

# 10-Step Interview Prep Checklist

## for ML & AI Professionals



### 1. Understand Your “Why”

- ☐ Going into it, be prepared to discuss what some motivating factors are for you to seek a new role.
- ☐ Keep your answer positive and focused on why you’re moving toward, not what you’re leaving.  
A few examples that land well:
  - ☐ You’re familiar with (new company)’s work and want to be a part of it.
  - ☐ You’re looking for more career growth or new challenges.
  - ☐ You want project variety that comes from consulting environments and the ability to make a bigger impact and work on more meaningful projects.
  - ☐ You’re seeking a company that allows you to lead and influence.

### 2. Research (Company)

- ☐ Visit the company’s website and check for online reviews. Go into the interview with an understanding of the services/products they provide and their involvement in the AI & Machine Learning, Data Engineering, and Analytics or whatever space you specialize in.
- ☐ Think about how your experience connects to the types of problems the company solves for. Familiarize yourself with the tools and platforms they use. This is almost always listed in the job description (Snowflake, AWS, Azure, CI/CD, MLOps, etc.).
- ☐ Look up recent case studies, white papers, and blogs to understand how the company applies these in real-world contexts.

### 3. Review Technical Fundamentals

- ☐ Refresh your knowledge of the main technologies and frameworks mentioned in the job posting. Write down what you’ve worked with as well as what you haven’t worked with but would be interested in up-skilling.
- ☐ Interviewers often assess not just what you’ve done, but how well you understand why you made certain technical decisions. Be ready to discuss trade-offs, scalability, performance tuning, or design choices for your solutions.

### 4. Know the Role

- ☐ Revisit the job description and make sure you can speak to how your skills align. Think of previous project work you’ve been involved in, and write down those examples so they are fresh in your memory.
  - ☐ Note the required skills vs. the nice-to-have skills
- ☐ Be ready to explain your approach and thought process clearly by using the STAR/T format.

## 5. Use the STAR/T Format

A common struggle in interviewing is failing to tell a complete story, or having to backtrack in a story to fill in gaps. This leads to a poor interview experience for both the candidate and the interviewing team. What can you do to avoid this?

An area that I see many candidates struggle with is being a good storyteller. For example, when they're asked open-ended, scenario-based questions such as "give an example of" or "tell me about a time when," use the STAR format to make sure you give a complete, structured answer:

### STAR stands for: Situation, Task, Action, Result (and Takeaway if relevant)

- **Situation:** Briefly set the scene and provide the necessary background for your story. This helps the interviewer understand the context.
- **Task:** Explain your specific responsibility or the goal you needed to achieve within that situation.
- **Action:** Detail the steps you took to address the situation or complete the task. Focus on what you did using "I" instead of "we," and highlight the skills you used.
- **Result:** Describe the outcome of your actions and the positive impact you made. Quantify the results if possible.
- **Takeaway (optional):** Conclude by explaining what you learned from the experience and how it relates to the job you're applying for.

### How to prepare STAR answers

- Write down your most recent examples ahead of time and practice saying them out loud. Think about projects that had a large impact, what you're most proud of in your career, what projects have you learned the most from, and why?
- Think of 2-3 of your best examples that show how you solved problems and delivered results.
- This helps keep these examples fresh in your mind and often jogs your memory of specific details you might otherwise forget.
- When answering, it is critical to focus on **your personal contributions**, what you did, the decisions you made, and the impact you had. Remember, you're being interviewed as an individual, not the team you worked with, so make sure your answers highlight your unique role and value.

### Basic ML Engineering STAR Example

#### SITUATION:

A client's churn prediction model worked in notebooks but couldn't scale or integrate with production systems.

#### TASK:

I needed to design and deploy a production-ready ML solution that automated retraining and integrated with their AWS and Snowflake environments.

#### ACTION

I containerized the model with Docker, used MLflow for tracking, and built a Spark ETL pipeline for data ingestion. I deployed it through AWS SageMaker and set up monitoring for drift and performance.

#### RESULT:

Retraining time dropped from two days to four hours, inference latency fell by 60%, and churn prediction accuracy improved by 15%, driving measurable revenue gains.

#### TAKEAWAY:

I learned that strong model performance is only part of the equation, and that building scalable, maintainable infrastructure is what turns a good model into real business impact.

Answering like this will give your answer a structure, provide clarity on context, highlight the impact, and demonstrate how your past behavior indicates future performance. One STAR story can address multiple behavioral questions, so try to keep these responses 3-5 minutes in length to allow for any follow-up questions.

## 6. Be Honest About What You Know (This is Incredibly Important!)

- ☐ If you don't know the answer to something or feel uncertain, say so. This builds trust and credibility versus giving a confidently wrong answer (classic AI move, right?).
- ☐ It's okay to say you have a good guess and ask if they'd like to hear it.
- ☐ Saying "I don't know" is actually better than guessing. The interviewers would rather spend time talking about areas you have experience in, not topics you're unfamiliar with.

## 7. Show Collaboration and Communication Skills

- ☐ Have examples ready of how you've worked well with teams, stakeholders, or clients. Do you have a GitHub? Do you share your projects on LinkedIn? Do you have anything that you can show them of your skills versus just telling them?
- ☐ Remember to mention any awards or distinctions you have won.

## 8. Prepare a Few Questions

- ☐ It's critical that you show a genuine interest in the role and company by having some questions prepared for the end of the interview.
  - ☐ Ask about the current team
  - ☐ What keeps them excited about working there
  - ☐ The types of projects you'd get to work on
  - ☐ Growth opportunities
  - ☐ How success is measured in the role

## 9. Practice

- ☐ Yes, you should practice interviewing. Don't have a person readily available? No problem!
- ☐ You can upload a job description to ChatGPT with your resume, and it will generate specific interview questions based on the description.
  - ☐ Use different prompts to ask technical questions—scenario-based or behavioral-based—whatever you think will be most beneficial.

## 10. Day-of Prep

- ☐ Select and prepare a professional outfit that you are comfortable in the day before the interview. If you're unsure of what to wear, dressing too formally is better than dressing too casually.
- ☐ Test your audio and video, find a quiet spot, and join the interview a few minutes early. Be confident in your preparation that you will have a successful interview!

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