

Interview Anxiety Cheat Sheet



A before, during, and after plan for interview nerves - written for people who are good at the job and shaky in the room where they prove it.

- 1 Read it once the day the interview lands on your calendar.
- 2 Work the Before steps on your own schedule that week.
- 3 Skim the During moves right before you walk in or dial in.

BEFORE

Most of the confidence you'll feel in the room is packed in advance

1 Prep the stories, not the script THE WEEK

Pick five real work stories: a problem you solved, a conflict you handled, a mistake you caught, a result you're proud of, a time you learned something fast. Five stories told naturally cover almost any question; fifty rehearsed answers collapse the first time a question is phrased differently.

2 Outfit, route, then lights out on prep THE NIGHT

Lay out what you'll wear, confirm the route or the meeting link, then stop preparing at an hour you chose in advance. Midnight rehearsal doesn't add polish - it adds adrenaline and takes the sleep that was going to keep you quick tomorrow.

3 Arrive early, cram nothing THE HOUR

Get there with time to spare so rushing never fires the alarm for you - then leave the notes alone. Nothing new sticks in the last hour, and scrambling for facts tells your body something is wrong. Spend one minute on long, slow exhales in the car or a bathroom stall instead; the extended out-breath is your nervous system's brake.



DURING

Your body will show up loud - these three moves put it to work

4 Call the racing heart what it is: ready MINUTE ONE

A pounding heart before a big conversation is extra oxygen being shipped to your brain - the same physiology as excitement. So say "I'm excited" and mean it. It works better than "calm down," because it steers the energy instead of fighting it.

5 The blank-out move ANY QUESTION

"That's a good question - let me think for a second." Say it, take the pause, then answer. It isn't a stumble; it reads as someone who thinks before they speak. Interviewers rate a considered pause higher than a fast answer that circles the point.

6 Slow your first sentence on purpose EVERY ANSWER

Nerves push speech into a sprint, and a sprinting voice convinces you that you're panicking. Deliberately slow the opening sentence of each answer - the rest tends to follow its pace, and the extra beat gives your memory time to fetch the right story.

GOOD TO KNOW

Interviewers walk away remembering **warmth and two or three specifics** - the project you described, the question you asked, whether you felt easy to work with. Your shaky hands and the pause you agonized over barely register. That harsh spotlight on every flicker of nerves runs only in your head; the panel is mostly thinking about their next question.

AFTER

Protect the evening, whatever happened in the room

7 One note, then the planned treat THAT EVENING

Skip the replay spiral - rerunning every answer on a loop trains dread, not skill. Write one line about what you'd sharpen next time ("lead with the result"), then go do the treat you planned before you walked in. The treat marks the effort, not the outcome.

8 Remember who else was auditioning THE WAIT

An interview runs both ways: you were also checking whether the manager listens, whether the team is honest about the hard parts, whether you'd want your weekdays there. A no is one team's guess about fit on one afternoon, not the market value of your work.