



Preparing for an Interview: The Student Career Compass

Essential tips to succeed in your career interviews





Interview Foundations



What Interviewers Are Really Looking For

Motivation and Engagement

Interviewers value candidates who clearly explain their interest and link it to studies or values, showing true engagement.

Transferable Skills

Employers look for evidence of problem-solving, communication, digital literacy, and applying learning in new situations.

Behavior and Attitude

Interviewers assess how candidates handle pressure, feedback, teamwork, and professionalism during interviews.

Cultural Fit and Communication

Employers seek candidates whose values align with the organisation and who communicate clearly and effectively.





Preparation and First Impressions



Preparation Basics That Make a Difference

Research the Organisation

Thoroughly research the company's purpose, products, customers, and recent news to understand its context.

Understand the Role

Review the role description carefully to anticipate required skills and expected behaviors during the interview.

Prepare Examples from Experience

Use diverse experiences like coursework, jobs, and volunteering to illustrate relevant skills and competencies.

Plan Practical Details

Decide on professional attire and familiarise yourself with the interview format to reduce anxiety.





First Impressions, Body Language and Communication

Components of First Impressions

First impressions depend on body language, tone of voice and overall presence beyond spoken words.

Effective Communication Skills

Clear speech, calm tone, active listening, and nodding convey confidence and engagement.

Online Interview Preparation

Testing technology, choosing a quiet, well-lit space, and minimising distractions enhance professionalism online.

Maintaining Professionalism

Professionalism starts when arriving and continues throughout the interview to create a positive impression.



Behavioural and Competency Interviews



Understanding Behavioural and Competency Questions

Purpose of Behavioural Questions

These questions reveal how candidates behaved in past situations, predicting future job performance effectively.

Common Competencies Explored

Interviewers assess teamwork, communication, problem-solving, leadership, resilience, organisation, and integrity.

Sources of Examples

Examples can come from academic work, part-time jobs, volunteering, or extracurricular activities, not just employment.

Effective Answer Structure

Clear explanation of situation, personal actions taken, and learning outcomes impress interviewers.



The STAR Method with Short Example Answers

Understanding STAR Framework

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result, providing a clear structure for behavioral interview answers.

Teamwork Example

Describe a group project with a deadline, coordinating roles, and supporting teammates to submit work early and achieve success.

Resilience Example

Improving performance by applying feedback, revising work, and gaining confidence through persistent effort.

Benefits of STAR Answers

Using STAR provides clarity, focus, and demonstrates self-awareness and learning in interview responses.





Managing Difficult Moments



What to Do If You Get Stuck or the Interview Goes Quiet



Accept Pauses in Conversation

Interviewers expect pauses and focus on how candidates handle moments of silence during interviews.

Ask for Clarification

It is acceptable to ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify questions when unsure.

Offer Alternative Examples

If one example doesn't work, acknowledge it and suggest a different relevant example.

Stay Calm and Professional

Maintaining composure and professionalism helps candidates regain control and present well.

Recovering if an Interview is Going Badly



Professional Reset Strategy

Acknowledging unclear answers and providing better examples demonstrates self-awareness and professionalism.

Finish Strong

Listening carefully, answering concisely, and asking thoughtful questions leave a positive final impression.

Show Enthusiasm and Composure

Displaying enthusiasm and maintaining composure helps rebalance the interviewer's perception positively.

Learning Mindset

Viewing interviews as learning experiences fosters long-term confidence and development.



Closing Strongly and Sector Questions



Questions to Ask Interviewers

Demonstrate Motivation

Asking thoughtful questions shows your motivation and genuine interest in the role and company.

Focus on Learning and Development

Good questions target learning opportunities, team support, and role expectations within the first year.

Avoid Common or Sensitive Questions

Prepare questions in advance and avoid easily found info or early salary and benefits topics unless prompted.



Typical Technical Interview Questions by Sector

Business and Finance Questions

Candidates are asked to analyse problems, differentiate profit and revenue, and explain cash flow basics.

Technology Role Questions

Focus on explaining technical concepts simply, learning programming languages, and industry trends.

Engineering and Built Environment

Questions cover project lifecycle, risk management, and health and safety concerns.

Marketing and Communications

Focus on audience targeting, measuring campaigns, and defining strong brand elements.

Interview Checklist

Before the Interview:

- Research the organisation and role
- Prepare STAR examples
- Plan outfit and logistics
- Prepare questions

During the Interview:

- Listen carefully
- Use structured answers
- Stay calm and positive

After the Interview:

- Reflect on performance
- Note learning points
- Send a thank you email if appropriate

