

Pre-Interview Tips

- Thoroughly research the organization and the role you are applying for. Create a list of questions for the interviewer. This shows investment and interest in the role
- Write down (or orally practice) your responses for **common interview questions**. Think about specific examples from your life to match each question
- Make a list of your strengths, interests, and talents, and think about how you might be able to bring these up in the interview
- Practice having a mock-interview with a trusted friend or adult. This is your chance to make mistakes and see if/how you can recover from them!
- Review your resume and cover letter, and bring paper copies to your interview
- Print out a list of references to bring to your interview
- Make sure you know where the interview is, and how to get there. You can even practice going to the front of the building the day before, if that helps!

Common Interview Questions and What They Are Really Asking

- **Tell me about yourself:** They want to know about your recent school/volunteer/work experiences, not your whole life story! Think about 3-5 past or current vocational goals or interests.
- **Describe your strengths and skills:** Choose strengths relevant to the workplace, such as good time management or excellent writing skills. They also want to hear stories about when these strengths were used; don't just list them!
- **What is your greatest weakness?** Choose one minor weakness that can be overcome, or that you are currently working on. Do not disclose autism here as a weakness!
- **Why do you want to work here?** This is a question that reflects how well you have researched the company. Highlight the qualities you like about the organization and what attracts you to them. Do not speak too much about how you hope the company will benefit you.

Day of the Interview Tips

- Wear a clean shirt with no logos or bold patterns, suit pants, and dress shoes
- Bring a paper copy of your resume, cover letter, and references that you can pass to the interviewer
- Make sure you eat, drink, and use the bathroom at least 15 minutes before your interview
- Consider bringing a small, quiet fidget toy, even if you have not disclosed autism. These are more common and accepted nowadays, and it can help with nervous stims
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before the interview starts (but do not arrive too early!)
- * Expect a handshake from the interviewer, and extend your hand firmly to meet theirs
- * Introduce yourself to the employer, and smile as you do so
- * If you have trouble with eye contact, you can look anywhere at their face instead. If it is not too much to think about while also trying to hear and answer interview questions, try to adjust your gaze every 5 seconds; otherwise, it may seem like you are staring at them. You can also say, "I realize that eye contact is expected, but I focus better on what you are saying when I am looking away. I am still listening."
- * When the interviewer is giving information or answering one of your questions, nod every now and then to visually show them that you are listening
- Avoid talking negatively about past experiences
- If you need a moment to gather your thoughts, it is okay to let the interviewer know, "I just need a moment to think about my answer."
- At the end of the interview, offer the piece of paper with your references, even if they have not asked. You can say, "Would you like a copy of my references?"
- Ask about next steps in the hiring process and when you should expect to hear back from them about a decision
- Thank the interviewer for their time at the end of the interview

*These are neurotypical interview expectations that you can choose to do, only if you are comfortable and it feels authentic enough to do so.

Post-Interview Tips

- Consider sending a follow-up thank-you email on the same day
- Celebrate your courage!
- Try to schedule some time to calm down or recharge from the experience. Consider spending some time engaging in your special interests after the interview to help self-regulate
- Be patient while waiting for a response – this period can be stressful. If you do not hear back within a week, consider sending a follow up email:

Subject: (Name of Position) Interview Follow Up

Dear (Interviewer's name),

It was a pleasure meeting you last (day of the week you met)! When you have a moment, could you please update me on your timing and potential next steps in the interview process for the (name of role)?

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Your Name

Common Interview Questions and the STAR Method

What Common Interview Questions are Really Asking

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STAR Method

The **STAR method** is a framework for storytelling that is useful for interview purposes, as it goes over all of the aspects employers tend to like to hear about. When selecting a story to tell using this method, make sure it is positive and speaks well of your attributes and skills!

- **Situation:** Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish. Be specific! This can be from a previous school, volunteer, or work experience.
- **Task:** What was the goal you were working towards?
- **Action:** What action did you take? It is okay to be the main character here; focus on your perspective, and use "I" instead of "we".
- **Result:** What was the outcome of the action? How did the event end? What did you accomplish or learn from this experience?

Questions that lead to using the STAR method for your responses can sound like:

- "Tell me about a workplace conflict."
- "Tell me about a time when..."
- "Give me an example of ..."
- "Describe a situation where..."