1. Tell me about yourself

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to have this interview today. My name is Rosen and I'm a Computer Science student at the University of Oxford. I have always been someone who is technically minded and over the years, throughout my academic career and previous internships, I have built a wide array of skills, qualities, and experience that will enable me to excel as a Solutions Architect at AWS.

I have solid programming skills as well as comprehensive knowledge in Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity, and AI/ML. I am a strong team player and can be relied upon to work quickly, to a high standard, and also within strict timescales.

Outside of work and school, I spend time with family and friends. I exercise on a daily basis to keep myself fit which helps me bring high energy levels and concentration to the workplace. I also spend a decent amount of time dedicated to my continuous improvement and development. This is essential for ensuring I stay at the top of my game in the area of Computer Science, especially when things are constantly evolving.

Note: replace **name, major, university, role, company, and skills** to make the introduction relevant to your interview.

2. Why our company?

Amazon
Amazon has led the way for many years now, not just in the quality of products and services it offers, but how it delivers its products to the customers, and how it always puts the customer at the forefront of everything it does. I can't think of many other companies that start with the customer and then work backwards. This aligns well with my personality as I love working with customer focus. I want to work for Amazon because it is one of the greatest companies in the world and I feel I will be able to learn, grow, and develop whilst working alongside other self-motivated people. Another reason I want to work for Amazon is because of your Leadership Principles. If I demonstrate these in my work, I will reach my full potential and will get to achieve amazing things.

Apple
Due to constant changing of customer requirements, it was amazing to see how Apple ensured that the organization is able to adapt based on the current customer requirements by revolutionizing and innovating the products. I want to work for Apple because you are innovative, creative, and your desire to continually design and build ground-braking products and services is fascinating. This means I will have the opportunity to work alongside a team of bright and talented individuals who all genuinely want the organization to succeed. I want to work in a place that is constantly developing, because this means my skills and expertise will be tested on a regular basis.

Meta

I'm excited about Meta because of its commitment to pushing the boundaries of technology and its vision for the future of connectivity. I've been using Facebook for years, and I've always admired how Meta revolutionized social media, connecting people across the globe in new and impactful ways. The company's focus on building immersive experiences with the Metaverse and its drive to shape the future of communication resonates with me. I'm passionate about creating innovative solutions, and Meta's environment fosters collaboration and cutting-edge research, making it an ideal place for me to contribute and grow.

Microsoft

I'm drawn to Microsoft because of its leadership in cloud technology and commitment to empowering individuals and organizations worldwide. The company's strong culture of inclusivity, innovation, and continuous learning aligns with my values. Microsoft's focus on solving complex problems at scale and its emphasis on using technology for social good excites me. I'm eager to work at a company that drives technological progress while maintaining a human-centered approach to innovation, making it a perfect environment for me to make a meaningful impact.

Google

I'm excited about Google because of its reputation as a leader in innovation and its relentless pursuit of solving complex, global challenges. The company's emphasis on using technology to make information universally accessible and useful aligns with my passion for impactful problem-solving.

3. Why this role?

Solutions Architect role example

I'm passionate about the Solutions Architect role because it allows me to combine my technical expertise with my ability to solve complex problems at scale. I enjoy designing systems that are both efficient and scalable, while considering the bigger picture of business needs. The role excites me because it involves collaboration, influencing key decisions, and ensuring technology solutions align with strategic goals. I'm motivated by the opportunity to create high-impact solutions that drive business success.

Software Development Engineer role example

I'm passionate about the SDE role because it allows me to leverage my problem-solving skills and create solutions that have a tangible impact. I enjoy the challenge of writing efficient, scalable code and continuously improving systems. The opportunity to work on complex projects, collaborate with talented teams, and innovate truly excites me.

Cybersecurity role example

I'm passionate about cybersecurity because it plays a critical role in protecting individuals and organizations from ever-evolving threats. Cybersecurity professionals are frontline warriors, defending against attacks that can have significant consequences. I'm committed to helping society by safeguarding data and ensuring that people's privacy and security are protected in an increasingly digital world. The challenge of staying

ahead of cyber threats and continuously improving systems to keep data secure excites me, and I'm driven to contribute to this important field.

Note: adapt the examples to the role you're going for

4. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Strength:
One of my key strengths is that I'm genuinely passionate about my work in the field of Computer Science. I enjoy diving into complex problems and continuously learning to improve my skills. This passion drives me to take ownership of my work and deliver results that make an impact. I'm also someone who values accountability and always strive to follow through on my commitments.

Weakness:
One area I'm working to improve is my tendency to sometimes avoid asking for help when I need it. I take pride in solving problems independently and am passionate about diving deep and doing research, but I also realize that collaboration and seeking guidance can often lead to faster, better solutions.

Note: it's important to avoid mentioning any red flag weaknesses during an interview. Red flag weaknesses are those that could raise concerns about your ability to perform in the role or align with the company's values and needs. For example, weaknesses related to lack of motivation, inability to work in a team, or poor time management could be seen as deal-breakers. Instead, when discussing weaknesses, it's best to mention something that is genuine but not critical to the role, and also workable and showing improvement. Employers value candidates who are self-aware and continuously working to improve themselves.

5. Do you have any questions for us?

Note: Choose one or two relevant questions to ask the interviewer at the end of the interview depending on the role you're going for.

- What advice would you give to the successful candidate in this role?
- Could you tell me more about the learning and mentorship opportunities in this role? (shows that you're passionate about learning)
- What are some of the key tools and technologies used in your team? (demonstrates that you'd like to learn more about the team)
- I'm interested in the potential for long-term growth here. Do you typically have full-time opportunities to interns who perform well? (good to use in an internship interview as it shows that you have long-term vision about your career)

6. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to handle conflict withing a team and how did you go about it?

In one of my university modules, I was assigned to work on a group project with a team of fellow students. Our project required close collaboration and equal participation from all team members. However, as we began working together, it became evident that one team member was not actively contributing and seemed disengaged from the project. Recognizing the importance of teamwork and the need for everyone's involvement, I took the initiative to address the situation. Firstly, I approached the team member privately to understand their perspective and any challenges they might be facing. Through active listening and empathetic communication, I tried to uncover the root cause of their lack of participation.

After gaining insights into their situation, I took on the role of a proactive leader within the team. I organized regular team meetings to discuss project progress, distribute tasks, and set clear expectations for each team member's responsibilities. To encourage the inactive team member's involvement, I assigned them specific tasks aligned with their interests and strengths, providing them with the necessary support and guidance.

Furthermore, I initiated open and transparent communication within the team, creating an environment where everyone felt comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns. I encouraged active participation by creating opportunities for brainstorming sessions and seeking input from each team member during decision-making processes.

As a result of these efforts, the previously inactive team member started to contribute more actively and became more engaged in the project. By continuously monitoring the progress and dynamics within the team, I ensured that everyone's efforts were effectively synchronized, leading to successful project completion.

This experience taught me the importance of staying calm when resolving conflicts and assuming leadership responsibilities when faced with challenges within a team setting. It also reinforced my belief in the power of effective communication and influencing a collaborative environment to overcome obstacles and achieve shared goals.

7. Describe a situation where you had to work with incomplete data or information

I was working on an internal project for my latest job experience that required me to work closely with another member of staff from a different department.

We had been working very well together for the duration of the project, and we both had different skillsets that helped the project move forward. However, towards the end of the project, I received an email from my colleague's manager saying that she had been taken ill, and that I would need to finish the project on my own. The only way for me to complete the project would have been to use the limited information I had available, which my colleague has previously passed on to me. I carried out lots of research to find out how to complete the elements of the project my work colleague was responsible for.

I ended up taking an online course, and also went online to a couple of technical forums to ask for advice and information for the elements of the project I was struggling with.
I am pleased to say that, after some additional work, and also by using the limited information my colleague has given to me, I was able to put the remaining pieces of the puzzle in place and complete the project on time and to the correct standards, receiving good feedback from my manager.

8. How would you approach a senior engineer in your team that you want assistance from?

If I needed help from another engineer on the team, I would first assess the situation and determine what specifically I need assistance with. Then, I would reach out to the engineer either through chat or in-person and provide them with the necessary context and information about the problem or task at hand. I would also make sure to express my appreciation for their time and expertise. I believe communication and collaboration are crucial in any team environment, and I am always open to both giving and receiving help. I also believe that a diverse set of perspectives and ideas can lead to better solutions and outcomes, and I would welcome the opportunity to work with other engineers on the team to find the best possible solutions.

9. Tell me about a time you had to make a quick decision that was going to have a significant impact on the organization

I was managing a project for a very important client with a small group of people from different departments across the organization. We literally only had 10 days left before the project had to be completed, when the client contacted me with an urgent project specification change request. The changes they were asking for would have a significant impact on the team's ability to complete the project on time, and it would also eat into our project budget. I had very little time to make a decision, and so I decided to agree to the changes, primarily because two of our core values were flexibility and customer focus. The client had been with us for a long time, and I saw their business as valuable for the future health of the organization. Although we ended up making very little money from that project due to the unexpected specification change request, the client was very happy with the results and they went on to spend significant amounts of money with us in the future due to the strong relationship we had built up with them.

10. Tell me about a time you found a simple solution to a complex problem

During a software migration project at work, we encountered a major issue with data compatibility between the legacy system and the new platform. The system stored data in a non-standard format, which made direct migration impossible without a complete rewrite of the data processing pipeline. This was causing delays and increasing project complexity.
My task was to find a way to migrate the data efficiently without overcomplicating the process or introducing unnecessary delays. After analysing the problem, I proposed a lightweight adapter script that converted the legacy data format into a format compatible with the new system. I noticed that only a small subset of transformations was actually required, so instead of rewriting the entire pipeline, I wrote a script in Python, leveraging

existing libraries to handle the necessary conversions. Additionally, I automated the testing process to ensure data integrity during the migration. As a result, the adapter script worked perfectly, allowing us to complete the migration within two weeks: half the time originally estimated. This approach eliminated the need for a complex rewrite, saving the team around 100 development hours. The migration was seamless, with zero data errors, and the project stayed on track

11. Have you ever had to take calculated risk at work?

I've had an experience in the workplace where I had to take a calculated risk. I was working on an important project over the weekend. Unfortunately, my company laptop developed a fault which meant I could no longer work on the project. To buy a new laptop, I needed a permission from my manager was not contactable at the time. I had to decide whether to get a new laptop without my manager's permission so I could continue to work on the project and meet the deadline.

After carefully considering my options, and after analysing the risk to the company of me not being able to finish the project by Monday, I decided to go ahead and buy the laptop. When my manager returned to work, he agreed I had made the right decision. Whenever I take calculated risks, I always put the needs of the company first, and I will never do anything that puts the business in danger.

12. Have you ever failed at work? If so, tell me what happen and how you reacted (Ownership)

I don't like to fail, but if I do, I always take ownership, put things right, and above all, view it as an opportunity to learn, grow, and develop.

During a challenging and exciting project at work in my latest internship, I was part of a team of talented people who were working on the creation of a new product for an important client. The task required us to work together as a team and use our combined expertise to create the product for the client within very scary timescales and specifications. The project should have been a breeze, simply because we had done this type of work together many times before.

We started out as usual with the project manager giving the team the usual brief. I can remember thinking the brief was perhaps not clear enough for the specification required by the client, but I chose not to say anything, which ended up being a huge mistake. Part-way through the project, it became apparent we had missed a very important specification of the product, which ended up putting us two weeks behind schedule.

Although the client was forgiving and allowed us additional time to complete the project, we had failed to deliver on our promises as a team. During the team debrief, I disclosed I had concerns during the initial team briefing, but I chose not to say anything. I apologized for not doing so. As a team, we learnt a lot from this experience, and moving forward, the same mistake never happened again.

13. Tell me about a time you helped someone

Last year I had the privilege to volunteer at a charity event initiative and it was an incredible experience. It was for a UK-based charity organization that supports disadvantaged children and young people across the country. When I heard about it, I wanted to contribute to this cause. I reached out to the local community organization that was coordinating the fundraising efforts in my area and asked how I could get involved. This was around Christmas time and they mentioned that they needed volunteers to wrap presents and raise awareness and funds for the initiative. As part of my contribution, I volunteered to wrap presents and helped organize a gift-wrapping station at a local mall to raise additional funds for the cause. I also organized a presentation at my university to raise awareness about the initiative and its mission to support disadvantaged children and young people across the UK. My Course Office help me set up this presentation. It had more than 50 participants and was designed to educate students on the importance of this initiative and to encourage them to get involved. As a result, I encouraged students to also participate in volunteering activities. Overall, this experience taught me the value of teamwork, collaboration, and community involvement. I am grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to this important cause.

14. Tell me about a time where you had to take feedback and/or change the initial plan of action

As part of my latest work experience, during the design phase of a client project, I proposed a solution architecture that involved using a specific AWS service to meet the client's requirements. However, during the review process, a senior architect provided constructive criticism on the design, suggesting that we consider a different approach that utilized a combination of multiple AWS services to achieve the same functionality in a more efficient and cost-effective way. I took a step back, reviewed the suggested approach, and discussed it further with the senior architect to fully understand their reasoning. Through this discussion, I learned that the suggested approach would not only address the client's requirements but also improve performance and reduce costs.

I appreciated the feedback and made the necessary adjustments to the solution architecture based on the senior architect's suggestions. The end result was a more efficient and cost-effective solution that met the client's requirements and exceeded their expectations. I learned the importance of being open to feedback and collaboration, even if it means making changes to my initial proposals.

15. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond for a customer

One of the most significant projects I worked on during at my last job involved assisting a large healthcare organization in migrating their critical legacy monolith to microservices on Microsoft Azure while ensuring security and scalability. In this project, I had the opportunity to collaborate closely with the client's development team, which comprised individuals from diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Understanding the importance of effective collaboration, I made it a priority to establish strong working relationships with the client's development team. I actively listened to their

perspectives and insights, seeking to understand their unique needs, technical preferences, and any constraints they might face during the migration process. By engaging in open and transparent communication, I fostered an environment of trust and mutual respect, which proved invaluable in driving the project forward.

Recognizing that each team member had different levels of familiarity with Azure and microservices architecture, I tailored my approach to meet their individual needs. For those who were less experienced, I offered guidance and support, patiently explaining concepts and providing resources for self-study. For more experienced team members, I encouraged them to share their expertise and ideas, allowing them to take ownership of specific aspects of the migration. Additionally, I recognized and respected the diversity of perspectives within the team, taking into account cultural nuances and considering how they might impact decision-making and communication styles.

Through effective collaboration and understanding of the client's development team, we successfully refactored the monolithic codebase into microservices, containerized the services using Docker, and deployed them on Azure Kubernetes Service. The infrastructure design provided the necessary scalability, fault tolerance, and security capabilities. By embracing diverse perspectives, we achieved a comprehensive solution that met the organization's specific needs and laid the foundation for their continued success in the cloud.

16. Tell me about a time you took initiative at work and did something outside of your main responsibilities

During my time latest internship, I personally experienced the challenges of the intern onboarding process, which wasn't very well structured and lacked centralized approach. I recognized the potential for improvement and I was inspired to take initiative because I saw an opportunity to make a positive impact on the experiences of future interns.

To begin, I collaborated with various teams and stakeholders, including fellow interns and managers to gather relevant materials and insights. Using my organizational skills and attention to detail, I curated a comprehensive collection of resources, including documentation, guides, best practices, and helpful tips tailored to role. I leveraged internal platforms and tools to create an accessible and user-friendly centralized space where future interns could easily access and navigate these resources. To ensure the longevity and effectiveness of this initiative, I established a feedback loop by regularly reaching out to interns and gathering their input on the resources provided so that their suggestions could be incorporated.

The potential impact of this initiative was significant. Future interns would be able to hit the ground running more efficiently, gaining a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities from the beginning. This would result in increased productivity, reduced onboarding time, and a smoother transition into their positions. Additionally, the centralized could become a valuable platform for interns to connect, share insights, and build a strong sense of community.

This experience demonstrated my proactivity, problem-solving skills, and dedication to improving the intern experience at Microsoft. By taking the initiative to create a centralized resource hub, I showcased my ability to identify a need, collaborate with stakeholders, and deliver a solution that positively impacted both the organization and future interns.

17. Tell me about a project which required you to learn something new

During my latest internship, I was working on an infrastructure development project with AWS. One of the main challenges I faced during this project was adapting to infrastructure-as-code practices, specifically with AWS CDK. Although I had a strong background in software engineering, I hadn't previously worked extensively with infrastructure as code concepts. As a result, the AWS CDK and the infrastructure-as-code approach posed a significant challenge. I was determined to overcome this challenge. Despite not having prior experience in this specific domain, I remained persistent and committed to acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. I embraced the opportunity as a chance to expand my expertise in automating infrastructure provisioning. I immersed myself in learning resources, including online tutorials, documentation. I also sought guidance from my technical mentor who had previous experience with infrastructure as code and provided me with useful resources. Through self-study and hands-on practice, I gradually gained a deeper understanding of AWS CDK and its application in automating infrastructure provisioning. My persistence paid off as I successfully managed to learn the concepts of IaC. Despite the initial learning curve, I leveraged my software engineering background to adapt coding principles to managing infrastructure. As a result, I was able to streamline infrastructure provisioning, reduce errors, and create a more predictable infrastructure.

18. Why should we hire you?

You should hire me for several reasons. I am a very positive person who enjoys the challenge of working on difficult tasks and projects. I have experience working alone and collaborating as part of a team. I am a solid communicator. I will always go above and beyond what is expected in this role. You should also hire me because I am a fast learner. This means you won't have to spend your valuable time closely monitoring or supervising me. Finally, you should hire me because I will always take care of my ongoing professional development. This means the skills and knowledge I possess will always be purposeful and relevant to the position.

19. Share an example of a time when you had to prioritize multiple tasks or projects with competing deadlines. How did you manage your time and ensure successful completion?

During my time in university, I faced a situation where I had to manage multiple tasks and projects with competing deadlines. In one semester, I was taking several demanding courses that required assignments, presentations, and exams to be completed within the same timeframe.

To effectively manage my time and ensure successful completion, I implemented the following strategies:

- Assessing task requirements and deadlines: I carefully reviewed the requirements and deadlines for each task or project. This helped me gain a clear understanding of the scope and urgency of each item on my to-do list.
- Prioritizing tasks: I assigned priority levels to each task based on their deadlines and importance. I identified the critical tasks that needed immediate attention and ranked them accordingly.
- Creating a schedule and timeline: I developed a detailed schedule and timeline to map out my work for each task. This involved setting realistic deadlines for individual steps and ensuring that I allowed sufficient time for revisions and unforeseen challenges. This allowed me to create a structured plan of action and allocate specific time slots to work on each component.

By implementing these strategies, I successfully managed to complete all tasks and projects within their respective deadlines while maintaining a high standard of quality. This experience taught me the importance of effective time management, organization, and adaptability when handling multiple priorities simultaneously.

Overview of behavioural interviews in Big Tech

Amazon: **Leadership Principles (LPs)**
Amazon's behavioural interviews are centered around **16 Leadership Principles** (including Ownership, Bias for Action, Think Big)

Google: **Googliness and Role-Related Knowledge**
At Google, behavioral interviews assess **Googliness**, which includes collaboration, humility, taking initiative, and alignment with Google's culture. They also evaluate role-related knowledge and how candidates align with Google's values.

Microsoft: **Growth Mindset and Core Competencies**
Microsoft's behavioral interviews are based on their **core competencies** (customer focus, teamwork, drive for results) and their emphasis on a **growth mindset**, reflecting adaptability and continuous learning.

Apple: **Apple's Values and Design Thinking**
Apple looks for alignment with their **core values** (innovation, simplicity, user focus). They tend to focus on teamwork, problem-solving, and creative approaches to challenges, reflecting their emphasis on **design thinking** and user-centric innovation.

Meta (Facebook): **Meta Values and Impact-Oriented Thinking**
Meta's behavioral interviews are guided by their **Meta Values** ("Move Fast," "Focus on Impact," "Be Open"). They focus on how candidates create impact, work collaboratively, and deal with ambiguity, emphasizing innovation and adaptability.