

Interview Preparation Interviews taken by McKinsey, as by other consulting firms, fall into two types: the experience interview and the case interview. The former determines the extent to which you fit the consultant profile and the firm's culture. The latter tests your problem solving skills. Both the types are equally important and hence students should prepare well for both.

Basic Do's and Don'ts for the Interview • **Arrive a little early.** If you arrive about fifteen minutes before the scheduled interview time, you will have time to collect your thoughts, wipe the perspiration from your hands, and scan the lobby for current company information. You will also show your interviewer that you value his or her time.

- **Do your homework.** Know the interviewer's name and how to pronounce it (including proper title: Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.). Know the company's major products or services, the organization of the company (divisions, parent company, etc.), current business news about the company and the company's major customers and competitors. You can learn most or all of this information from the company's website, annual report or company literature.

- **Bring a Spare Copy of Your Resume in a Briefcase or Folder.** This demonstrates that you are prepared. It also gives the interviewer something to take notes on.

- **Expect to Spend Some Time Developing Rapport.** Personal chemistry is a main ingredient in the hiring process. Try to relax and become comfortable with the interviewer.

- **Prepare for basic open-ended questions.** The interview is a process by which the interviewer gets to know you and judge whether you match the requirements both academically and as a person. Generally, the interviewer will throw up some open-ended question like "Tell me about you". This is meant to relax the applicant. This can be used as an opportunity to divert the interview into your areas of strength. Open-ended questions like those on hobbies, achievements, etc reveal a great deal about you as a person. Treat these questions very seriously.

- **Listen.** Listen to the question before answering it. Understand what the interviewer is looking for. If you need time to think about the answer, request for the same. Most interviewers would comply with such a request. But after you have taken time to think, better come up with a good answer.

- **Watch Your Non-Verbal Communication.** Maintain an open body posture. Seat yourself at a reasonable distance from the other person. Smile. Always maintain eye contact with the interviewer. It shows your confidence. Never droop in the chair. Sit upright and keep track of your hand movements while answering questions.

- **Don't Be Embarrassed by Nervousness.** Interviewers are human, and they often become nervous, too. In fact, nervousness is a good sign - it shows that you are taking the interview seriously. Avoid nervous mannerisms such as tapping your fingers, feet, playing with pens, etc.

- **Body language is powerful!** Good eye contact, a warm, natural smile and a firm handshake can help you overcome nervousness, develop a personal rapport and present a confident image.

- **Don't Play Comedian or Try to Entertain the Interviewer.** It is important to be personable, but do not overdo it.

- **Don't Exaggerate or Lie.** You might be tempted to embellish your achievements in the interview, but it will come back to haunt you on the job!

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- **Follow the Interviewer's Lead.** Don't try to take over the interview. Stick to the main subject at hand, but do not dwell too long on one point. It is better to deal with many questions rather than just one or two in-depth questions, unless that's where the interviewer leads you.

- **Be Prepared For Personal Questions, Even Some Inappropriate Ones.** Anticipate how you will handle personal questions without blowing your cool. Some interviewers may not be aware of what they can and cannot legally ask you. Be sure you understand the question. It is okay to ask for clarification.

- **Emphasize the Positive.** Be frank and honest, but never apologize for lack of experience or weaknesses. You can be self-confident without being overconfident or flippant. If you are new to the job market, your lack of experience has one very positive feature: you do not have to "unlearn" bad habits or different practices learned from previous

employers. Many employers like the idea that you can be taught their individual company procedures without needing to get rid of other training first.

- **Don't be Afraid to Think before You Speak.** Use silence and intentional pause to your advantage. Time is occasionally needed to think and to reflect. The interviewer will respect you for taking a question seriously enough to give it a moment or two of consideration before answering.
- **Emphasize What You Can Do For The Organization.** This means emphasizing your transferable skills. However, be careful not to reveal trade secrets from a previous employer. Employers are concerned most with what you can do for them. Focus on your ability to tackle new situations, your communication skills, interpersonal abilities, analytical thinking talents, and other skills developed while in college or in previous positions.
- **Don't give "Prepared Answers".** Most employers know a these stock answers when they hear them. This is a good reason to use interview question / answer guide as just that - guides. If your answers are not personalized to your situation, they will sound forced and unnatural. You might be surprised to learn how often interviewers hear the phrase, "I really like working with people". The phrase is used so often that it has lost its meaning!
- **Watch Your Grammar and your manners.** Employers are interested in candidates who can express themselves properly. Even if you have to slow down to correct yourself -do it! Use slang expressions very sparingly. If your knowledge of rules of etiquette is rusty, take a "refresher course" from a knowledgeable friend.
- **Be Prepared to Ask Questions.** Almost all interviewers will ask if you have any questions. You should have some ready and should have at least one that is related to the conversation you have just completed. This demonstrates that you are both prepared and interested. Your questions should be related to details about the company and should be based on the information you learned from the homework you have done. You should not ask questions like "How long to I have to wait before I can take a vacation?" Save those what's-in-it-for-me questions for later. If you do not ask any questions at this point, chances are that you may come across as a person who is not keen to join the company.
- **Be Careful With the Closing.** Do not linger. End quickly and courteously. Thank your interviewer for the interview. Smile.
- **Be Yourself!** You do not want to get hired on the basis of something you are not. You want to be hired for who you are! Do not try to be someone you are not during an interview. Be natural. An interview is a process by which the candidate and the interviewer. get to know each other and the candidate's role in the organization is established. Any mask that you may don for the interview will wear down in no time.
- **Mock Interviews:** It is always a good idea to attend mock interviews and use the feedback to improve your interview skills.

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Experience Interviews

Experience Interviews are designed to measure "softer" attributes of the candidates. It also confirms the skills you claim on your resume and hence also acts as a "sanity check". McKinsey expects candidates to be prepared to discuss specific instances of when you've used skills and been challenged. Usually your resume decides the course of this part of the interview and hence there is even greater incentive to prepare your resume well.

Focus on the same skills highlighted in your resume, but use different examples of teamwork, leadership, and other soft skills. Needless to say provide only relevant examples. Your answers should be logical and structured. Irrelevant answers are pretty evident on the other side of the table and don't do any good to your evaluation. To prepare, practice answering the more frequently asked behavioral questions until you can answer them smoothly. If time permits try to write an essay about yourself and get it reviewed by your peers. Such an exercise not only leads to be better prepared for the interview but also make you better aware of yourself, which helps in answering the questions confidently.

Case Interviews According to McKinsey “case interviews are broad, two-way discussions, rather than one-way tests and there is no perfect answer”. One is required to analyze the case based on the information provided making apt assumptions as and when required. How you arrive at your answer is much more important than if you answer correctly. Hence in such situations it is very important to engage with the interviewer by constantly communicating your thought process. Case interview questions fall into two broad categories: business cases and estimation cases. Business case is nothing but a problem-solving exercise. Though most interviewers give real world business cases, industry knowledge is not a pre-requisite to ace a business case. Key facts and issues pertaining to the case will be narrated by the interviewer. Feel free to ask any aspect of the case that you don’t comprehend well or are not familiar with. The interviewer is more interested in checking out your thought process and assessing your analytical ability, creativity, and poise. To prepare for business cases we suggest that one should read Macroeconomics basics and practice a few sample case studies from casebooks [8],[9],[10],[11]. This shall help you gain a good understanding of standard frameworks for solving business cases. You should then start practicing case studies with a partner and become comfortable in structuring the problem at hand into manageable sub problems. If you are able to assign a 2-3 level deep tree structure for case study questions and are also able to come up with your own framework (which may be inspired from standard frameworks, but is actually a customized framework tailored according to the problem at hand) your preparation for tackling business cases is going on track.

Estimation cases usually involve estimation of market size for a product/service or estimation of any other variable (e.g. Number of marriages happening in India each year). The key objective of the interviewer is to observe your reasoning process. Arriving at the correct answer is not something the interviewer is looking for, but yes concluding your analysis towards a final answer is desirable. Assumptions made during the analysis should be chosen sensibly and should be properly stated.