

Connect with an employer. Tell them a story.

If you have a job interview, the employer already knows you have the basic skills to do the job. Now your goal is to expand on your resume and cover letter by sharing stories from your past work experience that demonstrate those skills. Remember, interviewing goes both ways; this is a chance for you to see if a job is a good fit for you, too.

How to prepare

Research the employer

Find information about the company by reading their website, checking LinkedIn for employer profiles, talking to people who work there, seeing if there is any related news, etc.

Develop an introduction

Most interviews start with some version of “Tell me about yourself...” Come up with a few sentences that describe your interests and skills as they relate to the specific job and employer.

Prepare stories

An interview is your chance to give examples that show you have the skills to do the job. Review the job description and think about stories you could share from your past jobs that match the position’s responsibilities and requirements.

Practice common interview questions for your field or industry

Practice answering interview questions with a friend or career counselor until you feel comfortable.

Write down questions for the employer

The best questions come from your research. What do you want to learn more about? What will help you figure out if this is the right job for you?

Know where you are going

Plan out how you are getting to your interview and leave plenty of time in case there are delays—plan to arrive about 10 minutes early.

Dress appropriately

Wear clothing that matches the type of job and work environment where you are interviewing.

Bring several copies of your resume

You can also bring your cover letter and references in case they ask for them.

Closing and follow up

At the end of an interview, ask about the next steps and when you might expect to hear from the employer. Make sure to get everyone’s business cards and send a thank you email within 24 – 48 hours. If you don’t hear back within the timeframe they mentioned, check in and continue to express your interest.



Writing exercises for “Tell me about yourself”

Most job interviews begin with the employer asking you about yourself. Often people misunderstand this question and share the wrong information. When preparing your introduction, remember to keep your response to a minute or less, don't mention anything personal and keep your answer positive. Write your answer to these three questions to prepare your response to "Tell me about yourself."

Can you do this job? Describe your skills from past work and volunteer experience that demonstrate the skills needed for this position. You may also include personal traits that are a match for the job:

Do you really want to do this job? Describe what interests you about this type of work:

Why this employer? Based on the website and your other research, describe why you think this employer is the right match for you:

Preparing your interview stories

Using the job description, fill in the table below to match the job responsibilities to your past experience.

Job responsibilities	Tell a story that demonstrates how you performed these responsibilities in past jobs

Practice common interview questions

Every interview is different and there is no way to know exactly the types of questions you will be asked. The best way to be prepared is to: do your research about the job and employer, prepare your response to “Tell me about yourself” and come up with stories from your past experiences that demonstrate the skills needed for the job. Additionally, practice these common questions to become comfortable with the interview process:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you believe you are qualified for this job?
3. What do you like/dislike most about your current or recent job?
4. How would you handle a challenging situation?
5. What are your major strengths and/or weaknesses?
6. Can you explain your gap in employment?
7. What would your last boss say about your work performance?
8. Where do you see yourself in three to five years?
9. Why should we hire you?
10. Do you have you any questions for us?

Prepare questions to ask the employer

The best questions to ask an employer will come from your research about the job and company, demonstrating both your knowledge and curiosity. You can also ask questions to get your interviewers talking about the work environment and their own job satisfaction. This is helpful to learn whether the job is a good match for you. Here are some common questions you could ask an employer:

1. Based on my research, I learned... can you tell me more about this?
2. Can you describe a typical workday or work week?
3. Why did you decide to work here and what do you find rewarding and challenging about your job?
4. How would you describe the work culture here?
5. What qualities are you looking for in a successful candidate?
6. What does it take to succeed in this company?
7. Can you tell me what the next steps are in the interviewing process?