

What type of interviews might you expect

Introduction

Getting a job involves jumping through several hoops. After compiling your resumé, identifying a few suitable job opportunities, filling in applications and researching companies, you will begin to receive interview offers. The aim of an interview is to find a good match between the company and the candidate. Every company is different, and every company will conduct the interview process in its own way.

In this reading, you will learn about what is involved in a coding interview, such as:

- What the screening process entails.
- The type of quiz questions you might encounter.
- What an online assignment might consist of.
- The details of a technical interview.
- And any take-home assignments that you might be asked to complete.

Screening

The first contact you will have with a company will be a screening interview. A recruiter, having read your application, will usually arrange a phone call to discuss potential suitability. This stage aims to determine if you are genuinely interested in the role and whether you would be a good fit for the company. It is an excellent opportunity for you, as a candidate, to learn more about the role, the company and their hiring process. Some great questions to ask might include the following:

- What is the role?
- What coding language does the company typically use?
- What is the interview process, what types of interviews will be conducted, and how many will there be?
- What is the nature of the project the proposed role is for?
- What is the typical makeup of the team?
- Who will be on the interview panel, and what is their role in the company?

Remember that the interviewer wants to give you the opportunity to make a compelling case about why you should be hired. They should be more than willing to provide you with any information that might help you better prepare.

From the company perspective, the screening will typically look at your soft or interpersonal skills. There will be no technical questions, and a Human Resources (HR) representative will typically conduct it. Presenting yourself well and demonstrating your social abilities, like listening and question-answering, is essential.

Quiz

A quiz is a very straightforward way of establishing if a candidate knows how to code. Typically, they are conducted early in the interview process and act as a filter to reduce the number of interviews a company must conduct. You

should not expect deep or extended questions; instead, the purpose is to determine whether the candidate has a good grasp of the basics. Some questions could include the following:

- How do you test for nulls in an array in a language of your choice?
- What is the space complexity for Quicksort?
- Which data structure would you use to store a list of keys and values?
- What is a collision in hashing?
- What is the syntax to select a column name using SQL?
- What testing processes are you familiar with?

The questions will be job-specific, so the content may vary. However, they will be questions that should be answered with concise, direct responses. When preparing for an interview, it is prudent to identify which programming languages the company uses and any other technical insights that can be gleaned from the job posting and initial screening.

Online coding assignment

You may be asked to complete an online coding assignment, depending on the job you apply for. This generally happens before a technical interview, as the results can be used as a point of discussion during subsequent interviews. However, the assignment could also occur after a successful technical interview to compare candidates.

This step allows you to approach and solve a clearly defined task in a non-pressurized environment. Similar in difficulty level to the quiz, it is a filtering step to ensure that you can work with the target technology and grasp the basics, like loops, Booleans, checks, and so on. Some coding assignments could be timed; in this situation, you would have access to Google and other reference material.

The technical interview

This is also called the coding challenge. Typically, this will happen after the initial screening. It can either be virtual or in-person. The interviewer will present you with a challenging problem and give you a brief period to solve it. It is always best to discuss your thoughts aloud as you engage with the challenge. For example, before deciding between two data structures, explain why you feel one is more appropriate than the other for the task. Take the opportunity to demonstrate your general understanding of the topic and the task-specific expertise.

The difficulty level of the technical interview should be low. Interviewers know that you don't have access to Google and may have had to memorize some of the required syntax. Instead, these interviews are designed to demonstrate your problem-solving skills. Some technical interviews may be conducted using pseudocode. Additionally, technical interviews allow future colleagues to assess your ability to reason with code. They often include short, specialized prompts like:

- How would you explain technology X to a non-technical person?
- What is your favorite technology and why?
- What databases have you worked with?
- Tell me about a technical challenge you have overcome in a project.
- What projects have you worked on in your spare time?

These are generic prompts, and a technical interview will be tailored for a specific role. However, preparing a few

answers describing your journey as a programmer is good practice. Review your projects and be clear on the various decisions you have made and why particularly when selecting one technology over another.

The take-home assignment

If you get this far, you are doing very well. This may happen before or after the technical interview, as the interviewers may want to discuss your thought process around the solution you provided earlier in the process. If there are many rounds of interviews for the post, then it may happen between two technical interviews. A company should not ask you to do a take-home assignment unless they feel you are potentially a good fit.

You will be given several days to expand on a solution to the challenge. You could be asked to build an application or programmatically solve a traffic routing problem. Other tasks might be project specific, such as, if you are going to work with vision processing, you may be asked to demonstrate that you can automatically detect objects in a video feed.

Top tips

Conduct your research before every interview and review each one on completion. Most companies are happy to provide feedback after your interview, so always ask for this and use the points made as a starting point to be better prepared for the following interview. Remember, practice makes perfect.

Conclusion

In this reading, you learned about what is involved in a coding interview, such as what the screening process entails, the type of quiz questions you might encounter, what an online assignment might consist of, the details of a technical interview, and any take-home assignments that you might be asked to complete.

Several types of interviews have been explained. However, the company you are applying to will have its preferred format, which could take one or more of these approaches. The most important takeaway is that “every interview is a learning process.” Suppose you missed a question or were queried on a technical concept you aren’t familiar with. In that case, the opportunity is there for you to learn more about it post-interview.