



INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

Prepare with evidence. Answer with confidence.

A practical guide for job seekers, graduates and career changers

Assess > Analyse > Advise > Activate

How to use this guide

An interview is not a memory test or a performance of perfection. It is a structured conversation in which the employer tests whether your experience, capability, motivation and working style match the role. Use this guide before every interview, complete the worksheets, practise aloud and adapt your examples to the actual vacancy.

The goal: Make it easy for the interviewer to understand what you can contribute, how you have demonstrated it and why this opportunity makes sense for you.

The interview preparation pathway

Stage	What to do	Output
1. Decode	Study the advert and identify recurring requirements.	Role requirement list
2. Research	Understand the employer, sector, priorities and context.	Employer research notes
3. Evidence	Select examples that prove relevant skills and results.	STAR story bank
4. Rehearse	Practise concise, natural answers aloud.	Confident delivery
5. Prepare	Confirm logistics, questions, documents and appearance.	Interview-ready plan
6. Follow up	Send thanks, record learning and complete agreed actions.	Professional close

Your interview details

Role and organisation:

Interview date, time and format:

Interviewer(s), if known:

1. Decode the role

Read the vacancy more than once. Separate essential requirements from preferences and translate broad wording into observable behaviour. If the advert asks for “stakeholder management”, expect to show how you communicated with different groups, handled competing needs and achieved an outcome.

Requirement from advert	Evidence I can use	Result or proof

Your value proposition

Complete this sentence, then refine it into a 30-45 second introduction:

Template: I am a [professional identity] with experience in [relevant areas]. I am particularly strong in [2-3 strengths], and I have demonstrated this by [brief proof]. I am interested in this role because [credible connection].

My introduction:

2. Research the employer

[] What does the organisation do, and who does it serve?

[] What products, services or programmes are most relevant to this role?

[] What values, strategy or current priorities are visible?

[] What is changing in the sector?

[] Why does this role exist, and what problem might the successful person need to solve?

Three facts I can use naturally in the interview:

Why this organisation interests me:

Questions the research has raised:

Research sources

- Official website and annual or impact reports
- LinkedIn company page and recent updates
- Credible news and industry sources
- The vacancy, job description and recruitment correspondence
- Public profiles of interviewers, where appropriate

3. Build your STAR story bank

Behavioural questions ask for evidence from real situations. Use STAR to keep the answer focused: Situation - the context; Task - your responsibility; Action - what you personally did; Result - the outcome and learning.

Strong answers: Spend most of the time on your actions and results. Use specific numbers where accurate, explain your judgement and never claim team achievements as yours alone.

Competency	Situation / task	Actions	Result
Problem-solving			
Teamwork			
Leadership / initiative			
Conflict / pressure			
Achievement			
Mistake / learning			

4. Prepare for common questions

Question	Preparation guidance
Tell me about yourself	Present -> relevant past -> why this role. Keep it professional and under two minutes.
Why do you want this role?	Connect the work, organisation and your evidence. Avoid generic praise.
What are your strengths?	Choose relevant strengths and prove each with an example.
What is a development area?	Name a genuine, manageable area and show the action you are taking.
Why should we hire you?	Summarise fit: capability, evidence, motivation and contribution.
Why did you leave / want to leave?	Be truthful, brief and forward-looking. Do not criticise former employers.
Tell us about a failure or conflict	Show accountability, thoughtful action, learning and changed behaviour.
Salary expectations?	Research the market; state a considered range or ask about the budgeted range.

Questions I need to practise

1.

2.

3.

5. Ask strong questions

Your questions should help you assess fit and show that you are thinking about contribution. Ask what cannot be answered easily from the website.

- What would success in this role look like after the first three to six months?
- What are the most important priorities or challenges for the person appointed?
- How is performance measured?
- How does the team work together, and where does this role fit?
- What learning or development support is available?
- What are the next steps and expected timeline?

My three priority questions:

Questions to avoid too early

Avoid leading with information already supplied, asking only about benefits, or raising leave and promotion before understanding the role. These topics matter, but timing and tone affect how they are received.

6. Delivery and logistics

For an online interview

- ☐ Test the platform, camera, microphone and internet connection.
- ☐ Use a quiet, well-lit space and a professional background.
- ☐ Position the camera at eye level and look towards it when answering.
- ☐ Close notifications and keep the device powered.
- ☐ Keep the job description, CV and short notes nearby - not a script.

For an in-person interview

- ☐ Confirm the exact address, travel time, parking or public transport.
- ☐ Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early, but not excessively early.
- ☐ Take copies of your CV, qualifications or portfolio if requested.
- ☐ Choose professional clothing appropriate to the organisation and role.
- ☐ Treat every interaction respectfully, from reception onward.

Confidence reset

Before entering: Breathe slowly, place both feet on the floor and remind yourself: I do not need perfect answers. I need honest, relevant evidence and a professional conversation.

Final interview checklist

- ☐ I understand the role and its essential requirements.
- ☐ I researched the organisation and sector.
- ☐ I prepared a concise professional introduction.
- ☐ I selected at least five STAR examples.
- ☐ I can explain my motivation and value clearly.
- ☐ I prepared thoughtful questions.
- ☐ I confirmed the format, time, location and contact person.
- ☐ My clothing, documents, technology and travel plan are ready.
- ☐ My referees know they may be contacted.
- ☐ I know what I will do immediately after the interview.

After the interview

- Send a brief thank-you message within 24 hours when contact details are available.
- Confirm any information or documents you promised.
- Record the questions asked, strong answers and areas to improve.
- Follow up once, professionally, after the stated timeline.
- Continue other applications until a written offer is accepted.

What went well?

What will I improve next time?

Follow-up date and action:



READY FOR YOUR NEXT STEP?

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