Session 5: Interview Part 2

Welcome to Session 5, which will be covered in week 9 & 10. This session is a continuation of the previous session. The main focus of this session is on mastering professional presentation skills and post-interview follow-up.

Recap

- Review progress from the previous session on Interview Part 1 and discuss any tasks you have completed.
- Address any questions or challenges you faced with your mentor.

Activity 1: Professional Presentation

Objective

Master the art of professional presentation before, during, and after an interview to leave a strong, positive impression on interviewers and increase your chances of success.

1. Before the Interview

a. Research the company and role

- **Understand the company culture -** Study the company's mission, values, recent news, and major projects.
- **Role alignment -** Carefully review the job description and identify how your skills and experiences match the requirements.
- **Competitor insights -** Research the company's competitors to gain a broader understanding of the industry.

Pro Tip: Use LinkedIn to review profiles of employees in similar roles to learn about key skills valued by the company.

b. Prepare your documents

- **Resume and cover letter -** Bring 1–3 printed copies of your resume and cover letter.
- **Portfolio or work samples -** If relevant, include work samples or a portfolio showcasing your work.
- **References list -** Prepare a list of professional references, including their contact details.

c. Plan your outfit

- **Dress code research -** Check the company's website or social media for dress code hints.
- **General rule -** If unsure, wear business formal attire—clean, ironed, and well-fitted.

Pro Tip: Avoid overpowering perfumes or accessories that may distract interviewers.

d. Practice common interview questions

- **Behavioral questions -** Practice responses using the **STAR Method** discussed earlier.
- **Technical questions -** Prepare for any technical or job-specific questions based on the role.
- **Mock interviews -** Practice with a friend, mentor, or using online tools like **Pramp** or **Interviewing.io**.

Pro Tip: Record yourself practicing to review body language and tone.

e. Prepare thoughtful questions to ask

- **Examples of questions**
  - *"What are the biggest challenges the team is currently facing?"*
  - *"What qualities do successful employees in this role typically have?"*
  - *"How do you measure success for this position?"*

Avoid: Questions about salary, benefits, or vacation days in the first interview unless the interviewer brings it up.

f. Confirm interview details

- **Logistics -** Double-check the interview date, time, format (in-person, phone, video), and location.
- **Plan your route -** Arrive 10–15 minutes early to allow for unexpected delays.
- **Technology check -** For virtual interviews, test your internet connection, microphone, and camera in advance.

2. During the Interview

a. Make a strong first impression

- **Greeting -** Offer a firm handshake, smile, and maintain eye contact.
- **Politeness -** Treat everyone you meet with respect, including the receptionist.

Pro Tip: Use the interviewer's name during the conversation to build rapport.

b. Demonstrate positive body language

- Sit upright with an open posture to convey confidence.
- Lean slightly forward to show engagement and interest.
- Avoid crossing your arms or fidgeting, as it may signal nervousness.
- Maintain eye contact but avoid staring—balance attentiveness with comfort.

c. Speak clearly and confidently

- **Pace yourself -** Avoid speaking too quickly—pause briefly to collect thoughts when needed.
- **Eliminate fillers -** Minimize words like *"um"* or *"like"* to sound more polished.

Pro Tip: Pause for 1–2 seconds after a question to organize your thoughts before responding.

d. Show enthusiasm and positivity

- **Passion for the role -** Express genuine excitement about the position and company.
- **Avoid negativity -** Refrain from speaking poorly about previous employers or experiences.

Pro Tip: Frame any challenges as learning opportunities rather than failures.

5. Active listening

- Focus fully on the interviewer—avoid rehearsing your next answer while they're speaking.
- **Clarify questions -** If unclear, politely ask for clarification instead of guessing.
  - **Example:** *"Could you elaborate on what you mean by that?"*

6. Be Honest and authentic

- If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and offer to follow up later.
- Show self-awareness about areas for growth but emphasize your willingness to learn.

7. Highlight your fit

- Use specific examples that demonstrate how your skills and achievements match the job requirements.
- Tie responses back to how you can add value to the company.

8. Ask Insightful questions

- Show curiosity about the team's goals, challenges, and growth opportunities.
- Avoid yes-or-no questions—opt for open-ended ones that lead to meaningful conversations.

3. After the Interview

a. Send a Thank You Note

- Send a personalized thank-you email within 24 hours.
- Mention specific points from the interview and reaffirm your enthusiasm for the role.

Sample Follow-Up Email

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Unset
Subject Line: Follow-Up on [Job Title] Interview — [Your
Name]

Dear [Hiring Manager's Name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me about the [Job
Title] position at [Company Name]. I enjoyed learning more
about the team's goals and challenges.

I'm especially excited about [specific project or value
discussed] and how my experience in [relevant skill or
achievement] can contribute to your team's success.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. I
look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,
[Your Full Name]
[Phone Number]
[LinkedIn Profile]
```

b. Reflect and evaluate performance

- **Analyze responses -** Note which questions you answered well and which need improvement.

Pro Tip: Record observations immediately after the interview while they're fresh in your memory.

3. Follow up on deadlines

- If you don't hear back by the expected timeline, send a **polite follow-up email** to check on the status of your application.

Activity 2: Mock Interviews

Objective

Simulate real interview scenarios to practice responses, improve communication skills, and build confidence through constructive feedback and self-assessment.

1. Conduct mock Interviews

Step 1: Plan and set up the interview

- **Choose the format -** Decide whether it will be:
    - Behavioral interview (using the STAR method).
    - Technical interview (problem-solving and coding).
    - Panel interview (multiple interviewers).
    - Phone/Video Interview (remote setting).
- **Set the environment**
    - Dress as if it's a real interview.
    - Create a distraction-free environment with proper lighting and sound if it's virtual.

Pro Tip: Rotate interviewers (friend, mentor, or peer) to simulate different styles and personalities.

Step 2: Use realistic questions and scenarios

- **Behavioral questions**
  - *"Tell me about a time you overcame a major challenge."*
  - *"Describe a situation where you had to take initiative."*
- **Technical questions**
  - *"Write a function to sort an array."*
  - *"Explain how you'd troubleshoot a server outage."*
- **Situational questions**
  - *"What would you do if you had to meet a tight deadline with limited resources?"*
  - *"How would you handle a disagreement with your manager?"*

Pro Tip: Practice responding using the **STAR method** for behavioral questions and step-by-step explanations for technical ones.

Step 3: Simulate the pressure

- Set time limits for each response (e.g., 1–2 minutes).
- Practice maintaining composure when facing tough or unexpected questions.
- Conduct back-to-back interviews to mimic the experience of multiple rounds in one day.

2. Get constructive feedback

Step 1: Ask for specific feedback

- Presentation and communication - Was your tone confident and clear?
- Content of responses - Were your answers structured and relevant?
- Body language - Did your posture, gestures, and eye contact convey confidence?
- Technical skills - Were you able to explain concepts effectively?

Step 2: Evaluate key metrics

- Strengths - What did you do well? Highlight these and build on them.
- Improvements - Identify weak areas and note specific changes to improve them.

Examples

○ *Strength: Clear use of STAR method.*
○ *Improvement: Avoid filler words like "um" or "like."*

Step 3: Create an Action Plan

- Focus on addressing weaknesses before the next practice session.
- Schedule additional mock interviews if necessary.
- Track progress after each session to see tangible improvements.

3. Record and Review

Step 1: Record your interviews

- Use your phone, computer, or video conferencing software to record the session.
- Ensure good lighting and sound quality to accurately assess visual and vocal cues.

Step 2: Self-Assessment Checklist

Aspect	Questions for Review	Notes
Clarity	Did you speak clearly and avoid filler words?	Example: Reduce "um" and "uh."
Confidence	Did you maintain eye contact and show enthusiasm?	Example: Improve opening statement.
Content quality	Were your answers specific, structured, and relevant?	Example: Add more quantifiable results.

Body language	Did your posture and gestures convey confidence and engagement?	Example: Avoid crossing arms.
Time management	Were your answers concise and within 1–2 minutes?	Example: Shorten answers slightly.
Technical knowledge	Did you explain concepts clearly and show problem-solving skills?	Example: Practice more coding problems.

Step 3: Track progress over time

- **Rewatch videos -** Observe improvement by comparing earlier recordings with recent ones.
- **Highlight patterns -** Identify recurring habits, such as nervous gestures, and work to minimize them.

Pro Tip: Focus on one area for improvement per session to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Additional Tips for Mock Interviews

1. Practice elevator pitch
Prepare a 30–60 second pitch introducing yourself, your background, and what makes you a strong candidate.

2. Focus on storytelling

- Use personal anecdotes to make answers memorable.
- Highlight measurable outcomes (e.g., *"increased sales by 20%"* or *"reduced errors by 15%"*).

3. Handle difficult questions gracefully

- ○ *Weakness question:* Focus on growth—*"I'm working on improving my public speaking by attending workshops."*
- ○ *Salary expectations:* Redirect politely—*"I'm open to discussing compensation after learning more about the role."*

4. Adjust for virtual interviews

- ○ Maintain eye contact by looking at the camera.
- ○ Keep your background clean and professional.
- ○ Use headphones for better sound quality.

Tasks to complete before Session 5

1. Schedule at least two mock interviews - Conduct a timed mock interview with a friend or peer. Use different formats and interviewers.
2. Record and review performance - Focus on body language, clarity, and structure.
3. Reflect on learnings - Write down what you learned from this activity and note areas for improvement.
4. Compile feedback - Create an action plan to address specific areas for improvement.
5. Practice follow-up emails - Draft template thank-you emails to send after mock interviews.

Additional Resources

- **Interview prep tools**
  - ○ *Big Interview –* https://biginterview.com
  - ○ *LinkedIn Interview Prep –* https://linkedin.com
  - ○ *Pramp –* https://www.pramp.com
  - ○ *Interviewing.io –* https://interviewing.io
- **Behavioral interview guides**
  - ○ *The Muse – STAR Method Guide –* https://www.themuse.com
- **Mock interview videos (YouTube)**
  - ○ *Top 10 Behavioral Interview Questions and Answers –* YouTube Link
- **Body language tips (Video)**
  - ○ *Amy Cuddy's TED Talk: Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are –* YouTube Link

Key Takeaway

Mock interviews are a **safe space** to refine your skills and gain confidence before the real interview. By focusing on preparation, feedback, and self-assessment, you'll be better equipped to handle any interview scenario with professionalism and ease.

Preparation for Session 6

Focus Area: Enhancing Professional Skills

Prepare to discuss enhancing professional skills in the next session. The goal is to help you develop and enhance your professional skills once you are employed. This session will be the **last session**.

Feedback Form

Please fill out the feedback form below at the end of your meeting. Your input helps us improve the program, and we appreciate your assistance.

Mentee feedback form