

MASTER OF FINANCE INTERVIEW GUIDE



CAREER
DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE



Introduction

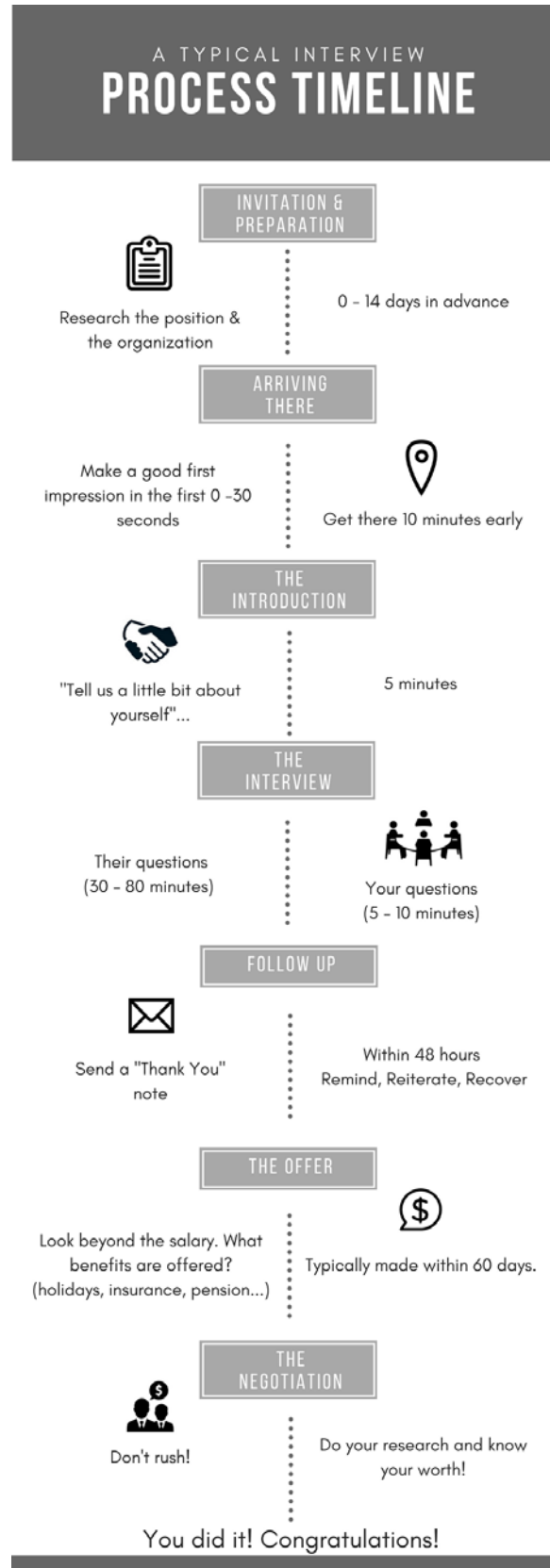
A job interview is a form of social interaction; a conversation between a job candidate and a potential employer, with specific goals on each side. It's a two-way process; the interviewer aims to verify that the candidate's qualifications, experience, character and style meet the job needs and the culture of the organization, while the candidate evaluates the position, the organization and the people with whom he/she will be working.

Impressive resumes, cover letters, degrees, qualifications and experience can get job candidates shortlisted for an interview. However, only those who align themselves with the organization and convince the interviewers that they can successfully do the job, end up being offered the position. Such success, however, is unlikely to be achieved without preparation.

Preparing thoroughly turns an interview into an opportunity to confidently describe yourself and your accomplishments in a way that substantiates your career goals and aspirations. It can be the culmination of all your career planning efforts.

The objective of the MFIN Interview Guide is to help you become a more confident, relaxed and successful interviewee by:

- Understanding different types of interviews.
- Understanding and effectively answering different types of interview questions.
- Identifying your unique marketability and exploiting your strategic advantage.
- Establishing professional presence in an interview.
- Understanding the general do's and don'ts of interviewing.





Common Interview Formats

There are many different formats of interviews. These are a common few.

Structured Interview: The interviewer poses a series of selected questions. Companies adopt structured interviews in an attempt to maintain equity and fairness for all job candidates, by asking the same set of questions in every interview. A structured interview can feature behavioral, competency or scenario based questions in addition to commonly asked questions.

Unstructured Interview: A more casual, less formal interview format. The interviewer could start from a list of structured questions and then pick up on elements of what you say as the basis for further questions. Current events in the news and topical issues sometimes influence the questions, especially if they relate to the industry.

Panel Interview: Consists of three or more interviewers who usually take turns asking questions. This format is becoming more widespread, especially at the later interview stage, post initial screening. Panel interviews are efficient for employers because they create more internal support for the successful candidate. Panel interviews are typically planned and constructed carefully and moderated to give all the members on the panel a turn to ask their questions.

Technical Interview/Demo: Usually features questions that are specific to the technical requirements of the job. The focus is on hard skills such as financial software tools, proficiency in a foreign language or industry related certificates, training and credentials. Technical questions also test the level up to which you've mastered relevant technical terms and concepts covered in your degree coursework. You may be asked to present a "demo", i.e. produce a piece of work that demonstrates your technical proficiency or sit through a specific technical test or exercise.

Informal Interview: Sometimes referred to as a dining interview. Hiring managers or recruiters invite candidates out for a chat over a cup of coffee, or a meal. Instead of calling it an interview, the conversation may be framed as an exploratory or informal meeting. In many cases, the purpose is to find out if you're a good cultural fit for their team. You want to prepare for an informal interview just as any other, but be ready to switch from "interview mode" into "social/casual mode." You'll be expected to be sociable and personable, and to be able to lead and contribute to conversations, even if they aren't about your qualifications. This is an interview that is more about personality and cultural fit than what is on your resume.

Other Interview Formats

Telephone/Video Interview: Interviews are not always carried out in person. It is becoming increasingly common for candidates to be asked to interview over the phone or via video conferencing.

- Follow the same approach in preparing for the interview as you would if it was in person.
- Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable and suitable environment. Cut out all distractions and put all electronics on silent mode.
- If you're interviewing via video conference, make sure your background is non-distracting, neat and gives a positive first impression.
- Sit at a desk or a table, don't lie down or slouch, even if it's a telephone interview.
- Test the program/equipment beforehand; have someone call you and rehearse with them.
- Dress as you would for an in-person interview to get you in the right frame of mind.
- Ensure your phone/laptop is fully charged (or better yet, use a landline).
- Have your resume, "study notes", notepad and your questions ready in front of you.



- Have a glass of water nearby, in case your mouth gets dry.
- Smile and use hand gestures, it helps convey enthusiasm even through the phone.
- Use earphones or a headset. Speaker mode might cause reverberations or an echo.
- Some companies have their own video conferencing platform. They will typically send you an email with instructions to install/log in to their system.
- Technical issues may still arise. Recruiters who conduct a lot of video conference/phone interviews are aware that sometimes this is simply unavoidable. Make sure to handle the situation gracefully with a smile and remain calm and friendly while you troubleshoot.



Networking Interview: Sometimes referred to as an informational interview; this is a chance to expand your network or gather information about a company/industry. Informational interviewing involves speaking to people who have experience in the area you want to learn about; occupational or industry information or insights about a specific employer. It is not formal interviewing for a job, but rather a way to:

- Introduce yourself to key contacts.
 - Market yourself for potential opportunities.
 - Gather information that can help you make informed career choices.
- Learn more about the companies and/or the key players in your industry of interest.
 - Write more effective cover letters and resumes.
 - Gain networking and communication skills.
 - Make valuable industry contacts.
 - Be better prepared for future job interviews.
 - Gain more confidence.

Series of Interviews with One Organization:

The job interview process can sometimes be lengthy and multi-tiered, especially at executive or mid-management job levels. Companies aim to improve the efficiency and reliability of their selection process, so they adopt a more expansive multiple interview process. The first stage is typically a screening interview which often takes place on the phone, followed by one or more in-person formal interviews, which can be one-on-one or panel interviews, and a final, possibly informal or dining interview.

- Remain positive, motivated, interested and patient throughout the process.
- Learn as much as you can about the style and format of each interview.
- Know your various audiences. In addition to the hiring manager, you may meet with other managers, employees and stakeholders.
- Be consistent and thorough in your answers, even if you are asked the same question more than once. Have plenty of accomplishment stories and examples prepared. Don't worry about telling the most relevant ones repeatedly, though you should adapt them and diversify your answers with other stories when possible.
- Don't wear the same outfit or suit.
- Progressing to the next interview in and of itself is a good sign. Nevertheless, reflect on each interview and evaluate your performance afterwards.



Interview Questions: What to Expect and How to Handle the Unexpected

No matter what type of interview, your preparation should not differ much, because interviewers tend to use a mix of different types of questions including common, factual, technical, behavioral based, competency based and scenario based questions.

Common Questions: These questions are used to determine your interests, motivations, goals, strengths, weaknesses and potential. The aim is to get to know you better and gain a sense of your ability to connect with people as well as decide if you are a match to the job and the company. You need to have well prepared answers that include sufficient information to prove your suitability for the position. Here are some of the top ones:

- **Tell me about yourself:** This question helps get the conversation started. Provide the interviewer with a high-level overview of who you are and how you are qualified for the position including your education, past relevant work and life experiences. Add in something unique about yourself to help them remember you.
- **What is your weakness?** Interviewers ask this question because your answer will tell them a lot about how you broach the less successful aspects of your experience. Make sure to:
 - ✓ Avoid sharing a weakness that is actually a desirable quality in an employee, such as “I care too much about my work” or “I tend to be a perfectionist”. Such answers can alienate the interviewers and are likely to make them think that you are trying to out-smart them or hide something.
 - ✓ Never say that you “can’t think of any”. It will give the interviewer the impression that you are unprepared or lacking self-awareness.
 - ✓ Select a weakness that is not a requirement of the position. Use the **W.A.R** formula (Weakness, Actions, and Results) to articulate your answer and demonstrate how you have improved.



See “Devise and Practise Your Five Sound Bites” on page 10 to perfect an answer to this question.

- **What are your strengths?** Keeping the position in mind, state your pertinent strengths and provide examples. This is not the time to be modest or to shy away from saying positive things about yourself. This is where you should “sell” yourself to the potential employer. You can do it in a way that feels comfortable and authentic if you prepare and rehearse in advance.



Prove it! Don’t just list a bunch of skills or strengths. They are ineffective and unconvincing without solid corroborating examples to substantiate and demonstrate them.

THE W.A.R. FORMULA



Note: The recruiter generally cares more about your actions and results than your actual weakness.



- **What do you know about our company?**
- **Why do you want to work for us?**
- **Why should we hire you?**

These very important questions have a significant impact on your interview results as they determine if you are sincerely interested in the opportunity and will make a good “fit” at the organization. Your answers should reflect your deep understanding of the job requirements and your knowledge of the organization. Try to align your skills, values and style with the job needs and the company’s culture, mission and values.



See “Know the Organization” on page 9 to develop an answer to these questions.

- **What are your salary expectations?**
You need to do research to be able to answer this question well. Don’t just throw out a figure without having an idea of what salary is suitable for the position, industry or for someone with your qualifications. When asked, you should give a range rather than a specific amount. Here are some suggested resources to help with your research:
 - ✓ Use the Government of Canada’s “[Explore Careers by Wages](#)” website.
 - ✓ Check if the Career Development Centre has information from past Grad Surveys to get a better idea about what your peers are earning.
 - ✓ Use websites that provide this information to get a better idea about the industry benchmark, like [Glassdoor](#), [indeed](#), [Vault](#) and [Payscale](#).
 - ✓ Reach out to your professional network, mentors, advisors, friends and family for additional information.



Don’t misrepresent your current compensation. It may ruin your chance to get the job offer. Companies verify what you say with your references.

Behaviour Descriptive Questions (BDI): BDI questions are a big part of most job interviews. They allow you to share specific examples of how you have handled situations in the past. They usually focus on the use of soft skills that are harder to measure in an interview. This form of interview question is based on the premise that your future behavior is most accurately predicted by your past behavior in similar situations. These questions typically sound like this:

- “Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a subordinate who was underperforming.”
- “Can you give me an example of a time when you had to deal with cross-cultural issues at work?”

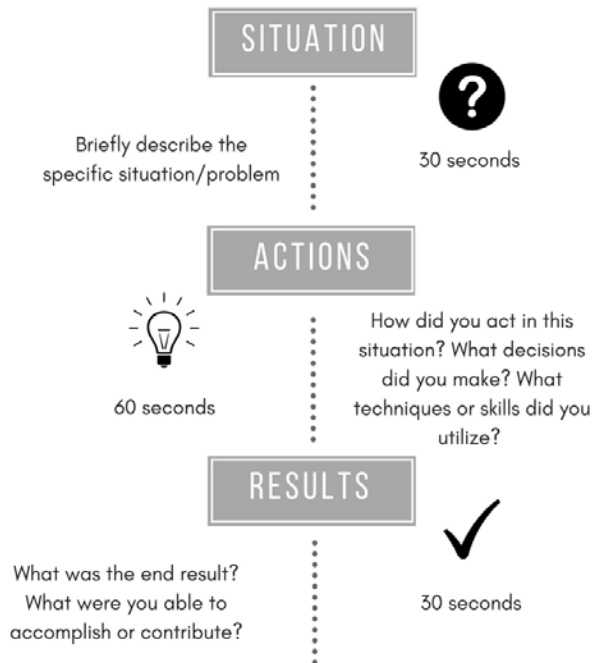
BDI questions can be **competency-based**, i.e. focused on the skills, knowledge and attitude that give you the ability to successfully handle challenges and problematic situations specific to the position being discussed. For example:

- “Tell me about a time when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.” (Adaptability / Flexibility)
- “Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.” (Decision Making / Judgment)

While the scope of BDI questions can vary, the best way to answer them is using the **S.A.R.** formula (**S**ituation, **A**ctions, **R**esults). You need to tell a specific story, typically about 2 minutes long, building on an incident or situation that actually happened in your past. Stress the importance of the situation to the organization at the time, and emphasize the actions you took and the favorable results that followed your actions. This is the time to share your accomplishments and success stories.



THE S.A.R. FORMULA



When preparing your answers for BDI questions, brainstorm experiences from the following areas of your life:



- Paid Work
- Unpaid work (volunteer)
- Education
- Extracurricular activities
- Interests and leisure

Focusing on these areas will help you provide examples of diverse experience, show work/life balance and expand on information from your resume and cover letter.

Situational or Scenario-based Questions:

These questions tend to be hypothetical and aim to simulate situations, dilemmas or case studies that are likely to arise on the job. For example:

- "How would you handle a situation involving an angry customer and one of your team members?"
- "You disagree with the way your supervisor says to handle a problem. What would you do?"

The aim is to get you to think through the posed problem and explain what you would

do under the circumstances. The answer is easier if you have experienced similar situations in the past, but if that's not the case then you need to rely on your knowledge, style, values, logical thinking and problem-solving and analytical skills. The key to successfully answering situational questions is to give an honest, straightforward description of what you would do in the situation described.

Factual Questions: Used to confirm specific details, such as information listed on your resume or basic job requirements. For example, "Are you legally eligible to work in Canada?" or "How long did you stay at your last job?"

Illegal and Unethical Questions: Such questions, intentionally or unintentionally, do get asked during interviews. If you are asked a question you feel is inappropriate respond with "I'm not sure of the relevance of the question to the role. Can you tell me how it relates specifically to the job?" This includes questions about subjects such as age, ethnicity, race, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, family status and others.

How to Handle Unexpected Questions:

Despite your best efforts in preparing, questions that you have not anticipated may still arise at your interview. These can come in two forms. One, covering a required skill or competency not listed in the job description. Or two, an "off the wall" question such as "If you were an animal, what animal would you be? Why?" Take your time, reflect on your answer and be strategic in your response. It is important to remember to remain consistent with your message and the main selling points that you emphasized throughout the interview. If you do this, you will likely impress the interviewer and succeed in your answer. For the "off the wall" questions, keep in mind that what is most important is probably not the actual answer you give, but how well you maintain your composure and how clearly you explain your reasoning under pressure. Don't be afraid to unleash a little creativity or humor in the process too!



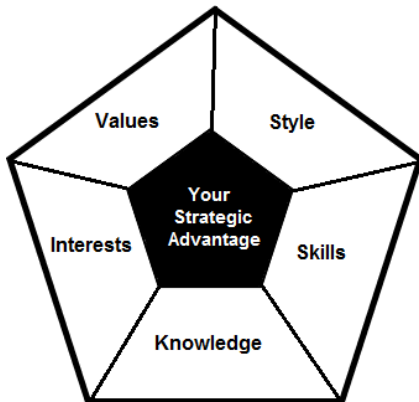
10 Steps to Interview Success

We have put together 10 steps that are conducive to achieving thorough and comprehensive interview preparation.



We chose to put remarkable emphasis on “Step 1: Know Yourself” because knowing yourself better enables you to gain focus and perspective of your ideal career/position.

Step 1: Know Yourself: Take the time to define where your style, skills, knowledge, interests and values intersect because this is where your greatest point of marketability lies. This is your **strategic advantage*** that will not only make you stand out as a candidate for the job of your dreams, but also integrate **what you do** with **who you are**.



a. **Your Personal Style:** What characteristics and attributes do you bring to the workplace that govern how you work and your interaction with others? Ask yourself:

- ✓ How do I usually approach a problem or an opportunity?
- ✓ How do I usually communicate my ideas?
- ✓ What kind of manager am I?
- ✓ How do I like to be managed?
- ✓ What role or tasks usually fall to me in a team setting?
- ✓ How am I hard-wired?
- ✓ What am I like at work?



Exercise: Take the time to write a short phrase describing yourself in each of the areas that appear below. Don't necessarily limit your choices to the examples provided.

DESCRIBE YOUR
PERSONAL STYLE

Your personal style is the summation of your distinguishing qualities.

THINKING STYLE

01

ARE YOU...?

Realistic, Visionary,
 Strategic, Analytical,
 Logical, Perceptive,
 Practical, Concrete, etc.

TEAM STYLE

..... 02

ARE YOU A...?

Detail Monitor, Innovator,
 Implementer,
 Communicator,
 Relationship Caretaker,
 Organizer, Leader, etc.

MANAGEMENT STYLE

03

ARE YOU...?

Fair-minded,
 Authoritative, Caring,
 Democratic, Non-
 directive, etc.

SUBORDINATE STYLE

..... 04

ARE YOU...?

Self-Reliant, Consultative,
 Task Implementer,
 Questioner, Loyal Follower,
 etc.

COMMUNICATION

05

ARE YOU...?

Enthusiastic, Cautious,
 Comprehensive,
 Persuasive, Inspiring,
 Reserved,
 Straightforward, etc.

WORK STYLE

..... 06

ARE YOU...?

Highly Organized,
 Spontaneous, Meticulous,
 Flexible, Process-
 Oriented, Team
 Player, Independent,
 Results-Focused, Decisive,
 Perfectionist, etc.

RESILIENCE

07

ARE YOU...?

A Worrier, Relaxed,
 Critical, Accepting,
 Optimistic, Pessimistic,
 Driven, Non-Competitive,
 etc.

*Adapted from *It's your Move (2nd ed.)* by Marge Watters



b. Your Key Skills: Your skill set comprises the professional credentials (BBA, CFA, MFIN) and technical skills (Excel, SPSS, Bloomberg) that you have acquired through formal education and training. They also include the functional skills (see tip below) that result from your practical experience.



Sample Functional Skills by Occupation

CFO	Vision, Strategy, Marketing, Operations, Finance, etc.
Financial Planner	Forecasting, Tax Optimization, Negotiations/Influencing, Client Relations, Business Development, Analysis and Research, etc.
Portfolio Manager	Communications, Analytical Skills, Competitiveness, Decisiveness, Tenacity, Independence etc.
Finance Analyst	Presentation, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Forecasting, Communication, Analysis, etc.
Business Development Specialist	Product Development, Pricing, Distribution, Promotion, Consumer Behaviours, etc.



Many skill sets cross over several industries. Focus on your transferable skills as that gives you an independent identity based on your capabilities, rather than the occupation or the title you hold or the organization you work for.



Exercise: Create a list of your professional credentials, technical skills, functional skills and any other soft skills you have acquired in your studies, work, volunteer or life experience.

c. Your Knowledge Base: Everything you have learned about everything! Your understanding of various industries, markets, cultures, companies, products, geographical regions, laws, regulations, etc. Pay special attention to compiling your accomplishments. Ask yourself:

- ✓ What industries do I know well?
- ✓ What organizations, in addition to my previous employers, do I know well?
- ✓ What products do I understand in depth?
- ✓ What markets or geographical areas am I knowledgeable of?

- ✓ In which types of transactions or strategic initiatives do I have experience?

d. Your Interests: Your interests can be a significant component of your strategic advantage. If your work allows you to be involved with something that fascinates you, you are fortunate. Think about the ideas, issues or philosophies that interest and appeal to you. Ask yourself:

- ✓ Who are my role models and heroes?
- ✓ What social, cultural, political or business issues do I find most compelling?
- ✓ What reading topics interest me the most?
- ✓ How do I like to spend my time outside work?
- ✓ What do I read or watch on TV?
- ✓ What subject would I study if I returned to school?



Don't ignore your talents, hobbies or athletic endeavors. They help you stand out and be remembered. They are great icebreakers at interviews.

e. Your Values: Knowing your values means that you are in control of your personal brand. Values give your job purpose, and are usually directly proportional to the effort, commitment and motivation that you bring to your work. If you are in a position that continually requires you to go against your values, or principles, you will be unhappy and often stressed out. So take the time to reflect on what's important to you and what motivates you. Values change over the course of our lives, so it's important to reassess yours from time to time and be prepared to take the appropriate action when your values are tested.



Exercise: Identify and prioritize your core professional values using this link: mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_85.htm



Use TypeFocus: TypeFocus is an online personality and career assessment tool that will help you understand yourself better, explore your interests, values, skills and identify your preferences based on your natural strengths. The assessment provides you with a list of the careers/occupations in which people with similar profiles report success and satisfaction.

You can access TypeFocus through the Asper Career Portal, under Resources. Don't expect miraculous revelations! Expect a helpful, comprehensive analysis the complements your own work.

Step 2: Know The Organization: Research as much as you can about the organization; its history, size, services, products, culture, management and stakeholders by:

- Exploring its website and its social media outlets
- Using LinkedIn to connect to key people and acquaintances that work there
- Googling the company under "news"
- Looking up the company's reviews and ratings on websites like GlassDoor or Vault

Build a comprehensive answer to the question "Why do you want to work for us", by answering the following questions:

- What are the organization's mission and values? Do they align with yours?
- What are the organization's products and/or services and how are they marketed? Do you have experience with any of these products or markets?
- What is its history?
- What is the size of the organization?
- Are there multiple offices? Where are they located? Do you see yourself moving to any of these locations, if you were asked to, in the future?
- What is the organization's reputation?
- How is the organization structured and who are the key personnel?
- What is the company culture? Is it a culture in which you can be comfortable and successful?
- Has the organization been in the news lately?

- Have there been any major internal/external changes lately? Expansions, layoffs, mergers, etc.
- Is the organization involved in any causes or community/charity projects?



A lot of the information on the internet, especially in terms of reviews/feedback left by current or past employees, can be subjective and indicative of their own experiences. Use your common sense and professional judgment.

Step 3: Know The Job: Although you have studied the job posting before you sent your application, it is now time to review and study it again. The job posting is the road map to your interview preparation. It is your key to the competencies, credentials and experience the interviewers are seeking in the successful applicant. Every section of the job posting is equally important and contains hints of what is most important to the employer.



Exercise: Analyze the job posting: extract a list of the required skills and combine it with the functional skills normally associated with this job. Then answer the following questions:

- Are some (or all) of these skills in your skillset?
- Does the job align with your values?
- Does this sound like a job you would be happy doing?
- Why do you want this job?



If the job posting doesn't say much about the required skills and competencies, search for the job on the *National Occupational Classification* (NOC) website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immig/rate/skilled/noc.asp>

Step 4: Set Your Targets: Give your interview focus and direction by determining whether the job/organization's needs and your career targets align. Make sure to point out how they do to the interviewers because it will show that your future career goals involve their organization. Be prepared to tell them where you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years. Be ready to answer questions about your location preferences, salary requirements, etc.



Step 5: Devise and Practice Your Five Sound Bites: Now that you have completed your self-assessment, studied the organization, analyzed the job posting and set your targets, it is time to tie everything together into your *five sound bites** script. This is a mental checklist of the key points you want to cover when you talk about yourself at the interview.

THE FIVE
SOUND BITES

A five-part script that answers the questions most frequently asked at job interviews.

<p>CAPSULE PROFILE 01</p> <p>30 SECONDS</p> <p>A conversational version of the profile statement on your resume. Rehearse it until it flows naturally from memory.</p> <p>CAREER REVIEW & ACCOMPLISHMENTS 03</p> <p>2-3 MINUTES</p> <p>Qualify and substantiate what you have said in the first two sound bites. Walk briefly through the chapters of the last few years of your career in chronological order. Mention dates, where you worked, position titles, roles, accomplishments and reasons for moving on.</p> <p>WHAT NOW? 05</p> <p>30-60 SECONDS</p> <p>What do you see yourself doing next? Speak in terms of your skills, style, knowledge and ambitions while relating to the needs and interests of the organization.</p>	<p>KEY STRENGTHS 02</p> <p>15-30 SECONDS</p> <p>Delivered together with the Capsule Profile. Name 3 or 4 of your most significant and relevant strengths in a concise point-by-point manner.</p> <p>LEAVING STORY 04</p> <p>30-60 SECONDS</p> <p>Why did you leave your previous organization or why are you looking to leave your current organization? Provide a brief answer set in an understandable and verifiable context. Your story should sound like a business decision that was completely necessary and acceptable to you. <i>This step is especially important if you are undergoing a career change.</i></p>
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In addition to formal interviews, the five sound bites will be very useful for networking and informal meetings. They can be delivered as one piece or as stand-alone pieces when needed.

Step 6: Know what to expect: Find out what you can about the interviewer(s), the hiring process, the interview style, etc. Be resourceful; while some of this information can be simply obtained during the phone call with the person arranging your interview, obtaining more detailed information will require more effort on your part. Reach out to your contacts who have experience with this organization, look up the interviewer(s) on LinkedIn, etc.

- What's the interview process? For instance, is there going to be just one interview or a series of interviews?
- What interview type/style usually takes place in this organization?
- What type of questions are likely to be asked? Common, competency-based, situational, technical, etc.
- Who is interviewing you? Name(s), Title(s).
- What kind of professional/academic background do the interviewers have?
- Can you align any of your experience, education, values, interests or career targets with the interviewers and their history?

Step 7: Prepare and Practice Your Answers: You are now ready to start compiling strategic answers to the questions that may come up at your interview. Practice the SAR stories, five sound bites and any other examples and achievements that you want to talk about. Rehearse your answers until they flow smoothly and naturally. Check pages 13-15 of this guide to see an inventory of sample interview questions to help you practice.



Book an appointment for a mock interview with one of the CDC Career Consultants or Graduate Career Advisor to practice your answers and receive tips and feedback.

Step 8: Prepare Your Own List of Questions to Ask: Asking very specific questions will allow you to impress your interviewer(s) with the depth of your knowledge, seriousness and preparedness, and gives you the opportunity to further highlight some of your qualities,

*Adapted from *It's your Move (2nd ed.)* by Marge Watters



skills, and experience while gaining additional insight about the company and the position. Not asking questions can make you seem unprepared or disinterested. Prepare four to six questions, assuming some will be answered over the course of the interview. Avoid asking questions about benefits or money, unless the interviewer brings it up.

Step 9: Dress the Part... To Get The Part! Appearance is a big part of making your first impression! This includes your clothing, hair and grooming. Dress professionally and conservatively in clothes that fit well and have been recently cleaned and pressed. Make sure you can sit, stand and walk comfortably in what you are wearing.



Wear something professional, yet "you". As a general rule of thumb, dress 10% better than you would going to work at the organization on a regular workday.



"Aha! A clip-on tie! I'm afraid that knocks \$5,000 off of your starting salary!"

Step 10: Prepare Your Documents: Although we live in a digital age, having a backup plan in hardcopy format is recommended.

- Extra copies of your resume.
- Examples of your work.
- Reference letter(s).
- Copy of the job posting.
- List of your questions.
- Details including time, location and who you will be meeting with.
- Blank paper and a pen for taking notes.

General Tips

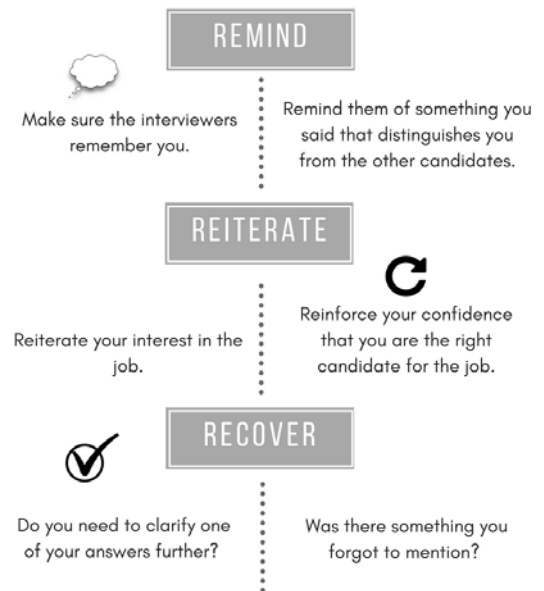
- **Plan your route:** Confirm the interview location and if possible, take a trip there prior to the interview so you know exactly where to go and where to park. Arriving 10 minutes before your appointment is perfect.
- **Make a good first impression!** Your interview starts the moment you arrive on the premises. Be respectful, friendly and polite to everyone you encounter.
- **Turn your phone off**, and put it away. A good tip is to set your phone to completely silent, then turn it off. That way if it comes back on for whatever reason, it won't startle you in the middle of answering an important question.
- **Take notice of your surroundings** while you wait at the reception: What does a normal workday in this place look like? Do people seem happy? Are there business awards on the walls?
- **Nonverbal communication, manners and positive body language is key.** Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake. Wait until you are asked to be seated, then sit up straight and avoid fidgeting. Be yourself and use hand gestures. Avoid excessive movement. Maintain good eye contact with everyone in the interview.
- **Be an active listener:** Listen to the questions fully and carefully, then let the interviewer know that you heard and understood what was asked with a relevant answer. Being a good listener is a sign of good communication skills.
- **Practice your delivery.** Make sure that your answers don't sound scripted. Practice your answers but be prepared to adapt at the interview as you observe the interviewer's style and pace.
- **Speak clearly and pause for breath.** Most first impressions aren't formed by what we say, but by how we say it or the



tone of our voice.

- **Be adaptable and go with the flow!** You're never 100% sure what might happen or what might be asked at the interview, even with the best preparation. You need to be mentally prepared and flexible. Don't get defensive if the interviewer picks on one of your weak spots, show resilience, emotional intelligence and the ability to handle high pressure situations by remaining calm and providing a positive, constructive response.
- **Don't bring a list of your references with you.** Instead, wait until after the interview, giving yourself time to learn more about the position and the interviewers so that you can contact your referees and inform them who will be calling and what the scope of the referral will be. If you are asked about your references at the interview, ask if you can provide them within 24-48 hours, and then follow through.
- **Impress the interviewer by using keywords from the job posting.** Your interviewer(s) will pay more attention to you and will be impressed when you choose terms that align with the job posting.
- **Asking for feedback creates a positive impression and you might learn something.** Showing that you are open to feedback and want to learn and improve will add to your overall positive impression. You might get some great insight that will help you be successful in future interviews.
- **Follow-up with the interviewer(s).** Send the interviewers a personalized "Thank You" email within 24-48 hours of the interview. Your aim is to **Remind, Reiterate and Recover**.

THE POST INTERVIEW THREE R'S



Your email should include:

- ✓ Thank you for the interview.
 - ✓ Why you are a good fit.
 - ✓ Why you want to work for them.
 - ✓ Any information that you were asked for or wish to add.
 - ✓ Any corrections or updates to one of your answers.
 - ✓ Positive closing saying you look forward to the next step and opportunity to join their company.
- **I haven't heard back, what should I do?** Ask the interviewers at the end of the interview about their timeline and when you can expect to hear back from them. Their answer will help you understand the appropriate time to follow-up. When you follow-up (through email or a phone call) ask if you can have an update on where they are at in the recruitment process. Be pleasantly persistent, polite and most importantly, confident in your request.



Post-Interview Checklist

Reflect on the interview. Give yourself feedback and make notes of what you have learned as soon as possible after the interview. Write down things that were discussed and the questions that were asked. Evaluate what went well and what could be improved. This will help you prepare for future interviews. Here's a sample interview checklist that you can use:

- Arrived on time.
- Was friendly and polite to everyone I met.
- Shook hands firmly.
- Set a positive tone with a smooth, confident opening.
- Answered questions thoroughly.
- Delivered S.A.R. stories.
- Highlighted strengths while describing skills and qualifications.
- Showcased accomplishments when talking about previous experience.
- Turned negatives into positives.
- Was calm and confident.
- Spoke clearly in an enthusiastic tone.
- Paused to collect thoughts before answering.
- Maintained a positive attitude throughout the interview.
- Maintained professional body language.
- Asked appropriate questions.
- Expressed interest in the position.
- Thanked the interviewer(s) for their information and time.
- Obtained contact details and shook hands with the interviewer(s) before leaving.
- What did I say that the interviewer obviously liked?
- What would I do/say differently if I could repeat the interview?

Sample Interview Questions

To make the best of these sample questions, we highly recommend that you do the following before you start answering them:



1. Complete the preparation steps 1 through 6 (pages 7-10).
2. Start by preparing answers to the questions that were discussed or used as examples (pages 4-6). These questions will not appear below, although variations of them might.

Position/Industry Related

- In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing the finance industry today?
- How would you bring in new business to the firm?
- What did you enjoy most (least) about your last position?
- What is your favorite financial software tool for analysis? And why?
- What do you know about our company, our competition and our industry, as a whole?
- What was the most difficult or challenging decision that you have made?
- What is your understanding of what is required to fulfil this role?

Decision Making

- Describe the process you typically follow to make decisions.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had a limited amount of time to make a critical or politically sensitive decision with significant impact on the organization.
- Give me an example of a poor decision that you made. What would you do differently today?
- Do you make better decisions alone or with a group?
- How do you balance instinct with facts when making decisions? Please share a specific example.
- Tell me about a time when you reconsidered a decision you made, due to receiving new information or being persuaded that you were wrong.



Interpersonal and Communication Skills

- Give me an example of a time when your effective interpersonal skills contributed to your success.
- How would you avoid a breakdown in communication at the office? How do you usually keep subordinates, colleagues, bosses, and clients informed in a clear and accurate manner?
- Describe a situation where you succeeded at persuading someone to your point of view.
- How do you “break the ice” with clients? With co-workers? With subordinates? With your manager? Share some examples.
- Tell me about a time when you had to communicate difficult, sensitive, or unpleasant information to members of your team.
- Please describe a particularly successful negotiation in which you took part. How did you contribute to that success?

Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Describe a project that best demonstrates your analytical skills.
- Describe the most stressful work situation you’ve experienced and how you handled it.
- Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer.
- How do you usually determine what amount of time is reasonable for a task?
- Tell me about a time when your logical solution was overridden by someone senior at your company. How did that make you feel? What was the outcome?

Finance Focused/Technical

- Suppose the company shows positive cash flow and management asks you if that means the company is doing well. What do you reply?
- Name the 4 financial statements and how they connect with each other.
- What information/model would you need to produce an annual forecasting report?

- Tell us about a time you made a bad financial decision. How would you avoid that happening again?
- What are the major valuation methodologies?
- What’s the difference between enterprise value and equity value?
- What’s the difference between budgeting and forecasting?
- When should a company consider issuing debt instead of equity?”
- Please walk me through the three financial statements.”

Leadership/Emotional Intelligence

- How would you describe your leadership style? Please illustrate with a specific example.
- Looking back on your team experiences, can you tell me about a time when you assumed the role of team leader?
- Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.
- How do your colleagues benefit from working with you?
- What makes you unique among your peers?
- Tell me about a time when understanding someone else’s perspective helped you accomplish a task or resolve an issue.

Flexibility, Adaptability and Creativity

- Can you think of the last time that you were asked to help out on a task that was not directly your responsibility? What was it? What was the situation with your own workload?
- This is a much larger (smaller) company than you’ve ever worked at. How do you feel about that?
- How do you adapt your work to changes in your industry?
- Tell me about a problem that you’ve solved in an unusual way.
- How do you create an environment where different perspectives are valued, encouraged and supported?



Team Skills

- Tell me about a time when you were part of a successful work group or team. Why was it so successful? What was your role?
- If one of the members of your team isn't pulling his/her weight, what would you do?
- How do you handle conflict with co-workers?
- Have you ever had to fire an employee? What were the circumstances? How did you handle it?
- What is your idea of the perfect team-building exercise?
- What type of support does a team need to function as efficiently as possible?

Ethics, Integrity and Credibility

- How would you establish a culture of honesty, transparency, inclusion and respect in your team?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you assumed responsibility and personal accountability for an adverse organizational situation or event?
- How do you react to criticism?
- As a supervisor, you've made an unpopular decision. What action would you take so that your team's morale is not negatively affected?
- Accountability and transparency are important values of our organization. Can you share a specific example of when you have demonstrated these values?
- Your supervisor makes a decision that you believe compromises the ethics of your workplace. What actions would you take?
- Tell me about a business situation in which you felt it was best not to be honest. What did you do?

Self-Motivation, Initiative and Career Targets

- Are you self-motivated (self-starter)? Give me an example.
- Give me an example of a successful project or new initiative you've been involved in. What was your role?

- How do you ensure that your personal level of motivation is high on a daily basis despite challenges?
- What objectives would you set for your first 12 months in this position?
- Consider times when you did your best work and other times when you didn't. Give me an example of each time. What made the difference?
- How do you define and measure your professional success?

Organization, Time Management and Planning

- Tell me about a time when you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work you needed to do? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you organized a successful event.
- Recent studies show that multitasking affects quality of work. What is the difference between multitasking and time management?
- Share an example of a time when you had to document a sequence of events after the fact. How accurate were you?
- Tell me about a time when you had to re-plan or reorganize something on short notice due to a sudden change in the organization's priorities.
- How would you handle a situation where you don't have all the information you need to prioritize your projects, and your supervisor is unavailable to help?

Notice that most of the aforementioned questions implicitly contain these follow-ups:

- (1) What was the situation/problem?
- (2) Who was affected by it?
- (3) What factors or variables did you consider in your actions?
- (4) What did you do?
- (5) What was the outcome?

This shows the importance and relevance of preparing your SAR stories.





Questions to Ask at the Interview

Always ask questions! Here are some great sample questions: *

The Job

- What are the most immediate projects that need to be addressed?
- What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?
- Do you expect the main responsibilities for this position to change in the next six months to a year?

The Team

- Can you tell me about the team I'd be working with?
- Do you expect to hire more people in this department in the next six months?
- Which other departments work most closely with this one?

Performance Management

- What are the most important things you'd like to see someone accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?
- What are the performance expectations of this position over the first 12 months?
- What metrics or goals will my performance be evaluated against?

The Company and its Culture

- What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked before?
- How would you describe the company's culture?
- What gets you most excited about the company's future?

Next Steps

- Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- When can I expect to hear back from you?

Conclusion

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." This quote, attributed to Roman philosopher Seneca, reminds us that we can create our own luck when we make intelligent, educated decisions based on thorough preparation.

The MFIN Interview Guide offers an outline to an interview preparation process that surpasses the 45-90 minutes you will spend actually interviewing. It helps you achieve a deeper understanding of your strengths, weaknesses, values, interests, knowledge, style and character that will always help you when you face difficult work decisions and tough career choices.

Once you have completed your preparation for your upcoming interview, consider booking a mock interview with the Graduate Career advisor or one of the CDC Career Consultants for more in-depth insights, feedback and advice.

Please remember that we are here for you throughout your career. You will continue to have access to our online and in-person career tools, services and resources, even after you graduate.

"Success doesn't come to you, you go to it."
- Marva Collins.

We wish you continued career success!



*Adapted from www.themuse.com