The 10-Minute Interview Prep Guide

THE RECRUITER GAL



A recruiter-built guide to help you organize what you want to say before the interview begins.

Before you begin...

You Don't Need to Prepare for Every Possible Question.
You need to know what you want the interviewer to understand about you.

After 21 years in recruiting and thousands of interviews, I've seen candidates spend hours trying to predict every question they might be asked. That's usually not the best use of your preparation time.

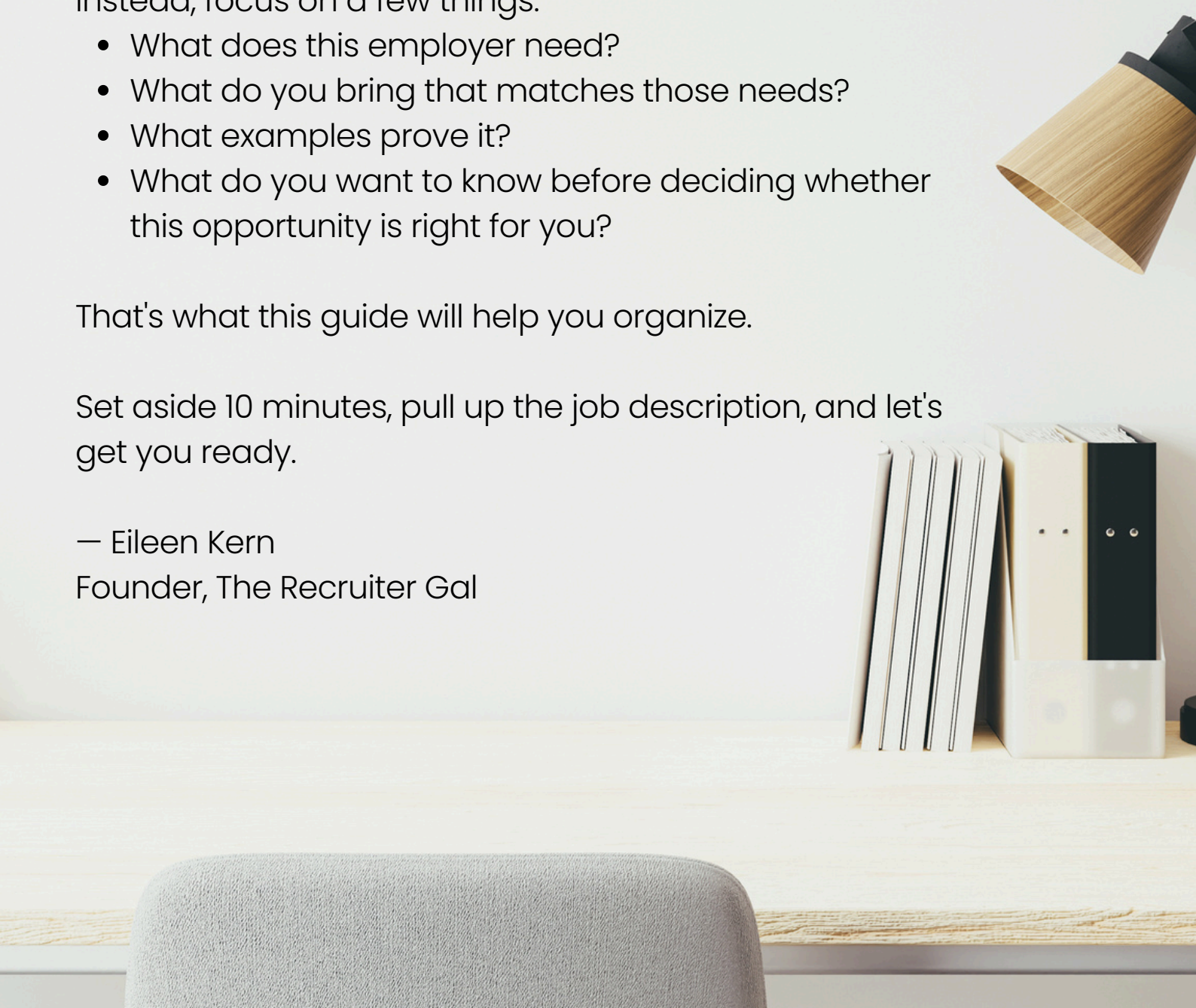
Instead, focus on a few things:

- What does this employer need?
- What do you bring that matches those needs?
- What examples prove it?
- What do you want to know before deciding whether this opportunity is right for you?

That's what this guide will help you organize.

Set aside 10 minutes, pull up the job description, and let's get you ready.

— Eileen Kern
Founder, The Recruiter Gal



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Your 10-Minute Plan

- Minutes 1–2: Understand what they're looking for
- Minutes 3–4: Identify your three selling points
- Minutes 5–7: Choose your strongest examples
- Minute 8: Know your numbers
- Minute 9: Prepare for the question you're worried about
- Minute 10: Choose your questions for them

Minutes 1–2: What Does This Employer Actually Need?

Pull up the job description. Don't reread every word. Look for the responsibilities, skills, and qualifications that appear most important or are mentioned repeatedly.

Identify the top three things they seem to need:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Recruiter's Perspective

Job descriptions can be long. Not every bullet carries equal weight. Your goal is to identify the core reason they're hiring someone and make sure your interview helps them see how your background connects to that need.

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Minutes 3–4: Identify Your Three Selling Points

Now flip the perspective. Based on what they're looking for, what are the three things about your background you most want the interviewer to remember?

1. _____
Why it matters for this role:

2. _____
Why it matters for this role:

3. _____
Why it matters for this role:

Recruiter's Tip

Don't try to communicate everything you've accomplished throughout your career. A strong interview creates a clear picture, not an exhaustive one. If the interviewer remembers only three things about you after the conversation, make sure they're the right three.

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Minutes 5–7: Choose Your Stories
You don't need to memorize dozens of interview answers. Instead, have several strong examples from your experience ready to go. The same example can often be adapted to answer more than one behavioral question.

Think of a strong example for each:

- An accomplishment you're proud of
- What happened, what did you do, and what was the result?
- A difficult problem you solved
- A time you demonstrated leadership or initiative
- A challenge, conflict, or setback you navigated
- Something you learned from a mistake

Keep Your Answers Focused Using the STAR method
A simple framework can keep you from wandering:

- SITUATION — What was happening?
- TASK - What were you tasked with doing?
- ACTION — What did you do?
- RESULT — What happened because of it?

Spend less time setting up the story and more time explaining your actions and results.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Minute 8: Know Your Numbers

Specifics make accomplishments easier to understand. Think about whether you can quantify any of your examples with:

- $ Revenue or cost savings
- % Growth or improvement
- # Customers, employees, projects, or volume
- TIME Hours, days, or turnaround improvements
- SCOPE Team size, territory, budget, or responsibility

Three results I definitely want to mention:

_____

_____

_____

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Minute 9: Prepare for the Question You're Hoping They Don't Ask

Most candidates have one. Maybe it's:

- ☐ Why did you leave your last job?
- ☐ Why are you changing careers?
- ☐ Why were you only there for a short time?
- ☐ Can you explain this employment gap?
- ☐ Why are you interested in taking a step back?
- ☐ What are your salary expectations?
- ☐ Why do you want to leave your current employer?
- ☐ Something else: _____

Write your answer:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Keep It Brief. Factual. Forward-Looking.
You don't need to overexplain or become defensive. Answer the question, provide any necessary context, and bring the conversation back to where you're going next.

Minute 10: What Do You Want to Ask Them?
An interview is a two-way conversation. Choose three questions that will help you better understand the opportunity.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Not sure what to ask?
A few options:

- What would success look like in this position during the first six months?
- What are the biggest challenges the person stepping into this role will need to address?
- How would you describe your management style?
- What do your strongest performers on this team tend to do particularly well?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

Recruiter's Tip
Ask questions because you genuinely want to know the answers, not because you feel like you have to ask something, or think they'll make you sound impressive. An interview isn't just about showing an employer why you're right for the job. It's also your opportunity to decide whether the role, manager, and organization are right for you.

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YOUR FINAL 60-SECOND CHECK

You're Almost Ready. Before the interview starts, make sure you can answer these five questions:

Can I explain why I'm interested in this opportunity?

□ Yes □ No

Do I know the three things I most want them to remember about me?

□ Yes □ No

Do I have examples that demonstrate what I can do?

□ Yes □ No

Can I talk about specific results I've achieved?

□ Yes □ No

Do I have thoughtful questions to ask?

□ Yes □ No

Then stop preparing. You don't need to memorize your answers or rehearse until you sound scripted. Know your experience. Know your examples. Know the value you bring. You got this!

Recruiter's Tip

Go into the interview as your genuine self. Don't try to become the version of yourself you think the employer wants to see or give the answers you think they want to hear. You want to be hired for who you actually are, how you communicate, and what you genuinely bring to the role. The right opportunity should be a good fit for both sides. When you show up authentically, you give both yourself and the employer the chance to determine whether that fit is really there.

A Recruiter in Your Corner

Sometimes knowing what you want to say and knowing how you're actually coming across are two different things.

TRG's Mock Interview + Personalized Feedback gives you the opportunity to practice with an experienced recruiter, receive direct feedback, and strengthen your answers before the interview that actually counts.

PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW →

Keep the Conversation Going

Behind the Recruiting Desk brings practical career advice, recruiter insights, and a behind-the-scenes look at how hiring actually works directly to your inbox.

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