

List of Competency Interview Questions

Investment Banking > Interview Preparation



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Investment Banking interviews typically start with a battery of questions about yourself. All those questions you will get in the investment banking interview have a single purpose and are trying to assess Adaptability, Analysis and Problem Solving, Commercial Awareness, Communication, Decision-Making and Judgment, Influencing and Persuasiveness, Leadership, Motivation, Relationship-Building and finally Teamwork.

About Yourself

1) Why did you choose to study economics/chemistry/history, etc.?

2) If you are from overseas, prepare to answer why you chose London?

(Mention all the positives about London and how it is a financial center, multicultural, etc.)

3) What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Good strengths include being a hard worker, analytical, curious, being a good communicator, a good team player, resistant to stress, don't give up easily. "Good" weaknesses can be being impatient, taking a lot of time to make decisions, because you always need a lot of information, being inexperienced in finance (of course, that could describe all of the students), being a bad loser. Characteristics not to mention: your intelligence, introversion, shyness, or individualism.

4) Have you enjoyed your study? Why?

(Answer must be "Yes.")

5) What is the achievement you feel proud of or least proud of?

The best examples are where you had to make a lot of effort, either hard work or team achievement. You can use sports, major study projects, or personal travel. The least proud achievements can be any kind of failure, but you need to show that you have learnt from that failure.

6) What would your teachers or other students describe about you? (See strengths and weaknesses.)

7) Give me an example of an important goal, which you have set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you overcome the obstacles?

(Mention what you learned from this and how you improved.)

8) Tell me about a goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did it make you feel?

(Again, mention what you learned from this and how you improved.)

9) Give me an example of instances in which you made mistakes and what you learned from them.

10) What courses have you liked most? Least? Why?

11) Why did you select your university? (Don't say, "It was the best"! Just mention classes, location, extra-curricular clubs, etc.)

12) What do you do in your spare time?

13) What would you most like me to know that is not in your resume? (Answer can be that you grew up in an interesting place or an interesting experience you had.)

14) How competitive are you? (Don't say: "I'm extremely competitive". Just add examples saying that you enjoy participating competitive activities such as sports, events, etc.)

15) Tell me about the time you worked the hardest in your life.

Motivation

1) Why investment banking? (Please see our article on this specific question.)

2) Where do you see yourself in five years?

3) What are the most important things to you in a job?

4) Why did you choose to interview with us?

5) Why investment banking versus sales and trading? What is the difference?

6) In what area of investment banking do you want to work? Why?

Adaptability

1) How do you work under pressure and stress? Describe a time of working under an intense time pressure or deadline. How did you handle it and react?

2) Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result? How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give some examples.

3) Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?

Analysis and problem solving

1) Give me an example showing how you demonstrated your quantitative ability.

2) Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?

3) Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. To whom did you make the recommendation? What was your reasoning? What kind of thought process did you go through? Why? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?

4) Tell me about a problem that you solved in a unique or unusual way.

5) If your boss is shouting at you for an error you didn't make, how would you react?

Challenges

1) Talk about a leadership experience - describe a leadership role of yours.

2) What are some key lessons you have learned about motivating people?

3) There are two analysts; one works very hard but his performance is just ok. The other one does not work hard at all and sometimes not in the office, however, his performance has been outstanding. If you were the manager, what would you tell those two people during their performance review?

4) Tell me about a time when you successfully resolved a conflict.

5) If your associate keeps giving you more work that you can handle and treats you unfairly, how would you handle the situation?

Initiatives

1) Tell me about a time when you were entrepreneurial or took initiative, and the end results.

2) Describe a recent unpopular decision you made. How was it received? How did you handle it?

Teamwork

1) How do you deal with team breakdown, difficulty, or disagreement?

2) Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate or colleague who was not doing their share of work. How did you handle it?

3) Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale.

- 4) What types of people do you have trouble getting along with? Why?
- 5) What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients to guiding and maintaining successful business relationships?
- 6) How do you get people to do things they don't like to do?

Business Awareness and Commercial Judgment

- 1) Have you ever had to sell an idea to your classmates or friends? How did you do it? Did they accept your idea?
- 2) What do you think makes our bank successful in the current economy situation?
- 3) What qualities do you think make someone successful in business?
- 4) What do you think about the recession? When do you expect it to recover?
- 5) What do you think are some good investments in an economic downturn?

Tough Questions

- 1) Based on your CV, what do you think concerns us about you? Knowing what you know about yourself, what would concern us most about you?
- 2) What negative feedback did you get from your classmates or at a previous internship/job?
- 3) Of those banks you interviewed with up to the second or third round and didn't give you offer, what feedback did they give you and why? If not, why do you think they didn't give offers?
- 4) Describe a time you have had to compromise on your standards, and why

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