Interview Preparation Worksheet for Software Engineers

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Hey there! 👋 I'm Leo, and with my experience as a Software Engineering Manager, I created this worksheet to help you understand the individual interview steps and prepare for your interviews in the best way. This sheet only summarises the steps, if you want to learn more, I've linked my videos to all chapters below.

I hope that after preparing, you get the job you've always dreamed about!

You can make a copy of this sheet if you want to edit it.
Ok, let's get started…

1: Why should you prepare?

🔗 Video: ▶️ Software Engineer Interview: Why preparation is so important

Impact

First, preparing for a job interview allows you to present yourself in the best possible light. It lets you showcase your skills, experiences, and qualifications to the interviewer. You will increase your

> 💪 **confidence,**
> 📈 the **opportunities** you get**,**
> 💵 and your **salary**.

2: What should you prepare?

🔗 Video: ▶️ What to prepare for your next software engineer job interview.

The four most important things

You need to prepare:

1. [Yourself](#)
2. [Your Experience](#)
3. [The Position/Company](#)
4. **Practice everything**

👇You will find all common topics in this working sheet and the links to the videos explaining the sections in more detail

3: 📄 Writing a good CV

🔗 Video: ▶️ How to create a good CV as a Software Engineer

Your CV is your first contact point with your potential employer, and most companies receive hundreds of CVs for every single role. I will explain how you can structure your CV to increase your chances of getting invited to job interviews drastically.

A good CV should include the following:

1. **Contact information**: This should include your name, address, phone number, email address, and current location of residence.
2. **Summary or objective**: A brief statement summarizes your qualifications and highlights your relevant skills and experience.
3. **Work experience:** A list of your past job titles, employers, dates of employment, and a brief description of your responsibilities and accomplishments.
4. **(Optional) Skills:** A list of relevant skills, such as computer programming languages, foreign languages, or certifications.
5. **Education:** A list of your educational degrees, including the name of the institution, the degree earned, and the date of graduation.
6. **Personal projects, awards, or achievements:** A list of any personal projects (as long as they are relevant to the job and you're proud of them), awards, or achievements you've received, such as publications, patents, or professional memberships.
7. **(Optional) References:** The names and contact information of people who can speak to your qualifications and work experience.

Link to great examples:

1. [Beamjobs: Software Engineer Resume Examples](#)
2. [Standout CV: Software Developer CV Examples](#)
3. [Resumeworded: Software Developer Resume Examples](#)

4: Tell me about yourself

🔗 Video: ▶️ How to introduce yourself as a Software Engineer: Tell me about yours…

General Tips

Keep it short! Focus on the most important points and give the interviewer room to start a conversation based on your introduction.

Don't repeat your CV! The interviewer has read your CV and probably has it open on another tab. Just repeating your CV is wasting valuable interview time.

Include something interesting about you. Add something interesting or fun about you to drive the conversation in a direction you want to. Careful! It should still be related to the job you're applying for!

Use the Past, Present, and Future format. Using this format ensures that you have a good structure the interviewer can follow. (Note: You can also switch present and past and start with your most recent job. But end with the value you bring in your future role)

5: Strengths & Weaknesses

🔗 Video: ▶️ Know your strengths and weaknesses! Software Engineer interview

It is important to understand that you're not preparing these questions just to answer them in the interview. ==You should prepare them to understand yourself better and how to grow towards your own goals.== It will help you much more than just getting the job.

Do it in steps

To make finding answers for yourself easier, remember to do it in the following steps:

1. **Brainstorm** (10-15 min; Write everything down without thinking. It's just for you, no one will read it.)
2. **Sort & Filter** (Sort your bullet points by importance and remove the ones you don't need)
3. **Connect to experiences** (Connect the 3-5 most important ones to real experiences you had that *show* this strength. For weaknesses, show that you are aware and already working on them)

6: Recruiter call

🔗 Video: ▶️ The initial chat with a recruiter as a Software Engineer 1/2
🔗 Recruiter Interview: ▶️ Best interview advice for Software Engineers 2/2

The recruiter call is not an interview 🤔 It is a mutual check whether the advertised role fits you. General advice when talking to a recruiter:

General Tips

<mark>The recruiter is on your side.</mark> Be honest. Clearly state what you want and especially what you don't want. The recruiter has a lot of knowledge about the company, and the open positions and has a good understanding of what they are looking for. Don't get hired for the wrong job.

<mark>Use their support.</mark> As already said, they also want to see you succeed so use the support they offer. If you have questions: Ask them!

Know your salary expectations. Knowing your salary expectations will help to set you up for success, and not end up with disappointment after you went through the whole process.

Research your salary expectations

Good websites you can use to research salary bands are:

Glassdoor: Glassdoor Salaries
Payscale: Payscale Research

Indeed: Indeed Salaries
Levels.fyi: Levels.fyi

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the upper and lower level for the job I'm applying for in the specific market?
2. What is my desired salary?
3. What is my walk-away number (The number you won't accept)

Keep in mind that if you're relocating, your cost of living might differ a lot. To make an informed decision if the salary is high or too low, compare your current city's cost of living, with the future one. You can do that here:

Numbeo: Numbeo Cost of Living Comparison (As a nerd, Numbeo is one of my favourite websites 🤩)

Common Recruiter Questions

Questions you should prepare before your recruiter call:

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What are you looking for in your next job?
3. Why did you apply for this position?
4. Why does this position appeal to you?
5. How can you contribute and help us grow?

Almost always recruiters will ask:
6. What are your salary expectations?
7. (Maybe) Are you willing to relocate for this role?
8. When is your earliest start date?
9. Are there any questions that I can answer for you? ⬅️*(Don't forget to prepare your own questions)*

7: Technical Interviews

🔗 Video: ▶️ 5 most common technical interview types and how to prepare

Coding interviews as a software engineer can be the most fun but also the most challenging part of the interview process. Here are resources you can use to practice and ace the interview. *Even if it is a technical interview, don't forget your introduction and questions at the end!*

Interview Types

Take Home challenges

They are usually the easiest because you can do it whenever you want and most of the time don't have an exact time frame.

Don't forget to **write or mention tests, comment on unclear situations,** and **deliver very clean** and readable code. **Be also prepared to discuss** your solution in depth during the next interview.

Technical Q&A

This is where interviewers go through a bit of programming trivia. It can be very open questions like "Why do you like a specific technology?" to very specific questions asking about one detail of language or framework.

Be clear in your answers, ask questions if you don't fully understand, and **say if you don't know**. No one knows everything and it's much better to say that you don't know before trying to squeeze some answer.

Coding challenge

A live coding challenge usually just checks the programming skills you have acquired during your professional experience. Yes, the code you deliver during the interview is important, but don't forget that they are looking for a new colleague. So talk out loud, ask questions, Google if necessary - just **work *with* them.** This is much more important than most people think.

System Design Interview

Once you start interviewing for senior positions, a system design part is almost always included. You need to rely on your technical knowledge, but without a good structure, it is hard to crack those interviews.

One of the best videos explaining a great structure is:

Whiteboarding/LeetCode

Some companies, especially , require demanding whiteboard and leet code problems. If you want to apply there, there is no way around thorough FAANG practice. Plan at least 1-2 months of daily (1-2h) practice.

The best platforms for that are:
1. https://leetcode.com/
2. https://www.interviewcake.com/
3. https://algo.monster/

8: Behavioral Interview

🔗 Video: ▶ Behavioural Interviews for Software Engineers: How to Answer Comm…

Next to your technical competence, **behavioural interviews are the most important part of assessing how experienced you are.** Behavioral interviews influence the hiring decision and salary more than technical interviews (assuming you passed them).

Most Common Questions

You always should prepare
1. Tell me about a time when you solved a complex technical challenge. How did you do that?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under a tight deadline? How did you prioritize?
3. Can you describe a time when you suggested improving something on the project that you were working on?
4. Can you give me an example of feedback you received? (or given)
5. Tell me about a time when someone asked for something impossible. How did you explain and communicate this to them?
6. Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker. How did you resolve the situation?

7. Can you give me an example of a time when you noticed a small problem before it turned into a major problem? How did you prevent that?
8. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you handle this?
9. (More Senior) Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a project. Why did you do that, and how did you approach this situation?
10. (More Senior) Give me an example of an underperforming co-worker. How did you support them and improve the situation?

9: Asking Questions

🔗 Video: ▶️ Questions YOU NEED TO ASK In Your Next Interview

Getting caught up in only answering the interviewer's questions is easy when you're in a job interview. However, **it's equally important to ask questions of your own!**

Asking questions shows that you're engaged in the interview, genuinely interested in the job, and thinking critically about how you would fit into the company.

10: Negotiations

🔗 Video: ▶️ How to Negotiate a Job Offer as Software Engineer. Should You Even …
Read this amazing article: **Ten Rules for Negotiating a Job Offer** (by Haseeb Qureshi)

11: The day before the interview

No video for this one.

The last day before the interview can be nerve-racking, but you're almost there. This day is for you to relax and mentally prepare for your interview.

1. **Don't try to learn new things** the day before the interview; review the basics and only brush up on your skills.
2. **Believe in yourself and your abilities**; if you're feeling nervous, try doing deep breathing exercises or meditation to help calm your nerves.

3. **Prepare everything you need for the interview the night before**, including your resume, portfolio, and other materials the company may have requested.
4. **Be well-rested for the interview**, get a good night's sleep, and avoid staying up late cramming or watching TV. Eat a healthy breakfast in the morning to give you energy.
5. If you're feeling anxious, **consider doing some physical exercises or going for a walk** before the interview to help you focus and feel more energized.
6. **Remember to be yourself** and show the company who you are and what you can bring to the table.

If you are prepared to this day, I'm sure you will do a great job in the interview and get a great job offer.

<mark>**You got this!**</mark> 💪🏻

12: How to present yourself in the interview

🔗 Video: ▶️ 5 Easy Tips to Look and Sound Professional in Video Interviews

How you present yourself will not get you the job, but whatever you can get going for you, you should do. Preparing your setup and making the best out of the interview requires very little effort, but has a big impact.

Be structured and punctual. Showing up on time, being ready to give your best, and being respectful of the interviewer's time is the first indicator that you are reliable.

Reschedule the interview if you don't feel well. If you feel sick, are in a bad mindset, or are distracted with something else - reschedule the interview.

Setup

Camera 📷
Check the **angle**, you want to look straight into the direction of the camera. Avoid looking away from the interviewer. Check that you're in **focus**. **Clean up your background** and avoid using filters or video backgrounds.

Light 💡
Use a soft light in front of you. It's best to use natural light or a lamp in front of you to

illuminate your face evenly. **Avoid harsh light sources behind you.** This will make your face darker and maybe not recognizable anymore. If you wear glasses, avoid reflections. **Seeing your eyes and face clearly is a very important factor to gain trust.**

Audio 🎤
Use the best microphone you can find. Hearing your voice clearly and making it easy to understand you makes the interviewer's life much easier and you can focus on the important things.

Internet 📶
Test your internet connection beforehand. Use your mobile connection if your internet is unstable. Hick-ups during the call will not cost you the job, but increase your stress and waste valuable time.

Dress appropriately 👔
Even if it's a remote interview, your **clothes matter. Show the interviewer that you're taking this seriously.** You don't have to suit up, but an ironed shirt and tidy hair can go a long way.

If you read until here and did all the exercises you did a fantastic job 🥳

You can be proud of yourself. I believe with this preparation worksheet you will be better prepared than most candidates, maximizing your chances of getting the job.

Thank you for using my worksheet, and watching my videos and I hope you will get the job you've always dreamed about. If you want to support my work and make me happy, please comment on your experiences and if my videos helped you on the videos 🙏

If you have specific questions or direct feedback on improving the sheet, reach out and connect with me on LinkedIn.

I wish you all the best,
Leonard