

Mastering Job Interviews

Welcome to **Mastering Job Interviews**, part of the ReSkill45+ program. This course will empower you - adults aged 45-65 re-entering the workforce - with the skills and confidence to succeed in any interview. You'll learn practical strategies for both in-person and online interviews, drawing on your valuable life and work experience. The ReSkill45+ project supports reskilling adults 45+, providing tools to improve employability. Together, we'll make your experience an asset as you prepare to shine in interviews.

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Course Objectives



Interview Formats

Understand different interview formats including in-person, phone, and video interviews



Effective Preparation

Master logistics, professional dress codes, and comprehensive company research



STAR Method

Use Situation, Task, Action, Result framework for behavioral questions



Communication Skills

Answer common questions clearly and master nonverbal communication



Online Interview Mastery

Handle technology, etiquette, and virtual presentation smoothly



Strong Closings

Close interviews positively with thoughtful questions and gracious thank-yous

Why Interview Skills Matter

You bring a wealth of experience and maturity to job interviews. Our goal is to help you present that experience in a way that fits today's job market. Older workers often have strong problem-solving and teamwork skills; we'll show you how to highlight these positively.

You'll learn to update your self-presentation for modern interviews, bridging any gaps from time away. Remember, organizations value your insights and reliability. By the end of this course, you'll feel more confident turning your decades of experience into interview success.

"Your experience is your greatest asset."



Interview Formats Overview

Job interviews come in several formats, and understanding each one helps you prepare appropriately. Whether meeting face-to-face, speaking on the phone, or connecting through video, each format has unique characteristics and expectations.

01

In-Person (Face-to-Face)

Traditional interviews at the employer's office, may be one-on-one or panel format with multiple interviewers

02

Phone Interviews

Often first-screening calls to check basic qualifications and interest, typically 5-15 minutes

03

Video (Online) Interviews

Increasingly common format via Zoom or Teams, quickly replacing phone interviews for initial screenings



In-Person Interviews



In-person interviews take place at the employer's office or a designated location. They can be one-on-one with a manager or a **panel** with several interviewers.

Essential Tips

- Dress professionally from top to bottom - suit, dress, or business attire
- Plan transportation to arrive 10 minutes early
- Carry multiple copies of your resume and work samples
- Practice a firm handshake and maintain good posture
- Smile and make eye contact with everyone in the room

These nonverbal cues show confidence and respect, setting a positive tone from the moment you walk in.



Panel & Group Interviews

Panel Interviews

Multiple interviewers assess you simultaneously. Address your answers to the whole group by making eye contact with each person, not just one interviewer.

- Distribute your attention equally among all panel members
- Note each person's name and role if introduced
- Direct specific answers to the person who asked

You might want to write notes afterward, since panel interviews can cover more topics quickly.

Group Interviews

Multiple candidates interviewed together. Focus on being polite and attentive while standing out positively.

- Listen actively when others speak
- Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation
- Show respect to fellow candidates
- Maintain professional composure throughout



Phone Interviews

Prepare Your Space

Find a quiet, comfortable spot with no background noise or distractions

Check Your Technology

Ensure your phone is fully charged with strong reception or signal

Have Materials Ready

Keep your resume, notes, and key career highlights within easy reach

Focus on Your Voice

Since they can't see you, speak clearly with positive tone and energy

Smile While Speaking

Smiling positively affects your voice even when unseen by the interviewer

Phone interviews are usually brief (5-15 minutes) initial screens to check your basic qualifications and interest. Stand or sit up straight as if in-person to project energy and enthusiasm.

Video Interviews (Live)

Live video interviews via Zoom, Teams, or similar platforms are now common. In many ways they feel like in-person interviews, but there are extra technical considerations to master.

1 Test Technology Beforehand

Check your internet connection, webcam quality, microphone clarity, and lighting at least 30 minutes before the interview

2 Optimize Your Setup

Position camera at eye level, sit against a tidy neutral background, ensure good lighting on your face from the front

3 Dress Professionally

Wear full business attire as you would for in-person interviews - it signals seriousness and professionalism

4 Engage Through the Screen

Look into the camera when speaking to simulate eye contact, nod and smile to show engagement, speak clearly



Interview Mindset & Confidence



Your Experience is Valuable

You may feel nervous about interviews - that's completely normal. The key is to use your wealth of experience to your advantage. Employers genuinely value the perspective, stability, and maturity that experienced candidates bring to their organizations.

Building Your Confidence

- **Be confident and humble:** Draw on your accomplishments while showing eagerness to learn
- **Prepare affirmations:** "I am prepared and experienced" or "My skills are valuable"
- **Practice calm breathing:** Deep breaths before entering reduce anxiety
- **Stay focused:** Keep answers clear and concise to hold attention

Remember: a positive mindset combined with thorough preparation creates powerful interview performance.



Logistics & Timing

Thorough planning reduces stress and shows respect for the interviewer's time. Taking care of logistics beforehand allows you to focus entirely on presenting your best self during the interview.

1

3 Days Before

Confirm interview details: date, time, location or video link. Research the company thoroughly.

2

1 Day Before

Plan your route or test video platform. Prepare your outfit and gather all necessary documents.

3

Interview Day

Arrive or log in 5-10 minutes early. Have interviewer's contact info handy for emergencies.

- ❏ **Pro Tip:** Create a small folder with extra resumes, your reference list, work samples, and the interviewer's contact information. Being punctual and prepared demonstrates enthusiasm and professionalism.



Dressing for Success

Professional Attire Guidelines

First impressions are visual, and dressing professionally shows you take the opportunity seriously. Choose attire appropriate for the company culture and industry.

- **Office jobs:** Suits, blazers, dress shirts, blouses, professional slacks or skirts
- **Colors:** Neutral tones (navy, black, gray, white) are universally safe choices
- **Grooming:** Neat hair, trimmed nails, minimal jewelry
- **Coverage:** Cover visible tattoos if possible, remove excess piercings
- **Condition:** Ensure clothes are clean, pressed, and fit well

Even for video interviews, dress fully as you would in person from head to toe - it signals seriousness and helps you feel more professional.



Documents & Materials

Multiple Resume Copies

Bring 3-5 printed copies on quality paper, even if you've emailed it beforehand

Reference List

Typed list with names, titles, contact information, and relationship to you

Work Portfolio

Certificates, writing samples, project examples, or tablet with digital portfolio

Notebook & Pen

Professional notepad for taking notes and jotting down important details

Questions List

Prepared questions to ask the interviewer about the role and company

Business Cards

If you have them, bring professional business cards to leave behind

Having these materials at hand demonstrates organization and preparedness - qualities every employer values.

Research the Company & Role

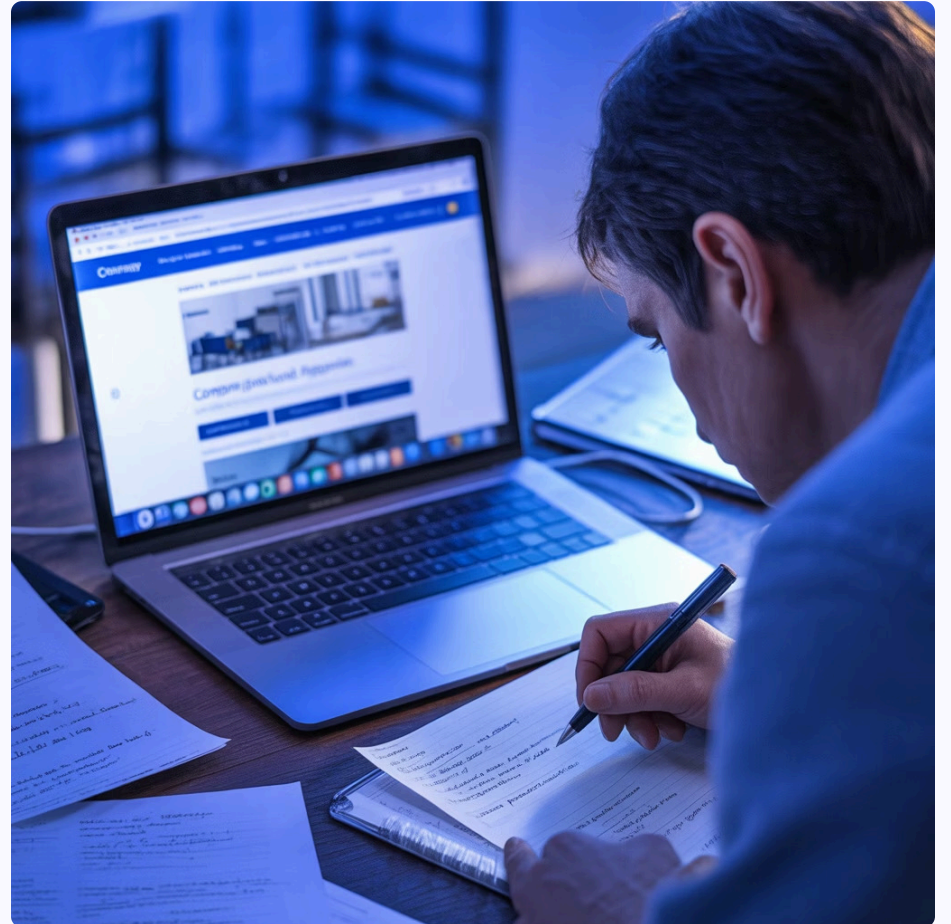
Learning about the employer and specific position before your interview is essential. This research helps you tailor your answers and demonstrate genuine interest in the opportunity.

What to Research

- **Company website:** Mission, values, products/services, recent news
- **Social media:** LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook for culture insights
- **Job posting:** Key skills, responsibilities, and qualifications listed
- **Industry trends:** Current challenges and opportunities in their sector
- **Competitors:** Who they compete with and what makes them unique

"Passion about the company and its mission are imperative. As a candidate, you need to demonstrate this throughout the interview."

During the interview, **weave in your knowledge** naturally: "I noticed your company values innovation, and I've always enjoyed improving processes in my previous roles..."





Practice & Preparation

Practice makes perfect. The more you rehearse, the more natural and confident you'll feel during the actual interview. Preparation transforms nervous energy into polished performance.



Review & Organize

Study the job description carefully and identify your relevant experiences that match each requirement



Write STAR Stories

Document 5-7 specific examples from your past using the STAR method framework



Practice Out Loud

Rehearse answers verbally - speaking aloud is very different from thinking through responses



Record Yourself

Use your phone or computer to record practice answers and review your delivery and body language



Mock Interviews

Conduct full practice interviews with friends, family, or career counselors for realistic experience



Test Technology

For video interviews, test your camera, microphone, internet, and lighting multiple times



Common Interview Questions

While every interview is unique, certain questions appear frequently across industries and roles. Preparing clear, concise answers to these common questions gives you a strong foundation for interview success.

Tell Me About Yourself

Your professional background summary and what makes you a strong candidate

Strengths & Weaknesses

Your key skills and one minor area for growth with improvement plan

Behavioral Questions

"Tell me about a time when..." requiring real examples using STAR method

Situational Questions

"What would you do if..." testing problem-solving and judgment skills

Role-Specific Questions

Technical skills and daily responsibilities relevant to the particular position

Why This Company?

Demonstrating research and genuine interest in the organization's mission

Pro Tip: Prepare 4-5 compelling stories from your experience that illustrate different skills. You can adapt these stories to answer various questions throughout the interview.

"Tell Me About Yourself"



This open-ended question is often the first one asked, setting the tone for the entire interview. It's your chance to deliver a concise, compelling professional summary that highlights your value.

Structure Your Response

- **Present:** Your current or most recent position and key responsibilities
- **Past:** Brief relevant work history highlighting major achievements
- **Future:** Why you're excited about this specific opportunity

☐ **Example:** "I have 15 years of administrative experience. Most recently, I was an office coordinator at XYZ Corp, where I managed scheduling for a team of 20 and improved our filing efficiency by 30%. I'm excited about this role because it combines my organizational skills with my passion for supporting teams..."

Keep it brief (1-2 minutes), focus on work achievements, and avoid personal details unless directly relevant. Practice until it flows naturally and confidently.



Strengths and Weaknesses

Discussing Your Strengths

Highlight 2-3 key qualities that directly match the job requirements. Provide brief, specific examples for each.

- Choose strengths relevant to the position
- Support each with concrete examples
- Show confidence without arrogance
- Connect strengths to potential contributions

"I'm highly organized, which helped me manage 50+ appointments weekly with zero scheduling conflicts in my last role."

The key is balancing confidence with humility - your experience is valuable, but you're also committed to continuous improvement and learning.

Addressing Weaknesses

Choose a modest, improvable skill and demonstrate how you're actively working to improve it.

- Select a real but minor weakness
- Avoid clichés like "I work too hard"
- Show self-awareness and growth mindset
- Describe specific improvement actions

"I used to struggle with public speaking, so I joined a Toastmasters group and have grown significantly more comfortable presenting."



Behavioral (STAR) Questions

Behavioral questions start with phrases like "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of..." These questions ask for real-life examples that demonstrate your skills, problem-solving abilities, and work style.



The STAR method creates an easy-to-follow story with clear conflict and resolution, keeping your answers structured and concise while highlighting your capabilities.

Situational (Hypothetical) Questions



Situational questions ask how you *would* handle a future scenario: "What would you do if a customer is upset?" or "How would you prioritize conflicting deadlines?" These test your judgment, problem-solving approach, and values.

Effective Response Strategy

1. **Listen carefully** to understand the full scenario
2. **Pause briefly** to organize your thoughts (this shows thoughtfulness)
3. **Think aloud** through your reasoning step-by-step
4. **Draw on experience** when possible: "In a similar situation, I..."
5. **Show logical thinking** and practical judgment

❏ **Example:** "I would first listen calmly to the customer's concern without interrupting. Then I'd clarify to ensure I understand the issue fully. If it's a scheduling problem, I'd check our calendar system and offer two or three solution options..."

Role-Specific Questions

Office Assistant Example

For specific roles like Office Assistant, expect questions about daily tasks and required skills. Tailor your answers to demonstrate how your experience directly relates to the position's responsibilities.



Scheduling & Coordination

"Are you comfortable managing multiple calendars and appointments?"



Communication

"How do you handle high call volumes while maintaining professionalism?"



Organization

"Describe your filing and record-keeping experience and methods."

Sample Answer Framework

Connect your response to specific skills:

- Mention relevant software/tools you've used
- Provide concrete examples from past roles
- Explain how you'd apply skills to this position

"Yes, I'm very experienced with scheduling. In my last role, I managed appointments for five executives using Google Calendar, always confirming details with clients and sending reminder emails. This ensured zero missed appointments over two years."



The STAR Method Explained

Your Story Framework

The **STAR method** transforms your experiences into compelling, structured interview responses. It creates an easy-to-follow story with a clear challenge and resolution, helping interviewers understand exactly what you contributed and achieved.

S = Situation

Set the scene with brief context. Provide just enough detail for the interviewer to understand the circumstances. When and where did this occur?

A = Action

Describe the specific steps YOU took. Use "I" statements (not "we") to highlight your personal contribution. This is the most important part - focus here.

T = Task

Explain your specific responsibility or the goal you needed to achieve. What was your role? What challenge did you face?

R = Result

Share the outcome of your actions. Quantify when possible (percentages, time saved, money earned). What did you learn? How did it benefit the organization?

- ❏ **Remember:** Spend most of your time on Actions and Results - these show your skills and impact. Keep Situation and Task brief to provide just enough context.



STAR: Situation & Task

Setting the Situation



Briefly establish the context and background. Answer: Where? When? What was happening?

- Keep it concise - just enough to understand
- Mention the company or department if relevant
- Describe the challenge or circumstances
- Avoid unnecessary details

Example: "Last year at ACME Corp, our small administrative team was short-staffed during the busy holiday season when call volumes typically doubled."

Defining the Task



Explain YOUR specific responsibility or goal. What were you asked to do or expected to accomplish?

- Clarify your role in the situation
- State the problem or objective clearly
- Show what was at stake
- Keep focus on your responsibility

Example: "As the lead office assistant, I was responsible for ensuring daily operations ran smoothly and that all client calls were answered professionally despite being understaffed."

STAR: Action & Result

Describing Your Actions



Detail the key steps YOU took to address the situation. This is the heart of your answer - emphasize YOUR role.

- **Use "I" statements:** Not "we" - highlight your personal contribution
- **Be specific:** What exactly did you do?
- **Show initiative:** Demonstrate problem-solving and leadership
- **Include steps:** Walk through your process logically

Example: "I created a shared digital task list prioritizing urgent items. I delegated specific assignments to each remaining team member based on their strengths. I also adjusted my own schedule to cover the busiest phone hours and set up an after-hours voicemail system for non-urgent calls."

Sharing the Results



Finish with the positive outcome. Quantify whenever possible to show measurable impact.

- **Quantify:** Use numbers, percentages, time frames
- **Show impact:** How did it help the team or company?
- **Include feedback:** Mention praise or recognition received
- **State learnings:** What did you take away from this experience?

Example: "As a result, we maintained 98% of our normal productivity levels throughout the holiday season. We received zero customer complaints about phone service, and my manager specifically thanked me for my leadership during that challenging period. This taught me the value of proactive planning and clear delegation."



STAR Example Answer

Question: "Tell me about a time you improved a process."

Situation

"At my last job, our office filing system was confusing and disorganized. Staff frequently spent 10-15 minutes searching for important documents, and we occasionally couldn't locate files at all, which delayed projects."

Task

"My manager asked me to take the lead on reorganizing the entire filing system to improve efficiency and ensure nothing was lost. The goal was to reduce retrieval time and create a sustainable system."

Action

"I started by auditing all existing files and identifying patterns in how we used them. I then designed a new color-coded filing system organized by project and date. I created a digital index spreadsheet that tracked every file location. I trained all five team members on the new system and posted quick-reference guides at each filing cabinet."

Result

"Within two weeks, file retrieval time dropped by 50% - from 15 minutes to just 2-3 minutes on average. Over the next six months, we had zero instances of lost files. My manager praised the efficiency improvement in my performance review, and other departments asked to implement our system."

Notice how this answer covers each STAR component clearly, emphasizes specific actions taken, and quantifies the positive results achieved.



Practice: Your STAR Story

Your Turn!

Now it's time to create your own STAR story. This practice will prepare you to answer behavioral questions confidently and effectively during real interviews.

Step 1: Choose Your Skill

Pick one skill you want to highlight: teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, organization, customer service, or adaptability

Step 2: Select Your Example

Think of a specific situation from your work history where you demonstrated this skill effectively

Step 3: Write Your STAR Outline

On paper, write 2-3 sentences for each component: Situation, Task, Action, Result

Step 4: Practice Out Loud

Say your complete story aloud, aiming for 60-90 seconds total. Time yourself and adjust as needed

- 📌 **Practice Exercise:** Prepare STAR stories for 5-7 different situations from your experience. Having multiple stories ready allows you to adapt to various interview questions. Record yourself to review delivery and body language.



Office Assistant – Role Overview

Office Assistant positions provide essential administrative support that keeps organizations running smoothly. Understanding the full scope of this role helps you prepare targeted responses that showcase relevant skills.

Typical Responsibilities

- Greeting visitors and creating positive first impressions
- Answering and directing phone calls professionally
- Scheduling appointments and managing calendars
- Performing data entry with accuracy
- Organizing and maintaining filing systems
- Managing office supplies and inventory
- Coordinating meetings and preparing materials
- Handling correspondence (email, mail, faxes)

Essential Traits

- **Organization:** Juggling multiple tasks simultaneously
- **Communication:** Clear, professional verbal and written skills
- **Multitasking:** Handling competing priorities smoothly
- **Professionalism:** Representing the company well
- **Attention to detail:** Ensuring accuracy in all tasks
- **Discretion:** Handling confidential information

As you prepare for office assistant interviews, think about examples from your experience that demonstrate these skills and responsibilities.



Office Assistant – Key Skills

Success as an office assistant requires a diverse skill set. Reflect on examples where you've used each of these skills - you'll need to discuss them during interviews.



Organization

Managing calendars, files, tasks, and priorities efficiently. Keeping systems orderly so information is always accessible when needed.



Technical Proficiency

Competent with email platforms, Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), scheduling software, and office equipment like printers and copiers.



Interpersonal Skills

Greeting visitors warmly, working collaboratively with colleagues, handling difficult situations diplomatically, and building positive relationships.



Communication

Answering phones clearly and professionally, writing polished emails, conveying messages accurately, and representing the organization well.



Attention to Detail

Ensuring accuracy in data entry, scheduling, correspondence, and record-keeping. Catching errors before they become problems.



Time Management

Prioritizing urgent tasks, meeting deadlines consistently, managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously without becoming overwhelmed.

Example Q&A #1: Prioritizing Tasks

Question: "How do you prioritize tasks when the office is busy?"

Situation

At my previous position, I often managed scheduling, phone calls, and walk-in visitors during peak morning hours when everyone needed immediate attention.

Task

When I was appointed the lead administrative coordinator, I needed to ensure all urgent matters were handled promptly while maintaining excellent service for every interaction.

Action

I started each busy morning by creating a quick priority list on my computer, categorizing items as urgent, important, or routine. I handled any time-sensitive client needs first, then addressed scheduled appointments, and finally tackled ongoing administrative tasks. I communicated clearly with colleagues about my availability and set expectations with visitors about wait times. I also used our phone system's hold feature professionally when juggling multiple calls.

Result

By organizing tasks this way and communicating proactively, we completed all urgent daily tasks on time, maintained a 95% customer satisfaction rating, and received multiple compliments about our responsive service. My manager specifically noted my strong prioritization skills in my annual review.

This answer uses STAR format and highlights essential skills: organization, communication, and customer service under pressure.





Example Q&A #2: Improving Efficiency



Question: "Tell me about a time you helped improve office efficiency."

Situation: At Company XYZ, our filing was entirely paper-based and retrieval was slow. Team members often spent 15+ minutes searching for documents, and sometimes files were misfiled or lost entirely.

Task: My supervisor asked me to find a better system that would speed up document retrieval and prevent loss of important files.

Action: I took the initiative to scan frequently-accessed documents and create an organized digital folder structure on our shared drive. I established a clear naming convention and trained all team members on the new system. For remaining paper files, I implemented a color-coded labeling system and created an index spreadsheet tracking file locations.

Result: File retrieval time dropped by 60% - from 15 minutes to just 5-6 minutes. Over six months, we had zero instances of lost documents. The team was grateful, and my solution was adopted by two other departments. I learned valuable lessons about change management and training.

This example demonstrates initiative, technical skills, and measurable positive impact on efficiency.



Example Q&A #3: Handling Difficult Situations

Question: "How do you handle a difficult customer or coworker?"

1

Situation

In my previous role, a regular client became very upset when they arrived for an appointment that wasn't in our system.

2

Task

As the front desk assistant, it was my responsibility to resolve the issue while maintaining the client relationship.

3

Action

I listened calmly without interrupting, apologized sincerely for the confusion, and investigated immediately to understand what happened.

4

Result

I rescheduled them at their earliest convenience, added preventive notes in our system, and they thanked me for the professional handling.

Key Principles Demonstrated

- **Active listening:** Letting them express concerns fully
- **Empathy:** Acknowledging their frustration
- **Solution-focus:** Offering practical options immediately
- **Follow-through:** Taking steps to prevent recurrence

What I Learned

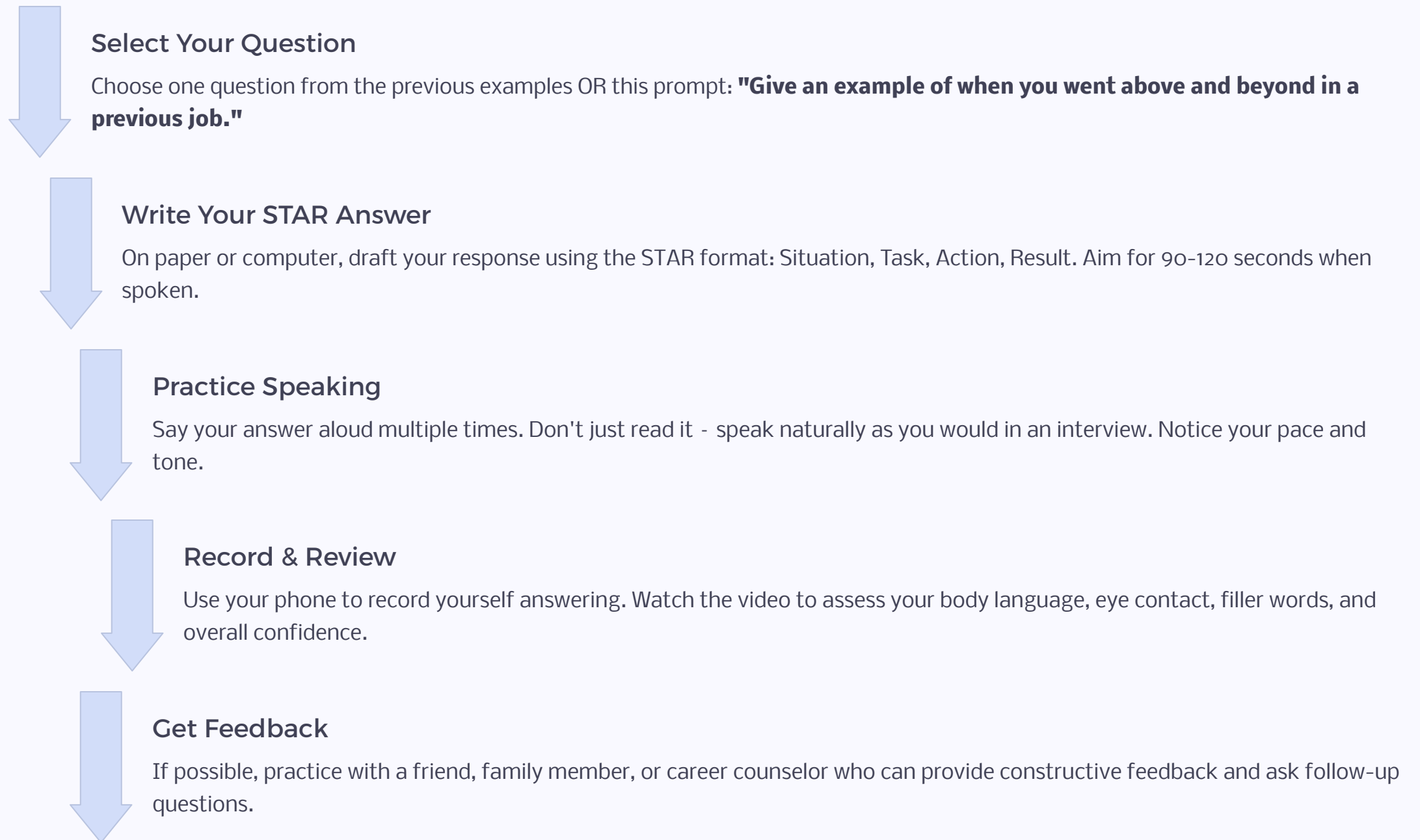
This experience reinforced the importance of staying calm under pressure, truly listening to understand concerns, and taking ownership of problems even when they weren't directly my fault. Clear communication and genuine empathy can turn negative situations into opportunities to strengthen relationships.



Practice Task: Mock Q&A

Your Practice Session

Active practice transforms preparation into performance. Complete this exercise to build your interview confidence and refine your delivery.



- Challenge:** Prepare answers to at least 10 common interview questions using this process. The more you practice, the more natural and confident you'll feel during actual interviews.

Body Language Essentials



Positive Body Language

- ✓ Sit up straight with shoulders back
- ✓ Lean slightly forward to show interest
- ✓ Keep arms relaxed and open
- ✓ Maintain good posture throughout
- ✓ Use natural hand gestures moderately
- ✓ Face the interviewer directly
- ✓ Nod occasionally to show engagement
- ✓ Smile genuinely and appropriately



Body Language to Avoid

- ☐ Slouching or hunching shoulders
- ☐ Crossing arms (appears defensive)
- ☐ Leaning back excessively (disinterest)
- ☐ Fidgeting or tapping nervously
- ☐ Playing with hair, jewelry, or pen
- ☐ Avoiding eye contact
- ☐ Checking phone or watch
- ☐ Frowning or looking bored

Studies suggest that much of communication is non-verbal. Your body language should reinforce your words, conveying confidence, enthusiasm, and professionalism. Even small adjustments to your posture and gestures can significantly impact how you're perceived.



Eye Contact & Facial Cues

Eye Contact

Maintain steady but natural eye contact with the interviewer. This demonstrates confidence, honesty, and engagement.

- Look at the speaker when they ask questions
- In panel interviews, include everyone with your gaze
- Break eye contact briefly and naturally - don't stare
- For video interviews, look at the camera lens

Facial Expressions

Your face communicates as much as your words. Show genuine interest and positivity through your expressions.

- Smile genuinely when appropriate - it's welcoming
- Look interested and engaged while listening
- Avoid frowning, even when concentrating
- Show enthusiasm when discussing your experience
- Keep expression positive and open

Positive facial cues build rapport and make you memorable. Even in stressful moments, maintaining warm and engaged expressions helps create connection with your interviewer.



Handshake & Greetings



The Perfect First Impression

First impressions form within seconds of meeting. Start strong with a confident greeting that sets a positive tone for the entire interview.

In-Person Greeting

- **Stand up:** If seated when interviewer arrives, stand immediately
- **Make eye contact:** Look directly at them as you approach
- **Offer your hand:** Extend for a handshake confidently
- **Firm grip:** Not too soft or bone-crushing - balanced and confident
- **Shake 2-3 times:** Brief but not rushed
- **Smile warmly:** Show you're pleased to be there
- **Clear introduction:** "Hello, I'm [Name]. It's nice to meet you."

Virtual Interview Greeting

For remote interviews, look into the camera as you greet them, smile warmly, and introduce yourself clearly: "Good morning, thank you for inviting me to interview today."

Gestures & Posture in Action


Movement and posture communicate energy, confidence, and engagement. Master these elements to enhance your verbal messages and project professional presence.

Effective Gestures

- **Use natural hand movements** to emphasize important points
- **Keep gestures controlled** and within your frame
- **Avoid fidgeting:** No tapping, pen clicking, or hair touching
- **Rest hands** comfortably on the table or in your lap when not gesturing
- **Point thoughtfully** when referencing your resume or materials
- **Keep movements purposeful** rather than nervous or random

Professional Posture

- **Sit with both feet flat** on the floor or crossed at ankles
- **Lean slightly forward** to show interest and engagement
- **Keep spine straight** but not rigid - appear relaxed yet alert
- **Position shoulders back** and down, avoiding hunching
- **If standing,** distribute weight evenly on both feet
- **Avoid swaying** or shifting weight excessively

 **Practice Tip:** Practice in front of a mirror to observe your natural gestures and posture. Ensure you look alert, engaged, and approachable. Small adjustments can make a significant difference in how you're perceived.



Managing Interview Nerves

It's Normal to Feel Nervous

Some nervousness before and during interviews is completely normal and natural. The key is learning to manage those nerves so they don't interfere with your performance. In fact, a little nervous energy can actually enhance your focus and enthusiasm.

1

Pre-Interview Preparation

Before entering, take 5-10 slow, deep breaths to calm your heart rate and clear your mind. Arrive early so you're not rushed.

2

Pause Before Answering

It's perfectly acceptable to pause briefly before responding to gather your thoughts. Say "That's a great question, let me think for a moment."

3

Control Your Pace

Speak at a steady, moderate pace. When nervous, we tend to speed up. Consciously slow down and articulate clearly.

4

Ask for Clarification

If you feel tongue-tied or confused, simply ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify the question. This is professional, not weak.

5

Reframe Nervousness

Channel nervous energy into enthusiasm and focus. Remind yourself that you've prepared thoroughly and you're qualified for this role.

6

Use Positive Self-Talk

Before and during the interview, repeat affirmations: "I am prepared," "I am qualified," "My experience is valuable," "I belong here."

Non-Verbal Cues in Video Interviews

In video interviews, your non-verbal communication remains just as important as in face-to-face meetings. However, the virtual format requires some specific adjustments to ensure your body language translates effectively through the screen.

Camera & Framing

- **Eye-level positioning:** Camera should be at or slightly above eye level
- **Proper framing:** Head and shoulders visible with space above head
- **Centered position:** Sit in the center of the frame
- **Look at camera:** Direct gaze at lens when speaking, not at screen
- **Stable setup:** Use a laptop stand or stack of books if needed

Lighting & Visibility

- **Face the light:** Position light source in front of you
- **Avoid backlighting:** Don't sit in front of bright windows
- **Even lighting:** Ensure face is clearly visible without harsh shadows
- **Test beforehand:** Check how you appear on camera in advance

Body Language on Screen

- **Maintain good posture:** Sit up straight, visible in frame
- **Nod and smile:** These cues show engagement on camera
- **Visible gestures:** Keep hand movements within frame
- **Facial expressions:** Be slightly more expressive than usual
- **Minimize movement:** Avoid excessive shifting or rocking
- **Stay focused:** Don't look away from camera frequently



Remember: Even though you're remote, your posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact (with the camera) are just as important as in an in-person interview.



Preparing Your Tech Setup

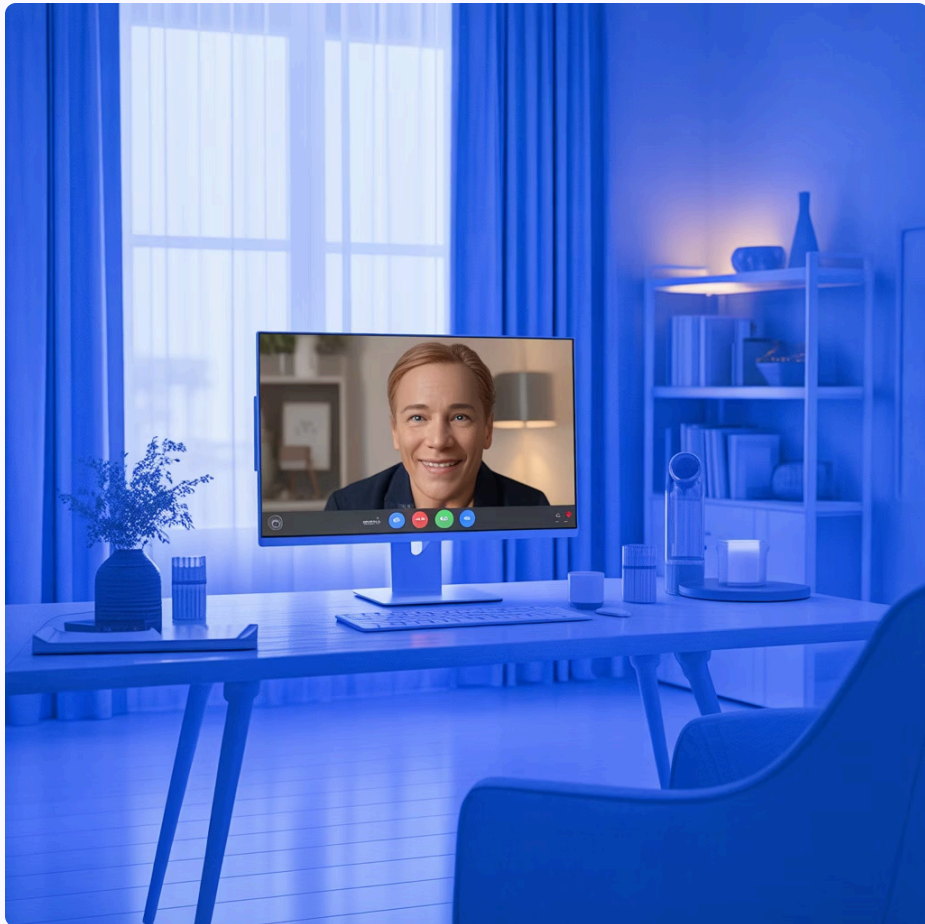
Technology Checklist

Technical issues during video interviews can be stressful and create negative impressions. Thorough testing beforehand prevents problems and allows you to focus entirely on the interview itself.

- Test All Equipment**
Verify that your camera, microphone, and speakers/headphones all work properly. Check video and audio quality at least 24 hours before the interview.
- Ensure Strong Internet**
Use a wired ethernet connection if possible, or sit very close to your WiFi router. Test your connection speed and stability.
- Learn the Platform**
Familiarize yourself with the video platform (Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, etc.). Know how to mute/unmute, turn camera on/off, and share screen if needed.
- Do a Test Run**
Log into the platform beforehand to confirm the meeting link works. Consider doing a practice interview with a friend using the same platform.
- Eliminate Distractions**
Close all unnecessary programs and browser tabs. Turn off notifications on your computer and phone. Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door.
- Have Backup Plans**
Keep the interviewer's phone number handy in case of technical failure. Have your phone available as a backup device if your computer fails.

Lighting & Background

Optimal Lighting Setup



Face your light source - window or lamp - so your face is clearly visible and well-lit. Natural daylight is ideal, but if interviewing in evening, use a desk lamp or ring light.

- Position light in front of you, not behind
- Avoid harsh overhead lighting that creates shadows
- Test lighting at the same time of day as your interview
- Ensure your face is evenly lit without glare

Professional Background



Choose a simple, uncluttered backdrop that won't distract from you. A blank wall, tidy bookshelves, or neat home office space work well.

- Remove distracting items, posters, or clutter
- Ensure nothing inappropriate is visible
- Check for items that might fall or move
- Consider a plain wall if space is messy
- Virtual backgrounds are okay if professional and necessary
- Blur background feature is acceptable if platform offers it

Your visual presentation speaks volumes about your professionalism. A well-lit face and clean background signal that you take the interview seriously and have prepared thoughtfully.

Camera, Attire, and Eye Contact

Camera Height & Position

Position camera at eye level so you appear natural and professional, not looking up or down. Sit centered in the frame with comfortable space above your head. Keep the camera stable - no shaking or tilting.

Full Professional Attire

Dress completely as you would for an in-person interview - yes, even the parts off-camera. This helps you feel professional and prevents awkward moments if you need to stand up. Choose solid colors that look good on camera and avoid busy patterns.

Eye Contact Through Screen

Look directly at the camera lens when speaking to simulate eye contact with the interviewer. This feels unnatural at first but creates connection. When listening, you can look at the interviewer's image on screen, but return to the camera when responding.

Remember: Your screen is the window through which interviewers assess your professionalism. Speak clearly at a moderate pace, smile as you would face-to-face, and maintain the same energy and enthusiasm as an in-person meeting.

- ❏ **Pro Tip:** Place a small sticky note near your camera lens with a smiley face or the word "SMILE" to remind yourself to look at the camera and maintain positive facial expressions throughout the interview.



Online Etiquette

Video interviews require the same professionalism as in-person meetings, plus some additional technology-specific considerations. Following proper online etiquette demonstrates respect and digital competence.

Control Your Audio

Mute yourself when not talking to avoid background noise. Use headphones if needed for clearer audio. Test sound levels beforehand so you're neither too loud nor too quiet.

Prevent Interruptions

Inform household members of your interview time and request they stay quiet. Put a sign on your door. Silence phones completely - not just on vibrate. Close all pets in another room.

Stay Fully Engaged

Give the interview your complete attention. Don't check email, browse other tabs, or look at your phone. Maintain focus on the conversation just as you would in person.

Body Language Still Matters

Continue using positive body language: nod to show understanding, smile appropriately, use moderate hand gestures, maintain good posture, and look engaged throughout.

Log In Early

Join the meeting 2-3 minutes before the scheduled time. This shows punctuality and gives you time to settle in, but not so early that you're waiting awkwardly for 10 minutes.

Consider doing a practice video interview with a friend or career counselor to get comfortable with the technology and online format before your actual interview.



Handling Tough Questions



Interviewers sometimes ask challenging questions to assess how you think on your feet, handle pressure, and respond to unexpected situations. These questions aren't meant to trip you up - they reveal your problem-solving skills and authenticity.

Strategies for Difficult Questions

- **Pause thoughtfully:** "That's an interesting question. May I take a moment to think?"
- **Stay calm:** Take a breath and organize your thoughts before speaking
- **Be honest:** If you don't know something, admit it gracefully
- **Show your thinking:** Walk through your reasoning process aloud
- **Stay positive:** Frame challenges as learning opportunities
- **Bridge to strengths:** Connect your answer back to your capabilities

❏ **Example:** If asked about an employment gap: "During that time, I took a career break to care for family, but I stayed professionally engaged by completing online courses in Microsoft Office and project management. This break gave me renewed energy and clarity about my career direction."

Showing grace under pressure and the ability to think critically leaves a strong, positive impression even when questions are challenging.



The "I Don't Know" Question

Honesty + Willingness to Learn = Strength

If an interviewer asks about something outside your knowledge or experience, honesty paired with enthusiasm to learn is always better than bluffing or lying. Employers value integrity and adaptability.

What NOT to Do

- ❌ Make up an answer or pretend to know
- ❌ Become defensive or apologetic
- ❌ Say simply "I don't know" and stop
- ❌ Change the subject abruptly
- ❌ Panic or show visible stress

Dishonesty almost always gets discovered and damages your credibility irreparably. Defensiveness suggests you can't handle feedback or admission of limitations.

What TO Do

- ✓ Admit honestly but confidently
- ✓ Emphasize your learning ability
- ✓ Reference similar skills you've mastered
- ✓ Show enthusiasm to develop this knowledge
- ✓ Ask a relevant follow-up question

Example: "I'm not familiar with that specific software, but I'm very quick to learn new systems. In fact, I taught myself Excel through online tutorials and became proficient within three weeks. I'd be excited to develop expertise in this tool as well."

This approach demonstrates self-awareness, honesty, adaptability, and a growth mindset - all qualities employers highly value in candidates.





Questions to Ask Interviewers

As the interview concludes, you'll typically be invited to ask your own questions. This is your opportunity to demonstrate genuine interest, gather important information, and assess if the role is right for you. Prepare 3-5 thoughtful questions in advance.

About the Role

- "What would a typical day look like in this position?"
- "What are the immediate priorities for the first 90 days?"
- "How is success measured in this role?"
- "What are the biggest challenges facing someone in this position?"

About the Team

- "Can you tell me about the team I'd be working with?"
- "How does this position interact with other departments?"
- "What's the management style of the person I'd report to?"
- "How would you describe the team culture?"

About the Company

- "What do you enjoy most about working here?"
- "How does the company support employee growth and development?"
- "What are the company's plans for growth in the next few years?"
- "How would you describe the company culture?"

About Next Steps

- "What are the next steps in the interview process?"
- "When should I expect to hear back from you?"
- "Is there anything else I can provide to help with your decision?"
- "Do you have any concerns about my qualifications?"

Avoid asking about salary, benefits, vacation time, or work-from-home policies in initial interviews unless the interviewer brings them up first. Save these for later stages or after receiving an offer.



Closing the Interview

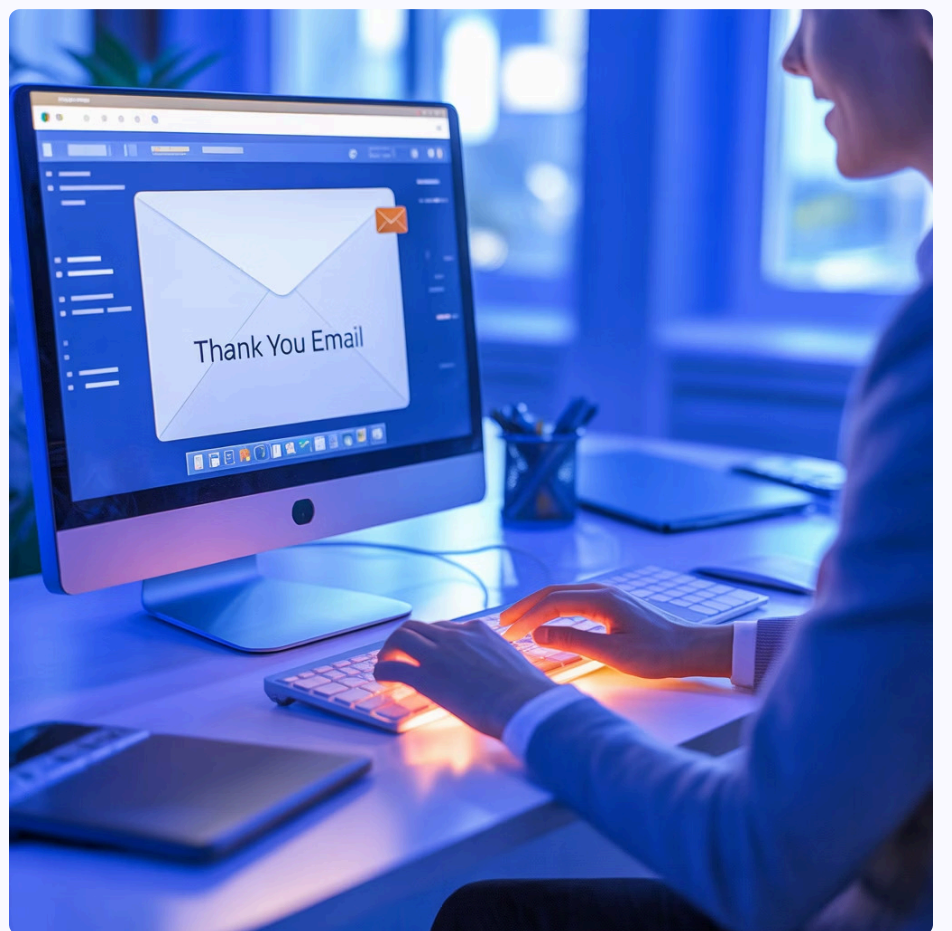
How you end the interview is just as important as how you begin it. A strong closing reinforces your interest, professionalism, and qualifications while leaving a memorable positive impression.

In-Person Closing Steps

- **Express gratitude:** Thank each interviewer by name for their time
- **Reiterate interest:** "I'm very excited about this opportunity"
- **Summarize fit:** Briefly mention one key strength relevant to the role
- **Ask about timeline:** "What are the next steps in your process?"
- **Shake hands:** Firm, confident handshake with eye contact and smile
- **Gather materials:** Collect your belongings calmly and professionally

Virtual Interview Closing

- Thank them warmly while looking at the camera
- Wait for them to end the call (don't disconnect first)
- Maintain your professional demeanor until call fully ends



Follow-Up Email (Within 24 Hours)

Send a personalized thank-you email to each interviewer within 24 hours. Mention a specific topic discussed, reaffirm your interest, and thank them again for the opportunity. This demonstrates professionalism and keeps you top-of-mind.

After the Interview

Your work doesn't end when the interview does. The post-interview period is crucial for reflection, follow-up, and continued momentum in your job search.

Immediate Reflection

While everything is fresh, write notes about questions asked, your answers, and any topics discussed. Note what went well and what you'd improve for next time.

Send Thank-You Email

Within 24 hours, send personalized thank-you emails to each interviewer. Reference specific conversation points and reiterate your enthusiasm for the role.

Continue Your Search

Don't pause other job applications while waiting to hear back. Keep applying and interviewing - momentum is important, and options give you negotiating power.

Follow Up Appropriately

If you haven't heard back within their stated timeline, send one polite follow-up email inquiring about status. Then wait patiently for their response.

Learn and Improve

Review your notes to identify patterns or questions that stumped you. Practice those areas before your next interview. Every interview makes you stronger.

- ❑ **Remember:** Job searching is a numbers game. Each interview is valuable practice, even if you don't get the offer. Stay positive, keep improving, and maintain your confidence. The right opportunity will come.

Key Takeaways

Your Interview Success Formula

Let's recap the most important principles that will guide you to interview success. These core strategies apply across all interview formats and positions.



Prepare Thoroughly

Research the company and role, practice common questions using STAR format, prepare your materials, and test technology in advance



Present Professionally

Arrive on time (or log in early), dress appropriately for the role and company culture, bring necessary documents and references



Communicate Clearly

Listen carefully to each question, answer concisely with specific examples, use positive language, and speak at a steady pace



Use the STAR Method

Structure behavioral answers with Situation, Task, Action, and Result to create compelling, organized stories that highlight your skills



Show Confidence

Maintain good eye contact and posture, highlight your experience with humility, show enthusiasm for the opportunity



Follow Up Thoughtfully

Ask insightful questions during the interview, thank interviewers warmly, send personalized follow-up emails within 24 hours

Each of these steps increases your chances of success. Practice these strategies in mock interviews to build confidence and refine your skills before the real opportunity.

Building Confidence & Next Steps



You've Got This!

You now have a complete toolkit: understanding of interview formats, preparation strategies, practice answers, STAR method mastery, body language awareness, and online interview skills. This knowledge transforms into confidence through practice and application.

Remember Your Value

Focus on selling your **relevant, recent achievements** rather than trying to cover every decade of your experience. Your goal is to show why you fit *this specific role* at *this particular time*. Employers seek candidates who can contribute immediately, and your experience gives you that capability.

Keep Practicing

Confidence grows with repetition. The more interviews you do, the more natural it feels. If nerves creep back, recall your preparation and the support network around you - classmates, mentors, career counselors, family, and friends who believe in you.

Stay positive, believe in your skills, and remember: every interview is an opportunity to learn and improve. You've prepared thoroughly, and you're ready to succeed!





Resources & Practice Tools

Continue improving your interview skills by leveraging these valuable resources and tools. Consistent practice in low-stakes environments builds the confidence and fluency you'll need in real interviews.



Online Learning Platforms

LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, and Indeed Career Guide offer free interview preparation courses, practice questions, and expert advice tailored for mature workers.



Career Centers & Counselors

Local workforce development centers, libraries, and community colleges often provide free mock interview practice, resume reviews, and career counseling specifically for adults 45+.



ReSkill45+ Community

Connect with fellow program participants through online forums and local meetups. Share experiences, practice together, and build your professional network while gaining support and encouragement.



Self-Recording Practice

Use your smartphone or computer to record practice interviews. Review your body language, verbal delivery, and use of filler words. This objective feedback accelerates improvement.

- ❑ **Practice Commitment:** Aim to complete at least 3-5 mock interviews before your first real interview. Each practice session builds muscle memory, reduces anxiety, and reveals areas for improvement.





You Are Ready to Succeed!

Congratulations!

You've completed the **Mastering Job Interviews** course and now have a comprehensive roadmap for interview success. Review this material whenever you need a confidence boost or refresher before an important interview.

Remember These Truths

- ✓ Your experience is a powerful asset
- ✓ Employers value maturity and reliability
- ✓ Preparation builds confidence
- ✓ Every interview is practice
- ✓ You bring unique perspectives
- ✓ Age is an advantage, not a barrier
- ✓ Your skills are current and valuable
- ✓ You belong in today's workforce

Your Next Steps

1. Review and practice your STAR stories
2. Update your resume with recent achievements
3. Research companies you're interested in
4. Schedule mock interviews with friends or counselors
5. Test your video interview technology
6. Prepare professional attire and materials
7. Apply confidently to positions
8. Believe in yourself!

"Success is where preparation and opportunity meet. You've prepared well - now go meet your opportunity!"

We wish you the very best on your journey back into the workforce. You have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed. Now go show them what you can do!

