THE POLICE CAREER ADVANCEMENT PLAYBOOK

7 practical ways to prepare for your next opportunity.

YOUR NEXT MOVE STARTS NOW.

Not every police agency provides a clear roadmap for career advancement. You may want to promote, pursue a specialty assignment, or take on more responsibility—but the next step isn't always obvious.

After 20 years in law enforcement, including service on promotional interview panels, I've learned that being good at your job and being ready for your next opportunity aren't always the same thing.

That's why I created this Playbook. It offers seven practical ways to prepare, communicate your experience, and build credibility.

YOU CAN'T CONTROL WHEN THE DOOR OPENS.
YOU CAN CONTROL HOW YOU PREPARE.

PREPARE BEFORE IT OPENS.

Three moves that make your experience count.

01 BUILD A LIBRARY OF REAL EXPERIENCES.

Don’t wait for an announcement to remember what you’ve done. Capture the situation, your actions, the result, and what you learned. Small moments of initiative often become your strongest examples later.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

You helped coordinate a difficult investigation. What problem did you solve, who did you bring together, and what changed?

02 KNOW YOUR STORY. NOT A SCRIPT.

Strong candidates sound prepared, not memorized. Learn the details of your experiences well enough to adapt to different questions. Practice telling the same true story from different angles instead of memorizing one answer.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Take one real incident. Explain it as an example of initiative, teamwork, then judgment—without changing the facts.

03 PREPARE FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY.

Understand what the next position actually demands—not just how to pass the interview. Talk with people doing the job and learn what success looks like on a difficult day.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE

Testing for sergeant? Think beyond the call: supervision, officer development, accountability, and the whole team.

MAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE COUNT.

Four ways to show what you bring to the next role.

04 REPLACE ADJECTIVES WITH EVIDENCE.

Don’t just say “hardworking.” Prove your contribution. Give the panel a specific reason to remember you.

TRY THIS: Explain a recurring problem you noticed and what you actually did to improve it.

05 PRACTICE HOW YOU COMMUNICATE.

Listen. Pause. Answer the question. A thoughtful pause beats a rushed answer you have to walk back.

TRY THIS: Record a 60-second answer. Did you answer the question and explain your role?

06 EXPLAIN WHY YOU DECIDED.

Explain why you made the call, not just how it ended. Share what information shaped your judgment.

TRY THIS: Describe a tough choice and the information you considered—not just the outcome.

07 WANT THE WORK. NOT JUST THE TITLE.

Understand the new responsibility and how you’ll contribute. Be ready to discuss its difficult parts, too.

TRY THIS: Explain how you’d support the team, handle new duties, and keep learning.

YOU DON’T CONTROL WHEN THE NEXT DOOR OPENS.

YOU CAN CONTROL HOW READY YOU ARE.

You now have seven ways to prepare. Ready to look at your own career and decide what to work on next?

OPTION 01 / SELF-GUIDED

CAREER READINESS AUDIT $49

Assess your readiness, reputation, and development gaps. Build a practical 30-day plan.

EXPLORE THE $49 AUDIT →

OPTION 02 / PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE

1:1 CAREER STRATEGY SESSION

Talk through your goals and next move with a working police lieutenant.

EXPLORE 1:1 COACHING →

The free guide teaches practical preparation. The $49 Audit evaluates your own readiness. Coaching provides individualized guidance. Selection processes vary by agency; no resource guarantees selection.