



# **HOLY GRAIL TO APPLICATIONS**

**PART 3: INTERVIEWS**

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# 1 | PREPPING FOR AN INTERVIEW

If you followed our guide to perfecting your resume, your preliminary application should blow the minds of recruiters! However, as you impress recruiters, you now face one of the biggest hurdles to the application process: the dreaded interview. The pressure is now on to show who you are outside your resume, but with proper preparation, the interview process doesn't have to be a daunting experience. In this section of the Holy Grail to Applications, you will learn how to set yourself up for success by managing different interviews expectations, calming pre-interview anxieties, and learning how to maintain a professional prose inside and outside of the interviewing room.

## Investigating the Position

Knowing *when* to apply to job or research postings is important, since applying at the right time can increase your chances of receiving an interview. For most summer student positions, the search for positions begins near the end of winter and the start of spring. If a summer position is your top priority, you should ideally be making around 5-10 application submissions, depending on the industry.

When you have been invited for an interview, your next step is to familiarize yourself with the company and industry that you are about to get into. Showing that you are informed is one of the best ways to leave a good impression, such as knowing the job description and the company or institution's philosophies.

# 1 | PREPPING FOR AN INTERVIEW

## Interview Anxieties

Talking about your story and leveraging your experience to connect with the position can be nerve-wracking. You can manage your interview anxieties by being extremely prepared for your interview. One great preparation technique is to practice answering questions out loud and with a friend! This technique gets out the interview-jitters while simulating a low-stake interview scenario that gets you ready to think about and respond to questions in real time.

You can also prepare a short list of go-to segues to use when you're at a momentary loss of a response. These segues can be experiences that emphasize widely-relevant skills, like leadership, or express your interest in the position.

Remember that it is most important to show that you are confident in your abilities and experiences. Get into the mindset that you are there to learn about the company as much as the interviewer there to learn about you.



# 1 | PREPPING FOR AN INTERVIEW

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Type	What is it?
<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Series of problem solving and aptitude testing</li><li>• Can occur remotely, through a phone call, or through in-person demonstrations</li><li>• Preparation with practice questions is highly recommended (ex. string/array/matrices, binary trees, computer algorithms, bit manipulation)</li></ul>
<b>Behavioural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment of interpersonal and critical thinking skills in different scenarios</li><li>• STAR method is the most common way to structure your answers</li></ul>
<b>Multiple Mini Interview (MMI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rotating between different stations</li><li>• Each station presents a task or scenario (ex. Ethical, essay writing, role-play)</li></ul>
<b>Closed File</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviewer does not have access to your application</li><li>• More of a conversational approach, trying to paint out as much of yourself as you would with a stranger</li></ul>
<b>Open File</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviewer has access to your application</li><li>• Prepare to talk about all experiences you have submitted in the application</li></ul>
<b>Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More than one interviewer</li><li>• Listen and acknowledge each interviewer and their perspectives</li></ul>
<b>Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More than one interviewee</li><li>• A test of leadership, teamwork, communication and interpersonal skills</li><li>• Listen and acknowledge other interviewees and their perspectives</li></ul>

# 2 | SELF PRESENTATION

First impressions are important. How you present yourself can convey a lot to someone before you even open your mouth, and first impressions are about much more than which outfit you decide to wear to your interview. Luckily, a first impression does not have to boil down to one perspiration-prompting moment. There are ways to prepare yourself, and showing up to your interview with an understanding of what details are quickly noticed by an interviewer can help you ensure you're making all the right considerations. Read onwards for advice on how to dress, introduce yourself, monitor your posture and demeanor as well as reminders of what to bring with you to your interview!

## What to Bring to In-person Interviews

### Interview Essentials

- A couple pens
- 5 copies of your resume and cover letter, each stored in separate folders so that they do not wrinkle and are easy to access.
- A list of references.
  - Include their name, title, department, organization, phone number, and email address.
- Pack of gum or mints
  - For use prior to (not during!) your interview

### Better to leave it at home...

- Family and friends
- Snacks and drinks
- Reading material for wait time before interview
- Smartphone (it should not be in your pockets, but may be stored safely in your bag on silent)
- Earbuds for listening to music
- Any competitors' products

# 2 | SELF PRESENTATION

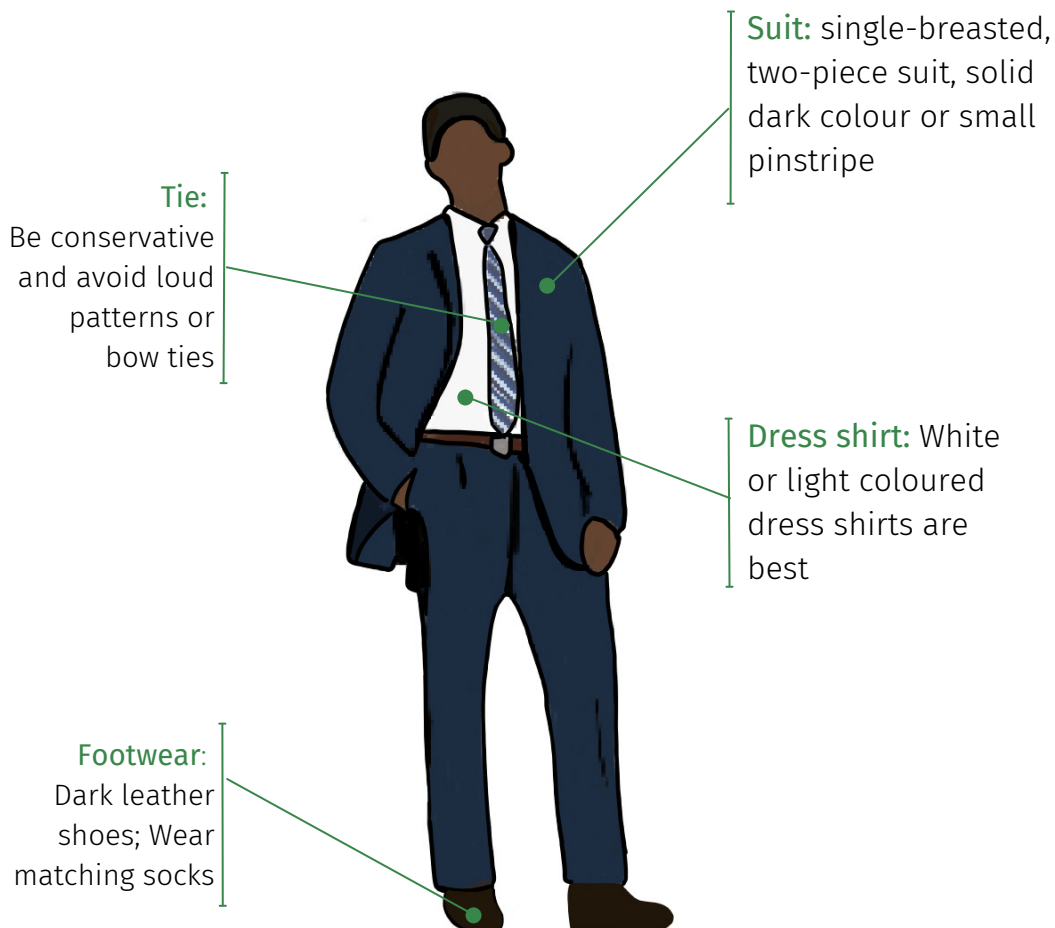
## What to wear

Deciding what to wear is a crucial part of the interview process as it is the first thing the interviewer will notice about you. But before you run off to the mall in search of a new outfit, it is important to consider the company culture. Will you be expected to wear a suit everyday? What type of environment will you be working in? These are important factors to consider before selecting an outfit.

### General notes:

- Avoid bright colours and stick to darker tones
- Avoid strong colognes or perfumes
- Cover tattoos and remove body piercings
- Consider the company culture!

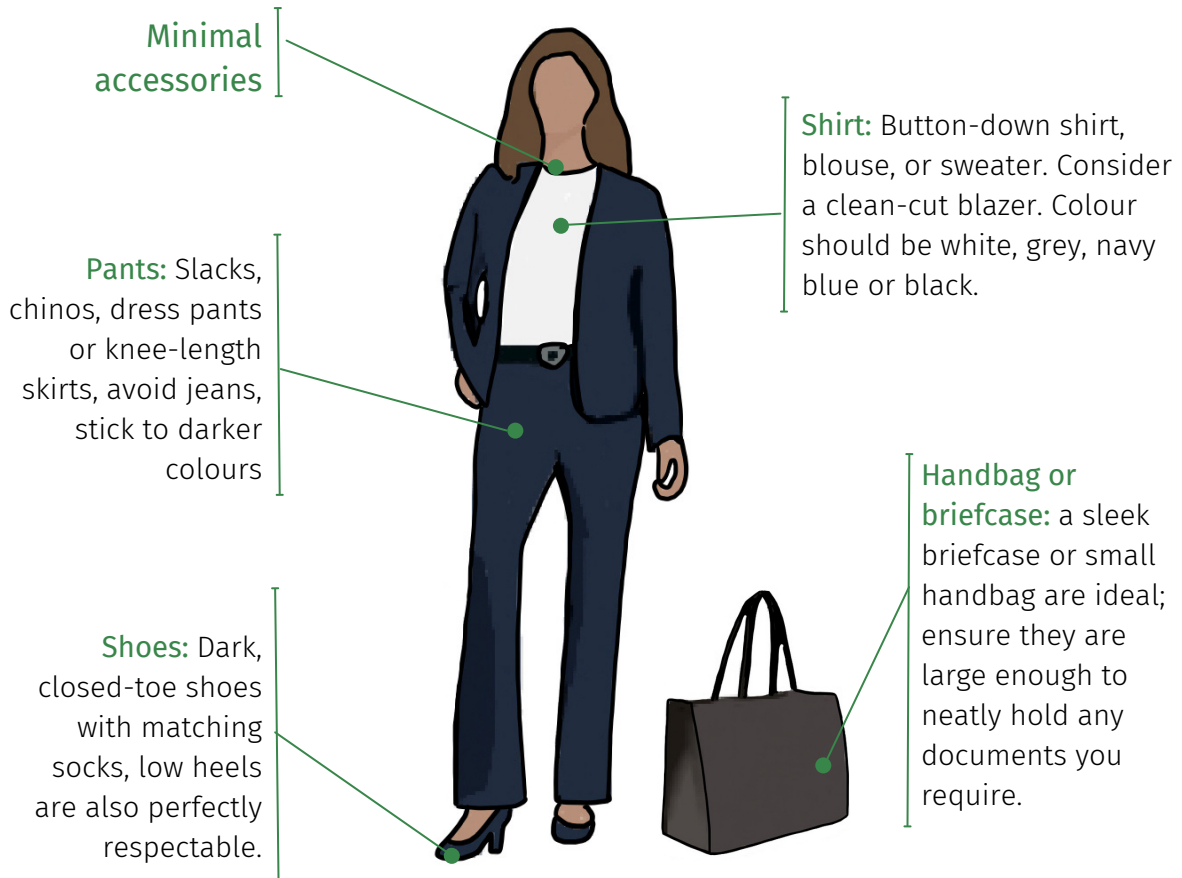
## For Gentlemen



# 2

# SELF PRESENTATION

## For Ladies





# 2 | SELF PRESENTATION

## Introductions

Ensure you arrive approximately 15 minutes early to your interview. Punctuality is always noticed, while tardiness always earns you a demerit. But being late to your own interview is not just disappointing for your interviewer, it is also stressful on your part! Arriving to your interview with some time to spare allows you to properly take in the pace and energy of the work environment, gives you time to calm your nerves, and accounts for any buffer time required to find the right floor, the right hallway, or the right door to your interview room.

When it's time for your interview to begin, make sure you start off with a firm handshake. Make eye contact and share a smile with your interviewer before introducing yourself clearly. Relaxed but confident body language can be conveyed through proper posture. Stand tall, try to hold no tension in your shoulders, avoid a nervous wringing of your hands, and do not force a smile— you should appear genuine, prepared and excited about the opportunity of introducing yourself and sharing your accomplishments.

The more you internalize that an interview is a good learning experience for you and a chance to assess if the company is the right fit for you, the more comfortable and confident you will appear!

**Tip For Zoom!**



If your interview is being conducted online, make sure that you consider what will appear in the background of your video camera. Minimal backgrounds, like clean walls, or bookshelves will not be distracting to an interviewer, while a kitchen, bedroom or living room backdrop come off as unprofessional. Ensure that there is proper lighting to highlight your face, and find a quiet space where no family or pets will interrupt. After all, you wouldn't expect your pet cat to run across the desk in an in-person interview!

# 3 | DURING THE INTERVIEW

## Common Questions

What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Tell us a little bit about yourself. These questions ring in the ears of interviewees, though preparing to answer these questions can be a challenging task. In this section of our guide, we have created an overview of some common questions you can expect to be asked to better prepare for your interview. We will go over how to approach some of these difficult questions as well as mistakes you can avoid. Keep in mind that this guide should be used as a starting block and you should expect and prepare for more than just the questions that we have listed.

### General Tips:

- Be clear and concise - Use positive, forward-focused language
- Link all your answers to the job requirements
- Do not ramble. You do not want to take much time away from other questions in the interview
- Be specific in your answer, avoid providing surface-level answers without further elaboration
- Show instead of telling. Let your skills and competencies reveal themselves naturally as part of your story rather than stating them explicitly for your listener.
- Incorporate impact. Choose to highlight the projects or engagements you worked on that impacted a company's strategy, people, or processes in a positive way

## Examples of Common Questions and Tips

### *A | "Tell me about yourself."*

"Identify what it is you want the interviewer to know about you and why it is relevant. Your interviewer already knows your education and job history from your resume so there is no need to reiterate those facts unless they are in service of your "point" (from IVEY handbook).

### Good questions to ask yourself before answering this question:

- What is important for someone to know about you? What are some personal philosophies you have/certain values you believe in? How would they apply to the position?
- What skills are relevant for the role?
- What makes you stand out (don't be afraid to think beyond your resume)

### What to do:

- Discuss interests that relate to the job and why your background makes you a good candidate for the specific job. Your background can include anything that you think is fitting for the job (e.g. school, experiences, past jobs, volunteering experiences, etc.)
- Talk about your program/major and your university: Why you chose your major, how it impacted who you are now, what have you learned about yourself through your degree, what clubs/volunteering experiences have you gained.
- Briefly discuss major career events. For example, taking time off to gain experience, travelling to different countries for volunteering, etc.

### What not to do:

- Do not delve into your entire life story. Be as professional as possible when asked this question. Remember that the overall goal of the interviewer is to assess if you are fit for the job- leave out information that is not relevant

## **B | "What are your Strengths and Weaknesses?"**

### **Weakness:**

#### Why they ask:

The recruiters want to see whether you are able to demonstrate self-awareness and show the willingness to work on your weaknesses.

#### How to answer:

- Never talk about a weakness that you are not trying to improve
  - E.g. Not good at public speaking but have been volunteering to run meetings.
- Find weaknesses that are either fixable or not fundamental to the job
- Choose an actual weakness that you are trying to improve
  - Shows self-awareness and the ability to critically analyse your skills
  - Provide examples and share what you're doing or have done to overcome it

#### Poor examples

- *'I am a perfectionist'* → overused and sounds superficial
- Any answer that reflects bad attitudes/habits
  - E.g. *Procrastination, laziness*
- Answer that undermines ability to do the job

## **Strengths:**

### **Why they ask:**

The recruiters want to see that your strengths are in line with the qualifications of the role and are looking for specific qualities and experiences that set you apart from the rest.

### **What to do:**

- Discuss interests that relate to the job and why your background makes you a good candidate for the specific job. Your background can include anything that you think is fitting for the job (e.g. school, experiences, past jobs, volunteering experiences, etc.)
- Talk about your program/major and your university: Why you chose your major, how it impacted who you are now, what have you learned about yourself through your degree, what clubs/volunteering experiences have you gained.
- Briefly discuss major career events. For example, taking time off to gain experience, travelling to different countries for volunteering, etc.

### **What not to do:**

- Do not delve into your entire life story. Be as professional as possible when asked this question. Remember that the overall goal of the interviewer is to assess if you are fit for the job- leave out information that is not relevant

## ***C | "Give me an example of a Past Conflict and tell me how you Approached the Problem."***

### **How to Answer:**

1. Briefly mention the conflict that occurred
2. Describe your role in the situation
3. Explain how you approached the problem and any actions you took to resolve it
4. Share results that prove how the outcome was positive

### **What not to do:**

- Do not say that you do not handle conflict well or say you've never experienced conflict. This is unrealistic.

## ***D | “What interests you about this role and why do you want to work here?”***

### **Why they ask:**

The recruiters want to know what motivated you to apply and if you understand the company’s goals as well as how you can contribute to it.

### **How to prepare:**

- Do research on the company and share something that stands out to you
  - How responsibilities of the role align with personal interests
  - Opportunities for progression
  - Environment and work culture
  - Past projects or current initiatives - mission statements
- Get in touch with someone to get insight
  - Pro-tip: Do not mention the name in the interview

## ***E | “What is your greatest achievement?”***

### **Why it is asked:**

Do not worry, the employer is not attempting to get you to reveal arrogance. The employer wants to know what makes you stand out, how you view success, and whether you have the ambition to succeed.

### **How to Answer:**

Remember that your greatest accomplishment is subjective to yourself. Choose a scenario that you can discuss and elaborate on.

Use the STAR Method as a general outline to structure how you should answer the interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result.

<b>Key Idea</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>S: Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In what context did the accomplishment occur?</li></ul>
<b>T: Task</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was your goal and what challenges did you face?</li></ul>
<b>A: Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What skills did you employ to complete the task?</li></ul>
<b>R: Result</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What did you learn from the experience and why is it your greatest accomplishment?</li></ul>

## ***F | "Out of all the Candidates, why should we choose you?"***

### **Why they ask:**

Recruiters will ask this question at the end to search for specific qualities that will differentiate between a good and a great candidate.

### **Questions to ask yourself before answering this question:**

- What additional context can you add to help tell your professional story?
- How can you demonstrate progression and personal growth?



### **How to prepare:**

- Find out why the company is looking to hire and present how you could fill the gap they are looking for
- Prepare another accomplishment that you did not touch upon in the interview that highlights qualities you think are relevant
- Search for a past problem the company has faced or current initiatives and describe how you would act in those situations

# 3 | DURING THE INTERVIEW

## How to behave during an interview

1. Monitor your posture
2. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
3. Follow conversational cues and practice active listening behaviours
4. Keep a positive, friendly and attentive attitude
5. Beware of nervous mannerisms
6. Sit when you are asked to sit, and not before.
7. Keep all mobile and electronic devices on silent and out of sight.
9. **Make mental notes as you go.** Listen attentively to anything your interviewer says after your response, and try to relate to relevant ideas in the following questions.

## What to avoid during an interview

1. **Do not panic if you feel the interview is going poorly**
  - Focus on answering the current question as if it is the first question - with confidence
2. **Do not talk negatively about past jobs or employers**
  - Instead, paint past challenges in a positive light and discuss what you've learned from difficult situations, and how you might apply what you've learned to new challenges
3. **Do not bring up money or time off (unless employer asks)**
  - This reflects that you are more interested in the pay and vacation days instead of the job as an opportunity to exercise and grow your skills
  - Seek clarification of these questions for later rounds

## Standing out as a candidate

### 1. Connect on a commonality, briefly.

- If there is a natural way you can connect with your interviewer on some personal detail, take advantage of it, as this can help you leave a more memorable impression.

### 2. Answer questions with examples.

- Instead of saying that you would be an asset to the team and bring in new ideas to your new role, demonstrate how you'd do it. Sketch out an idea of how you'd approach solving a problem, and bring up some past challenges you've overcome or experiences you've learned from.

### 3. Incorporate the company's values in your answers.

- Demonstrate that you've done your research on the company and that you are capable of internalizing their values and embedding them in your work.

### 4. Show your authentic self

- Finding out that there is a natural chemistry between you and the interviewer can go a long way. Be honest about your areas of expertise and also your areas in need of improvement. There is always room for improvement and no one is expecting you to be perfect for the role already.

### 5. Treat the job interview like a conversation

- If you want to stand out in your job interview, don't step into the interview thinking that it is just a quiz you need to pass.

### 6. Ask strong questions at the end of an interview

- Having prepared questions demonstrates curiosity, genuine interest, and forethought. You can ask about the position, current projects, challenges, why they're looking to hire someone, or what direction the company is headed in.
- Some example questions might be:
  - What have past employees done to succeed in this position?
  - Do you have any hesitations about my qualifications or experience?
  - What do you [the interviewer] like most about



## Speaking about your accomplishments

It is important to be proud of your accomplishments, and an interview is the perfect opportunity to speak about all you have worked hard for. No one else can speak on your behalf, and no one else knows how much time, effort, creativity and commitment you put into your work! Still, it is important to know how to speak about your accomplishments to a potential employer.

### General Notes:

- If possible, quantify your achievements with numbers, percentages and statistics.
- If you can't quantify them, describe a qualitative achievement, like the impact of your work. Use specific examples that highlight the many steps and considerations you had to make to achieve your goal or overcome challenges.
- Bring up keywords required of your position (like leadership, collaboration, and organization).
- Prioritize achievements that are relevant or that demonstrate your transferable skills in relation to the position requirements.
- Make sure to distinguish between your roles (what was expected of you) and your accomplishments (how you successfully met challenges or went above and beyond your roles)
- It is great to convey confidence, but draw a line between being proud of your accomplishments and being boastful or arrogant. There is always room to grow and many new challenges to face in the new role you are applying for.

## PROBLEM-ACTION-RESULT (PAR) technique

**P**

Identify the **PROBLEM** that you were confronted with

**A**

Describe the **ACTIONS** you took to meet your goal(s) and overcome challenges

**R**

Summarize the tangible or measurable **RESULTS** you achieved

### Questions to help you precisely describe your accomplishments:

- What critical issue did you resolve?
- Did you create or build something?
- How did you follow a plan through from an idea to a measurable result?
- How did you successfully overcome challenges?
- How did you contribute to a decision or a change?
- How did you increase efficiency, profitability or overall turnover?
- Did you help someone achieve his or her goals?
- Were you recognized for your work with an award or congratulations?

# 4 | POST INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

## Keeping in Touch

Congratulations! You just made it over the largest hurdle in the recruitment process after being grilled with questions. Now all you need to do is wait and hope for the best, right? Of course not! Your potential as a candidate is still in your control even after your interview, which is why it is important to maintain consistent professional prose after the interview is over. Here are some things you can do after an interview to ensure you continue to impress recruiters or admissions officers:

- Ask the interviewer for any relevant contact information: how you should follow up, with whom, and when
- Ask when you may expect to hear back, and from whom
- Analyze your feelings about the position and place you are applying for; did anything about the company surprise you (i.e did this company/position seem like the right fit for you)? Note these down for future job searches to know what to look out for
- Analyze your performance in the interview and add any points you did not have a chance to bring up during the interview in follow up emails or calls

One of the most important things you can do after an interview is to keep in touch with recruiters through email or phone. This should ideally be done within 24 hours after the interview as a chance to thank recruiters for their time and consideration, recap some of your strengths and experiences, or some questions you felt you did not get to answer completely.



## Thanking the Employer after the Interview Email Template

New Message	
To	Cc Bcc
Subject	
<p>Dear [employer],</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to interview me regarding the [position and company name]. I enjoyed our conversation about [a topic discussed] and it was great learning more about the [job title] position and the [company name] team overall.</p> <p>It sounds like an amazing opportunity and I believe this is a position I could excel and succeed in. I look forward to hearing any updates regarding the position. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.</p> <p>All the best,</p> <p>[Your Name]</p>	

If it has been a while since you expected to hear back about your candidacy, it may be in your best interest to reach out once more and politely ask recruiters what the status of your application is. However, when reaching out for updates, proceed with caution. Although you may be anxious to hear back, be careful not to contact recruiters excessively to avoid spamming their communication lines and coming off as overly invasive.

### Declining Interviews

In the case that a position no longer intrigues you or you have already accepted a position before your next interview date, it is important to professionally communicate your status to recruiters. Try not to decline at the last minute—give companies time to contact backup candidates. Be honest about your declination as the interconnectedness of companies in an industry allows your actions to be known by other companies. Start with an email with thanks for the opportunity to speak with recruiters. Be sure you get an answer to confirm that they are aware of your decision. If you don't get a response back, contact the recruiter verbally by phone or voicemail. State you have tried to contact them via email, and verbally inform them of your status.

## Managing Offers

Professionalism does not stop even after finally receiving that crucial call or email. Regardless of whether the news is good or bad, always respond positively by thanking recruiters once more for their time and the valuable experience they have given you. If you hear that you were unfortunately rejected from the application pool, it would not hurt to reach out and ask what recruiters think you should work on or what they think defines a strong candidate.

If you have been given an offer that you would like to accept, be sure to prepare some extra questions to better understand the role if not already covered during training or orientation. For example, ask who your supervisors will be, when will you begin tasks in this position, what systems must you familiarize yourself with, and other logistical questions. Most importantly, be sure that you are given a written offer if you were informed of the recruiters' decision verbally.

Questions about the role should not be inquired if you do not plan to accept the offer to avoid leading recruiters on and prematurely rejecting other applicants. Reach out and inform recruiters of a deadline by which you will be making your decision, buying you time to consider your options.

If you find that a position no longer interests you after receiving an offer, be sure to decline professionally as you would decline an interview.

## Declining an Interview/Offer Email Template

New Message		
To		Cc Bcc
Subject		
Dear [employer],		
Thank you very much for considering me for the position of [job title] at [company name] and for inviting me for the interview. However, I would like to withdraw my application for this position.		
I sincerely appreciate the time taken to review my application and thank you again for considering me for this position. I wish you the best of luck in your search for a candidate.		
Best regards,		
[Your Name]		

# 6 | FAQ

## **1. When should you inquire about pay, vacation, and benefits?**

It can come off as quite disrespectful to jump to inquiries about compensation and benefits in your first interview. This can make you appear extrinsically motivated at a time when you should better appear interested in making meaningful changes to your position and motivated by personal growth.

It is best to wait until you've made it to the second or third round of interviews before you broach the subject of pay and benefits. By this point, the company shows strong interest in taking you on for the position. But do not postpone for too long, because it is important to know these details before you accept the position!

## **2. How long are interviews supposed to last?**

The length of an interview is not necessarily a strong indicator of how strong your interview was. There are many other factors, like the interview's busy schedule or how clearly the needs of the position have been defined, that impacts the length of the interview. The length of a job interview can also vary based on the complexity and impact of the role. Usually, if a role is more complex, the interview will be longer. However, a professional interview usually lasts around 45 minutes to an hour.

## **3. If you encounter a question to which you do not immediately have an answer, how do you approach the situation?**

If you do not immediately know how to answer an interview question, do not fret! Interviewers may purposefully ask difficult questions or pose novel scenarios in order to assess how you think on your feet when presented with a challenge. Slow down, take your time, and think out loud. Consider what steps you might need to take to solve the problem, using transitional phrases like "first," "next," and "finally."

## **4. How can I practice for an interview?**

Employers are generally interested in your most recent experiences, so focus on the experiences you have gained during university, or experiences that go back about 4-5 years. Unless you're in first or second year, you can omit experiences from high school.