

## Preparing for the Big Day

If the job is important to you, you don't want to "wing it." People who feel well and do well in interviews are those that study ahead of time!

Think of a POSITION that you are or plan on applying for: \_\_\_\_\_

### Know the Job

✎ What are the TOP 3 job duties you'll be expected to perform?

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

✎ What are the TOP 3 skills/qualities the employer will want?

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

### Know the Company \_\_\_\_\_

✎ What 3 things do you already know about this company?

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

✎ Where can you find more information? \_\_\_\_\_

### Know Yourself

✎ What are the TOP 3 skills/qualities you already have that will make you successful in this position or with this company?

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

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# Common Interview Questions

## “Please tell us a little about yourself.”

First Impressions Count! This is a common first interview question. It may be asked in different ways but you should be ready to address it succinctly and make a powerful first impression.

Here are a few tips:

- ▶ Limit your answer to 2-3 minutes.
- ▶ Your answer should be 100% relevant to the position.
- ▶ DO NOT include personal, private, and family information.
- ▶ Practice, practice, practice.
- ▶ Do your homework: understand what qualities the ideal candidate might possess.


Consider including the following ingredients in your answer:

1. **The past:** A snapshot of your **background**- what educational background or industry do you come from, what positions have you held, what goals have you achieved? (1 minute or less)
2. **The present:** A snapshot of **who you are and what you have to offer today**. How have your experiences changed you, how did your past experiences position you for the new opportunities that you are seeking, what skills do you enjoy using that will benefit the company, (1 minute or less)
3. **The future:** How does this company and position allow you to achieve your **long term goals**? Communicate this for the employer; let them know how important this opportunity is for you. (1 minute or less)

### Sample Response:

**EMPLOYER:** *“Good Afternoon, John. Thank you for joining us today. As you know, we are interviewing candidates for Cashier position here at Spoons. Please start by telling us a little bit about yourself.”*

**CANDIDATE:** *“Thank you so much for inviting me here today. I’m really excited about this opportunity! As you can see on my resume, most of my work experience comes from my summers working to mow lawns around my neighborhood. It took a lot of organization and good people skills to keep my clients throughout the years! I’ve also worked the cashier at our school store, so I’m familiar with ringing people up and handling busy times in a service setting. I’m currently a junior at Fort Collins High School and am looking to get some more professional work experience. Eventually I plan on attending Front Range Community College where I anticipate working part time as well. This job would be a wonderful opportunity to help me gain some additional skills. Given my hard work ethic and commitment, I think I’d be a great fit here!”*

 **Choose a job title that interests you and develop your own response.**

**Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**“Tell us a little about yourself.”**

(Appreciation)

(Past/Background)

(Present/Today)

(Future/Longer Term Goals)

## Story Telling Time: The STAR Approach

There's an art to telling a good story. Take your examples to the next level by telling a story so that the employer:

- ▶ Views you as being very well organized and a good communicator and,
- ▶ Remembers you because of your engaging stories!

**When preparing your examples for the interview, organize your story using the STAR approach:**

1. **Set the Stage:** Briefly mention the experience that you are referencing
2. **Task / Situation:** Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. Provide enough detail for the interviewer to understand.
3. **Action:** Describe the action you took. **Keep the focus on you.** Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did - not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what **you did**.
4. **Result:** What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

**Apply the STAR model to your examples.**

**Skill / Quality #1** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is one question that the interviewer might ask to evaluate your skills?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Set the Stage

2. Task / Situation

3. Action

4. Result

## **How to Respond to Difficult Questions**

Employers will sometimes ask questions that require you to share mistakes, conflicts, or weaknesses. How can you tell the truth about your blunders without blowing the entire interview?!

***Be prepared! Hoping that you will not be asked these questions is not a plan for dealing with them!***

When reflecting on your negative experiences, choose examples that fit the following criteria:

1. Keep it small
2. Keep it in the past
3. Choose something that does not provoke an emotional reaction from you like anger, frustration, disappointment
4. Choose something that is already solved (or a solution is in progress)

Some examples of difficult questions include:

- Tell us about a time you had to deal with an irate customer. What action did you take and what was the outcome?
- Give us an example of a mistake you've made.
- What are your weaknesses?
- Have you ever experienced a conflict with a co-worker or supervisor?

**Example:** John is preparing a response in case his interviewer asks him for an example of a conflict he had with a co-worker:

### **Sample Response**

#### **1. Set the Stage**

*For my English class, we had an assignment where we needed to work together to complete a class project.*

#### **2. Task / Situation**

*One of our project team mates would constantly miss class, and therefore miss the times we were working on the project to get things done. When we scheduled time outside of class to work on it, he had a conflict and couldn't attend. It was difficult because we were all responsible for the final grade, and wanted to be sure everyone was involved with the process.*

#### **3. Action**

*We decided that we needed to talk to him to figure out how to help him get his portion of the work done. I decided to discuss it with him just he and I so he wouldn't feel a ton of pressure with the rest of the group coming at him. I started by letting him know that we were a bit concerned about how much he's missed, and asked him how he was coming along with his portion of the project. He shared that he had had a lot going on and hadn't been really making it a priority. I told him I understood that, and that if he needed us to pick up more slack, we could. Let him know how important it was to all of us that he participate.*

#### 4. Result

*He was happy I had talked with him just between the two of us. We swapped schedules as he works part time which was why he was missing our outside of class meetings. We were able to schedule a time around his schedule so that he could participate. It was a tight squeeze, but we got it all done and received a good grade. I learned it's best to bring up concerns before it's too late to fix the problem.*

**Tell us about a time when you made a mistake or a bad decision. How did you respond and what was the outcome?**

1. Set the Stage

2. Task / Situation

3. Action

4. Result

#### Is this example...

- Something small or minor?
- From the past?
- Something that doesn't provoke an emotional reaction within you?
- Something that is already solved (or a solution is in progress)?

**Apply the STAR model to your examples.**

**Skill / Quality #2** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is one question that the interviewer might ask to evaluate your skills?**

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Set the Stage

6. Task / Situation

7. Action

8. Result