What Is a Job Simulation & How Can You Prepare for One?

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Job seekers, take note — the next time you head in for an interview, it may not be the typical question-and-answer format you're used to. More and more companies are implementing creative interview strategies that go beyond the surface and dig deep into your skills, personality and behavior. Case in point: the job simulation.

A job simulation is any task that is designed to give you an accurate preview of what the role you are interviewing for entails on a day-to-day basis. Job simulations are becoming increasingly popular among employers, as they help companies more accurately predict whether or not candidates would be successful if hired.

"For us, it's all about being efficient and making the right hire, the first time," says Jeff Rizzo, Founder & CEO of product review sites RIZKNOWS and The Slumber Yard, who implements job simulations in his companies' hiring processes. "We've been burned in the past when we hired candidates that interviewed well, but weren't nearly skilled enough when it came time to actually produce work. We are looking for fit, of course, but the simulator serves as our final test of acumen."

Job Simulation Formats

Job simulations can take many different forms, such as in-person assignments, online exams, take-home assignments, role-playing,

presentations or even virtual simulations. Chris Chancey, founder of [Amplio Recruiting](#), described some of the more common job simulation formats in depth:

- **In-basket exercises:** "Here, the candidate is required to complete certain tasks such as [responding to emails](#), taking phone calls and handling grievances within a set amount of time. Often, these exercises are best for administrative and managerial positions."

- **Situational judgment tests:** "The candidate is presented with a work-related scenario and is asked to use their judgment to provide a solution that can amicably resolve the situation at hand. These tests lend themselves well to positions such as [customer service](#) and supervisory roles."

- **Work sample tests: "**These, typically hands-on tests, require the candidate to complete certain activities that are similar to actual tasks they would perform on the job. Examples include writing code, take-home assignments, collaborating with others to design a website or completing an onsite construction task."

- **Role-playing: "**Role-playing is probably the most common of all job simulation formats. These exercises help to evaluate a candidate's ability to navigate interpersonal challenges in a work environment."

This is far from a complete list, though. Because job simulations mimic the tasks of actual jobs, the possibilities are virtually endless.

[How to Prepare for a Job Interview Exam or Assignment](#)

Tips for Acing a Job Simulation

So, what should you do if you find out a job simulation will be a part of your job interview? First things first, you'll want to do some research into what exactly it might entail. Turn to Glassdoor's [interview reviews](#) section

and look up the company you'll be interviewing with to see if any other previous candidates have described what the interview process involves.

You can also "research types of simulation exercises by talking to employees in similar roles or work environments [or] reviewing industry journals," points out Diana Brush, Associate Director or Employer Relations at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. And of course, you can ask the recruiter to provide some insight — odds are, they will be happy to share some basic information.

Once you know a bit more about what to expect, it's time to brush up on your abilities.

"Review your knowledge, skills and abilities for the position being assessed to identify your strengths and weaknesses," then "practice and then demonstrate the task/issue that will be assessed," Brush says. "Record yourself performing the task and ask co-workers to observe and provide constructive feedback."

No matter your specific field — software engineering, consulting, sales, finance, etc. — a quick online search should reveal plenty of practice assessments.

And finally, try to relax.

"Candidates should always come off as calm and collected," Rizzo says. "[Simulations] aren't always about judging skill — most of the time they're looking to measure intangibles such as critical thinking ability and emotional intelligence."

[50 Most Common Interview Questions](#)

Job Simulations: Beneficial for Employers & Candidates Alike

If you've never faced one before, a job simulation can be intimidating. But just remember: job simulations aren't just for the employer's benefit — they're also for yours.

"Job simulations enable self-selection where, after being immersed in the actual job environment, a candidate can determine whether the job is [the right fit](#) earlier on in the process," Chancey says. "Candidates who stick to the process and are hired are more likely to stay with the company longer, report higher levels of job satisfaction and demonstrate greater productivity."