



Interview questions – answer guidance

Introduction

Although we do not know the actual interview questions you will be asked, we have collated several of them so that you can prepare your answers.

Our suggestions on preparing are as follows

- Know your own motivators, values, strengths & skills etc.
- Have your elevator pitch planned
- Match your skills to the role
- Understand how the STARS model works
- Have examples for the below **using the STARS model** (work examples are preferred but uni examples can be used).
 - 2 successes & 1 failure that includes working with people & targets
 - 2 greatest achievements (1 work, 1 personal)
 - 2 situations where you have managed conflict/emotion/difficult situation
 - 1 situation where you have needed to develop/build relationships
 - 1 situation where you have managed risk
 - 1 situation where you have worked as part of a team
 - 1 situation where you have negotiated
- Completed Commercial Awareness research. Include current
 - research about company, finances, recent news, vision/mission, social media posts
 - interviewers, people in similar roles to the one you are applying for (LinkedIn)
 - competitors
 - sector/industry issues
- Have questions ready to ask

List of the questions

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Guidance on answers

Openers

What has prompted your job search?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A positive mind set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss motivation, development opportunities, excitement about meeting new challenges Personal goals and career intentions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk negatively about prior experiences Focus upon financial issues or clashes with other staff

What gets you out of bed in the morning?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your motivators to get the best out of you Enthusiasm and self-awareness Attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 2-3 motivators (making a difference, social purpose, career progression, responsibility etc.) Provide personal examples (See Who am I module) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about being a morning/evening person Do not talk about money/financial gain

Tell me about yourself. What is your elevator pitch? What value will you bring to the company and the role?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your attitude Your elevator pitch – your background, your achievements, why them, your ambitions Your ability to summarise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it concise (2-3 mins) Explain who your are - your unique selling points Explain why you are suitable for the role – the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not ramble Assume they have read your CV – many do not Talk about career ambition that the company cannot offer



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your passion Your attitude 	<p>skills you are offering & how they match the role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mention key achievements Talk about yourself from a personal and professional point of view Why you applied to this specific company Research your interviewer to see what you have in common 	
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Tell me why you want this job. Why did you apply for this job?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your understanding of the organisation & role Your ambition How your skills meet this role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it relevant, focused Research the company & role (Commercial awareness) Highlight how role motivates you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss financial gains (money, allowances) Discuss this being a stepping-stone role

How was your journey here today?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your ability to communicate Your attitude (Also trying to help you relax) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chat about your journey time, make it interesting Develop a rapport – e.g. ask them if they have far to travel Be positive, chatty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go into detail Be negative e.g. about bad traffic, late bus/train

Why are you here?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honest insight into your ambition What excites you about this role Positivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short & long term ambitions Enthusiasm for new challenges & opportunities Development this role offers you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss financial gains (money, allowances) Discuss this being a stepping-stone role Be negative about current unemployment/employer

Why should we hire you? What unique qualities and abilities will you bring to this role?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your elevator pitch Specifics regarding the role and the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give your elevator pitch Within context of the role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce who you are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk more than 3 mins Be arrogant



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills you are bringing • Your passion & enthusiasm • You confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain the skills you bring ○ What you are looking for • Provide examples using STARS method • Discuss how your skills can be used in the role • Ask what additional skills are required for this role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about skills not needed for the role • Talk about skills you cannot support/evidence or have little experience in
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Questions about you

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Honesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 2-3 strengths relevant to the role • Back them up with examples/facts using STARS • Provide 1 weakness that isn't relevant to the role • Explain how you address the weakness with example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List lots of strengths or no weaknesses • Give a weakness that could be a strength e.g. being a perfectionist

What's different about you?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See if you will fit into their organisation/team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why you are a good fit to the team/organisation • Sell yourself & your unique selling points • Include non work examples • Relate your character to the culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only talk about work experiences • Waffle

How do you handle criticism?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your resilience • Your self-management • Your communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that you listen to criticism, take time to consider it, ask others their view to see if it is valid • Highlight you re open to change as it will help you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples directly relevant to the role • Imply that criticism impedes your success • Imply you ignore criticism



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	develop and become more successful	
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What would your peers and colleagues say about you? What 3 words would your friends use to describe you? What do your peers/managers think about you? What will your referees/colleagues/friends say about you?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How self-aware you are • Your potential impact upon others • That you know your own strengths and weaknesses • How you are professionally views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer 2-3 positives and 1 area for development/weaknesses • Include one professional and one personality point • Provide facts, not feelings e.g. they would say I did x, showing that I am ... • Highlight that you reflect on how others view you • Link the positives to the company's culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only talk about your personality • Be negative about other people

How ambitious are you?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your focus and drive • How long you will stay • The support you need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show how committed you are to this role • Provide realistic ambition for the stage you are at • Use key words such as loyal, committed • Be excited about developing skills/knowledge in this role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you want the line managers role • Focus on too long term – they are employing you now for this role • Sound like you need lots of support

What motivates you?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you match the role and organisation • If you are self motivated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight you are readily self-motivated • Provide examples of activities completed that required self motivation (using STARS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not provide specific details • Don't talk about external motivators such as money, time off

Why have you chosen this career path?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why you have made this decision • Your motivators • Your self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be specific • Explain what interests you, how you match the required skills • The research/work experience you have done • Show long term commitment to this career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waffle • Say it's something you've always wanted to do unless true (so provide example)
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If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your ambition • See if you can think on your feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim high • Have a specific role outside the norm • Explain why • If possible, link to skills you have/they are looking for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a generic/standard answer

What is your greatest achievement?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise • Strategic approaches you have used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give examples using STARS model • Relate achievements to the role and what it could bring to the role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't just state the achievement without showing skills developed, impact • Lie/exaggerate

Describe a situation when you had to deal with emotion/conflict/difficult situation

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict management • Emotional stability • Resilience • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an example where you reduced the conflict using STARS model • Explain concisely what the situation was, how you explored the options, what option you took, the outcome • State how you diffused the situation • Talk about what you learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk generically • Provide examples where you created the issue • Focus on the actions of others, instead focus on the actions you took & the impact

How do you spend your spare time?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion • Personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a genuine interest • Link them to the work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk over 2 mins unless asked to



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show skills & impact (PARS/STARS model) 	
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Company specific

What research have you done about this company? How did you prepare for this interview? What do you know about the role you've applied for? What do you know about our company and the industry we work in?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to summarise Enthusiasm about the role & company The effort you have already put in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the company & place in sector (Commercial awareness) Understand what the company does/ their vision Have 5 bullet points about the company Prepare a short summary prior Go beyond basics e.g. just looking at website. Include industry changes, company's financial standing, recent news postings, media included LinkedIn & Twitter (Commercial awareness) Include research about interviewers & people in similar roles to job you are applying for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assume that reading the company job spec. and web site is enough You know everything about the job List basic facts such as company size, turnover

What are your thoughts about working in this organisation? What interests you about our company?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enthusiasm Specific knowledge about company Credible and thoughtful reasons How you match the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know your facts about the company (business, product. service, customers/clients, culture etc. (Commercial awareness) Consider reasons such as culture, work environment, reputation Highlight how your short and long term ambitions match this role Explore how you match job spec Have 2-3 specific points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only focus upon career progression (may look like you want to leave quickly) Base your answer on generic information e.g. working with a well-known brand Do not give a general answer Do not focus upon career progression

Why do you want to work for us and not one of our competitors?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of your research • Your understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show you have identified the skills the company needs to compete/grow against the competitor • List differences between the competitors • Show how your skills match what they need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be generic • Blag an answer • Simply say the competitor is not as good without concrete examples •
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What do you think the most important issue facing our business today is? What do you know about our company and the industry we are in?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial awareness • Genuine interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research about the company & sector (Commercial awareness) • Talk about a real issue (growth, competition, technological changes, legislation etc.) • Be able to categorise the customer/client base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk negatively – this is an opportunity to develop • Make sweeping statements

Role specific

How long will it be before you make a positive contribution to the business?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you fit into the business • Positivity & enthusiasm • Self-management • Commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show enthusiasm and want to be part of new challenges for the start • Acknowledge the time it takes to fully understand a role. Once there, you hope to deliver results • Explain how you go about understanding the requirements of a task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make specific promises

What do you like and dislike about this role?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection • Knowledge of company • Listening skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete your research about the company including culture, environment, mission/vision, recent news (Commercial awareness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have lots of dislikes or no dislikes



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 2 likes & 1 dislike • Ask questions to provide clarity e.g. I am uncertain about...can you elaborate please? 	
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What do you expect to achieve in the first 10,30, 100 days? What do you want to achieve in the first 3,6,12 months?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the role • Planning skills • Realism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link answer to core objectives of the role • State wish to ask questions, learn, listen, gather info to then take appropriate action quickly • Develop relationships with colleagues, meet clients/customers/suppliers, talk to different departments/teams, networking internally and externally • Want to get on with role and set challenging but realistic targets • Consider what goals you could set for the first 2-3 months and 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not make promises • Do not be over ambitious • Do not miss the detail

Why do you think you are suitable for this role? Why do you think you are right for this role?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into role • Self-awareness • Enthusiasm • Attitude • If you are a good fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify 3-4 points that show your strengths, skills, ambitions and how these match the role and the company (wider reason for recruitment of this role) • Focus on the competencies and how you meet them • Show evidence using STRS model • Ask if there are any additional elements to the role & say how you can deliver against them • Know your unique selling points • You can include aspects of your personal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waffle

Work history/competency based

How successful do you think you've been in your career to date? What's your greatest success in your professional career? What's your greatest achievement in work?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your abilities Your honesty (a balanced response including successes and failures) That you learn from experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 1-2 concrete examples using STARS model to show impact Explain why this was a great achievement/success Consider your degree work if you have no work experience Include a failure (if appropriate) and how you turned it around If work related, include statistic/figure where possible Relate example to this role & how you could add value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only cover successes – consider failures & how you turned them around Exaggerate/make up information Do not talk about team success- they are interested in you
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Provide an example of when you have overcome a problem at work. What's the biggest challenge you've face? Tell me about decisions you have made.

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you identify and work through problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a recent example that was in your control Focus on the process: Provide a clear description of the issue, various solutions you considered, the one you chose, how you implemented it, the result What you learnt (use STARS model) Consider your degree work if you have no work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss problems that were out of your control or you were unable to overcome Discuss problems with team members Use an example directly linked to this role

Describe a time when you have influences someone to get a decision through

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How influential you are Communication skills Emotional intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 1 real example where you can discuss people's characters/traits & specific detail of the case Focus on the process Demonstrate your understanding of including others, negotiation, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State you used your position of authority, force or financial incentives



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	<p>understanding needs, communication, emotional intelligence, compromise etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe outcome (win win) 	
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What management style suits your way of working?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How you fit in Attitude to responsibility Attitude to management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify previous management styles you have liked & disliked Explain reasons Highlight your willingness to be proactive, use your initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not be negative about person or organisation Use examples where you failed

Describe a situation where you have had to adapt your working style.

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptability Flexibility Self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an example – describe situation concisely, options, action you took & why, outcome (using STARS model) Highlight your choices are dependent upon situation & personnel involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use examples that had a negative outcome Forget to explain why you selected that approach

What's the biggest mistake you've made in your life? Tell me about a mistake you've made at work. When have you experienced failure?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honesty Self-awareness Learning from mistakes See mistakes as a positive Emotional intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select work/study example that you could have acted differently. Explain concisely the situation, choice, outcome, what would do differently & why Talk about a similar situation and how you then acted differently/how you would now act if it arose again Be honest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a personal example as it can become too emotional and interviewers may not be able to relate it to the workplace Pick a skill hard to change – focus on an event instead Discuss a repeated mistake Blame others Use a mistake that is directly related to this role's responsibilities



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What size organisation do you prefer to work in?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How you will fit into their sized organisations (small, medium, large) • Understanding about working in smaller teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be honest, providing reasons • Offer insights into the size of companies & teams you have worked for in the past • Ask the interviewer for information relating to size of their team and how the teams communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume that a large company wants to hear that you want to work for a large company, it may have many small teams (and vice versa for small company)

How do you build relationships with other members of your team?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your personality • Self-awareness • Communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how you build relationships e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are friendly, open, honest ○ ask questions, show genuine interest • Give example of when you have developed relationship (using STARS model) • Consider team and company wide including external people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be negative about previous relationships

How do you deal with difficult people/team members?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Relationship skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select example with successful outcome • Provide a real example • Concisely explain situation, options, choice made & why, outcome, skills required (PARS/STARS model) • Highlight that you considered views of all parties involved • Discuss what you learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over criticise an individual – focus on your actions & the outcome

Explain how you have improved a team's performance.

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of targets & performance measures • Team working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain you and how your team were measured • Explain how you worked as a team to identify the actions for improvement • Explain the action you took and the impact • Have statistics/figures to hand • Ask how you are targeted in this role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take all of the credit • Only focus on the outcome • Assume it relates only to sales
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Provide an example of how you have taken risks. Tell me about decisions you have made.

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can take responsibility • Problem solving skills • Your approach to assessing risk (pros & cons) • You can make decisions • Interpersonal skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a concise explanation of situation. • Use an example that includes people as well as data • Emphasise acknowledgement that are clear on what risks can/cannot take • Review pros & cons to each action, explore decision making process, understood impact upon people • Use STARS to provide a real example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss risks that you took when you shouldn't have/did not have authority to • Use an example that does not include people • Sound rigid or inflexible

What is your approach to negotiation?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation skills • Confidence in negotiating • Good outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a concise explanation of the situation, state what you did, why, and the outcomes (use STARS model) • Highlight examining the situation from multiple perspectives • State win win outcome or good outcome for one side only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not come across authoritarian or highly aggressive unless a requirement of the role



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Give me an example when you have led a team. What is your approach to managing people?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Your willingness to manageRelationship buildingCommunication skillsSelf-awarenessLeadership skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide concise details about a situation requiring you to lead people (what, outcome wanted, actions taken & why, outcome)Highlight how you have explored information, planned, organised, guided, motivated and monitoredExplain concisely any difficulties and how you overcame key challenges.Discuss skills and personalities traits used to lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not include unusual techniques

How well do you work under pressure?

Looking for	Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stress managementResilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide concise example where pressure had a positive impact, helped you stay motivatedState what situation was, how you responded & why, outcomeHighlight prioritising, being organised, staying calm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not state that you need pressure to perform wellHide the fact that you are sensitive to pressure