



**GOODWIN
COLLEGE**

INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

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INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

Preparing for an interview can be a daunting task but it shouldn't have to be. The key to being comfortable in an interview is creating a "brand" of yourself and selling that brand to the potential employer. This guide will serve to help you create that brand and feel comfortable portraying your strengths as they relate to the job.

There are some basic fundamentals that make for a great interview:

- You can capture the attention of the employer
- You have the qualities and skills to be successful at the job
- You present evidence to back up your claims

With proper preparation you can attain all of these fundamentals and your interview will be much less of a challenge.

To start: Examine all of your previous experience. Write out the major responsibilities for each job you have held. NOTE any special accomplishments. Identify your important "work-strengths"—the abilities where you excel and are most productive.

Now locate the job description for which you are going to be interviewing. Review the employer's and position's needs and determine which of your abilities and which aspects of your experience will be most important *to the employer*. Use the attached "Five Point Agenda" as a worksheet.

With a strong Five Point Agenda you should be able to comfortably answer any interview question. Use your Agenda (and practice) creating a 60 second sales-pitch of your skills and accomplishments that directly relate to your employer's needs. When you get the question: "Tell me about yourself," you can concisely articulate who you are and why you are such an excellent fit for the position.

1. Do Your Homework

Don't walk into a job interview with zero knowledge about the business you are interviewing with. Research the company beforehand -- visit its website, follow it on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and do some simple Google searches to see what you can find out about its history and its leadership team.

Be sure to showcase your newfound knowledge during your interview. This will boost your credibility with the interviewer and will help you to formulate intelligent questions to ask him or her.

2. Plan Your Route

Don't sabotage your chances before you even arrive by getting lost on your way to the interview or getting stuck in traffic. Arriving late to a job interview leaves a very bad impression on the interviewer.

Map out where you're going and prepare alternate routes. Figure out how long the trip will take, where to park, and anything else you need to know to arrive on time. Be sure you have the name and phone number of the person you'll be meeting with.

3. Rehearse Beforehand

Every once in a while an interviewer will ask an unexpected question, but for the most part, many interviews play out the same way.

Prepare intelligent answers to common questions the interviewer is likely to ask, such as "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"; "Why do you want to work here?"; "Why should we hire you?"; and "Tell me about yourself." Conduct a mock interview with a trusted friend as practice.

4. Get Solid References

Find at least three key people -- former supervisors, colleagues, or instructors -- who will serve as your professional references. Ask their permission beforehand, as well as the best way for them to be contacted.

You may be asked to send these references at a later time, but you should arrive at the interview with this information in hand just in case it is asked for.

5. Bring Necessary Documentation

Make a checklist of documents that you will need for the interview, and make sure that you have them with you. These may include copies of your résumé, a passport, driver's license, Social Security card, or portfolio of work.

If the interviewer asks for something that you did not know to bring, be sure to get it to them as soon as possible.

6. Dress the Part

Your clothing should be neat, pressed, and professional looking. It's better to dress too conservatively than too casually. Be well groomed with clean, manicured nails. Keep tattoos under wraps and remove any facial piercings if you have them. If the work

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environment seems casual, you'll be able to gauge later what's acceptable -- *after* you have the job.

7. Arrive Early

Arrive at least 15 minutes before the interview. Visit the restroom and check your appearance. Turn your cell phone off so it doesn't ring during your meeting.

However, be sure not to announce your arrival too early or you might annoy the interviewer, who may be meeting with another candidate or simply isn't ready to meet with you yet.

8. Sell Yourself

Now is not the time to be humble. Develop a 60-second sales pitch that sings your praises. In business this is called an "elevator speech," a compelling overview of "why you?" that can be recited in the time it takes to ride an elevator. It should include your strengths, your experience, and what sets you apart from other applicants.

9. Ask Questions

Nobody is very impressed by a candidate who sits in silence, or exhibits little knowledge about the position he or she is applying for.

Based on your research about the company, ask questions that show your knowledge of the business and industry. Don't barrage the interviewer with difficult or sensitive questions, but make sure your questions aren't generic either. This is your time to prove that you are knowledgeable about the company you want to be a part of.

10. Follow Up

After the interview, send a handwritten note or friendly email thanking the interviewer for his or her time and consideration, as well as restating your interest in the position. If you don't hear anything after one week, call to politely ask when they will be making a decision.

Every interview is a learning experience. Even if you don't get this job, when the next interview rolls around, you'll be better prepared and more at ease, which will improve your chances of being offered the next job.

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5 Point Agenda:

Write five personal traits that are most important *to the employer* and list as many examples as you can think of explaining how these traits fit you:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Think about what your greatest weakness is and list examples of how you have overcome this weakness in the past. Example: “Sometimes I’m shy around new people” *I have taken a public speaking course and found that speaking in front of people is rarely as scary as I think it’s going to be.*

FIVE POINT AGENDA EXAMPLE

5 Point Agenda:

Write five personal traits that are most important *to the employer* and list as many examples as you can think of explaining how these traits fit you:

- 1. I have excellent time management skills.**
 - a. I am a parent of two children, I work 20 hours a week as well as a full time student.
 - b. While employed as a server for five years, I was responsible for monitoring twelve tables at a time, taking orders, picking up from the kitchen, operating the cash register, etc. I was awarded Server of the Year.
 - c. In my current job as Accounts Payable, I manage billing and checking invoices for accuracy and work under strict payment schedule deadlines.

- 2. I like learning new things/I learn new things quickly.**
 - a. I am a first-generation college student who is finishing up my degree in a couple of months. I never knew I would like learning as much as I do.
 - b. I remember when I had my first child, there was so much to learn and it was scary but looking back, it was a challenge worth having.
 - c. I have such diverse interests that my friends are always surprised to see the variety of magazines on my coffee table.

- 3. I like helping people.**
 - a. I grew up looking after my nieces and nephews, one of which is developmentally disabled. I always knew I wanted to be in the helping profession.
 - b. My family always comes to me when someone needs a shoulder to lean on. I pride myself on being able to listen to people and help out whenever I can.
 - c. I'm a firm believer that kindness is contagious and that smiles go a long way.

- 4. I love new challenges/I have overcome adversity.**
 - a. I remember the challenge of being pregnant with my first child while still in High School. I managed to complete high school and continue on to fulfill my dreams of being a college graduate.
 - b. As a volunteer for Rebuilding Together I have learned how to do basic home repairs and painting all while helping my community.

- 5. I frequently set goals and tirelessly see them to completion.**
 - a. At Girl Scout camp I decided that I would train to be able to swim across the lake. I swam every morning before breakfast and became the youngest Girl Scout to swim across the lake unassisted.
 - b. My personal goal was to receive my degree before my 35th birthday. This goal seem easy to attain, but after having to retake math twice I was forced to take on additional classes to meet my goal.

Think about what your greatest weakness is and list examples of how you have overcome this weakness in the past. Example: "Sometimes I'm shy around new people" *I have taken a public speaking course and found that speaking in front of people is rarely as scary as I think it's going to be.*

SAMPLE 60 SECOND OVERVIEW

Using your 5 Point Agenda you can be prepared to effectively answer the question: “*Tell me about yourself.*” In your head start the answer to this question “.....you should hire me because..”

“I’m a life-long learner and a mother of two. I have followed an interesting and sometimes complex and hectic path to be where I am today and I’m not afraid to say that I am proud to have been able to see my dreams come to fruition. I have known from a very young age that I was destined to be in a helping profession when I started looking after my nephew who has developmental disabilities. My experiences as a student at Goodwin College has only affirmed my desire to work with people and proven to myself that I can succeed in anything I put my mind to. I can adapt to a changing environment, in fact I find I am at my peak performance when faced with tight deadlines and pressure. I hope to someday work where I can learn new skills and improve upon the skills that I already possess and from what I know about Hartford Hospital, this is the place where that can happen.”

This is your “brand”. You have just demonstrated that you:

- Enjoy and have experience helping people.
- Like, and are good at learning new things.
- You can set goals and meet them.
- You are not afraid of challenges. In fact, you love them.
- You are able to manage your time.

A statement like this **will set you apart** from candidates that respond like this:

“I’m really good with people. I work well on a team or independently. I work well in a fast-paced environment.”

Take the time to create your own statement and time yourself speaking it out loud to not exceed 60 seconds.

25 MOST COMMON JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. *Tell me about yourself.*

Provide a brief summary of your personality, educational qualifications, and your professional experience, skills, and work history. Talk about things you have done and job you have held that relate to the position you're applying for. This is an opportunity to show your capabilities. Do *not* mention your hobbies or pets. Keep it relevant to the job.

2. *Your exact job responsibilities and experience in previous jobs*

Tell about your job titles and responsibilities.

3. *Education and knowledge base*

Where have you gotten your degree from and other academic qualifications? Provide additional information regarding courses/ programs/lessons you took.

4. *What are your future plans?/ Where do you see yourself in 5 years?*

Don't tell the interviewer you want to be sunning on a beach in the Bahamas, instead offer information about your professional goals as they relate to this job. You want to progress in terms of interest, duties, position, and financial matters. Your answer should show how motivated you are and offer insights into your professional intentions.

5. *How will you add value to the company?*

Make a short list of all your strengths and added value and create a paragraph comparing the job requirements to your advantages. Try to be as specific as possible. Explain in detail: why you would make a good employee, why you are the right fit for the job, and what sets you apart from others. Point out your achievements, accomplishments, and applicable experience.

6. *What do you know about this company?*

Do your homework before the interview and give general details about the company products/services, future goals, and organizational structure. Know the company's vision and mission statement.

7. *Why did you leave your last job?*

Provide an honest answer. This is more of a test than a question. The interviewer wants to see what pushes your buttons. Whatever you do, try not to sound bitter, angry, or violent. And most importantly do not badmouth your former company, boss, or coworkers. If you do, you'll

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be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to do something special, or other forward looking reasons.

8. *What are your weaknesses and strengths?*

Be honest. In general, employers are looking for people with the best learning agility (quick learners) and those who can better adjust to changes and new jobs. Provide one professional weakness and at least 2 of your strengths. Explain your strengths and how it will contribute to your work performance. Provide examples on how you handled/ overcame your weakness.

9. *Your ability to work in a team or run a team.*

Speak about your past good experiences working in a team and good examples of project implementation. If you led a team in the past or were a key member that has a potential of leading a team, then talk about that.

10. *Your initiative to solve problems or problem solving skills.*

Talk about the methods you utilize for solving problems with some good past examples.

11. *Your career achievements so far.*

Tell about those career achievements that reflect back on the job you're applying for. A few good examples: your ability to prioritize, your problem-solving skills, your energy, your loyalty, your ability to work under pressure, your initiative, your ability to focus on projects (results-oriented), your professional expertise, your leadership skills, your positive attitude.

12. *How do you handle difficulties and stress?*

Provide short interesting success stories from your background. Explain the way you manage your work-time to cope with high work load or high stress environment. You can also tell about the techniques you use to overcome stressful situations and difficulties.

13. *Your availability.*

Provide a basic timeframe. The preferred answer is as soon as possible with the understanding that you might have to give a two, three or four week notice.

14. *Your salary expectations.*

Remember that the job interview is not the right place for negotiating salary. Leave this issue for after a job offer has been made. Instead say something like, "that's a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position?" In most cases the

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interviewer will tell you. If not, say that it can depend on the details of the job. Then give a wide range.

15. *What have you learned from mistakes on the job?*

Here you have to come up with something. Make it small, well intentioned mistake with a positive lesson learned. An example might be working too far ahead of colleagues on a project and throwing off coordination or always helping other employees and being taken advantage of.

16. *Are you a people person?*

Of course you are. You can give examples of good customer service skills or explain why you went into this particular field. Give specific examples of your personality and how nurturing/caring/understanding you are etc.

17. *Why do you want to work here?*

Even if it's true, do not answer with: Because I really need a job and you were hiring. This is another place you can use the research you did prior to the interview. Utilize what you know about the company. Some examples are why you admire the company, their practices, or products. Relate it to your long term career goals if possible.

18. *What experience do you have in this field?*

Speak about specifics that relate to the position you're applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can. Then point out that you're a hard worker or quick learner.

19. *Are you a team player?*

Of course you are! Be sure to have examples ready. Specifics that show you often preform for the good of the team rather than for yourself is good evidence of a team attitude. Do not brag; just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. This is a key point.

20. *Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends? Holidays?*

This is up to you. Be totally honest.

21. *Are you applying for other jobs?*

Be honest but do not spend a lot of time on this. Keep the focus on this job and what you can do for this organization. Anything else is a distraction.

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22. *Do you know anyone who works for us?*

Be aware of the policy on relatives working for the organization. This can affect your answer even though they asked for friends not relatives. Be careful to mention a friend only if they are well thought of and a good employee.

23. *Would you be willing to relocate if hired?*

You should be clear on this with your family prior to the interview if you think there is a chance this may come up. Do not say yes just to get the job if the real answer is no. This can create a lot of problems later on. Be honest at this point and save yourself future grief.

24. *How long do you expect to work for us if hired?*

Specifics here are not good. Something like this should work: "I'd like it to be a long time. Or as long as we both feel I'm doing a good job."

25. *Are you willing to put the interests of the company ahead of your own?*

This is a straight loyalty and dedication question. Do not worry about the depth and ethical philosophical implications, just say yes.

QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK THE INTERVIEWER:

1. What are the day-to-day responsibilities I'll have in this job?
2. Can you explain your organizational structure to me?
3. Could you describe to me your typical management style and the type of employee that works well with you?
4. What challenges might I encounter if I take on this position?
5. Describe the atmosphere of the office.
6. What types of people tend to excel here?
7. How does the company promote personal and professional growth?
8. Is this a new position? If so, why was it created? If not, what did the last person in this job move onto and why?
9. I've been told that I work very well as a team member, what are some of the ways your company encourages teamwork?
10. Can you tell me more about the people with whom I would be working if hired?
11. What are the biggest challenges that you are facing as a company? As a department?
12. How will my job performance be evaluated if I am hired? To whom will I be reporting?
13. What are the characteristics that you are looking for in the ideal candidate? Do you feel that I meet those characteristics satisfactorily?
14. Can I contact you if I have any other questions?

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15. When will a decision be made about the person hired? What is the next step in the interview process?

INTERVIEW TIME IS SHOW TIME

Want to tell a potential employer that you're creative? A problem solver? Flexible?

Instead of describing yourself as a "self-starter," tell a story about how you took action when you saw an issue that needed to be fixed.

Don't say you are "flexible"—tell the hiring manager about a change in your job (or schoolwork demands) and what you did to deal with the change.

Well-worn phrases won't help you get the job, but concrete examples will!

Don't say	The story you need to tell
Highly qualified	Highlight your accomplishments in previous jobs. Emphasize your specific skills and note any certifications you have earned.
Hard worker	Explain exactly how you've gone the extra mile for your job. For instance, did you regularly meet tough deadlines, handle a high volume of projects, or tackle tasks outside your job description?
Team player	Provide examples of how you worked with colleagues or individuals in other departments to meet an objective or complete a project.
Problem solver	Highlight a difficult situation you encountered and how you handled it.
Flexible	Describe how you responded to a major change at work (or in your schoolwork) or dealt with the unpredictable aspects of your job.
People person	Can you offer examples of your strong communication skills? Can you describe how you've worked with co-workers and customers?
Self-starter	What can you contribute immediately to the company or to the department you work in? Describe how you took action when you saw an issue that needed to be fixed.

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