**1. Your “Story”**

o 100-150-Word Outline

▪ The Beginning:

▪ Finance “Spark”:

▪ Growing Interest:

▪ Why You’re Here Today and Your Future:

o 200-300-Word Full Version –

**2. Your 3 “Short Stories”**

o “Success” Story –

o “Failure” Story –

o “Leadership” Story –

o “Adversity” Story –

**3. Strengths and 3 Weaknesses**

o Strength #1 –

o Strength #2 –

o Strength #3 –

o Weakness #1 –

o Weakness #2 –

o Weakness #3 –

**What They Want To Know From You**

**Liberal Arts:** Do you know accounting and finance? Can you do math? Can you work

long hours and deal with psychotic people?

**You want to be at [Company X]:** Why do you want to work for them? What do you bring to the table? Do you fit in there? Will you be a good long term investment for the company?

**FULL TEMPLATE:**

**Interviewer:** Why don’t you start by walking me through your resume?

**Interviewee:** “Sure. So I grew up in **[Location Name]** and learned about business early on from **[A family member, an activity like stock trading, a book, an activity, etc.]**. I went to **[University Name]**, since **[I won a scholarship there / it had a great program in something I was interested in, etc.]**, and I majored in **[Major Name]**.

In university, I did two internships at **[Company Name]** in **[Position Name]** roles and received good reviews there. I did a lot of writing and **[Donor outreach, event planning, advertising/marketing work, or anything else that was more qualitative]**, but I also had the chance to **[Do something business-related, such as writing about finance or M&A or hedge funds, or help the company cut costs, boost sales, raise capital, etc.]**.

As I **[Did more of the business-related task]**, I became interested in investment banking and **[How companies grow, manage their budgets, raise capital, think about acquisitions, etc.]**.

So then I **[Joined the student investment club / started taking accounting or finance classes/did an investment banking case competition / other experience and activities related to banking]**.

I also **[Did a more relevant internship, such as working at a boutique bank]**, and I had to balance classes with work and was studying and working for 70-80 hours per week in that time. I also learned a lot about **[M&A, capital raises, valuation, deal analysis, specific sectors, etc.]**.

I’m here today because I want to combine my **[Major/internship industry background]** with my finance experience, and advise **[Industry/Geography]** companies on **[M&A and financing deals]**. And since **[Bank Name]** has a great reputation in that area, with deals like **[Name a Deal]**, joining your group is the best way for me to get there.”

**Resume Outline**

**Beginning:** Where you’re from, your university, and your internships/activities. Insert a brief mention of some interest in finance at a younger age. Spark: A banker you met, an internship project, or an activity or class that sparked your interest in finance.

**Growing Interest:** Networking with bankers, self-study of the technical side, stock-

market investing, case competitions, etc.; also give a short example of how you can handle the hours.

**The Future and Why You’re Here Today:** You want to combine your liberal arts

background with finance and advise companies on major transactions, ideally in an

industry related to your major, internships, or background.

**Fit Questions**

**1. Can you talk about a team project or group activity you’ve worked on before?**

(You should use your “Success” story and the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) structure for this one. Aim for 100-150 words to keep your answer under 60 seconds.)

**2. Can you describe a situation where a team did not work as intended?**

(You can use your “Failure” story here. Resist the urge to blame others and instead use this question to state one of your weaknesses/areas for improvement and explain how you’ve been improving.)

**3. Can you tell me about a time you faced an ethical dilemma in a team or with a co-worker?**

(You could use any of your short stories for this question but focus on a different aspect of it – namely, disagreeing with a team member over the right course of action. You don’t have to cite a gigantic “ethical dilemma”; it could be something where the person suggested doing something that was borderline-unethical but not definitively wrong.)

**4. What was the most difficult situation you faced as a leader, and how did you respond?**

(This question is almost the same as the one above, but you should use your “Leadership” story for this one and focus on the key challenge(s) you overcame. Spend more time describing that challenge and the ACTION you took rather than the Situation.)

**5. Can you tell me about a time when you stepped up and demonstrated leadership even when you were not in an official leadership role?**

(You can use your 3 “short stories” to answer this question, but you should stick to the one where you did not hold an official title or leadership role. Most likely, that means you’ll use your “Success” story or “Failure” story. It’s a bit better to use the Success story since this question doesn’t relate to a weakness or failure.)

**6. Do you work better as a leader or a follower?**

(You can function as both a leader and a follower depending on the situation. You do this all the time, even at the entry-level, so you have to be OK with both roles. For this question, you can use your “Leadership” story and also speak about an aspect of the story where you were more like a team member rather than the official leader.)

**7. What is your leadership style?**

(Everything in investment banking is task and goal-based, so you probably don’t want to say “laissez-faire” or “hands-off” for this one. But you also don’t want to say you’re a dictator or autocrat. Use a “middle of the road” response where you say that you like goals and task lists, and you don’t like to micromanage, but you will step into the details when it’s necessary.)

**8. Does the leader make the team?**

(No – the team makes the team. The leader provides direction, resolves problems, and unifies everyone, but the team is much more than just the leader. For this question, you could use your “Failure” story to illustrate a challenge or your “Leadership” story if that one better illustrates the importance of teamwork.)

**9. Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult team member.**

(This question is a prime candidate for your “Failure” story, but your “Leadership” or “Success” story could also work well. The structure is the same: STAR, 100-150 words, and focus on your learnings, takeaways, and how you’ve been working to improve your teamwork and leadership skills.)

**Strengths & Weaknesses**

**Strengths**

• Your Quantitative or Analytical Abilities – You could cite this as a strength and then use

• Your Client Management Skills – You could cite this as a strength and use the second or third stories above to support it.

• Your Ability to Work in or Lead a Team – You could use the second or third stories to

support this one. Even though the second story is a “failure,” you still achieved some

success because you helped your clients get better outcomes.

• Your Attention to Detail – You could cite the first story to support this point and explain how you found small details in the company’s financial reporting that others missed, which saved the company time and money.

• Your Work Ethic and Ability to Work Long, Stressful Hours – You could cite the third

story to support this point and explain how you had to meet a tight reporting deadline, which was critical since the company was public.

• Your Interest and Knowledge of Finance – You could point to the third story and explain how your knowledge of the company’s accounting systems and internal budgeting process resulted in a successful outcome.

**Weaknesses**

**• “I’m not always good at delegating tasks, so sometimes the workload isn’t divided**

**evenly among team members.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This is a real weakness, but as an Analyst (or even Associate), you won’t be delegating that many tasks on the job. Also, you don’t say that you’re too much of a perfectionist or that you do too much of the work.

**• “I sometimes take too much time to make decisions, or I second-guess myself, which makes it take longer to complete tasks.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This is a real weakness that could hurt you in banking, but bankers still want you to make the correct decisions and do the work correctly above all else.

**• “Sometimes I don’t speak up even when I’m sure that someone else on the team or a superior has made a mistake or overlooked something.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This one is good because it’s not a universal weakness – it depends on the context. In some cases, you have to shut up, and in other cases, you have to speak up, so you can spin it any way you want.

**• “I don’t always manage my time well, and sometimes I focus more on finishing urgent tasks than making long-term plans.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This is a variation of “I focus too much on details and don’t always see the bigger picture,” but it’s more specific and less of a cliché. You could also back it up by pointing to a long-term project that didn’t go well because you were busy with day-to-day emergencies.

**• “Sometimes I have trouble saying ‘no’ to requests from co-workers and classmates,**

**which makes it harder to complete my own work.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This can be a real weakness in certain situations (e.g., it’s 3 AM,

and you need to finish a pitch book by 7 AM), but it’s not necessarily a deal-breaker.

Bankers do want you to help other teams and respond to requests from others.

**• “I submit my projects and work on time, but sometimes I forget to follow up and**

**check to see what I need to change or improve.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This is a legitimate weakness that could hurt you in IB, but it’s not that serious a weakness... since you still get your work done. Also, in most cases, it’s up to the senior bankers to respond and tell you what to fix or improve.

**• “In team settings, I find it tough to balance doing the work itself and also managing**

**others and answering their questions.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: This one is a weakness/challenge that every manager experiences, so it is legitimate, but it won’t affect you as a junior banker that much since you’ll mostly be doing the work.

**• “Sometimes I’m too ‘soft’ evaluating others and giving them useful feedback, which**

**makes it harder for a team to function well.”**

Why It’s Acceptable: The supporting example is critical because this one sounds vague if you present it as is. A good supporting story might be: “I’m a teaching assistant, and, as a student myself, I feel guilty grading other students too harshly. But I’ve been working with my professor to refine the process and become more critical.”

**Questions to Ask**

1. What types of resources do interns receive over the course of the internship?
2. As you have seen many intern classes pass through Putnam programs, what have you seen be distinguishing qualities of the most successful interns? / What have you seen the most successful interns done in the past to set themselves apart?
3. What about **[Company X]** has led you to stay for **[Y number]**  years?
4. (If it’s a person doing what you want to do) Coming from **[X University majoring in blank]**  how did you find that your background prepared you for **[X position]**.