Google Leadership Principles Interview Questions

Getting hired at Google is not easy. However, the low acceptance rate doesn't deter applicants from applying — in fact, the tech titan receives approximately 3 million applications every year but has an acceptance rate of only 0.67%. So, it goes without saying — the competition is fierce! How you prepare for your interview plays a crucial role in getting your foot in the door.

Luckily, former recruiters and top HR bosses at Google have spoken about the general attributes that Google considers to pick the best from the hiring pool. When it comes to software engineering roles, in addition to Googlyness, technical knowledge, and general cognitive ability, Google places a lot of emphasis on leadership. Regardless of the role you are applying for, you'll need to crack the Google leadership principles questions.

Let's dive in and take a closer look at the Google leadership principle questions and how you can ace such Google interview questions. In this article, you'll learn more about:

- Google Leadership Principles: What Does It Mean for a Software Engineer?
- What to Expect During Google Leadership Principles Interview
- Common Questions You Can Expect During a Google Leadership Principles Interview
- How to Prepare and Answer Google Leadership Principles Questions
- Mistakes to Avoid While Answering Google Leadership Principles Questions
- FAQs About Google Leadership Principles Interview

Google Leadership Principles: What Does It Mean for a Software Engineer?

Regardless of the industry you are in, strong leadership traits rank as one of the most desirable qualities a potential employer looks for. A leader can influence a group and help maximize organizational efficiency. Google also places a lot of emphasis on leadership skills to achieve better business outcomes. Hiring teams at Google consider "emergent leadership" a key competency for technical and product managerial roles.

To find the common traits of effective leaders, Google launched Project Oxygen in 2008. Subsequently, it conducted employee surveys to take the feedback from Googlers about their manager. Over the years, the following behavioral skill set has emerged as Google Leadership Principles:

1. You are a good coach
2. You can empower a team without micromanaging
3. You create an inclusive team environment and show concern for success and well-being
4. You are productive and results-oriented
5. You are a good communicator
6. You support career development and discuss performance
7. You have a clear vision/strategy for the team
8. You possess key technical skills to help the team
9. You can collaborate across Google
10. You are a strong decision-maker

As a software engineer, who is not gunning for a managerial role, you might think — *why should I care about leadership principles?*

Don't make that mistake! At Google, these leadership traits are not tied to any formal designations. As a Googler, everyone, including those hired as **a software engineer or a software developer,** is expected to step into leadership roles and mentor others. In fact, according to senior recruiters at Google, leadership is simply considered as "being able to influence others and inspire followership for your ideas."

Google is known for conducting in-depth interviews. Google interview questions are a combination of testing your technical skills, your behavioral skills, and your leadership skills. That's why you can expect the interviewer to test your leadership traits through a series of Google leadership principle questions. But unlike behavioral questions aimed at understanding whether you are the right fit for the culture at Google, these questions are geared towards understanding how you act, collaborate, and respond to challenges.

What to Expect During Google Leadership Principles Interviews

For Google, their leadership principles are not merely inspirational. There is an extremely high standard of leadership expectations from everyone interviewing with Google.

Whether you are a fresh college graduate or an experienced **coding engineer**, here's what you can expect to be evaluated on as part of Google leadership principles questions:

- Communication and leadership style: Google expects you to be humble, authentic, and a master of technical skills. But it is impossible to know the answers to every question or be the smartest person in the room. That's why communication plays a very crucial role when you are a Googler. The recruiter expects you to demonstrate your communication skills along with examples from your life to show that you can pass on and receive information from others efficiently.
- Navigating through ambiguous and complex situations: As a software engineer at Google, you'll need to solve complex problems through your skills. During the interview process, Google technical interview questions test your technical knowledge through coding challenges. But in real life, working on such problems can often put you in ambiguous situations. In such circumstances, your ability to look at the bigger picture and identify various stakeholders' needs is crucial.

  For instance, you may be asked to assist another team with a project, and that may impact the work you need to do for your team. The recruiter expects you to show how you'll balance these requests without compromising the needs of your team.
- Working with your team: Google has a highly collaborative environment. As a software developer, you won't be working in silos. Naturally, Google is looking for a team player. The recruiter expects to hear about your experiences of working successfully within a team, even when your opinions conflicted with others. You should be able to explain how you can handle such situations with understanding and care.
- Vision: Every aspiring Googler is looking to make a difference in the world. So you should be able to talk about changing the status quo through out-of-the-box thinking. You can even talk about a particular problem you want to address once you start working at Google.
- Delivering results: Having a vision is not enough. You also need to be able to translate your vision into concrete goals. You'll need to show your project management skills. The recruiter is interested to know how you identify goals, develop a plan, delegate tasks to team members, and monitor the execution. You should show that you can strike a balance between setting the right processes in action and getting the results.

Common Questions You Can Expect During a Google Leadership Principles Interview

Google interview questions follow a two-pronged approach:

- The interviewer introduces a scenario and poses a question to the candidate. Typically, these are the scenarios you would deal with when working at Google.
- Based on your initial response, the interviewer will ask you a range of follow-up questions to get more crucial insights into your thought process.

The ultimate goal of Google leadership principle questions is to understand a candidate's thought process and decision-making abilities. The questions are designed in a manner that your technical skills alone are not sufficient to come up with an answer.

Based on the experiences of past candidates and recruiters, here's a list of the Top 30 Google leadership principle questions. Please remember that this is only an indicative list to give you a sense of what to expect.

1. What do you think are the qualities of a good leader?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to interact with difficult stakeholders.
3. What is the biggest challenge that you have faced in your current role?
4. Tell me about a time when you faced a technical and interpersonal challenge in your current role.
5. Tell me about a time when you worked with a super performer in your team, and how did you handle it?
6. What do you do when someone you are managing doesn't deliver as promised?
7. Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with your team members during a live project, and how did you handle it?
8. Talk to me about a situation when you took on responsibilities that went beyond what's expected from you.
9. Tell me about a time when you had to convince someone to follow your strategy.
10. Tell me about a time when you started a new project but failed miserably, and how did you handle the failure?
11. Tell me about a time when you had to take a crucial decision under tremendous pressure.
12. When was the last time you made a wrong decision?
13. Talk to me about an unpopular decision that you made at work.

14. Describe a situation when you had to work with limited resources.
15. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager, and you managed to convince them.
16. Tell me about a time you worked with a poor performer.
17. What process do you follow to prioritize requests from different stakeholders?
18. Give me an example of an XFN conflict and how you resolved it.
19. Tell me about a time when you were unable to meet your own expectations on a project.
20. Talk to me about a time when you led by example.
21. How do you make sure that you delegate tasks effectively?
22. How do you prioritize tasks?
23. What do you do to make sure that your team sticks to a schedule?
24. What do you enjoy about managing others?
25. When was the last time you faced an unexpected setback in your current role?
26. When was the last time you thought outside the box to solve a problem?
27. As a leader, how do you get others to follow your ideas?
28. Tell me about a time when you took up a leadership role even though you were not expected to.
29. What do you do to gain commitment from your team?
30. What is your weakness as a leader?

How to Prepare for and Answer Google Leadership Principles Questions

Recruiters at Google follow a structured interviewing technique for hiring candidates — they ask the same questions to all the candidates and grade them on the same scale. They listen to your responses to assess whether you have the necessary attributes that Google is looking for. The follow-up questions are also designed to help the interviewer look for the attributes that the response to the initial question did not cover.

If you want to stand out from the other candidates, you should be prepared to back up your answers with solid examples that show how you have handled complex situations. While answering Google interview questions, you should be able to clearly outline your thought process and decision-making process.

Always remember that technical ability alone is not enough to impress the recruiters — you also need to showcase your problem-solving abilities. As many questions are deliberately left open-ended, it is best to follow a storyteller's approach and breakdown every response in the following manner:

1. Highlight the difficulty you faced
2. Talk about the options you considered
3. Focus on what you did
4. Talk about the results

Recruiters are also interested in knowing how you have improved as a leader over time. So don't forget to share your learnings to show your actual growth.

Avoid Making These Mistakes While Answering Google Leadership Principles Questions

Let's face it — Google interview questions can be nerve-wracking, and even the best candidate might falter. Here are some common mistakes to avoid during the interview:

- **Giving "too much" background information:** Keep your responses brief and sharp to keep the interviewer engaged. Don't forget that communication is a key attribute of Google's leadership principles. If you cannot communicate your answers correctly, you won't be able to impress the recruiter.
- **Giving vague or generic answers:** Always include specific examples to make your answers interesting. Interviewers are only trying to look for one thing: *are you someone they would want to work with at Google?* So make sure you can convince them that you will be a great hire.
- **Not asking for clarifications:** If you are not sure about the question, always seek clarification. This is immensely helpful — there's nothing more embarrassing than giving the wrong answer because you did not understand the question.
- **Sounding too scripted:** Nobody likes talking to a bot. So make sure that you don't mug up the answers.
- **Not recognizing the contribution of others:** Don't make every response only about yourself. While your accomplishments and learnings are undoubtedly important, acknowledging the efforts of your peers/mentors can get you brownie points. Remember that humility is a key trait of all successful leaders!
- **Not being comfortable in your skin:** Your strongest selling point is you. So go ahead and show the recruiter the best version of yourself.

FAQs About Google Leadership Principles Interview

Question 1: How do hiring managers at Google score the responses to Google leadership principles questions?

Typically, interviewers use a grading rubric to compare responses to the same question from multiple applicants. They often refer to a document that illustrates what a poor, mixed, good, and excellent answer should sound like. Most interviewers also take detailed notes during the interview to help the independent hiring committees review the assessment.

Question 2: What is the best way to prepare for Google leadership interviews?

Write down the responses and practice the delivery out loud. This can be especially helpful when your communication skills are a bit rusty. You can also schedule mock interview sessions with your peers or SMEs. Interview Kickstart offers you the unique opportunity to have mock interviews with actual hiring managers at Google. Read on to learn more.

Want to Nail Your Next Interview at Google?

Unfortunately, even the best software engineers who crack the **tech interview** fail during the leadership interview round because they don't prepare enough.

But that's no reason to be disappointed — the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.

If you need a hand to get you interview-ready, *register for our webinar* today. Our instructors are hiring managers, hiring committee members, and technical leads from FAANG companies. They bring a unique hiring manager perspective, which is immensely helpful while preparing for interviews. Our bootcamps follow a structured interview preparation course that has helped thousands of software engineers land their dream jobs.

We also have an extensive network of candidates working in top tech companies that can help you connect with the right companies or learn more about your domain.

Register for our free webinar on How to Nail Your Next Tech Interview.