From RIF to Ready:
Mastering the Modern Job Interview

PREPARATION

What do I know about the opportunity and how will I show I'm ready for it?
How will I position myself to reflect the needs and priorities of the role?

☐ **What do I know about the job, the interviewers, and the company?**
Start with context. Research the role, the team, and the organization. This shapes how you present yourself and which stories you choose to share.

☐ **Do I have a clear understanding of what I bring to the table for this company?**
Clarify your value. Know your strengths and how they align with the company's needs so you can position yourself as the obvious choice.

☐ **How have I prepared for the kinds of questions I'm likely to be asked? For the questions I will ask?**
Build fluency. Use AI tools, mock interviews, and resume review to prep examples that show your fit. Draft questions that reflect curiosity, strategy, and alignment.

☐ **What mental and personal preparation will I undertake to show up as confident during the interview?**
Do the mindset work. Practice staying present, managing nerves, and projecting credibility, especially when the stakes are high.

☐ **What do I need to bring or prepare for prior to a live interview?**
Handle logistics early. Pack printed materials, confirm directions, and choose attire that supports your presence. Arrive focused, not flustered.

☐ **What technical or environmental preparations do I need to make for a virtual interview?**
Set the stage. Check lighting, sound, background, and connectivity. Don't let tech or noise distractions undermine your message.

THE INTERVIEW

How will I communicate my value with clarity and confidence?
What will I do to build rapport and credibility during the conversation?
How will I stay present, responsive, and aligned with the opportunity?

☐ **How will I speak with clarity, honesty, and enthusiasm?**
Choose words that reflect confidence and professionalism. Speak clearly, stay authentic, and let your energy show.

☐ **What tone, pacing, and body language will help me build rapport and credibility?**
Match the moment. Use tone, pace, and posture that align with the setting and help you connect.

☐ **How will I demonstrate intellectual engagement?**
Think out loud. Ask relevant follow-ups, interpret nuance, and respond with insight to show strategic awareness.

☐ **What examples or stories will I share to demonstrate my fit for the role and culture?**
Pick stories that stick. Share examples that show how you think, solve problems, and collaborate.

☐ **How will I ask questions that reflect curiosity, strategic thinking, and alignment?**
Ask with purpose. Use questions to show you're invested, informed, and evaluating fit.

☐ **What mindset will help me stay grounded and confident throughout the conversation?**
Stay steady. Choose a mindset that helps you focus, adapt, and show up as your best self.

☐ **What strategies will I use to regain focus if I get flustered or thrown off?**
Have a reset plan. Pause, breathe, and redirect your focus to regain composure and credibility and refer to your notes, if helpful.

SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

How will I approach negotiation as a collaborative conversation instead of a debate?
What preparation will help me advocate for my value with confidence and flexibility?
How will I respond if the process doesn't go as expected?

- ☐ **How will I respond if salary comes up before I'm ready to discuss it?**
  Redirect with purpose. Express enthusiasm for the role and ask to revisit compensation after understanding the full scope.

- ☐ **What research will I do to understand a realistic salary range for this role and industry?**
  Know the market. Use credible sources to anchor your expectations and speak with authority.

- ☐ **How will I prepare and use my BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)?**
  Identify your next-best option, write it down, and use it to guide your decisions if the offer doesn't meet your needs.

- ☐ **How will I anchor my goals to the value I bring and not just to what I want?**
  Lead with impact. Frame your ask around results, experience, and alignment with the organization's goals.

- ☐ **What will I do if the offer isn't what I hoped for?**
  Stay curious. Ask questions, explore adjustments, and keep the conversation open.

- ☐ **How will I keep the tone friendly, professional, and focused on mutual success?**
  Build the relationship. Use a respectful tone to maintain credibility and leave the door open even if the deal doesn't close.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

How will I follow up in a way that reinforces my interest and professionalism?
What did I learn from this experience about the role, the company, and myself?
How will I use this interview to grow and prepare for what's next?

- ☐ **How will I follow up to express appreciation, reinforce my interest, and stay professionally engaged?**
  Follow through. Send a timely, thoughtful thank-you note. Stay engaged without overstepping.

- ☐ **What insights did I gain about the role, the team, or the organization?**
  Reflect with purpose. Capture what you learned to assess fit and sharpen future questions.

- ☐ **What feedback, explicit or implied, can I use to improve my performance?**
  Read the signals. Identify what landed well and what didn't to refine your approach.

- ☐ **What moments am I proud of and what would I handle differently next time?**
  Own your growth. Celebrate wins and note what to adjust moving forward.

- ☐ **What patterns or lessons are emerging across my interviews?**
  Track the trends. Spot strengths, gaps, and opportunities to sharpen your narrative.

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Strategy: STAR
Situation, Task, Action, Result

Use
- Competency-based, behavioral, or technical questions
- Use for technical roles or when asked to describe specific accomplishments
- Focuses on measurable outcomes and role alignment

Notes
- Easy to remember and use
- Highlights problem solving
- May feel formulaic if overused

Examples
In my last role, I was tasked with reducing onboarding time. I mapped the process, identified bottlenecks, and implemented a new workflow. We cut onboarding time by 30%.

When our system crashed during a client demo, I quickly diagnosed the issue, restored functionality, and followed up with a postmortem. The client renewed their contract.

Strategy: SOAR
Situation, Obstacle, Action, Result

Use
- Challenge- or failure-based questions
- Highlights EQ and growth mindset
- Ideal for discussing adversity and transformation
- Useful for strategic and leadership role questions

Notes
- Highlights initiative and forward thinking
- Encourages ownership
- May overemphasize struggle if not balanced with strategic wins

Examples
After a merger, morale dropped. I organized listening sessions, addressed concerns, and rebuilt trust. Engagement scores rose 20% in six months.

I missed a key deadline early in my career. I owned the mistake, restructured my workflow, and never missed another. That experience shaped my reliability.

Strategy: DRIVE
Deliverable, Role, Issue, Value, Effect

Use
- Questions about leadership, vision, influence or shaping culture
- Good for high-stakes interviews where presence and insight matter
- Demonstrate self-awareness and accountability

Notes
- Connects individual impact to organizational outcomes
- Showcases strategic decision-making
- Not optimized for behavioral questions
- Requires discipline to apply clearly
- Adaptable not only for interviews but negotiations, leadership challenges, or personal development

Examples
I was hired to lead a turnaround. I clarified deliverables, aligned the team, and addressed systemic issues. Within a year, we doubled output and improved retention.

As a program lead, I noticed gaps in cross-functional collaboration. I introduced shared planning tools and quarterly syncs. This improved delivery speed by 25%.

NOTES

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STAR	SOAR	DRIVE
Situation Task Action Result	Situation Obstacle Action Result	Deliverable Role Issue Value Effect
Structured, competency-based interviews	*Exploring EQ, resilience, and interpersonal dynamics*	*Leadership roles with a mission focus and strong values alignment*
Focus: Clear, concise evidence of past behavior	**Focus:** Reflection, learning, adaptability	**Focus:** Depth, insight, future orientation