

FEARLESS SALARY NEGOTIATION



**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
TO GETTING PAID
WHAT YOU'RE WORTH**

JOSH DOODY

Fearless Salary Negotiation

A step-by-step guide to getting
paid what you're worth

This is a sample chapter from *Fearless Salary Negotiation*—an **Amazon
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SAMPLE

How to ace your next interview

Your résumé is out there, your LinkedIn profile is updated, and now you're just hoping some of your applications will turn into interviews. Maybe you've had your eye on one job you *really* want, and they've finally called you to start the recruiting process.

Now what?

The interview is two opportunities in one. It's an opportunity to pitch yourself and convince a company to hire you. And it's an opportunity for you to determine whether you *really* want to do a particular job for a particular company.

There are four phases to the interview process, and if you're a good fit you may repeat the last two phases several times with a given company:

1. Preparation
2. Pre-interview
3. Interview
4. Post-interview

Here's what you need to do in each one of these phases to ace your next interview.

1. Preparation

When an opportunity is on the way, you'll usually get some kind of heads-up: a message on LinkedIn, an email, a voicemail, or even a text message from a recruiter or hiring manager. Once you get the heads-up, you need to do some prep work before you're ready to talk.

Basic company research

Start by spending some time on the company's website, learning about what they do and looking at advertised job openings and job descriptions. Read their blog. Google them to see if there are any recent press releases or articles about them. Check them out on social media.

So what do you need to know? You need to know what the company does to make money, who their customers are, how big they are, where they're located, basic information like that. If you were to bump into this company at a dinner party and chat for about 10 minutes, this is the stuff you would learn.

You may have just thought, "Duh. Of *course* I would check out their site," and that's a good sign for you. But you would be surprised how rarely job

candidates actually do this, and how much of an impression it can make on an interviewer.

Know which job you're applying for

Read the job description a few times to make sure you get it well enough to answer some basic questions about it and, more importantly, to *ask* some basic questions about it.

Look into other jobs the company is trying to fill

You also need to have a sense of what *other* sorts of jobs they're trying to fill. You can get a good sense of where the company is focused by looking at their "Jobs" or "Careers" page. Are they hiring a lot of sales reps? Engineers? HR folks? Consultants? Managers? If you see any trends like this, take a minute to think about what that tells you about the company itself. Don't read too much into this, but you may be able to identify a need the company has so that you can position yourself in a way that could help the company address that need.

Here's an example:

You notice the company is hiring a lot of sales reps in the western half of the country. That could mean a number of things, but it probably means they're trying to expand geographically and looking to increase top-line revenue. They want to get more customers out west.

Think about how your skillset can help a company like that. If your skillset lends itself well to sales and revenue growth, then you can play that up. If your skillset is in an unrelated area, think about how you can contribute in a way that takes pressure off the company in your area of expertise so they can focus on growing. “I can help you grow” can be just as valuable as “I can help make this other part of the business more autonomous so you can continue focusing more resources on growth.”

While you’re at it, take note of any other jobs you might be good for, just in case this one doesn’t work out. That way you’ll have some backup opportunities in mind if you need them.

Prepare for the dreaded salary question

Finally, you need to be prepared to answer the following two-part question:

“So where are you right now in terms of salary, and what are you looking for if you make this move?”

Just so I don’t bury the lead: It’s best if you *do not* disclose either your current salary or your desired salary during the interview process.

Why you shouldn’t reveal your current or desired salary

Once you’ve completed the interview process, the company will assess your skillset and experience, and determine a range of salaries they’re willing to pay you. The range of salaries goes from “If we could get him on board for

this salary, that would be a great deal for us!” up to “This is the absolute most we can pay him to do this job.”

Your objective with your salary negotiation is to get them as close as possible to the maximum they’re willing to pay. You will do this by giving them as many reasons as possible to pay you more *and* by avoiding giving them any reasons to pay you less.

Sharing either your current salary or your desired salary could possibly give them a reason to pay you less (if either or both of those numbers is below the maximum they’re willing to pay) and is very unlikely to give them reason to pay you more. So, disclosing either your current or desired salary is risky because it will most likely work against you and could cost you money.

How to respond to the dreaded salary question

If you shouldn’t disclose your current or desired salary, then how *should* you respond to the dreaded salary question?

For the “current salary” part of the question, I recommend something like, “I’m not really comfortable sharing that information. I would prefer to focus on the value I can add to this company and not what I’m paid at my current job.”

It’s true that they may do some digging and put together a good educated guess as to what you’re making anyway, but maybe they won’t. If they don’t

know what you're currently making, that makes it more difficult for them to base an offer on your current salary, and that's probably going to mean a higher initial offer for you. It also means that their eventual offer will need to reflect both your market value and the value you'll add to the company without being biased by what you currently make.

The exception is if your current salary is high relative to the market value for your skillset and experience in your industry. In that case, it may help you to tell them what you're currently making to send a signal that you are highly valued at your current company, and that means they will need to work hard to persuade you to join their team by making a very strong offer. But when in doubt, don't share your current salary.

My pat answer to the "what are you looking for" part of the dreaded salary question is, "I want this move to be a big step forward for me in terms of both responsibility and compensation." This answer demonstrates that you want to contribute to the company by taking on additional responsibilities *and* that you want to be paid well for those contributions.

If they continue to press, even after you give them the answer above, you can say something like, "I don't have a specific number in mind, and you know better than I do what value my skillset and experience could bring to your company."

Here is my recommendation for a good answer to the full dreaded salary question:

“I’m not comfortable sharing my current salary. I would prefer to focus on the value I can add to this company rather than what I’m paid at my current job. I don’t have a specific number in mind for a desired salary, and you know better than I do what value my skillset and experience could bring to your company. I want this move to be a big step forward for me in terms of both responsibility and compensation.”

Now you’re prepared to ace the pre-interview.

2. Pre-interview

Depending on the size and structure of the company you’re applying to, the pre-interview may actually be part of the interview itself. I’ve separated the two concepts (pre-interview and interview) because you’ll often have a pre-interview with a recruiter and the actual interview(s) with team members or the hiring manager. But sometimes you’ll just jump straight to talking with team members or the hiring manager; in that case, this section will apply to the interview directly.

The recruiter’s purpose for the pre-interview is to confirm that you’re a good candidate for the job and for the company and subsequently whether they will recommend you for a formal interview. Make sure to build rapport with the recruiter because they’re probably your gatekeeper. If they don’t like you, they may just drop you from the list of candidates and move on to the next one. They could also be your advocate as the interview process moves forward, and they may even find other opportunities for you at the

company if it turns out you're not a good fit for the specific job you've applied for.

The pre-interview is also an opportunity for you to vet the company and the opportunity. Listen carefully and ask good questions so you can decide if you want to continue investing time in the interview process with this particular company.

As for the content of the pre-interview, you've already prepared for this in the preparation step!

Here are some questions the recruiter may ask you during the pre-interview:

- How did you find out about us?
- Why are you interested in working with us?
- How do you see yourself contributing to our company?
- What do you like to do?
- So where are you at now in terms of salary, and what are you looking for if you make this move?

Listen carefully to the questions and give honest answers. Also, try to frame your answers so they apply to this specific company (this won't be a problem because you've already read up on them before this conversation).

Most of the time, you'll also have an opportunity to *ask* questions. This is your chance to figure out if you like the company's mission and vibe, so just ask questions you want answered.

You may learn a lot by asking the recruiter some of these things:

- How long have you been with the company and what is it like working there?
- What can you tell me about the team or group that I would be working with if I get the job?
- What's the company culture like?
- I noticed this trend in your current job openings—what does that say about the company's direction right now?
- Can you tell me about career growth opportunities for this job? What would a long-term career look like at this company?

The “career growth” question may be a good way to learn about the company's salary structure (see the chapter on “How companies manage their salary structures” for more on this topic). If people tend to stay in the role for a long time then the job may be in a wide paygrade, and you might be able to push for a higher salary during the negotiation process. If people only stay in the role for a year or two—true for many entry-level jobs—then the paygrade is probably narrower, and there may be less wiggle room when setting your salary.

Asking about career growth opportunities also shows that you are thinking about a long-term relationship with the company, and that may make them more interested in bringing you on board.

As you're wrapping up, be sure to ask about next steps and how you'll be contacted about them. That way, you can keep an eye on your inbox and spam folder, or you can be ready for their call.

Finally, you might want to ask if you should do anything specific to prepare for a formal interview if you move on to that stage. Most of the time, there won't be anything, but occasionally you'll find out there's a short written skills test or something that you should mentally prepare for.

If the pre-interview went well, and if you still want to pursue the job, your next step will usually be the interview. Here's how to ace the interview phase.

3. Interview

For the most part, an interview is just a conversation between someone who's trying to fill a job (the interviewer), and someone who wants to fill that job (you, in this case). I'm going to call your interviewer "Andy" because this section feels weird if I keep saying "your interviewer" over and over.

We'll start with a general overview of what to be ready for in your interview, and then I'll talk a little about the different venues where you might interview.

Be early

Make sure you show up early so that you're waiting on Andy to begin. Never keep your interviewer waiting—there are few faster ways to make a very bad first impression. Odds are that Andy has just left a meeting, or ended a client call, or scarfed down his lunch so he could make sure you get started on time. If you're late, he'll be frustrated right out of the gate. Frustrated people aren't likely to recommend their frustrators for jobs.

Before the interview begins, make sure you know your interviewer's name if at all possible. (It's "Andy", remember?)

Bring a notebook and your résumé

What this means when you're interviewing in person

Take a notebook and a pen. Don't make a big show of it, but take some notes during your conversation. You may want those notes later, and it looks more professional. (Yes, this is basically just acting. You should still do it.)

Make sure to bring multiple copies of your résumé, printed on good paper with good ink. Assume Andy doesn't already have your résumé, and have it

ready if he needs it. You're already bringing a notebook, so put your résumé in there as well.

What this means when you're interviewing virtually

You should have a notebook even if you're interviewing virtually (on the phone or videoconference). This could be a virtual notebook (like Evernote), but you need to be prepared to take notes and let Andy know when you're writing things down.

Have your résumé ready to send electronically if you need to. You've probably already submitted it online to start the application process, so just make sure you have that version of your résumé handy in case Andy doesn't have it.

Introductions

Most of the time, the interview will begin with a little small talk. "So, you know Tom Smith huh?" or "I see you went to Florida State. I'm a Gator, so hopefully we'll get through this okay." Try to give accurate, concise responses. Don't spend 20 minutes talking about that one time Tom jumped off the hotel balcony into the pool at a sales conference a few years ago. Make sure your answers are genuine, and take the opportunity to relax a little bit so that you're both comfortable during your interview.

The question and answer portion

Once things are rolling, there are many different topics that may be covered during your interview. Every interview is different. Even Andy's interviews may vary from day to day depending on his mood, the particular job he's trying to fill, or whether he's bored and feels like doing something different that day.

Make sure to listen carefully to each question, and then consider your answer before you give it. Don't be afraid to ask for some time to think about a particular question before you answer. Sometimes Andy will ask you a question you didn't anticipate, and you'll be caught off guard. It's okay to say, "Wow, that's a good question. I'm just going to think about this for a few seconds before I answer." Then gather yourself, compose your answer in your head, and deliver your answer to Andy. Most interviewers will appreciate that you took the time to really think about your answer rather than just blurting something out. You can do this two or three times in a single interview, but no more than that.

Let's talk about several potential topics you may encounter in your interview so you have a sense of what to expect and how to shine in each situation.

Questions about your résumé

You should know your résumé cold before you start the interview. Make sure you know which previous jobs you've listed, any skills you've listed, accomplishments, all of it. And be ready to talk about everything on there.

Many interview questions begin with, “I see on your résumé that...” This is because it’s the easiest place for Andy to go for material, and that may be all he knows about you before he meets you. It’s even possible he hasn’t seen your résumé before the interview, so he’ll likely be scanning it to get a quick sense of who you are as you’re introducing yourself.

If you have things on your résumé that you can’t talk about (a tool you used for a class project in college, but don’t really remember anything about), you should strongly consider taking it off your résumé or noting that you have “basic knowledge of...” that thing. It’s not a good sign if Andy asks you specifically about something you have on your résumé and you hesitate and say, “Well, that was a long time ago. I haven’t used that in forever.”

Questions about you personally

These are often questions about hobbies, side projects, or activities listed on your résumé. Many hiring managers want to be sure you’re a good fit for their company and for their team in particular. A good way to figure that out is to learn more about you and, more importantly, to hear you talk about yourself. How you answer questions, your demeanor, how thoughtful or nonchalant you are—all these things give a manager a sense of what it would be like to work with you.

Just relax and answer these questions honestly.

Questions about tools and technology

Andy might ask you about some tools or technology that are in the job description, or that you have listed on your résumé, so be ready to talk about them. Most of the time, you can anticipate these questions by carefully reviewing the job description—there’s often a section near the end that lists required and desired skills. Many of those skills will be technology-specific (“proficient with such and such technology”).

If it’s on your résumé, it’s fair game, so make sure you only list technologies you *actually* have experience with.

Technical questions

Andy may ask you technical questions related to the job itself. You can’t do too much to prepare for these unless you happen to know they’re coming. Just be sure to carefully consider the question and either give your best answer or tell Andy you don’t know. This might be a good opportunity to ask for some time to gather your thoughts.

Most of the time, you’re being asked these questions because your résumé or something you said indicates that you should know the answer. If you have multiple interviews where you’re asked similar technical questions that you can’t answer, you may need to study up on that topic so you’re more prepared next time. In the meantime, consider revising your résumé to avoid similar questions until you’re able to answer them.

Questions about your career goals and aspirations

Be ready to talk about these because they're probably coming. A common one is, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Yes, it's cliché, but it's also a useful question because it will give Andy a sense of how you're thinking about the job. The best way to give a good answer to this question is to think about it ahead of time. Specifically, think about it in the context of the company you're applying to.

Frame your answers so that they define how you'll contribute to the company and team you're applying to. A good structure for an answer to this type of question is, "I would like to learn more about [something] and apply that new knowledge to help improve or grow [some business function] within the company. I would also like to help [the team you're interviewing for] be more proficient at [something else]."

"Why do you want to work here?"

Some companies will just come right out with it, so you should be prepared to answer this question. Fortunately, you've spent time reviewing their website and looking at their job openings, so you know what they do and how you can contribute.

Mention things you like about the company in general, and then talk specifically about how your skillset would be a good fit for the company's mission. This is also a good opportunity to mention some good things you might have heard about the company from friends or acquaintances.

Questions about “a challenging situation”

A common one is, “Tell me about a difficult work situation you’ve encountered, and tell me how you resolved it.”

Interviewers ask this type of question because it can provide some insight into how you think about difficult problems in tough situations. You should have at least one of these stories ready to go.

Questions about special projects or side projects you’ve done

Andy might ask you about special projects you’ve worked on or side projects you’ve done on your own time. Make sure you’re ready to talk about at least one of these in detail. Before the interview, think about your previous special projects in the context of the company you’re interviewing with so that your answer resonates with Andy.

Don’t be caught off guard by curveball questions

Interviewers will occasionally throw you a curveball. Sometimes they do this because they want to see how you react when presented with an uncomfortable situation. Sometimes they’re just bored.

I’ve done this myself, and there’s usually a method to my madness.

One of my most interesting jobs was building a technical support team from scratch. I was hired specifically to help build a local team, and our goal was to grow the team to 25 people as quickly as possible.

The economy was still in rough shape and our company was in a college town. This led to a unique dynamic: We had far more candidates than we could possibly hire, and all of them had strong technical backgrounds (recent engineering and computer science grads, some Masters grads, and the occasional PhD).

I interviewed several people a week and quickly found that I couldn't use their résumés as any sort of real tool because all the candidates were so technically savvy. So I focused almost exclusively on interviewing for "fit"—I wanted to know how they would work with me, with customers, and with our team. This meant asking questions without caring about the content of the answer so much as its formulation and delivery.

One day, I happened to be interviewing in a very small conference room where the candidates couldn't see anything except me and the wall behind me. It was really, really tight. A candidate came in and sat down, and we talked about his background for a few minutes.

Then I threw him a curveball:

"We're in a pretty small office that has a drop ceiling so there are a bunch of tiles and a few lights above our heads right now. Without looking up, can you estimate how many tiles are in the ceiling?"

I didn't care what answer he gave (I had no idea how many tiles were up there). I wanted to see *how* he formulated his answer to a curveball question. This mattered because customers call into Technical Support with questions just like this all the time. "I logged into the site and it didn't work. Can you fix it?" "What do you mean 'didn't work'? What happened?" "It isn't there." "What isn't there? What did you expect to see? Can you tell me exactly what you did to get there? What did you click?"

In this case, the candidate immediately looked up at the ceiling, then back down at me and gave an answer. He hadn't listened closely and ignored the only constraint I gave him ("don't look up"). Not a good sign. We didn't hire him, and moved on to the next candidate on our list.

I know this seems harsh, but tech support calls are a lot like an interview in that tiny little room—customers will tell you all kinds of useless details, but they won't let you see the ceiling and they demand a solution quickly. It may seem like I asked him this question because I *wanted* him to fail, but I really needed to know if he *would* fail in a similar situation with a customer. I didn't hire him because I didn't want to put him in a situation where he might fail in his job. If I had hired him and he had failed, that would've been my fault.

So how do you figure out how many tiles are up there?

There's no one true way to get the answer, but it's important to listen carefully, acknowledge the constraints, and formulate a plan. It can also

help to talk aloud as you think through tricky problems. If you feel comfortable with your interviewer, turn his question into a sort of one-sided discussion so that he can hear you work through the problem. This will give him a good sense of how you think. If you're not comfortable talking aloud while you think through the problem, just tell him you need a moment to think it over.

The wrap-up

Things will usually start winding down when there are a few minutes left. You'll feel the tone shift a little bit from more formal to more friendly. It may feel like the interview is already over, but it's not! There may still be a few great opportunities to make a good impression on Andy.

If you're lucky, Andy will open the door for you by asking whether *you* have any questions for *him*. As a matter of fact, you do!

You can accomplish a couple of things here. First, you can learn more about the company and how this role contributes to it. But you can also leave a good impression on Andy by demonstrating that you were paying attention during your interview, and you came prepared.

You don't want to ask too many questions—two or three is about right. And make sure you're aware of the time—you may have to skip this part if you're already at the end of the allotted time for the interview.

You might want to start with this one: “What does a typical day look like for this role?” Pay close attention to the answer to this question because you could learn a lot that will help you determine whether you really want this job. This is also an opportunity for you to demonstrate genuine interest in the job itself.

Another good question is “What are the greatest challenges for your team right now?” or “What is the greatest challenge for this particular role?”

Both of these questions show that you’re already thinking about the job itself and the answers will help you evaluate whether the job is a good fit for you. It’s possible you’ll hear about the day-to-day and think, “Oh, that sounds terrible.” Or you’ll hear about the challenges and realize you wouldn’t function well in that kind of environment. You’re not asking these questions just to sound like you care—you’re asking them so that you can evaluate whether you want to continue pursuing the job.

Sometimes, you will have already addressed these two questions organically during the interview. That’s okay because we’ve already discussed some questions you might ask a recruiter in the pre-interview section, and those questions are good here too.

If Andy gives you an opportunity to ask questions, take it. But if you really don’t have any questions, don’t just ask something to fill the time. It’s okay to say, “Well, I was going to ask about the day-to-day work, and about challenges your team faces, but we’ve already talked about those, so I’m all

set!” Andy would rather have 10 minutes back than have to answer silly questions that you’re obviously asking just to fill the time, so don’t do that.

Venue-specific recommendations

There are a few common venues for interviews these days. The main ones are:

- Telephone
- In-person
- Virtual (Skype video or Google Hangouts)

Almost everything I said above applies to all three venues, but there are a few unique things to consider for each one.

Telephone

Andy will be the one to call you most of the time, so “be early” means having your phone ringer turned on, and being ready to answer the call at least five minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin. If you’re calling the interviewer, avoid being early and just shoot for “on time”—you don’t want to interrupt Andy’s previous meeting if he’s in one.

You should also consider wearing headphones so that you can put your phone down to free up your hands to take notes or do discrete Googling. If you pause to take notes, tell Andy that’s what you’re doing so he doesn’t think you’ve fallen asleep. “I’m quickly jotting that down.”

If Andy calls you, you'll have his phone number. Don't use it unless he specifically tells you to give him a call. Just forget you have the number. It's generally okay to send a follow-up email to someone who interviews you, but calling them is a little too personal.

In-person

Your appearance matters because it indicates how serious you are about the job. So put a little effort into looking nice, even if you know the company is very casual.

See if you can find out the dress code for the company and dress one notch above it. If you can't find out on your own (from their website or someone you know who works there), ask the recruiter what the company dress code is. If they're casual, you'll dress business casual. If they're business casual, you'll dress business appropriate.

Virtual (Skype video or Google Hangouts)

Treat this like an in-person interview with respect to your appearance. Make sure to set yourself up at a desk or table rather than sitting on your couch with your laptop. (Yes, I've interviewed people who were just slumped on their couch with their laptop open. No, I didn't offer them a job.)

When you take notes, make sure to give Andy a heads-up so he doesn't think you're just looking down at Facebook on your phone.

4. Post-interview

Now you've aced the Interview, but your work isn't done yet—you still have a few more opportunities to stand out in the post-interview.

First, if you happen to have Andy's email address, shoot him a very, very short email thanking him for his time. You'll also want to discretely share your contact information just in case he needs it later. Unless there's something specific he expects you to follow up on, don't ask any new questions or give Andy any action items in this email. This is just a short email to say "Thanks!" and demonstrate professionalism; it shouldn't require a response.

Here's an example.

To: Andy Smith <andy.smith@example.com>

Subject: Josh Doody interview—Thanks for your time!

Hi Andy

I just wanted to say thanks for your time today. It was great to learn more about ACME Corp, and about the Associate Accountant role in particular. ACME Corp sounds like a great company to work for!

Feel free to email or call anytime if you have any follow-up questions.

Thanks again for your time and have a great day!

Josh Doody

josh@example.com

555-555-1234

You'll also want to send an email to the recruiter if that person and Andy are different people. There's one wrinkle here: If you *don't* have Andy's contact information, you'll want to ask the recruiter to thank him for you and let him know that you appreciated his time.

Here's an example.

To: Shawn Jones <shawn.jones@example.com>

Subject: Josh Doody interview—Thanks for your time!

Hi Shawn

Thanks so much for arranging my interview with Andy today. It was great to learn more about ACME Corp, and about the Associate Accountant role in particular. ACME Corp sounds like a great company to work for!

If you talk with him, please thank Andy for me and let him know that I appreciated his time today.

If you need anything else from me, please let me know. Otherwise, I look forward to the next steps in our process!

All the best

Josh Doody
josh@example.com
555-555-1234

How long should you wait to follow up again?

Some companies will let you know if they decide not to move forward with you, and some companies won't. It's difficult to know which you're dealing with, so you may want to send one more follow-up email after about a week to make sure they haven't forgotten about you.

Here's an example.

To: Shawn Jones <shawn.jones@example.com>

Subject: Josh Doody interview—Follow-up and next steps

Hi Shawn

It's been about a week since I talked with Andy, so I wanted to follow up to see if you need anything else from me. I'm also curious if you can give me a sense of our next steps in the process.

Thanks for your time and I hope all is well!

Josh Doody

josh@example.com

555-555-1234

Hopefully, Shawn will reach out and let you know they're ready to schedule your next interview. In that case, you're right back to the "Interview" step, and you'll rinse and repeat that step along with the "Post-interview" step until you either get an offer or they let you know, explicitly or implicitly, that they're not going to move forward with you.

We'll talk about what to do once you get an offer in the next chapter, "How to negotiate your new salary".

Summary

The interview is two opportunities in one. It's an opportunity to pitch yourself and convince a company to hire you, and it's an opportunity for you to determine whether you *really* want to do a particular job for a particular company.

Interviews can be intimidating, but they are also relatively predictable. Most interview processes have four phases—Preparation, Pre-interview, Interview, and Post-interview—and if you prepare for all four phases, you will ace the interview process. You'll know you're doing well when you find yourself repeating the Interview and Post-interview phases multiple times with a company.

I recommend reading through this summary section before each of your interviews, just to make sure you're fully prepared. After each interview, take a few minutes to evaluate it and see if you can do anything differently the next time around.

You'll get better with practice, but this should be enough to help you ace your next interview.

1. Preparation

Do basic company research. You should understand the basics of the company—what they do, how they make money, how big they are.

Know which job you're applying for. Read the description a few times to make sure you understand it well.

Know which *other* jobs the company is trying to fill. You can learn a lot about a company by looking at their job openings. See if you can get a sense of where they're currently focused and how you can contribute to

helping them get there. Take note of other jobs you might be a good fit for, just in case.

Prepare for the dreaded salary question. They'll probably ask you something like, "What are you making now, and what would you like to make if you get the job?" My recommendation is that you do not give them either number.

Here's a good answer that covers both parts of the question without giving them a number, while emphasizing that you believe you can be a valuable asset to the company:

"I'm not comfortable sharing my current salary. I would prefer to focus on the value I can add to this company and not what I'm paid at my current job. I don't have a specific number in mind for a desired salary, and you know better than I do what value my skillset and experience could bring to your company. I want this move to be a big step forward for me in terms of both responsibility and compensation."

2. Pre-interview

The Pre-interview is usually a separate meeting, but will occasionally be part of the Interview itself.

Build rapport with the recruiter. The recruiter may be your advocate both during the process and later if you're interested in other opportunities at the company.

Be ready to answer questions about yourself and why you want to work for the company. You should already be prepared thanks to your research from the Preparation phase.

Have a few questions ready in case you have an opportunity to ask them. This is a good chance to learn about the company, demonstrate your interest, and continue building rapport with the recruiter.

Before you end the conversation, ask what the next steps will be and find out whether you need to do anything to prepare for the Interview.

3. Interview

Be early. Don't keep your interviewer waiting—that's a horrible way to make a first impression.

Bring a notebook and your résumé. Take notes. It's possible your interviewer won't already have your résumé, so be prepared.

Try to relax and be honest during introductions. It's okay to make small talk for a few minutes so that you and your interviewer can get settled in, but don't spend too much time on this.

Come prepared for different types of questions. Here's a partial list of common types of questions you may be asked:

- Questions about your résumé
- Questions about you personally
- Questions about tools and technology
- Technical questions
- Questions about your career goals and aspirations
- “Why do you want to work here?”
- Questions about “a challenging situation”
- Questions about special projects or side projects you’ve done

Don’t be afraid to ask for some time to think about your answers.

This shows “intentionality” and may help you formulate better answers to tricky questions. But don’t do this more than a few times during an interview.

Don’t be caught off guard by curveball questions. If your interviewer asks you something wacky, just gather your thoughts, listen carefully, and formulate the best answer you can. Make sure to account for any constraints that are part of the question.

When things start wrapping up, look for opportunities to ask questions to learn more about the company and the role you’re interviewing for. Here are some good questions you can ask if they haven’t been addressed already:

- “What does a typical day look like for this role?”
- “What are the greatest challenges for your team right now?”

- “What is the greatest challenge for this particular role?”

If those questions have already been covered, see if any of your Pre-interview questions might work.

Only ask questions if you can learn new information from them. If you’ve already covered everything in your interview, it’s okay to say, “I think we actually covered everything already!”

4. Post-interview

Email the interviewer to thank them for their time. This email should be *very* brief and should not ask anything of the interviewer.

Email the recruiter to thank them for arranging the interview. If you don’t have the interviewer’s contact information, you can ask the recruiter to pass along your regards and thank the interviewer for their time. You should also ask the recruiter what the next steps in your interview process will be.

If you haven’t heard anything from the recruiter after a week, follow up with one more email. It’s okay to follow up with an email a week after your last interview if you haven’t heard anything and don’t know what the next steps are. Beyond a week, it’s likely the company has decided not to continue the process and they just didn’t reach out to let you know.

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