



12 Surprising Job Interview Tips

You're almost there. [Your resume](#) landed you an interview and now it's time to seal the deal. So what's the best way to prepare?

To find the answer, I looked back on my interviews, sifted through research, and most importantly, asked employees from today's most coveted companies. I tried to find deep insights beyond the typical "sit up straight!" and "dress to impress!" tips we hear too much.

Below you'll find the 12 best tips to help before, during and after your interview.

BEFORE

1. Research Earnings Calls, Quarterly Reports & Blog Posts

In today's world, content is king. Goldman Sachs publishes quarterly reports, Microsoft records its earning calls, and every startup has a blog.

With so much out there, I'm baffled that few of us look past the company's homepage. It's like we're writing an essay on *The Odyssey* without quoting a single passage from the book.

Example: If you're interviewing with Google, here's two ways to answer: "What's Google's biggest opportunity in the next 5 years?"

- **Weak:** "I think wearable technology will be big because Google Glass and Apple Watch represent a new trend that shows..."
- **Strong:** "Call me geeky, but I was listening to Google's quarterly earnings call and was blown away by the fact that display advertising hit over \$5 billion in the past few years. Therefore, I think that..."

Neither answer is wrong, but the latter says much more. It shows you've done your homework and give answers rooted in data.

2. Use Google Alerts

Keeping up with company news is hard, especially if you're interviewing with multiple places at once. That's why [Google Alerts](#) is a savior; it's a tool that emails you anytime a new story appears for a specific term. That way, you learn about current events without searching for them.

Example: If you're applying to Creative Artists Agency, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.google.com/alerts



2. Type in “Creative Artists Agency”
3. Put in your email address if you’re not already logged in to Gmail

Soon enough, you’ll get updates on CAA and have more ammo for your interview.

3. Use Social Sweepster To Clean Your Facebook & Twitter

Nowadays, [91% of employers](#) search your social media for any red flags. While most people tell you to watch every single thing you upload, there’s a much easier solution. Use [Social Sweepster](#), an app that detects pictures of red solo cups, beer bottles, and other “suspicious” objects. It even detects profanity from your past posts! Now, that’s f%\$king awesome!

“Too many recruiters reject candidate because of something they found on their social platforms” Social Sweepster CEO Tom McGrath says. “We help you create the first impression on your own terms.”

4. Schedule For Tuesday at 10:30 AM

[According to Glassdoor](#), the best time to interview is 10:30 AM on Tuesday. Remember, your interviewer has a world of responsibilities beyond hiring. They’re responding to emails, balancing projects, and meeting tons of other candidates so it’s crucial to consider when they’ll be in the best mental state to meet you.

10:30 AM Tuesday is the sweet spot because you:

- Avoid the bookends. On Mondays and Fridays, employees gear up for the week or wind down. By the same token, avoid the first or last slots of any workday.
- Avoid lunchtime. Immediately before noon, your interviewer may be too hungry to concentrate; immediately after, they may be in a food coma.

But there’s a caveat. [Research shows](#) it’s best to take the earliest interview slot “in circumstances under which decisions must be made quickly or without much deliberation because preferences are unconsciously and immediately guided to those options presented first.”

Bottom line: if the firm is hiring for a job starting in a few months, try to interview late morning between Tuesday through Thursday. If the firm is hiring immediately, grab the earliest slot.



5. Craft Your “Story Statement”

Though most interviews start with the same prompt (“tell me about yourself” or “walk me through your resume”), we blow it off with boring answers like:

I studied [major X] because I really care about making a difference in [industry Y] as you can see through my last job at [company Z]...

This answer is like tearing out the first 200 pages of your autobiography. You leave out everything that gives meaning to why you want this job in the first place. What was your moment of epiphany? How did your childhood influence you? Why does this job move you? Most people don’t answer these questions. They start and end with their professional experience, leaving little to inspire the interviewer.

Next time, use what I call a “Story Statement,” which is a Cliff Notes of your autobiography.

Example: Here’s an amazing Story Statement that Teach For America fellow Kareli Lizarraga used for her interviews.

I grew up in California and Arizona after immigrating to the United States when I was four years old. Since neither of my parents went to college, I relied on my high school teachers to help me apply to top universities. With their support, I was able to attend the University of Pennsylvania. Then I spent a summer at a Washington DC law firm, which represented low-income students and helped me realize that my passion lay within creating educational opportunities for all.

I decided to become a teacher because I see myself so deeply reflected in the stories of so many students in your schools – and that’s why I’m so excited about the opportunity to interview with you today. Like my teachers did for me, I want to impact the next generation of students by supporting them and understanding the experiences they’re facing.

A Story Statement shows that you’re a person, not just a professional. It also makes it easy for your interviewer to predict the next chapter of your story. For Kareli, Teach For America is a logical next step. Of course, if she interviewed for Apple, she may change her Story Statement to include an early experience with her first computer and talk about how her passion for tech grew from there. For a Bain interview, she could mention how she started problem solving at a young age and now wants to do it on a big scale.



Chances are, we've all had experiences we can connect to where we're trying to go. It's just a matter of selecting the right ones to tell our story. That said, if you struggle to craft your Story Statement for a particular interview, you might be applying for the wrong job.

6. Wear a Subtle Fashion Statement

We already know dressing well makes a difference. But what if we took our attention to detail a step further? That's exactly what Morgan Stanley analyst Julio German Arias Castillo did for his interviews.

"Wear something that represents your culture or background," he says. "In my case, I always wear a pin of the Panamanian flag on my suit lapel. Most of my interviewers ask about it so it becomes a chance to discuss my upbringing and love of my homeland."

Julio created a conversation starter with his clothing. Depending on the company, you can be more playful: wear a bracelet from your recent travels to India, a tie with a quirky pattern, or — if you can pull it off — a small mockingjay pin if you're a Hunger Games fan. As long as it's subtle and tasteful, your fashion statement can build rapport through fun conversations about your hometown or mutual love for Katniss Everdeen.

7. Prepare for The "What's Your Weakness?" Question

Most people overthink this question and give a canned answer like "I'm too much of a perfectionist!" Others give a genuine answer but still fall short of what this question is really asking. It's not about admitting your weaknesses. It's about showing how you overcome them. What systems have you put in place? What progress have you made? Include those thoughts to strengthen your answer.

Example:

- **Weak:** "My weakness is that I struggle to run efficient meetings..."
- **Strong:** "I sometimes struggle to run efficient meetings. But I've worked to improve by drafting an agenda before every meeting, sending it to all participants, and then following up with a recap and clear action items so everyone knows what to do moving forward."

8. Brainstorm 3 "PAR" Anecdotes

Your interview is as memorable as the stories you share. Many people have fascinating experiences but forget them when they're on the spot. To remedy this, have three anecdotes ready to plug into your interview. Your anecdotes should follow a simple format:



1. Problem – what was the situation?
2. Action – what did you do to solve it?
3. Result – what changed afterwards?

With this format, you can adapt your PAR anecdotes to fit a variety of questions such as “tell me about a time you worked with a team” or “when have you struggled most?”

Example: University of Pennsylvania Senior Hunter Horsley has a terrific PAR anecdote for his interviews.

- **Problem:** “When I worked on [Lore](#), an education tech startup, our big marketing challenge was finding a way to get professors to try our product. Ads are inefficient and competitors like Blackboard and Canvas had sales teams call IT administrators to sign multi-year contracts — a very slow and expensive process. We needed to move faster.”
- **Action:** “We realized that students preferred our product so we teamed up with about 200 students from 100 colleges. They developed a custom outreach plan for their campus and we provided resources to support them.”
- **Result:** “This was highly effective in creating awareness with professors. In fact, it became a competitive advantage. During our first two semesters, our team of 15 people drove adoption that outpaced a competing product launched by Pearson at the same time. An additional benefit was that the approach created brand affinity. Because professors heard about the tool from students instead of an ad, the value proposition came across more authentically.”

DURING

9. Think Aloud on Analytical Questions

Some interviews include tough analytical questions. Whether you’re solving for an exact number (“what’s the EBITDA of Company X?”) or rough estimate (“how many ping pong balls can fit in a Boeing 777?”), it’s important to talk through your thinking. Don’t just give an answer; show how you got there.

Example: Consider these two answers to “How many lawn mowers are there today in the United States?”

- **Weak:** After 45 seconds of silence, you blurt out “75 million!”



- **Strong:** You're talking the entire way through, sharing your calculations and assumptions.

"Let's start from the top down. Assuming the US population is 300 million and each household averages 3 people, then we have 100 million families in the US. Let's assume urban households don't have lawns to mow and therefore only suburban and rural families buy lawnmowers. If roughly 25% of America is urban and 75% is suburban and rural then we have 75 million households that own a lawnmower."

(side note: it's okay to make assumptions and for those assumptions to be off. But that's why you need to communicate them first).

This is a great way to show your communication skills alongside your analytical ones. Plus, if you make an error, it's easier to know where you went wrong and fix it.

10. Ask Questions That Kill Two Birds With One Stone

At the end of your interview, it'll be your turn to ask a few questions. This is a perfect opportunity to kill two birds with one stone – that is, asking a genuine question while conveying something new about you. Most people just do the first part and forgo a final chance to impress the interviewer.

Example:

- **Weak:** Will this role provide opportunities to work in emerging markets?
- **Strong:** I'm passionate about languages and minored in Arabic in college. Will this role provide opportunities to work in emerging markets in the Middle East?
- **Weak:** Are there opportunities for community service?
- **Strong:** I used to work with Habitat for Humanity and was so grateful for the opportunity to give back. For a full time employee, are there company-wide community service events that I could take part in?
- **Weak:** What's [Company X]'s fastest growing division?
- **Strong:** According to your quarterly report, your revenues grew by 17%. Is that because of a particular division within the company?

This works beautifully if you haven't found a natural way to bring up an accomplishment or cite a publication beforehand.

11. Grow A Backbone & Ask This Final Question



This one takes guts — and that’s why I love it. Spredfast Product Manager Luke Fernandez says it’s the “single piece of advice that has consistently made a difference.”

Before your interview ends, ask this one last question: “Have I said anything in this interview or given you any other reason to doubt that I am a good fit for the role?”

“It’s bold, but if delivered honestly, it displays true desire and confidence,” Luke said. “I’ve been commended for that specific question in interviews with Google, YouTube, BCG, Deloitte, Twitter, and Spredfast. In one situation, the interviewer actually said yes and gave me the chance to clarify something that would have otherwise lost me an offer.”

Talk about badass!

AFTER

12. Email a Personalized Thank You Note

Thank your interviewer within 24 hours of finishing. It not only shows your gratitude, it also combats recency bias if you interviewed early. Not to mention, it opens the door for dialogue even if you don’t get the job. Sometimes, recruiters reach back out on the same email thread months later, mentioning new job opportunities.

Example: Accenture senior analyst Anthony Scafidi shared a wonderful email from Robert Hsu, an interviewee whose follow up email shows how to do it right.

Hi Anthony,

Appreciate your taking the time to chat with me today. I really enjoyed hearing about your two projects so far, how much you love the people at Accenture, and how you’ve been able to continue your community service work even while working. (Hope you had a good meeting with your mentee!) Best wishes on your current project.

Sincerely,

Robert

By Jon Youshaei, contributor at Forbes.com