

Job Seekers of Montclair

Interview Preparation

June 11 2025

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What's the first step in interview preparation?

RESEARCH

Research the organization: industry leader? Struggling start-up? Reputation with customers? Reputation with current/former employees? If a nonprofit, security/diversity of funding sources? Organizational culture?

Research compensation for like jobs in similar firms, on job boards, in postings, at salary.com to compare to range offered in posting, or set a range.

Do a SWAT analysis as if you were a prospective buyer: strengths, weaknesses, assets, threats

Research your interviewers: background, education, reputation inside and outside the firm, hiring manager, HR recruiter, who has input into hiring decision?

What's the second step in interview preparation?

PROVE YOUR “FIT”

Review job posting, your cover letter and resume:
how well did you offer proofs of skills required in
your application materials?

Prepare answers to interview questions for each
skill/experience required, pick best fitting PAR.

**Study up on recognizing behavioral vs case method
questions**, and methods of offering proofs

Prepare 6-10 questions YOU want to ask; not doing
this is failure to do due process of your fit.

Selection Interviewing

Main types:

1. Screening – Zoom, phone
2. Selection Interviewing – rarely in person

Primary types of questions are introductory, behavioral, stress, technical, and case study, for example.

Expect that all of your interviews will be via Zoom; may be multiple interviewers

Behavioral Based Questions

- Tell me about a time when. . . You made a bad decision?
- What are you best at?
- Have you ever failed?
- Please give me an example of your team leadership skills
- Which part of your current (most recent) job do you do least well? (THIS IS ALSO A STRESS QUESTION)

Answering behavioral-based questions

- ALWAYS give ONE example, in PARS or STARS format. What did you do? What was the result? What did you learn? What impact did it have?
- Do not point to a chronic failure: give ONE time you failed to delegate, one time you failed your team, one time you blew a deadline. The interviewer wants to know what you learned and did better the next time.
- Specificity builds credibility: quantify your impact where possible. Qualitative results count too.

Case-Method Questions

- These questions are common in government agencies, consulting firms, many large companies.
- Constants: a problem for which you have too little information to solve, and too little time.
- Content: solve a business problem, or an unrelated question to test your critical thinking.
- Employers use these questions to understand your approach and methodology to solve a problem: What do you assume? What do you extrapolate? The solution is NOT what is measured.
- See separate handout on Case-Method questions. Wharton and Harvard graduate schools of business have books with banks of questions you can buy.

Tips for answering questions in a job interview

Tell me about yourself?	90 second pitch tailored for this position, end with “and these skills and experiences make me highly qualified for this job”
“Tell me about yourself” is not asked!	Make sure your “value proposition” for this job is conveyed in answers to questions you are asked
Give me 3 strengths and 3 weaknesses	Give 3 strengths and a PAR to support one, then give 1 weakness and how you overcame it, make interviewer ask for more weaknesses (often not)
Tell me a time when you . . . managed a project	What did you do? What was result? PAR?

Answering “Tell me about yourself”

Professional identity whether or not you currently work in this role, e.g. digital media production, branding, policy analysis, fundraising, socio-economic development, ESL curriculum design, journalism GIVE FUNCTION NOT JOB TITLE

Job target: Role, industry, where, when?
“I’m now ready for a new challenge in “X” role”

Work Background—do not recite resume!

(Corporate/Nonprofit/Internship)

Areas of Expertise, strengths NEEDED IN THIS JOB
What do you do better than competitors?

Education, certifications?

Languages spoken/read if you have a least a working knowledge

Technical skills IF critical for job (GIS, Salesforce, Python)

Statement of interest/fit: why do you want THIS job in THIS organization? Thread from past to present to future.

Tips for answering questions in a job interview

- If unsure of the question, ask for clarification
- Listen carefully and remember 2nd part of a 2-part question
- If there is long silence after you answer, ask if interviewer wants another example
- If you are cut off before finishing your answer, give shorter answers
- Pay attention to your posture, eye contact, body language
- It's ok to take up to 10 seconds to prepare a thoughtful answer
- When asked about a strength, always include a PAR that proves it
- If asked an illegal question, look for the legal question inside it, and answer that

Answering the salary question:

Scenario A If a salary range was given (new law in NJ, NY, CT, other places) i.e., \$80-100K

If you have a lot of experience/exceed qualifications:

- Based on my deep experience and proven track record, for a job like this in an organization like yours, I expect compensation to be between \$95-110k plus incentive.

If you have little experience/meet most qualifications:

- My graduate degree and two internships have prepared me for this role in an organization like yours, I expect compensation to be between \$80-85k plus incentive.

Answering the salary question:

Scenario B: If a salary range was not posted or given

If you have a lot of experience/exceed qualifications:

- I'm interviewing for positions offering a salary/incentive package in the low to mid six figures, \$115-130k.

If you have little experience/meet most qualifications:

- My graduate degree and two internships have prepared me for this role in an organization like yours, I expect total compensation to be between in the very high five or low six figures, \$95-110k.

Questions that you will want to ask:

- Can you tell me more about X (company-specific question that shows you've researched its strengths, competitors, current issues)
- Could tell me what your expectations are for the first three months in this position?
- In what way are you anticipating that the successful candidate in this role will help the company's overall mission?
- What is the next step in your decision process?

Questions NOT to ask:

- How much does this job pay?
- What's the benefits package like?
- How soon could I get promoted?
- How soon can I take a vacation?

Last Task:

CLOSE THE SALE! Tell them you would really like the job and contribute to their mission, etc. Be sure to reinforce your fit with the position and the organization.