

Know Yourself

Value = (Inborn Attributes + Learned Attributes) x Attitude

- Define your inborn attributes — natural talents and traits
- Identify your learned attributes — skills from education and experience
- Recognize that attitude is the multiplier — if attitude is zero, everything else is zero
- Define your level of ambition clearly

Strengths & Weaknesses

- Consider taking the CliftonStrengthsFinder assessment to identify and articulate your top strengths
- Select your best strength (think ahead of time)
- Be honest about your weaknesses — everyone has them. Play to your strengths.

Winning Attitude Checklist

- Be a fountain, not a drain — bring energy to every interaction
- Be fully present — no phone distractions, no drifting off in meetings
- Be realistic and project good judgment — don't overpromise
- Be responsible for how you show up — dress, mannerisms, body language, accountability
- Adopt an abundance mindset — aim for win-win outcomes
- Never give superiors the opportunity to say you've wasted their time
- Don't project a "what's in it for me" attitude

Know the Company

- Assess whether the company is public or private, for-profit or not-for-profit
- Study company website thoroughly - products, services, mission, culture values
- Look up recent company press releases, news, and developments
- Research company's competitors and market position
- Determine the company's size category and what that means for their hiring process:
 - Micro (< 30 employees): informal, likely no formal process, hiring due to immediate need
 - Small (30–100): some process, growing structure
 - Lower Mid Market (100–500): increasing formality
 - Upper Mid Market (500–2,500): structured processes
 - Large (> 2,500): process-oriented, risk-averse, formal compliance requirements

Culture Type Identification (Four-Way Model)

- Use this model to understand the company's operating style and calibrate your follow-up approach:
 - Command & Control (think: UPS, military, football team)** — First day: "Learn all the rules." Follow their stated timeline strictly. If they say two weeks, wait two weeks.
 - Free Form / Horizontal (think: Habitat for Humanity)** — First day: "What do you want to work on?" More flexibility in communication timing and approach.
 - Client-Centric (think: basketball team, specialized medical teams)** — First day: "Get to know everybody." Company reinvents itself around client needs. Multiple contact points are welcome.
 - Competency Culture (think: baseball — individual stats plus team)** — First day: "It would be good if you hit a home run." Focus on demonstrating individual excellence within the team context.

1-2 Weeks Before Interview

Research Position

- Understand the specific department/team you'd be joining
- Research interviewer(s) on LinkedIn and company profiles
- Research salary ranges for the position and location
- Review job posting details and requirements multiple times
- Research whether they're hiring for growth or replacement — this tells you a lot about the culture
- Use your network to gain direct insight or even personal introductions to the firm interviewing you
- Lean on your mentors! Ask how they might approach this interview as a prospect or hiring manager.

Know Who You're Communicating With

- Supervisor / Hiring Manager:** Research who your direct boss will be (LinkedIn, company website). This is the person you'll work with every day. They want someone who's highly anticipatory, trainable, willing to own things, and who can handle half their workload. Show energy and specific examples of going the extra mile. Don't suggest their methods are wrong.
- HR Representative:** Focused on compliance and a safe, clean hire. Provide straightforward, low-risk answers and avoid giving reasons to reject (spelling errors, inconsistencies, or red flags).

Content Preparation

- Prepare to relate your enthusiasm(!) and experience to specific job requirements
- Identify 5-7 examples using STAR/SAR/CARL technique from school/work
- Practice explaining 2-3 projects you're proud of and excited about (whiteboard ready)
- Review technical concepts relevant to the position
- Prepare responses for common questions
 - What would you consider your strengths? Weaknesses?
 - Why do you want to work for our company?
 - Why should we hire you?
- Be ready to address anything questionable on resume (gaps, GPA, etc.)
- Prepare 3-5 questions you have about the job and the company, the position, benefits, culture, etc.

3-5 Days Before Interview

Elevator Pitch Development

- Write 30-second elevator pitch with: Hook + Connection + Key Points
- Write 1-minute version for longer conversations
- Practice until it feels natural and genuine
- Test pitch with friends/family for feedback
- See "**Elevator Pitch Guide**" for more details

Mock Interview Practice

- Conduct mock interviews with friends, family, or career services
- Practice with someone unfamiliar with your background
- Record yourself to review body language and speech patterns – are you engaging and enthusiastic?
- Practice technical explanations and whiteboarding
- Time your responses to avoid rambling
- Review your interview performance honestly — what could you do better next time?

Documentation & Materials

- Print multiple copies of resume on quality paper
- Prepare portfolio of projects (digital and/or physical) – don't assume you can take in a phone/laptop
- Organize references and contact information
- Prepare notepad and professional pen for taking notes
- Write (all caps) at the top of the notepad "STAR, SAR or CARL" as a reminder

Day Before Interview

Final Preparations

- Pick out a professional and clean interview outfit and shoes (including backup)
- Research route and transportation (plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early)
- Prepare all materials in professional folder/bag
- Get interviewer contact information easily accessible
- Charge phone and test video conference technology
- Set up backup internet connection plan if virtual interview

Mental & Physical Prep (helpful if new to interviewing)

- Get good night's sleep (7-8 hours), eat a healthy dinner and plan a nutritious breakfast
- Review your resume and elevator pitch one final time
- Visualize success: imagine being in the room and answering questions comfortably

Day of Interview

Pre-Interview

- Eat a good breakfast and stay hydrated
- Arrive 10-15 minutes early (not too early)
- Turn off phone notifications
- Review interviewer names and key company facts
- Take deep breaths before starting the interview and practice positive self-talk

During the Interview

Professional Presence

- Make eye contact, offer firm handshake, and smile!
- Offer printed resumes to attendees and keep a copy with your portfolio next to your notes
- Refer to resume and portfolio as needed if memory or conversation stalls
- Take deep breaths to stay calm, sit up straight and project your voice clearly
- Keep responses simple, direct, and organized – remember don't ramble!
- Have a thick skin — don't assume everything is personal

Response Techniques

- Use STAR/SAR/CARL technique for behavioral questions (see last page for explanation)
- Pause, take a deep breath, and collect thoughts before responding
- Draw examples from internships, jobs, or school projects
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question or if they need more details after responses
- Reminder: It's okay to say "I don't know (much) about that subject, but I'm confident I can learn."

Note-Taking

- Take brief notes on key points and questions

- Note interviewer(s) name(s) and title(s)
- Record important details about role and company culture

Example Questions to Ask Interviewers (select 2-3 from list below)

Role & Performance

- "Why are you hiring for this role? (New Position or Replacement?)"
- "Who will I report to? (Likely the hiring manager but could be someone else)"
- "What are the three things I can contribute in my first 100 days?"
- "What does great performance look like in this role?"
- "How will I be brought on to the project?"
- "Are there skills/certifications I should be pursuing?"

Company & Culture

- "What's your leadership style?"
- "What's key to this company's success that outsiders wouldn't know?"
- "What's the atmosphere and rhythm of work here?"
- "How is onboarding and training conducted?"

Strategic & Future-Focused

- "Which competitor worries you most and why?"
- "How does this position help achieve 202X company goals?"
- "Is this a new or existing position? If new, why was it created?"
- "What type of follow-up should I expect?"

Closing the Interview

Final Impression

- Summarize your experience using elevator pitch
- Remind them you're trainable and eager to learn
- Express genuine continued interest in the role
- Ask about next steps: "When are you planning to make a decision? When should I expect feedback?"
- Thank interviewer(s) for their time and insights
- Get business cards or contact information if not provided

Post-Interview Follow-Up

Immediate Actions (Within 24 Hours)

- Send personalized thank you email to each interviewer (consider asking first if it's okay)
- Reference specific conversation points from interview
- Reiterate interest and key qualifications
- Include any additional information promised during interview
- Receive feedback graciously
- Review your interview performance honestly — what could you do better next time?

Ongoing Follow-Up

- Set calendar reminder to follow up if no response within stated timeframe
- Continue researching company and role
- Prepare for potential second interview (usually more technical)
- Reflect on interview performance and areas for improvement

Second Interview Preparation

Advanced Preparation

- Review first interview questions and focus areas thoroughly
- Prepare for detailed technical discussions based on their interests
- Research specific areas they emphasized
- Prepare concrete examples of relevant experience
- Expect more technical depth and team-focused/multi-panel questions

Additional Professional Development

Networking & Ongoing Growth

- Create or update LinkedIn profile -use a professional picture that is clear, crisp, and bright
- Join relevant professional organizations and campus clubs
- Attend industry conferences, career fairs, and networking events
- Practice elevator pitch at networking opportunities
- Build relationships with professors and industry professionals

Key Reminders

- Preparation is everything** - the more you practice, the more confident you'll be
- Be genuine** - authenticity resonates more than perfect answers
- Show enthusiasm** - companies want people who are excited about the opportunity
- It's a conversation** - you're evaluating them as much as they're evaluating you
- Leverage your network** – your friends/associates may have valuable insight or connections – use them!

STAR/SAR/CARL Technique for Behavioral Questions

- STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result
- SAR: Situation, Action, Result
- CARL: Context, Action, Result, Learning
- Prepare 3-5 examples from school projects or work experience

Elevator Pitch Basics (30 seconds)

- Hook them with a genuine opening statement
- Connect your background to the position
- Highlight 2-3 most important and relevant points
- Practice until it feels natural
- See “**Elevator Pitch Guide**” for more details