

## PREPARE FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Writing down notes about yourself before your interview can be very helpful for a lot of reasons:

- It can help you think through answers and decide what you want to tell about yourself.
- It can remind you of what you want to say as you are practicing your answers.
- A shortened list can remind you of things you want to tell your interviewer about yourself during your actual interview.

Complete the following worksheet to help you answer these typical interview questions.

### 1.) Tell me about yourself.

These are appropriate things to tell about yourself in an interview because they are professional and many of them relate to work. Write out your answers to each question:

Where are you from? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you go to school? \_\_\_\_\_

When did you graduate? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest degree earned? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any specialized training or taken any classes? \_\_\_\_\_

What was your most recent job? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you do at that job? \_\_\_\_\_

What other relevant work or volunteer experiences do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is a hobby or interest of yours that relates to the job you are applying for? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have answered all of these questions, pick 3 or 4 of them that you would like to share in an interview. You should not answer all of these questions in an interview. That would take too long. Instead, pick 3 or 4 impressive things to say about yourself that you are most comfortable with.

Write down the 3 or 4 things you would like to tell about yourself in an interview:

1.) \_\_\_\_\_

2.) \_\_\_\_\_

3.) \_\_\_\_\_

4.) \_\_\_\_\_

**2.) Tell me about your previous work experience (or volunteer experience).**

List the following information to brainstorm and organize your past work history.

Your current job: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties/Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
How long you worked there: \_\_\_\_\_

Your most recent job: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties/Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
How long you worked there: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous job: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duties/Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
How long you worked there: \_\_\_\_\_

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Duties/Responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_  
How long you worked there: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, in your actual interview, you will not want to talk about ALL of your previous jobs. Instead:

- Talk about 2 - 4 of your previous jobs, and the duties and responsibilities that went along with them. You can also say how long you worked there if you think that would help (meaning you worked there longer than 6 months).
- Pick the jobs that are related to the job you are applying for.
- Pick the jobs that you enjoyed and were successful at, if possible.
- Pick jobs you held within the past 10 years.

**3.) Why do you want to work here?**

When answering the question “why do you want to work here?” think about what appeals to you about the job. Why would you be excited to work there?

**For more help in answering this question write down your answers to the following:**

- Is the job related to an interest of yours? If so, what is it?
- Do you have certain skills necessary for the job? If so, what are they?
- Do you have training relevant to the job? If so, what is it?
- Have you heard good things about working there? If so, what have you heard?
- Are you looking forward to learning something new or improving a skill? If so, what?

If you answered “no” to all of the above questions, why do you want this job? The pay? The hours? Is it something to do? These are all good reasons to want a job, but not the reasons you should mention in a job interview. Instead, go back and re-read the questions above. Can you think of anything positive to mention in your answers to those questions?

It helps to have more than one reason that you are interested in the job. Read your answers to the above questions and write down the 2 reasons that you are interested in the job:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4.) Why did you leave your previous job?

This can be a tricky question.

Remember: 1) do not say anything negative about your previous job and 2) do not lie.

You also do want to talk about yourself favorably. You can come across favorably or positively by wording your answer very carefully.

Review this table for examples of how to do that:

Appropriate Answer	Instead of...
"It wasn't a good fit between what they needed and my skills."	"I didn't have the skills or training to do a good job."
"I realized that I needed to look for a position where I could have more clear direction from my supervisor."	"I did not like the way my boss was treating me."
"I had been there several years and I wanted to try something different."	"I got bored."
"I was young and green, but I have matured a lot since then and I want to get back in the work force."	"I was irresponsible and was not doing a good enough job."
"I learned a lot from my previous job, but now I am looking for a change." This response is a good one because it's positive and vague.	A lot of things...that you got bored, you didn't like the people you worked with, you weren't keeping up with your responsibilities.
"I am looking for a new opportunity to broaden my horizons and learn from." This response is a good one because it's positive and vague.	A lot of things...that you got bored, you didn't like the people you worked with, you weren't keeping up with your responsibilities.

Think of why you left your previous job. Write your reason here:

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Now think of a more positive way of wording that reason. Use the table above for ideas. Write your new answer here:

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You do not need to give more than one answer for this question. One reason for leaving your previous job is enough.

### 5.) What are you strengths and weaknesses?

This question is asking two different things: What are you strengths? And, what are your weaknesses? Let's start with **strengths**.

What are you good at? Think of things that would be relevant to a *job*. It is great if you are good at basketball, but if you are interviewing for an office job, being good at basketball would not help you at an office. Think about things that would help you succeed at your job.

List three things you are good at here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Re-read your answers. Would all of them help you be successful at your job?

Here are some questions to help you brainstorm and give you more ideas about what you might be good at. Circle your answers to each question.

1. Do you have a skill related to the job?	Yes	No
2. Are you punctual?	Yes	No
3. Are you dependable (you arrive on time, leave on time, do not miss many days of work)?	Yes	No
4. Are you attentive to details?	Yes	No
5. Are you organized?	Yes	No
6. Are you good at following instructions (can be visual instructions and checklists)?	Yes	No
7. Do you have a good memory?	Yes	No
8. Do you have a good attitude?	Yes	No
9. Do you work well with others?	Yes	No

Look at all the yeses that you circled and re-read your list of things you are good at. Are there things you want to add to your list or changes you would like to make to it? Write down a final list of three strengths (things you are good at) that you want to mention in a job interview. Use the strengths you listed above as well as the answers to the questions above.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you've picked your strengths, let's move on to **weaknesses**. Talking about your weaknesses in an interview is tricky. You want to be honest, but you don't want to discourage the interviewer from hiring you if you say something bad about yourself. When you talk about your weakness, explain why that weakness is not really such a terrible thing.

In other words, turn your weakness into a strength- I am not good at \_\_\_\_, BUT I am good at \_\_\_\_.  
 Here are some examples:

Weakness	BUT....
I am not social.	I get more work done because I am not socializing.
I am a slow worker.	I am careful and don't make many mistakes.
I have trouble processing spoken language and directions.	I am great at processing visual (written) information.
I don't like change.	I do very well under predictable conditions.
I stutter / talk in a monotone or unusual tone of voice.	I am still able to get my point across and communicate effectively.
I have trouble making eye contact.	I still hear what you are saying and listen effectively.

There are certain things that you should not mention in an interview because you will likely not get hired because of it. Weaknesses to avoid mentioning entirely include:

- I am often late.
- I often leave early.
- I miss work frequently.
- I argue with others.
- I don't like being bossed around.
- I steal.
- I lie.
- I make a lot of mistakes / I am careless.

Now make a list of your weaknesses in the first column of the table. Add a positive comment relating to your weakness in the second column.

Weakness	BUT...

In an actual interview, you don't want to spend too much time talking about your weaknesses. Talking about one weakness is enough. You should not talk about more than 2 weaknesses. Pick the weakness you feel most comfortable talking about from the table above.