



PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

LEVEL 3 PROJECT



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INTRODUCTION



Presenting yourself in a strong and positive way is an important skill when you are the focus of an interview. Whether it is an opportunity to share your expertise with an unfamiliar audience or communicate your skills and experience when interviewing for a new job, talking about yourself comfortably paves the way for success in many settings.

In this project, you will learn to assess yourself without judgment, to identify and speak about personal strengths, acknowledge areas you plan to develop, and to present yourself well in an interview of any type.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to present yourself well in an interview.

Overview: Determine which type of interview you would like to practice, such as a job or expert interview. Prepare by reviewing your skills and abilities. Complete the resources in the project and give them to your interviewer before your presentation. You determine which member of your club interviews you, but your interviewer must be someone other than your evaluator. In a 5- to 7-minute role-play presentation at a club meeting, practice answering interview questions to promote your skills, abilities, and experience.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 11.



Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

5
EXEMPLARY

4
EXCEL

3
ACCOMPLISHED

2
EMERGING

1
DEVELOPING

Pre-Project					Statement	Post-Project				
5	4	3	2	1	I am comfortable discussing my strengths.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am able to discuss skills I need to develop without being overly critical.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I have a realistic idea of how others perceive me.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I am comfortable displaying my talents, skills, interests, and knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I know how to present myself well.	5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1	I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters.	5	4	3	2	1

COMPETENCIES

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Convey your best qualities in an interview.
- Assess yourself fairly and nonjudgmentally.
- Identify personal strengths and areas for growth.
- Speak about personal strengths and plans for developing new skills and knowledge.

ASSESS YOURSELF FAIRLY

It can be difficult to honestly assess your talents, skills, interests, or knowledge. When you are preparing for an interview of any type, whether it is an opportunity to share your expertise, a new job, admission to a college or university, or joining an organization, it is important to know your strengths and have the ability to express them well.

The first step in preparing to answer questions about yourself is to fairly assess your areas of expertise. There are different categories to consider when developing a personal and professional summary.

SELF-AWARENESS

Build your self-awareness and confidence by fairly assessing your skills and experience. The greater your self-awareness, the more comfortable you are answering questions about yourself. Be impartial when you assess your expertise. Even if you have many skills you wish to develop, focus on the abilities you have now and how those can benefit your interview or an organization.

When you are self-aware, you are able to readily identify your strengths and address how those strengths meet the needs of an organization or audience. Interviewers will often ask questions that require you to imagine yourself in a new or different situation. The more clearly you understand your skills, areas in need of further growth, and your overall personality, the easier it will be for you to respond to situational questions with confidence.



SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Make note of abilities from different areas of your life, both professional and personal, even if they don't seem to apply to your most immediate interview. Include expertise gained from any volunteer experience as well as your educational background. You can narrow the list down when you are done, but taking the time to cover everything will provide comprehensive information.

Identifying your skills and abilities is a very important step to building confidence when you interview. The next step is looking at how you have applied those skills in your work, volunteerism, and life. For instance, you may be an excellent writer. Consider where you have used your skill as a writer to help others or advance your position in an organization. Knowing your skills and how you are able to contribute because of them will help you answer questions in an interview.

AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

Identify skills you want or need to develop. Acknowledging areas where you lack expertise displays self-awareness and willingness to learn. Input from others can help you identify areas for growth. By formulating a plan to build skills or extend learning, you start on a path to increase your skills, extend your knowledge base, and demonstrate your motivation and interests to an interviewer.



Use the Identifying Your Skills Worksheet on page 16 to list your skills and make note of how you applied those skills in any area of your life.

PRESENT YOURSELF WELL

You have taken the time to understand your skills and areas you wish to develop. The next step in achieving success is to present yourself well. There are many external influences that can have an effect on the success of an interview.

RESEARCH

Research the organization where you are interviewing. When your interview is with an individual to share your expertise, learn about the individual's role in the organization and the information that led her to you for your expertise. This will help you refine your responses to her questions and build a positive rapport.

BE PREPARED

When you are prepared for an interview, it shows. An interviewer's positive response often builds during the encounter. This positive response can create a better experience for you as interviewers may take time to explain questions, assist you when you are searching for a word or an example, or simply become more relaxed.

JOB INTERVIEW

When you are interviewing for a job, be sure you have reviewed and can recall the details of the position. Research the size, location, number of students or employees, and what the organization offers. Prepare to address how your skills match the organization's needs and specifically address the duties described in any job posting.

EXPERT INTERVIEW

When your interview is designed to learn about your expertise for academic or other reasons, know the interviewer's goal before you begin. Ask questions when you set the appointment so you have a clear idea of the interviewer's needs. In many settings you can request a list of possible questions in order to prepare.

GIVE YOUR BEST ANSWER

Your interviewer wants to get your very best and most complete answers. The better your preparation, the more likely you are to provide your interviewer with comprehensive information. Remember, you are your best advocate.

CHOOSE YOUR TOPICS

Once you have collected information about the organization and have a clear, organized view of your skills and abilities, determine several areas of your expertise to address during the interview. Take the time to write them down and develop strong examples of how you have applied your skills in previous settings.

Recording how your skills and abilities can enhance the interviewer's organization will contribute to preparing you for the discussion and building your confidence.

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS

Anticipate questions you may be asked and practice answering them. Review practical examples of how you have contributed or would contribute in a given situation in which your skills apply. Practice answering questions with your examples woven into your responses.

Rehearse with friends or family to get feedback on responses and poise. Record yourself on video or practice in front of a mirror.

Appearance

Your appearance matters when you are interviewed. Dress in the way you would like to be perceived. For instance, if you are being interviewed for a job, choose professional clothing.

Demeanor

The way you are perceived is affected by your demeanor. Your demeanor is your outward manner. You can be perfectly dressed for an interview and make a poor impression because of your demeanor.

Focus on behaving in a genuine, respectful way and be yourself. Your interviewer wants to learn about and understand you. Misrepresenting yourself will only lead to problems.

Take your behavioral cues from your interviewer. Make note of her level of formality and match that level or behave in a slightly more formal way.

Body Language

Be aware of your body language and what it communicates to the interviewer. Having the best posture possible shows self-confidence.

Make eye contact with your interviewer. If more than one person is interviewing you, divide your attention evenly among panel members.

Focus on the person asking each question as he or she speaks. When you respond, acknowledge everyone on the panel of interviewers by making eye contact with each while you answer.

HOW TO SPEAK ABOUT YOUR STRENGTHS

An interview begins as soon as you arrive. Even if the first person you meet is not the interviewer, treat him as you would the person you are scheduled to meet. Introduce yourself politely, smile, and speak with confidence.



When you are in an interview, focus on the best way to communicate your strengths. You have only one opportunity to make a first impression, so take a deep breath and gather your thoughts before you enter the interview. Make an effort to repeat the name of the interviewer once you have been properly introduced. Doing so demonstrates your respect and consideration to the individual performing the interview.

RESPOND WITH CONFIDENCE

When asked a question, answer it as directly as possible. Confident responses that are accurate and succinct demonstrate your preparation. Give interviewers an honest assessment of yourself and your skills. Acknowledge your level of expertise and promote yourself.

If asked, offer carefully-considered plans to build your skills or expertise. Share your intentions to take a training course or join a professional organization. Acknowledging areas where your skills can be developed shows self-awareness. Expressing ways you can build those skills demonstrates motivation. Both self-awareness and motivation are important characteristics to possess and demonstrate to the interviewer.

REVIEW AND APPLY

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- How will you convey your best qualities to an interviewer?
- In what way can you use the Identify Your Talents Worksheet to validate your skills?
- What is the value of researching an organization where you are interviewing?
- How will you prepare to speak about your personal strengths and areas of development?

COMPLETE YOUR ASSIGNMENT



Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report.

Review: Return to page 3 to review your assignment.



Organize: Use the Project Checklist on page 11 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

Schedule: Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.



Prepare: Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 13–15 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.

PROJECT CHECKLIST

Prepare for an Interview

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to present yourself well in an interview.

Overview: Determine which type of interview you would like to practice, such as a job or expert interview. Prepare by reviewing your skills and abilities. Complete the resources in the project and give them to your interviewer before your presentation. You determine which member of your club interviews you, but your interviewer must be someone other than your evaluator. In a 5- to 7-minute role-play presentation at a club meeting, practice answering interview questions to promote your skills, abilities, and experience.

This project includes:

- The Identifying Your Skills Worksheet
- The Interviewer Instructions resource
- A 5- to 7-minute role-play interview at a club meeting

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

Review your skills and abilities.

Identify at least two strengths you are confident sharing.

Make note of any skills you would like to develop and formulate a plan for improving those skills.

Complete the Identifying Your Skills Worksheet.

Schedule your interview with your vice president education.

- Plan the role-play activity. Be creative and thorough. For example, create names and descriptions of the organization, open position, and interviewer.

- Prepare interview questions for your interviewer that are specific to the skills you would like to practice during the activity.

- Determine which member of your club will interview you. If possible, select a member who has experience interviewing others. The vice president education is not required to act as the interviewer. Remember, your interviewer must be someone other than your evaluator.

- Send the Interviewer Instructions resource, your interview questions, and any other plans for the activity to your interviewer well in advance of the meeting.

- Review your answers to questions on the Identifying Your Skills Worksheet to prepare for your interview.

- After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your interview, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

EVALUATION FORM

Prepare for an Interview

Member Name _____ Date _____

Evaluator _____ Speech Length: 5 – 7 minutes

Speech Title _____

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is for the member to practice the skills needed to present himself or herself well in an interview.

Notes for the Evaluator

The member completing this project has spent time organizing his or her skills and identifying how those skills can be applied to complete this role-play interview.

About this speech:

- The member designed interview questions for the interviewer that are specific to their skills, abilities, and any other content he or she wants to practice.
- Though the member designed questions, he or she does not know exactly which questions will be asked.
- Look for poise, concise answers to questions, and the ability to recover from ineffective answers.

General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

EVALUATION FORM – Prepare for an Interview

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

5 EXEMPLARY	4 EXCELS	3 ACCOMPLISHED	2 EMERGING	1 DEVELOPING	
Clarity: Spoken language is clear and is easily understood					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
Vocal Variety: Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
Gestures: Uses physical gestures effectively					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
Comfort Level: Appears comfortable with the interviewer					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
Poise: Shows poise when responding to questions					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	
Impromptu Speaking: Formulates answers to questions in a timely manner and is well-spoken					Comment:
5	4	3	2	1	

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Prepare for an Interview

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the interviewer
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the interviewer
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the interviewer
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the interviewer
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the interviewer

Poise

- 5 – Shows exemplary poise when responding to questions
- 4 – Shows a high level of poise when responding to questions
- 3 – Shows poise when responding to questions
- 2 – Shows poise when responding to some questions, but is flustered or uncomfortable with others
- 1 – Is often flustered or uncomfortable when responding to questions

Impromptu Speaking

- 5 – Appears comfortable, seamlessly answering questions with well-formulated responses
- 4 – Appears comfortable answering questions with well-formulated responses
- 3 – Formulates answers to questions in a timely manner and is well-spoken
- 2 – Takes time to formulate answers to questions, but creates awkward pauses at times
- 1 – Creates multiple awkward pauses by hesitating before answering questions and may fail to answer at all

IDENTIFYING YOUR SKILLS WORKSHEET

List personal or professional accomplishments:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List activities you enjoy:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are you interested in studying? Learning about?

What skills would you like to improve or enhance? What new skills would you like to develop?

List some examples of compliments you have received about yourself or your work:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Based on your answers to the question above, list at least three talents or skills you possess:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

How do your skills apply to your current interview?

How will you tailor your answers for this interview?

What specific examples can you provide that illustrate your skills and abilities?

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS

The member completing this project has asked you to act as an interviewer for a role-play activity. During the 5- to 7-minute presentation at a club meeting, the member will practice answering interview questions to promote his or her skills, abilities, and experience.

Prior to the interview, the member will provide you with any additional information. He or she may have developed background information to support the activity, such as the name of the organization, the title of the vacant position, the title of the person conducting the interview, or interview questions. Ensure you have this information prior to the activity. The goal is for the member to make the scenario as realistic as possible in order to practice responding well.

In addition to information from the member, common interview questions are listed below. You are not required to use them. Develop your own unexpected or follow-up questions. In doing so, you better prepare the member to answer unanticipated questions and to strengthen his or her impromptu speaking skills.

The following questions are formatted for a job interview. Modify as you see fit for the member completing the assignment.

Simple

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- How did you hear about this opportunity?
- Why do you want this job?
- What are your greatest professional strengths or achievements?
- Why are you leaving your current company?

Challenging

- What do you consider to be your greatest weakness?
- What's your management style?
- How do you deal with stressful situations?
- What can you tell me about our competitors?
- What do you look for in a job?

Most Challenging

- Tell me about a challenge or conflict you have faced at work and how you dealt with it.
- What can you do for us that someone else cannot?
- How would you deal with an angry customer or client?
- What didn't you like about your last job?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?



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