

Code Institute Guide to Interview Preparation



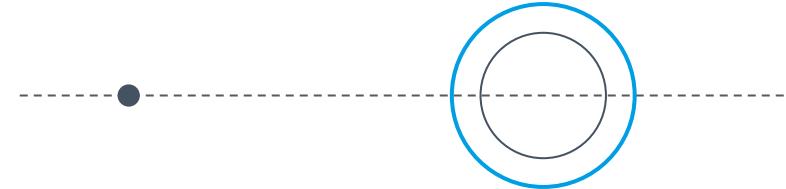
Welcome

Firstly, congratulations on securing your interview, you should look forward to this, prepare well and while it's natural to be nervous remember that good preparation will overcome nerves and help you represent yourself really well. Preparation and using your interview time well is important, so we have prepared some advice to keep you focused and looking forward to sharing your time with these companies!

Remember, interviewing and recruitment systems all vary, so the best remedy to this is to prepare well. Regardless of the potentially technical tests that are involved, communication and people skills are enormously important and this is what this guide is designed to assist with.

For further practice around demonstrating your technical skills we recommend:

- Really focusing on your core technical learnings within the Diploma!
- Allocating time for involvement in the technical challenges on the course, and the additional resources such as the regular Hackathons.



- Activity on GitHub is key - this is the first place a potential technical hiring manager will be interested in looking at.
- Your mentor! Use your final session with your mentor as your technical practice if you would like additional 1:2:1 on this.
- Our Webinars - Hear first hand what employers say themselves around how they assess technical skills, it will really help you to get comfortable!
- Last, but certainly not least, our CAREERS channel on SLACK is a mine of information on what your fellow students and alumni are encountering during technical assessments. It's a great place to learn more.

We hope you enjoy this interview guide, and that it helps you to do your best.

That's all that you can ever do!!!

Happy Interviewing!

The Careers Team

Section 1: Forward Planning

Practical Details:

Virtual Interview - make sure you're happy with the platform, test it, download what you need if required. Don't leave this until the last minute. Or if you have the platform already, make sure you have the log-ins ready and software updated.

Face -to-Face - make sure you've located exactly where it is, and how long it's going to take you to get there. Always err on the side of caution, and allow yourself an additional 30 minutes or so just in case. Some business parks can be tricky to navigate and might have awkward entrances. Check with the recruiter or administrator organising the interview if there is anything you should note about the entrance etc.

Clever Details:

Panel - Check who you are going to be meeting with and have a look at their professional profile on the company site or another open online platform(LinkedIn). Be familiar with their role and professional background, this is impressive and intelligent use of research. They might have started as Junior Developer in that company and worked their way to Team Lead indicating the company rewards hard work with promotion.

Recruiter - if you have secured your interview through an agency or through a T/A team do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are going through a recruiter ask the recruiter:

- Has the company interviewed candidates previous to you?
- What feedback did they receive on previous candidates?
- Questions asked - competency based / technical?

Company - You need to be able to summarise in a few lines what the company does. This may sound obvious - but you can be almost guaranteed that you'll be asked "what do you know about us?" You should have practiced this, summarise it (in your own professional words) and be able to deliver it smoothly, positively and correctly. It's a super opening to an interview!

IE: "Sure - you're an Ecommerce business. You deliver a tailored web based solution to businesses so that they can manage their online commercial offerings through integrating your platform. This is a B2B arrangement - the end user doesn't even know you're there supporting the client. Genius!"

TIP!!! When a company asks you what you know about them, they aren't interested in hearing about when they were founded and how many people work there etc etc. They are looking for your interpretation of what the company does. They are curious about our ability to comprehend things and then how you communicate them back. This is easy - just put some time and thought in and don't over complicate things, practice on others.

If you have researched the company and reiterated it back to someone else, the conversation will flow more efficiently and smoothly in an interview, rather than some rehearsed facts.

Video Interview Must-Dos!

- As already stated - don't forget to check the technologies in use in advance. Test the mic, camera and make sure you're good to go well in advance.
- Basics - hardware check! Are you plugged in? Connectivity isn't an issue!
- Grab a glass of water and some stationary - you may want to take notes
- CAMERA - the etiquette here is cameras on unless otherwise stated.
- Take a careful look at your background. It should be neat, as neutral as possible ideally, well lit and private. If you're in difficulty with where you're having the interview, pick a background or blur things. There are plenty of options available!
- Present yourself as you would in a face-to-face interview, do not slouch in the chair. Sit up straight and in the centre of the screen.
- Dress appropriately - it's always important to look organised, professional and focused on the job in hand. Check yourself out on the screen before settling on your outfit - it does matter! This shouldn't impinge on your own sense of style and work dress is decidedly more informal than before - but ideally your clothes shouldn't totally distract from the important conversation, I would recommend something plain.
- Privacy - it's really important to remember that this is a private interview. Have a chat with your housemates if you're living with people or family members - stick a sign on the door to avoid surprise interruptions! It's hard to perform at your best if you're distracted. Plus, it is hard for people to conduct an interview with others present. There are also laws that govern privacy around interview situations that are designed to protect all parties. Respect them!



Section 2: Interview Mistakes to Avoid

There are a few basic, yet vital interview mistakes you need to avoid and again, a lot of it comes down to either preparation or practice.

Talking too much/too little! - Allow for silences, take your time to think about your answers. Keep your answers sharp and to the point. Do not be afraid to simply end an answer and pause waiting for the next question. Get the balance right though, you need to be forthcoming about yourself in an interview, and aid the flow of conversation.

Body Language - remember non-verbal communication is believed to make up more than 90% of total communication so make sure your body language is positive

Previous Employers: A major No -No in an interview is speaking negatively about a current / previous employer. Avoid, avoid, avoid! If there's something sensitive in your work history, figure out a way of smoothly presenting it, and don't use negative language here.

Section 3: Competency-based Interviews

Competency-based interviews are designed around examining competencies or skills relevant to the job you are being considered against. The style may be unfamiliar, as it is not designed to explore your career history in detail. Rather, the purpose is to collect information about how you behave at work. The interviewer has a list of set questions and all candidates being interviewed for a particular position are asked the same structured questions. This provides a fair basis for comparison.

How to structure your answers: Your interviewer will be looking for you to provide examples of your actual behaviour at work rather than hypothetical ideas about how you may do something. These are situational based questions - on most occasions you will be advised of the competencies being explored as you progress through the interview. PREPARE in advance!

Preparation

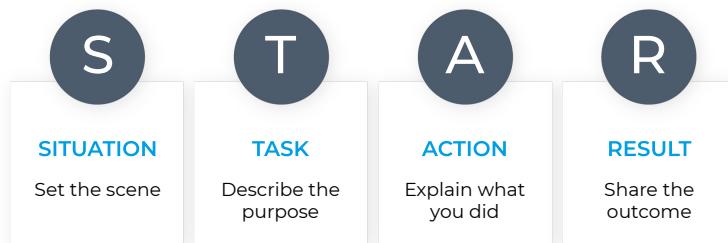
Before the interview you may find it useful to reflect on your career to date, focusing on key work experiences and any projects you have been involved in, as well as the way you typically approach your work. It will probably be useful to make a mental note of key achievements that you may want to refer to at some stage.

How to respond to competency-based questions:

The best way forward is to look for some of the key competencies mentioned in the job description, look at your CV and find examples of each competency. Many positions will seek applicants with excellent teamwork and leadership skills so your goal is to think of examples of this in your previous jobs.

The classic STAR model is a good way to prepare:

The interview will require you to draw on past experience and describe specific examples of incidents that demonstrate your competence in a particular area. The most effective way of answering these questions is to use the STAR technique:



Situation: Describe the background to your example, the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge at work.

Task: Next, describe your responsibility in that situation. What you had to do. Perhaps you had to help your group complete a project within a tight deadline.

Action: How did you do it, you then describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did rather than what your team did.

Result: Summarise what happened, explain the outcomes or results generated by the action taken. It may be helpful to emphasize what you accomplished, or what you learned.

Here is an excellent answer to a competency-based question that is testing working to a deadline and under pressure as a competence:

Q: Tell me about a time you had to complete a task within a tight deadline. Describe the situation, and explain how you handled it?

A: While I typically like to plan out my work in stages and complete it piece by piece, I can also achieve high-quality work results under tight deadlines. Once, at a former company, an employee left days before the imminent deadline of one of his projects. I was asked to assume responsibility for it, with only a few days to learn about and complete the project. I created a task force and delegated work, and we all completed the assignment with a day to spare. In fact, I believe I thrive when working under tight deadlines.

Section 4: Standard HR Questions

Be prepared with answers and supporting examples to standard HR questions such as:

- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What are our core values?
- What interests you about our product/service?
- Of your previous jobs, which did you enjoy most and why?
- How have you managed conflict at work in the past?
- Describe what you have done in your career that shows your initiative.
- What are your biggest strengths?
- What are your career aspirations?
- What does teamwork mean to you?
- What style of management gets the best results from you?
- Tell us about something that you're particularly proud of?
- How would your manager describe you?

For all of the above, your answer can be structured clearly, delivered positively, and well managed. An interview situation is not a time to be overly modest, be comfortable in critiquing your proudest moments and big wins. Also remember to be gratuitous about your current/previous teammates and be able to detail what you find challenging and how you overcome it. Keep the narrative linear, comprehensive and as uncomplicated as possible without compromising the punch of the story!

Section 5: Example Questions

An important thing to remember before you start any interview, is that this panel has a NEED to hire! They really want to hire someone that they feel confident in and comfortable with. They too are hopeful that their time spent with you will be fruitful, and that they will be hiring! They are not trying to catch you out or trick you in any way!!! This isn't a test, it's an exploratory conversation designed to enable them to understand as much as they can about you in the short time available.

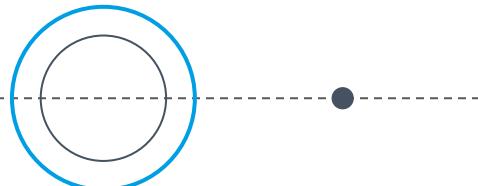
An interviewer will want to know what motivates you. Ways of discovering this are by asking:

- Would you describe yourself as self-motivated? If yes, why?
- Can you give an example of a time when you made a suggestion to improve something at work?
- What happened? Was it implemented?
- What was the level of supervision in your last job?
- What was your relationship with your supervisor/manager like?
- How would your last manager/current manager rate your performance and how would you rate it yourself?

TIPS: Don't be afraid to reveal a little about your personal self here. You don't want to fall into the trap of oversharing (!!) but allowing a panel to see a bit about what makes you tick is an important part of the process of getting to know one another. Plenty of CI students are exceptionally self motivated, juggling our flexible program with families, full time roles, and sacrificing time to invest in themselves professionally. Don't be afraid to explain this in positive professional terms! Commitment to something is a hugely attractive quality in a team mate or an employee.

They might want to see you demonstrate self-awareness - ways of discovering this are by asking:

- If I was to ask your last supervisor or a colleague to describe you, what would they say?
- In your last job, how did you go about organising your day?
- Can you describe a time when you were under pressure at work? How did you go about handling the pressure?
- Would you describe yourself as organised? What makes you describe yourself in this way?



TIPS: Be honest here. Also, don't over complicate things. Self organisation comes down to diary management, prioritisation of tasks and realistic planning. Plus, awareness of what's going on around you and the external influences within the workplace that can both aid / distract your work! Explain how you manage your day in language that someone else can understand clearly. It's logic and smart planning that is required in order to make sure that your manager doesn't have to do all this for you. This can be especially important in today's changing remote work environments, as managers recognise that workers will require self motivation in order to consistently maintain their working day.

To succeed in any role today, we all need to be team players:

- Can you tell me about a time when you helped a team you were part of achieve its goals?
- Can you tell me about a time there was conflict in a team you were in?
- What happened and how was it resolved?
- Do you prefer to work alone on a task or with others?
- Does anything frustrate you about working with other people on a daily basis?
- Are you a member of any teams or groups outside work?

TIPS: Teamwork is important - and it boils down to respect and communication. By spelling out that you understand the importance of regular, organised communication and awareness of how to try to successfully manage this, you're demonstrating that you know it's not always plain sailing. Things do go wrong, and they will continue to in the future; the important note here is try to minimise them, and ultimately how we respond to them maturely if/when they do is the key skill. Planning, organisation, calm responses and ideally a touch of appropriate humour helps here!

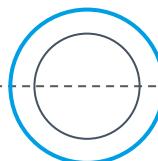
An interviewer will want to know about where you see yourself in the future:

- Would you describe yourself as ambitious? If yes, why?
- If we were to hire you, how long would you see yourself staying with us? (Example answer: "Gosh! Well I certainly would be entering into the employment with a strong sense of commitment. Looking forward as long as there is an equal commitment to growth and learning then it could be forever!"
- Where would you like to see yourself in five years' time? What are you going to do to ensure you reach those goals in five years' time?
- Do you plan to study further in any particular area?

TIPS: Balance honesty intelligently here! Over ambition will result in you sounding naive, bolshy domination of the company in the next 12 months sounds tiresome. Ambition and progression are super characteristics, but must be intelligently presented with a sense of realism. If you have identified in the interview that you're talking to people in a company that has great characters and plans, that they will work with you as you grow, will respect and manage your career in a healthy environment and you can progress appropriately as you reach new milestones, then you're in a great position. Try to explain it this way! Recognising that bringing great skills is something you can add, and that you too need and want to learn more is a great balance to strike.

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Then there are the awkward questions:

- Why should we choose you for this position?
- Could you tell us a bit about yourself?
- What did you think of your previous manager? (shows attitude)
- What three words would you use to describe yourself?
- If I was to ask a friend to describe you what would they say?
- What do you think you would bring to this role?
- Why do you want to work for the company?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How would colleagues describe you?
- How do you deal with difficult people in your office?
- Can you tell me about a project that you completed? Where did it go wrong?
- How did you deal with the problem and what did you do to resolve it?
- What are the two most significant accomplishments in your last assignment?
- What are you most proud of?
- What is wrong with your current position? NEVER BAD MOUTH YOUR PREVIOUS COMPANIES - this is really important don't bring negativity with you, it's left at the door.
- What are your career goals?
- What will you bring to us that no one else will?
- What other positions are you applying for?
- What are your salary expectations? TRY NOT EXPAND ON THIS
- How have you achieved your targets?
- Do you have any other questions?

Closing Stages of an interview:

In most organisations, there will be a portion of time allowed at the end of an interview where you have the opportunity to ask questions. This is REALLY important!! It's a key measurement of your interest and thought process in regard to this company and the role you are interviewing for. Prepare some questions in advance, and really avoid anything like "No, I have no questions you've covered anything"....(There are loads of things you don't know yet!)

Should I ask a question? YES.

Always aim to have one or two questions to ask as this is a great opportunity to show off that you have researched the company. These questions really should be job specific, and provide you more information about their expectations, team plans, project plans etc. This is also another opportunity to showcase yourself - this is howling how well you've listened, incorporated what they have shared with you and applied it to thinking ahead about life within the team. It's a MAJOR disappointed from a recruiters perspective if a candidate is not processing this info and demonstrating clear thought progression.

Here are some good ones:

- What are your expectations on the person you hire? Say in the first three months?
- Do you hire into this team regularly?
- Why / Why not? - by this you're finding out if this is based around a new project, someone moving on, additional needs etc.

- What sort of people have done well in this team/organisation?
 - What do you like about your role in the company?
 - How would you describe your organisational culture?
 - How is the company positioned against its competitors?
 - What is your vision for the future? What are the plans, if any, for growth or expansion?
 - What are the three things that would make someone an outstanding success in this role?
 - What is the next step in the process?
 - If I was taken on, what is the most pressing objective for me in the next three to six months?
 - What type of support will I be getting in terms of people's support?
 - If they have asked you a lot about what you want in the future - flag this, and ask if their company run formal career progression plans?
- Do your research with salary guides and sites to get an idea what you ought to be paid for the role based on your experience and decide what range you're willing to take.
 - Do your own maths and realistically be familiar with your expectations, and your bottom line! Don't forget that there are benefits, training, access and environment you should also place a value on. What makes the best decision in the long term, not just the immediate.
 - Working with a recruiter can be useful as a recruitment consultant will work with you to get you the best offer you can.
 - If/When salary is brought up, don't be shy - be clear on what you're looking for and need, and allow the company a little bit of time to investigate whether it fits with their budget.

MONEY - MONEY - MONEY: We would advise not to bring this up at an early stage interviewing, especially the first round. I wouldn't use the time for questions to be focused on remuneration. However, salary is fundamentally an important part of work and accepting offers, so in an ideal world companies will be upfront about this. Not all interview processes are run in an ideal world though!

Ideally, you will have an idea of the range being offered for this role and they will have an idea of what you're willing to take. However, if you're uncertain how to handle this we advise the following steps:

Here are some helpful online resources for tech tests and you can also opt into a technical test with your mentor as part of the last session.



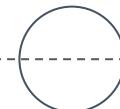
Second / Third Round Interviews:

As we all know, different companies will run their recruitment process in a way that they determine themselves. Often there are multiple rounds, with different stakeholders etc.

Behind the scenes, as more and more team members meet you, they typically are being asked for their feedback so that an entire profile is being built on how you are progressing. The key term here we are looking for is CONSISTENCY.

Very often, either fatigue or misunderstanding can set in on the part of the candidate. Please remember some tips to get you through various stages, especially if you feel they are similar conversations with different people:

1. Don't be afraid to use the same examples, stories, and descriptions of yourself.
2. DO NOT ASSUME that because you've told it before, that this person has heard it before. They haven't!
3. As you progress through these stages, it's because you are being recommended. Allow each panel member that you're meeting to get the same fresh impression and energy that you did so well in previous stages.
4. Often candidates think that 2nd/3rd stages are for them to sit back and be asked questions as they have already talked a lot about themselves. This is so often not the case, and the stakeholder coming into the interview is expecting the same preparation and forthcoming communication that you would have prepared for your 1st interview.
5. Bring information that you're learning forward, and reference this as much as you can in later conversations. It's great to sound increasingly familiar and comfortable with the team.
6. Don't complain - I know that these processes can seem a bit drawn out sometimes, but perseverance and commitment is often one of key characteristics that companies are testing here. Stick with it - you will always be learning something!



At the end of the interview.

In your parting comments be sure to thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet you. Reaffirm your interest in the job and company. You will leave a lasting impression on the panel if you end strongly by telling them you want the job and would be delighted to progress to the next round.

Finally - GOOD LUCK and most importantly BE YOURSELF!

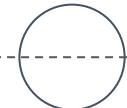
We Wish you the best of luck with your Interview!

Also - when you start receiving offers, allow yourself time to consider them if you feel you need to. Especially if you're in multiple processes, and would like to finish out as many as you can. It's reasonable to be allowed a few days to think this over, which you should ask for if you need it. Be honest though, and keep communication lines open at all times. If you decide to turn down an offer, do this graciously and ideally in as personal a manner as you can. Your reputation is really important, and you may be back in these peoples company again at some point further along your career journey.

Always thank people for their time,

Good Luck!

The Careers Team





University
Credit-Rated

Industry-Approved
Curriculum

Flexible
Learning Options

1:1 Tutor &
Mentoring Support

High Success &
Satisfaction Rating



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