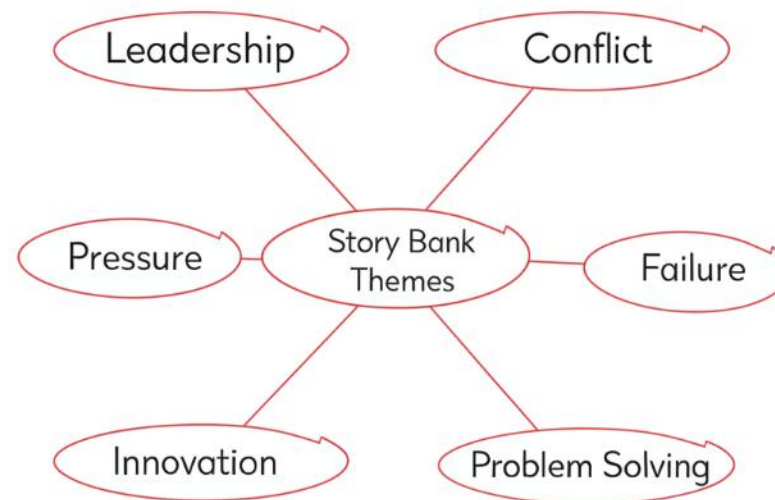
INNOVATION

A time you improved a process or introduced something new

6

PRESSURE

A time you delivered results under a tight deadline



Prepare at least one strong STAR story for each theme. Most stories can cover 2–3 themes.

PRACTICE 2

Build Your First STAR Story

- 1 Pick ONE theme from the Story Bank
- 2 Think of a real work situation that fits
- 3 Write out each STAR component — 1–2 sentences each
- 4 Make sure Action is 60% of your story
- 5 Include at least one specific number in your Result
- 6 Practice telling it in under 3 minutes

8

MINUTES

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Uses “I” not “we” in Action

Result includes a quantified outcome

Fits in 2–3 minutes spoken

Tip: Write it out first, then practice out loud. Stories always take longer than you think.

04

Strengths & Weaknesses

15 minutes

Why They Ask About Strengths & Weaknesses

- It's NOT a trick question — interviewers want to see self-awareness
- **Strengths:** Do you know what makes you effective? Can you articulate it?
- **Weaknesses:** Do you have a growth mindset? Are you honest about limitations?
- The framework matters more than the specific answer

STRENGTHS

Can you articulate what makes you effective?

WEAKNESSES

Do you have a growth mindset?



SELF-AWARENESS

Authenticity beats rehearsed perfection every time.

The Strengths Framework: Strength → Evidence → Relevance

STEP 1

Name the Strength

Be specific, not generic.
“Operational efficiency”
not “hard worker”

STEP 2

Provide Evidence

A concrete example
that proves it.
Use numbers.

STEP 3

Connect to Role

Why this strength matters
for THIS position.
Show alignment.

Keep it to 60 seconds. Don't list 5 strengths — go deep on one.

Pick strategically. Choose a strength that directly maps to a key requirement of the role.

STRENGTH

Name it
specifically

EVIDENCE

Concrete
example

RELEVANCE

Why it
matters for
THIS role

Strength Answers — What Works vs. What Doesn't

GENERIC / WEAK

"I'm a hard worker and a people person."

"I'm detail-oriented."

"I never give up."

No proof, sounds rehearsed, could be anyone

FRAMEWORK / STRONG

"My strength is operational problem-solving. At my Tampa DC, I noticed our pack rate was declining every Thursday. I dug into the data, found it correlated with a specific associate rotation pattern, and restructured the Thursday schedule. Pack rate went up 14%."

"That's the kind of analytical approach I'd bring to this GM role — using data to find and fix hidden patterns."

Specific, proven, connected to the role

The Weakness Framework: Honest → Actions → Progress

STEP 1

Name a Real Weakness

Not a disguised strength.
Not a cliché.
Something genuine.

STEP 2

Show Actions Taken

What have you actively done to improve?
Specific steps.

STEP 3

Demonstrate Progress

Show measurable improvement, not perfection.
Growth mindset.

The best answers show self-awareness AND a growth mindset. You know your gap and you're actively closing it.

Pick wisely: Choose a weakness that is real but not disqualifying for the role you're pursuing.



Weakness Answers — What Works vs. What Doesn't

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- ✗ “I’m a perfectionist” — *disguised strength*
- ✗ “I work too hard” — *cliché*
- ✗ “I have no weaknesses” — *arrogant*
- ✗ “I’m terrible with people” — *disqualifying*

These answers signal low self-awareness

STRONG WEAKNESS ANSWER

HONEST

“I used to struggle with delegation. I’d take on too much because I wanted to make sure everything was done right.”

ACTIONS

“I started using a priority matrix — anything not in my top 3, I assign with clear expectations and check-in points.”

PROGRESS

“My direct reports now own 70% of daily operations decisions. My last review specifically noted improved delegation.”

Self-aware, proactive, shows growth

05

“Why This Position?” & “Why Now?”

10 minutes

The 3-Part “Why” Framework

COMPANY

Why THIS company?

What about this organization resonates with your values, mission, and goals? Show you’ve done your research.

ROLE

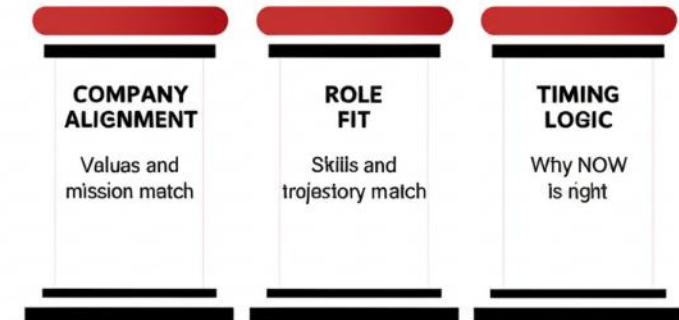
Why THIS role?

How does this specific position match your skills and career trajectory? Be specific about scope and responsibilities.

TIMING

Why NOW?

Why is this the right moment for this move? Show career progression logic, not desperation.



Your Compelling Answer

Research the company before the interview. Generic answers are immediately obvious.

“Why This Position?”

Flat vs. Compelling

FLAT ANSWER

“I think it would be a great opportunity. I’ve always wanted to work at a bigger company and this seemed like a good next step.”

No research, self-focused, interchangeable

COMPELLING ANSWER

COMPANY

“Tesla’s mission to accelerate sustainable energy aligns with what I care about — I want my work to matter beyond the balance sheet.”

ROLE

“This GM role manages the exact scale I’ve been building toward — 40+ associates, multi-shift operations, direct P&L ownership.”

TIMING

“I’ve spent 3 years mastering AGM operations. I’ve built the systems and now I’m ready to own the full operation.”

Researched, specific, shows career logic

“Why Now?” — Framing Transitions Positively

- **NEVER** badmouth your current employer or role
- Frame as “moving toward” not “running from”
- Show progression: “I’ve accomplished X, and now I’m ready for the next challenge”
- If layoff/restructuring: “The change gave me the opportunity to be intentional about my next step”

Your “why now” should feel like the natural next chapter, not a desperate escape.

06

Additional Frameworks

10 minutes

Framework Quick Reference

CAR

**Challenge →
Action → Result**

Best for problem-solving questions.
“What’s the biggest challenge you’ve faced?”

Tip: Lead with the challenge to hook the interviewer, then show your solution.

PAR

**Problem →
Action → Result**

Best for “tell me about a time” questions. Simpler than STAR when the task is obvious.

Tip: Use when the situation and task are the same thing — no need to separate them.

SOAR

**Situation →
Obstacle →
Action → Result**

Best for adversity questions.
Emphasizes what stood in your way.

Tip: The obstacle is the star — it shows resilience and problem-solving under pressure.

CAR	PAR	SOAR
Challenge	Problem	Situation
Action	Action	Obstacle
Result	Action	Action
	Result	Result

When to Use Which Framework

ACE

Direct questions, competency questions, “Tell me about yourself”

60–90 sec, answer-first

STAR

Behavioral questions: “Tell me about a time when...”

2–3 min, detailed story

CAR

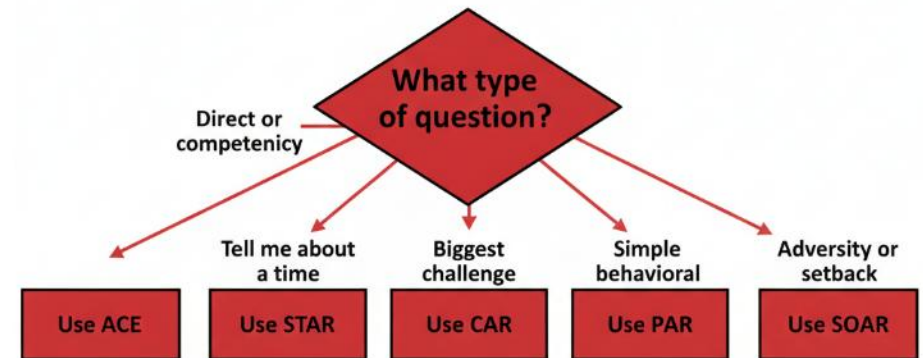
Problem-solving: “What’s the biggest challenge...”

Lead with the challenge

PAR

Simple behavioral questions when STAR feels like overkill

Shorter, situation = task



07

The Two-Way Interview

10 minutes

You're Evaluating Them Too

The best interviews are **conversations**, not interrogations.

You should leave knowing if this role is right for **YOU**.

Asking smart questions signals **confidence** and **preparation**.

Avoid questions you could Google — ask what only an **insider** would know.

A good company will respect your questions. A red-flag company will be annoyed by them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THEM

“What does success look like in the first 90 days?”

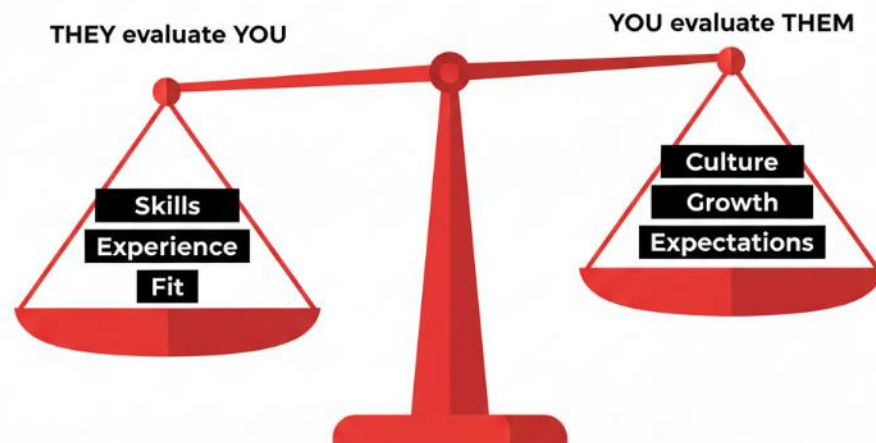
“What’s the biggest challenge the team is facing right now?”

“How is performance measured and rewarded?”

“What happened to the last person in this role?”

“What’s one thing you’d change about the team if you could?”

THE TWO-WAY INTERVIEW



Red Flags & Green Flags in an Employer

GREEN FLAGS

- ✓ Clear expectations
- ✓ Growth path
- ✓ Team stability
- ✓ Honest about challenges

RED FLAGS

- ✗ Vague answers
- ✗ High unplanned turnover
- ✗ Rushing the process
- ✗ Annoyed by your questions

GREEN FLAGS

- ✓ Clear expectations for the role from day one
- ✓ Defined growth path and development support
- ✓ Team stability — low turnover, tenured managers
- ✓ Honest about current challenges
- ✓ Interviewer is engaged and asks follow-ups

RED FLAGS

- ✗ Vague answers about the actual role and responsibilities
- ✗ High turnover they can't explain
- ✗ Rushing the interview process
- ✗ Avoiding questions about culture or team dynamics
- ✗ The role has been open for a suspiciously long time

08

Putting It All Together

5 minutes

Your 48-Hour Interview Prep Checklist

1

Research the company, role, and interviewer (LinkedIn, news, job posting)

2

Build your STAR story bank — at least 6 stories covering the key themes

3

Prepare your ACE for “Tell me about yourself” — practice until natural

4

Know your strength (with evidence) and **weakness** (with actions + progress)

5

Write your “Why” — Company + Role + Timing answers

6

Prepare 3–5 questions to ask THEM (two-way interview mindset)

48-HOUR INTERVIEW PREP CHECKLIST



Research company, role, interviewer



Build STAR story bank with 6+ stories



Prepare ACE for Tell me about yourself



Know your strength + weakness frameworks



Write Why this company and Why now answers



Prepare 3–5 questions to ask THEM

Key Takeaways

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. ACE every direct question
2. STAR for behavioral 60 percent on Action
3. Strengths and Weaknesses equals self-awareness
4. It is a two-way street
5. Preparation is the difference

1 **ACE every direct question** — Answer first, Cite evidence, Explain the connection

2 **STAR is your go-to for behavioral questions** — spend 60% on the Action

3 **Strengths & Weaknesses** are about self-awareness — use the frameworks, be authentic

4 **It's a two-way street** — evaluate the opportunity as much as they evaluate you