

# Electrical Apprenticeship: Interview Preparation

Everything in the application process leads up to the Committee interview. This is where you really get to shine and impress the IBEW-NECA representatives. Based on your interview, you'll receive a ranking score which determines if you may be offered an electrical apprenticeship.

This brochure walks you through what to expect from the interview, and some ways you may prepare. We'll offer general interview tips; insight into the character qualities and experiences that are being explored; and how to contact us with any specific questions or needs otherwise.

## General Guidance

The Committee who interviews apprentice candidates is made up of area representatives of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). The Committee members are highly experienced electrical professionals, with IBEW representing the union workers and NECA representing the union employers.

There are usually six (6) Committee members on the interview team. They will take turns asking you questions, which should last a total of 10-20 minutes. Interviews may be conducted in-person at the electrical training center – or, as it's common practice nowadays, your meeting may be facilitated remotely through an online video conference call.

In the sections below, we'll discuss what the Committee is looking for in the interview. Broadly speaking, they are able to assess if you have the background, fundamental skills, and other characteristics necessary to be successful as part of the IBEW-NECA community.

Before we get to the kinds of questions being asked, here are some basic tips to keep in mind:

1. **First impressions.** The Committee is invested in the future of the electrical industry and the well-being of its union members. They are interested in candidates who understand the value of the apprenticeship opportunity. Simple ways to make a good impression are to:
  - a. Arrive early to your interview, so you're on time and can gather your thoughts.
  - b. Be well-groomed and dress appropriately with "professional casual" attire.
  - c. Display calm confidence through good posture, eye contact, and avoiding nervous gestures like crossing your arms or tapping your fingers.
  - d. Communicate effectively by speaking clearly, with a friendly demeanor; and loudly enough for the Committee to hear and understand you.
2. **Be positive and specific.** Since your interview is brief, the Committee will want you to do most of the talking. When you're asked a question, always stay focused on the relevant topic, offering a clear and comprehensive answer. If you need, ask for clarification about any question. While keeping your responses succinct and to the point, you may also convey a team-oriented attitude of collaboration and camaraderie.

3. **Practice your responses.** You may ask your friends or family to help you with practice interviews, preferably in a group setting. This will allow you to get your thoughts organized, your answers polished, and to become more comfortable with real-time, interpersonal communication. If you don't have anyone to "interview roleplay" with, practicing in front of a mirror and writing out your answers may be helpful alternatives.
4. **Get a good night's rest.** The interview is a necessary step in the application process, but it's not meant to be stressful. It's simply an occasion for you to introduce yourself and speak with the IBEW-NECA team. Please find a way to relax during the evening before your interview, so you may be healthy, alert, and best prepared for your meeting.

## Your Background

Overall, the Committee is looking for apprentice candidates who will be a good fit for the electrical industry. Specifically, we're looking for career-minded individuals who exhibit exceptional aptitude, integrity, motivation, and work ethic.

As you prepare for your interview, think about your background and experience – that is, your home life and employment; school and community projects; sports, hobbies, or extracurricular activities. What situations stand out in your memory that you're particularly proud of; where you learned an important lesson; or you had to confront and overcome a real challenge?

Having these memories and stories in mind will help you to answer the interview questions. Here are some qualities and attributes that the Committee is taking into consideration:

- **Educational training**, especially math & science proficiency.
- **Physical and mechanical skills**, such as the use of hand and power tools, which can be applied in the construction trades.
- **Previous work experience** which demonstrates good character, attitude, judgment, cooperation, reliability, punctuality, and an ability to perform under pressure.
- **Knowledge of electrical work** which expresses your interest and enthusiasm to establish a dignified, lifelong career in the electrical industry with IBEW-NECA.

It's absolutely essential to understand your "why" in applying for an electrical apprenticeship. You should be able to articulate clearly why you want to build a career in the electrical industry. Why do you want to be an electrician? Why is being a union electrical worker important to you? What makes you a good candidate?

You should arrive to the interview with an understanding of what electrical workers do, the environments they work in, and the details and expectations of the apprenticeship training program. The Committee is looking for team players and future leaders who have a strong desire and commitment to serve within the IBEW-NECA workforce.

## Interview Questions

In addition to communicating why you're interested in electrical work, the interview questions invite you to explain how you've handled situations in your life experiences. Your responses give the Committee an idea for how you collaborate with others as a team; along with your ability to be self-motivated, responsible, and dependable. The Committee wants to learn how your personal history will translate into success on the job and in the apprenticeship program.

The interview process, in part, highlights your being able to understand thoughtful, verbal instructions (in the form of questions); along with your being able to communicate clearly and effectively with complete, understandable responses. Though the questions asked of you will cover a range of behavioral concepts, your answers should reflect how you handled a particular situation and what the outcome was.

As mentioned, interview practice will improve your ability to give concise, purposeful answers. Regardless of the questions, your responses should be focused, to the point, and meaningful. The Committee will ask you to describe some situation you were involved with; what you did in each situation; and how things turned out. Therefore, when replying to any question, you may always follow a familiar format: ST + A = R.

### **Situation/Task + Action = Result**

All of your responses may use this simple "STAR" format – these three elements (situation or task, action, and result) – to communicate in an efficient, effective manner.

1. **Situation or Task.** Briefly describe the event or task, taking care to provide enough detail for the Committee to understand, but without wasting your limited interview time. Usually, the situation can be explained in a sentence or two.
2. **Action.** Describe what actions you took, what you did or said, to complete the task or resolve the situation. If it was a team effort, keep the focus on what you did effectively and how you worked with others. Use first-person action verbs, such as "I discussed..." or "I called..." and so on.
3. **Result.** Lastly, say how it all turned out. Give a one- or two-sentence description for the outcome of your efforts. If you learned something from the situation, you can say so.

For your interview practice, think about how you would respond to different kinds of behavioral questions. For example, what is something you've built that you're really proud of? Describe a time when you made a mistake, and how did you handle it? Tell us about a time when you had a conflict with a coworker, and how you resolved it? Tell us about a time when you had a certain job to do, but you didn't know how? Describe a time when someone got hurt, and what did you do? As you practice your interview skills, please remember to use the "STAR" structure when formulating your answers.

When all is said and done, the Committee will assess your candidacy on a range of topics:

- Your specific, clearly defined interest in the electrical apprenticeship.
- Your capacity to develop and choose among solutions to a problem.
- Your being able to plan and organize tasks in meeting deadlines.
- Being able to maintain good relations with others in a work setting.
- Being able to work smoothly with others as a team to complete tasks.
- Being motivated, responsible, and dependable without close supervision.
- How you're able to remain calm in an accident or emergency situation.

## **More Information**

As with all occupational interviews, the conversation is a two-way street. The Committee is learning more about you, so that you might become part of a long history and international community of electrical workers. Also, during the interview, you might find an occasion to emphasize your interest in the union, its opportunities, and long-term benefits.

A few last details, as you prepare for this final phase of your application:

1. **Special accommodations.** If you have a physical or mental impairment that you believe may affect your ability to complete the interview – that is, if you wish to request an accommodation to ensure that the interview accurately measures your skills and abilities – please [notify the training director](#). We are able to provide special accommodations, but only if you inform us well in advance of the interview date.
2. **IBEW Local 551 Women's Committee.** The Women's Committee is made up of Journeywomen and women apprentices from our local union. They are not part of the Interview Committee; however, they are available to offer support and answer any questions you may have about the application process and apprenticeship program. For more information, please see their [online brochure](#).
3. **After your interview.** You will receive a letter from the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC), letting you know of your ranking score. Depending on when you applied and interviewed, it may be several months before apprenticeship offers are made. In general, new apprentices are accepted into our training program in May and June of each year.



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