

Interview Prep Quick-Reference Sheet

Walking into an interview without prepared stories is one of the most common reasons qualified candidates stumble — not because they lack the experience, but because they're trying to organize it in real time while also managing nerves.

This quick-reference sheet gives you the handful of questions you're almost guaranteed to face, a simple system for turning your experience into clear, compelling stories, and a short process for researching the company so you walk in informed rather than generic. It won't replace full interview coaching, but it will help you feel prepared and consistent — and it should sound like the same person described in your resume and LinkedIn profile.

Core Questions to Be Ready For

"Tell me about yourself."	A 60-90 second walk through your professional identity, your strongest relevant experience, and what you're looking for next — not a full career history.
"Tell me about a recent accomplishment."	Your strongest, most quantifiable win, ideally one relevant to this role.
"Tell me about a time you handled conflict or a difficult situation."	" A story that shows composure, judgment, and a constructive resolution — not who was "right."
"Why did you leave your last role / what happened?"	Your brief, factual layoff explanation (see the Layoff Script Guide), pivoting quickly into your direction and value.

Have one strong story ready for each of these before you walk in — trying to think of an example live, under pressure, is where most answers fall apart.

Building Your Stories: The SMART Method

Rather than just listing what you did, use the SMART method to turn your experience into a structured, memorable story:

S	Situation	Briefly set the scene. What was the context, and what made it a challenge worth mentioning?
M	Metrics (or More)	Add scope and detail — the size of the team, budget, timeline, or obstacle involved. This is what makes the story feel real, not generic.
A	Action	What did you specifically do? Use "I," not "we," and focus on your decisions and reasoning.
R	Results	What changed because of your action? Quantify it wherever possible — a percentage, dollar figure, time saved, or other concrete outcome.
T	Tie-in	Connect the story back to the role you're interviewing for. Name the skill or approach the story demonstrates, and briefly explain how that same skill would apply here.

Example:

"In my last role, our team was missing service-level targets after a system migration (Situation), affecting response times for around 200 customers a week (Metrics). I led a review of the workflow, identified the two biggest bottlenecks, and worked with IT to fix them within three weeks (Action). Response times improved by 30% and customer complaints dropped significantly the following month (Results). That same ability to diagnose a process problem and drive a fast, cross-functional fix is exactly what I'd bring to this operations role, especially since you mentioned scaling support as the team grows (Tie-in)."

Before your interview: Write out 4-5 SMART stories covering your strongest accomplishments, a conflict/challenge, and a moment of leadership or initiative. Practice them out loud — aim for 60-90 seconds each — so the Tie-in comes naturally rather than feeling tacked on.

Quick check: Does every story end by connecting back to a skill this specific employer needs — not just what you did, but why it matters here?

Researching the Company Before You Walk In

A few focused minutes of research lets you ask sharper questions and show genuine interest, rather than sounding like you could be interviewing anywhere. Before the interview, review:

The company website	mission, products or services, and how they describe their own priorities.
Recent news or press releases	funding, growth, leadership changes, new initiatives, or challenges in the last 6-12 months.
LinkedIn	the company page for recent posts and tone, plus the interviewer's own profile for shared background, mutual connections, or recent activity.
The job description itself	re-read it closely and note the top 3-4 skills or outcomes they emphasize — these should show up in your SMART story Tie-ins.
Reviews or industry commentary	(e.g., Glassdoor, industry news): general sense of culture or reputation, read with a healthy grain of salt.

Turn your research into 2-3 questions you can ask the interviewer, such as:

"I saw you recently [expanded into X / launched Y] — how is that shaping priorities for this team over the next year?"

Quick check: Could you explain, in one or two sentences, why this company specifically — not just this job title — interests you?

Before You Walk In

- Prepared answers to the four core questions above.
- 4-5 SMART stories written out and practiced out loud.
- Company and interviewer research completed, with 2-3 questions ready to ask.
- Your stories and language are consistent with your resume and LinkedIn profile.