How to Prepare for a Job Interview

Solutions manual and marking guidance (for learners checking their work, and for instructors).

O1: Research an employer and match your experience to the job.

Q01 [Foundational · short answer] Name four things you should find out about an organisation before an interview.

Answer: Any four: what it sells or provides, its customers, values, size/locations, recent news, competitors.

1. Sources: official website, social media, news, annual reports, employee reviews (opinions).

Q02 [Foundational · multiple choice] Which document tells you most directly what the interview questions will be about? (a) the company logo (b) the job description (c) your school certificate (d) the office address

Answer: (b)

1. Each requirement and responsibility in the job description is likely to become a question.

Q03 [Core · practical] Explain what an evidence table is and why it is useful.

Answer: Requirements of the job on the left, matched to real examples on the right.

1. It shows which stories to prepare and reveals gaps where you need a new example.

Q04 [Core · true/false] True or false: employee review websites give objective facts about a company.

Answer: False

1. Reviews are individual opinions; use them as one source among several.

Q05 [Applied · application] A role requires 'experience of working to deadlines'. You have never had a paid job. Suggest two sources of evidence.

Answer: Examples: coursework or exam deadlines; organising an event; volunteering; a family business task.

1. Any activity with a fixed date and a result you were responsible for counts as evidence.

Q06 [Applied · analysis] Why might a director and a team leader want different things from the same interview?

Answer: A team leader focuses on day-to-day work and teamwork; a director on results, strategy and long-term value.

1. Knowing the interviewer's role helps you choose which examples and outcomes to emphasise.

Q07 [Advanced · application] Choose a real job advertisement and build a complete evidence table with at least five requirements. Mark any gaps and say how you will address them.

Answer: Answers will vary; each requirement should be paired with a specific, real example.

1. Gaps can be addressed with a related example, a plan to learn, or a short course.

O2: Answer common interview questions, including 'Tell me about yourself'.

Q08 [Foundational · short answer] What three-part structure is recommended for 'Tell me about yourself'?

Answer: Present, past, future.

1. What you do now; relevant past experience; why you want this role.

Q09 [Foundational · multiple choice] About how long should 'Tell me about yourself' last? (a) 10 seconds (b) about a minute (c) 10 minutes (d) as long as possible

Answer: (b)

1. Long enough to be informative, short enough to keep attention.

Q10 [Core · conceptual] Why is 'I work too hard' a poor answer to 'What is your greatest weakness?'

Answer: It sounds rehearsed and avoids the question, so it shows little self-awareness.

1. Choose a real, non-essential weakness and explain how you are improving it.

Q11 [Core · true/false] True or false: it is acceptable to criticise a previous employer if they really treated you badly.

Answer: False (in an interview)

1. Stay positive and forward-looking; criticism worries the interviewer about how you will speak of them.

Q12 [Applied · writing] Write a 'Why do you want to work here?' answer for a hospital receptionist role.

Answer: Should connect specific facts about the hospital (values, services, reputation) to the candidate's own skills and motivation.

1. Strong answers mention something only that organisation offers, then link it to the candidate.

Q13 [Applied · evaluation] Evaluate this answer to 'What are your strengths?': 'I'm a people person.'

Answer: Weak: vague, no evidence, not linked to the job.

1. Improve by naming a specific strength relevant to the role and adding a brief example with a result.

Q14 [Advanced · writing] Write and time your own 'Tell me about yourself' answer for a job you want. Aim for about a minute, and end by linking to the role.

Answer: Answers will vary.

1. Check: present-past-future structure, relevance, a concrete achievement, a closing link to the role.

O3: Use the STAR method to give clear, convincing examples.

Q15 [Foundational · short answer] What do the letters S, T, A and R stand for in the STAR method?

Answer: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

1. Situation and Task set the scene briefly; Action is the longest part; Result gives the outcome.

Q16 [Foundational · multiple choice] Which part of a STAR answer should usually be the longest? (a) Situation (b) Task (c) Action (d) Result

Answer: (c)

1. The interviewer most wants to know what you did.

Q17 [Core · conceptual] Why should you say 'I' rather than 'we' when describing your actions?

Answer: The interviewer is assessing your contribution, not the team's.

1. You can mention the team, but make your own role clear.

Q18 [Core · classification] Label each sentence S, T, A or R: (1) 'Our team's waiting time was 9 minutes.' (2) 'I was asked to cut it.' (3) 'I changed the order in which calls were routed.' (4) 'Waiting fell to 4 minutes.'

Answer: 1 S, 2 T, 3 A, 4 R

1. Situation = context; Task = responsibility; Action = what you did; Result = outcome.

Q19 [Applied · evaluation] This answer has a weak result: '...and in the end things went better.' Rewrite the result to make it convincing.

Answer: Example: 'Complaints fell from 12 to 3 a month within two months, and my manager asked me to train two colleagues in the method.'

1. Use numbers, time frames and recognition where possible.

Q20 [Applied · writing] Write a STAR answer to 'Tell me about a time you worked in a team under pressure.'

Answer: Answers will vary.

1. Check: brief S and T, detailed A in the first person, specific R, one to two minutes spoken.

Q21 [Advanced · analysis] A story ended badly: your project missed its deadline. How can you still use it in an interview?

Answer: Use STAR, take responsibility, explain what you learned and what you would do differently, and give evidence you applied it later.

1. Interviewers value honest reflection and learning.

O4: Handle body language, your own questions and the follow-up.

Q22 [Foundational · short answer] Give two examples of positive body language in an interview.

Answer: Any two: upright posture, slight lean forward, natural eye contact, relaxed visible hands, a genuine smile.

1. On video, look at the camera while speaking.

Q23 [Foundational · true/false] True or false: having no questions to ask at the end can look like a lack of interest.

Answer: True

1. Prepare two or three genuine questions.

Q24 [Core · short answer] Suggest two good questions to ask an employer at the end of an interview.

Answer: Examples: what success looks like in the first months; how the team works; training and development; the next steps.

1. Avoid questions answered on the website; salary is usually best left until the employer raises it or makes an offer.

Q25 [Core · multiple choice] When should a thank-you message usually be sent? (a) within a day (b) after a month (c) only if you get the job (d) never

Answer: (a)

1. A short message within a day shows interest and professionalism.

Q26 [Applied · writing] Write a thank-you email of three or four sentences after an interview for a library assistant role, mentioning one specific point from the conversation.

Answer: Answers will vary.

1. Include: thanks, one specific detail, renewed interest, polite close; check spelling and the interviewer's name.

Q27 [Applied · application] During a video interview your connection fails. What should you do?

Answer: Reconnect quickly; if that fails, call or message the contact you prepared, apologise briefly and offer to continue.

1. Preparing a backup phone number in advance makes this easy.

Q28 [Advanced · analysis] A candidate gives excellent answers but avoids eye contact, speaks very fast and never pauses. What impression may this create, and what practice would help?

Answer: May seem nervous or rehearsed; practise with a friend or recording, slow down, pause before answering, and practise looking at the listener or camera.

1. Delivery affects how content is received.

Marking scheme: Assignment 1: full interview preparation pack (individual)

- Research: accurate, specific, from more than one source: 3 marks
- Evidence table: requirements correctly identified, real examples: 4 marks
- Common answers: structured, relevant, honest: 3 marks
- STAR answers: correct structure, first person, measurable results: 6 marks
- Questions and follow-up: genuine, well judged: 2 marks
- Presentation and language: 2 marks (total 20)

Marking scheme: Assignment 2: recorded mock interview (pairs)

- Questions appropriate to the role: 2 marks
- Candidate answers structured (STAR where relevant): 4 marks
- Accurate, specific feedback given: 3 marks
- Clear improvement in the repeated answer: 3 marks (total 12)