TIPS!

- This is your chance to elaborate on those small bullet points on your resume.
- It is your chance to become memorable with your stories.
- It is your chance to stand out.

When you prepare stories that showcase the questions below, it gives you the opportunity to become memorable, establish trust, stand out and show what you have to offer, as well as paint vivid pictures. In your preparation think of the circumstances as well as the events to answers the questions below.

Present your stories and answers in the STAR formula:

**Situation or task** >>> **action taken** >>> **Results**

You can even switch it around and start with **Results**

**Common Questions:**

1. **Tell me about yourself?**

   Start with telling something personal you are passionate about, then transition into professional, listing key professional skills that add value to your target job, but not a repeat of your resume skills. This is where a good elevator pitch can be a great advantage. If you need assistance in developing an elevator pitch, visit Career Services on the 5th floor of the Holland Bldg.

   Remember throughout your answer to focus on the experiences and skills that are going to be most relevant for the hiring manager when they’re thinking about this particular position and this company. And ultimately, don’t be afraid to relax a little bit, tell stories and anecdotes—the hiring manager already has your resume, so they also want to know a little more about you.

2. **What interests you about this job?**

   When answering this question, you want to show that you have researched the company, and prove that you are a good fit for the job.

   - Research the company ahead of time
   - Be specific about why you are a good fit. Know the requirements for the job and then note which requirements fit your skills and experience. Create an answer or story that highlight the abilities you have that qualify you for the job.
   - If possible use numbers to express how you can add value to the company
• Avoid reasons that focus on you. Don’t mention salary, hours or commute as your primary reason. How do you benefit the company not how does the position benefit you

3. What major work challenge and or problem have you faced and how did you overcome?

There is not a magic, one situation that is right here. The ways to find the answer to this is to ask, “What are the most difficult decisions you have to make in your position?” or “Have you ever had to make a really tough decision at work?” Employers ask these questions in job and/or promotion interviews simply because they want to see that, when you face a difficult decision or situation, you are able to handle it. They also want to see what kind of decisions you consider difficult.

Whatever answer you give, be specific, itemizing what you did, how you did it, and how your difficult decision ultimately profited your team and your employer or what you learned from it.

The best way to prepare for questions where you will need to recall events and actions is to refresh your memory.

Skim through your resume and reflect on some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You can use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved a difficult situation.

4. How do you handle stress?

One common interview question is “How do you handle stress?” The interviewer does not want to hear that you never get stressed; after all, everyone feels stress at one time or another at work. Instead, the employer wants to see if you know how pressure affects you, and how you manage it.

To answer this question successfully, you want to provide specific examples of how you have handled stress well in the past.

The best way to answer this question is to give an example of how you have handled stress in a previous job. That way, the interviewer can get a clear picture of how well you work in stressful situations.

5. Tell me about a time you were juggling multiple projects with immediate deadlines?

This is a question that can be more job specific. However, the idea behind is to see how you handle this particular’s position challenges. Look at the job description and look for the requirements of the job. Find a situation in your past that can relate to the skills required where you can demonstrate your mastery of the challenge.

6. What is your greatest strength?

This is the question people struggle with because the culture we live in frowns on people who boast on their character. However, this is the time to sing. Be confident not cocky. Take a strong look at yourself, think about what you think others would say about you. What do you think you are particularly good at? Have this ready. There could be several different questions you can use this answer in.
7. What is your greatest weakness?

This is another question that can stump you if you don’t prepare in advance. You don’t want one that will keep you from getting the job, nor do you want to dress up good a thing to look like a weakness. You don’t want it to be bad or trivial. However, everyone has a weakness, so you can’t say “I can’t think of one” when asked this question. So your goal is to produce a weakness that you have worked to overcome. For example I can focus too strongly on what I’m working on and tend to forget the niceties that make a work place pleasant for those of differing personalities. I had a friend that put it this way. “I write and email and then go back and humanize it”.

The trick to this question is to prepare in advance! Once again this questions can be presented in a multitude of ways, so advance preparations will help you be prepared to answer.

8. Tell me about a time you failed?

Remember failure is an opportunity to learn. If you approach your explanation with that attitude you can then show them you can learn from failure, you can overcome and move on. An answer could be something like this.

"I have always lived by the maxim that nobody is perfect, so I am relatively comfortable taking responsibility for my shortcomings. My approach is to figure out what I could change to avoid similar circumstances in the future.” Then go on to tell a story of a situation you have thought of in advance where you did fail, but worked to overcome the failure and learned from it in order to not repeat it.

9. Tell me about your greatest achievement?

This is the antithesis of “Tell me about a time you failed”. Here they want to know not only your achievement but how you handle it. A story, with numbers, and individuals that showcase how your skills match those they are looking for is the way to go here. You can look over your resume and tell the story behind one of your bullet points.

10. Do you have any questions for us?

You should always have a question for them. However, it should not be a question that you can find the answer to quickly on their website. Use this time to not only try to impress the interviewer — but also ask questions designed to help you figure out if the job is even right for you in the first place. It’s understandable to want to impress your interviewer, but interviewing is a two-way street. You need to also assess if the job and the employer and the manager, and figuring out whether this is a job you want and would do well in. If you’re just focused on getting the job and not on whether it’s the right job for you, you’re in danger of ending up in a job where you’re struggling or miserable.

Some sample questions would be:

- How will you measure the success of the person in this position?
- Can you describe a typical day or week in the job?
- What drives the workload in this position?
• What are you hoping the person you hire to accomplish in the first six months, and or in the first year?
• Thinking back to people you’ve seen do this work previously, what differentiated the ones who were good from the ones who were really great at it?
• What do you like about working here?

Places to pull stories from that help to answer those difficult questions:

• Tell about a team project?
• Tell a about a time:
  o You deescalated an upset customer?
  o You taught a non-technical person and technical problem?
  o You offer that someone else can not?
  o You failed?
  o You shined?
  o You went above and beyond the requirements for a project?
  o You disagreed with your boss?

To prepare for your interview: (If you haven’t already)

• Research the company
• Prepare stories for your common questions
• Refresh your memory of the job description
• Refresh your memory of your cover letter and resume used
• Sit down with the job requirements and your skills and match them up
• Remember, many responses can be used with multiple questions

More information on preparing for your interview:

https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-answer-the-31-most-common-interview-questions
https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/common-interview-questions/
https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/top-interview-questions-and-answers
https://www.betterteam.com/common-interview-questions