

Ways To Practice For Your Job Interview So You Sound Prepared But Not Overly Rehearsed

Most candidates don't prepare enough for their job interview, so overwork is not a common problem. If you are looking for a job and not currently doing any interview practice, you want to do some preparation ASAP and not worry about sounding overly rehearsed. (You can start with these five steps for interview preparation.)

However, every once in a while, I run into candidates who have answers so readily available that they sound more like actors delivering a monologue than potential colleagues having a conversation in the moment. Remember that a job interview is at its essence a person-to-person conversation. You are with a potential future colleague, so you want to relate and communicate with that other person, not talk at them.

You don't have to stumble over yourself to sound spontaneous. You want to prepare so you sound articulate and knowledgeable about what you are saying. But you don't want to be so overly rehearsed that you sound fake. Here are four ways to practice for your job interview so you strike that balance and sound prepared but not overly rehearsed:

Practice in different mediums, not just in-person

Many first round interviews are by phone, not in-person, and the change in medium throws candidates off more than they probably realize. Talking by phone cuts off your energy level and removes all non-verbal communication (eye contact, gestures, your ability to read the interviewer). Your detailed interview answers that sound just fine in-person are probably too long for the phone. Even video, while bringing back some of the non-verbal advantages that phone doesn't have, is not an exact substitute for in-person interviews because you still have that technology barrier between you and your interviewer. If you're good in-person, don't assume that translates to other mediums. Practice a phone interview. Practice a video interview. Make adjustments for different mediums your energy level, enunciation, and length of interview responses.

Try at least five different ways to introduce yourself

Many interviews will start with some variation of introducing yourself – “tell me about yourself” or “walk me through your resume” or “give me an overview of your career”. Of course, some of this story is fixed because it's based on who you are, BUT it also depends on who the interviewer is – what s/he already knows about you, what kind of role or company this is, what you want to emphasize. If your interviewer went to your alma mater, you may want to start your story there to establish rapport right from the start. If this role is heavy analytics, you may want to thread your story with specific examples of analytical roles. If you're in late stage callbacks and you now know this role will require introducing new ideas and initiatives, you may want to emphasize how innovative you are across your career. Your story will always be longer than the two minutes allotted to your introduction, so you must pick and choose based on what you want to highlight. Have at least five different ways to tell your story so you can be flexible based on the interviewer, the company, the role, or where you are in the hiring process.

Spend time on actions that build rapport

It's not just the content of what you say but how you say it – the enthusiasm you show for your work, the interest you have in your area of expertise, the rapport you build with your interviewer. Don't get

so focused on the details of your projects and the dates in your career that you forget to practice actions that help you build that rapport. Practice your handshake, eye contact, your smile. When you role play your interview (a mock interview is part of good preparation!), ask your interview partner for feedback on your ability to build rapport. Are you personable? Do you have a positive attitude? Is your energy level high?

Develop performance triggers so you're good from the start

Too many candidates warm up to the job interview several minutes into it, which is several minutes too late – you have already left an indelible impression at that point! You want to develop performance triggers so you perform at your best from the start of the interview. If you over-rehearse, you might be so focused on what you want to say that you don't pay enough attention to settling yourself and exuding confidence from the start. If you need to warm up your voice, have some friendly chatter with the receptionist. If your body feels tight, do some light stretching of your neck, shoulders and wrists in the waiting area. If your mouth is dry, drink some water or practice some deep breathing.

You can be prepared for a job interview without seeming stiff and over-rehearsed. Try some of the techniques above so you are articulate, while still keeping the spontaneity, congeniality and person-to-person rapport that enables you to build a genuine relationship with the interviewer.

Credit: <https://www.forbes.com>