

Network Engineer interview checklist

Network engineer hiring usually runs as a screening call, one or two technical rounds with senior network engineers that include subnetting, routing and switching scenarios and sometimes a lab or packet tracer task, and a final managerial and HR discussion.

10 QUESTIONS TO PRACTISE OUT LOUD

1. Explain the OSI model and say at which layers switches, routers and firewalls work.

What it checks: Whether you understand the layered model well enough to use it for troubleshooting, not just recite the seven layer names.

2. Tell me about a network outage at a branch or office that you resolved.

What it checks: How you handle pressure, use evidence and communicate with users and the business during a network outage.

3. Are you comfortable with 24x7 shifts and being on call for network incidents?

What it checks: Whether you accept the shift and on-call reality of network operations roles and can work reliably in them.

4. Which traffic on a corporate network uses TCP and which uses UDP, and why?

What it checks: Whether you understand transport protocols in terms of real applications and why the choice affects troubleshooting and firewall rules.

5. Describe a change you made that caused an unexpected outage. How did you handle it?

What it checks: Honesty, and whether you follow change discipline on live networks, with reviewed commands, rollback plans and lessons applied afterwards.

6. Which networking certifications do you hold or plan to take, and why?

What it checks: Whether you are investing in structured learning that fits the role and the company's equipment and career path.

7. How many usable hosts does a /26 subnet have, and what are the subnets of 192.168.10.0/24 at /26?

What it checks: Whether you can subnet quickly and accurately in your head, a basic skill tested in almost every network interview.

8. Tell me about a time you had to escalate a problem with an ISP or vendor.

What it checks: Whether you can work with external providers firmly and with evidence to get problems fixed quickly.

9. What salary do you expect as a network engineer, and what is your notice period?

What it checks: Whether your expectation is reasonable and explained by your experience, and whether your joining date fits their needs.

10. What is a VLAN, and how do devices in different VLANs communicate?

What it checks: Whether you understand layer 2 segmentation and how inter-VLAN routing is actually configured in an office network.

TIPS FOR THIS INTERVIEW

- Practise subnetting until you can work out network, broadcast and host ranges for any prefix in under a minute without a calculator.
- Know the show and debug commands you would use for VLANs, spanning tree, OSPF, BGP, NAT and VPNs on the platforms listed on your resume.
- Build a small lab in Packet Tracer, GNS3 or EVE-NG and break things on purpose, so you can describe real symptoms and fixes.
- Prepare one outage story and one migration or change story, with timeline, root cause and what you changed in your process afterwards.

THE DAY BEFORE

- ☐ Confirm the time, venue or video link and the interviewer's name
- ☐ Plan your route and leave time for traffic, or test your camera, microphone and internet
- ☐ Keep copies of your resume, ID proof, certificates and photographs in a folder
- ☐ Iron your clothes and charge your phone and laptop
- ☐ Do one final run-through of your introduction, then stop and rest

ON THE DAY

- ☐ Arrive 15 minutes early, or log in 5–10 minutes early for a video call
- ☐ Greet everyone politely, including the receptionist or coordinator
- ☐ Listen to the full question, pause, then answer in a clear structure
- ☐ Take brief notes of names and key points
- ☐ Ask your prepared questions and confirm the next steps before you leave