

Interview Cheat Sheet

Everything you need to prepare, perform
and follow up – the night before any interview.

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**FREE
RESOURCE**

For students applying
for jobs, apprenticeships
& work experience

01

The STAR Framework

Use this structure for every competency question.

Keep answers to 90–120 seconds.

Prepare 5–6 examples before any interview.

**No work experience?
Use school, sport
or volunteering.**

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Situation

Set the scene. Where were you? What was the context?

e.g. "During my part-time job at a local supermarket last summer..."



Task

What was your responsibility? What needed to happen?

e.g. "I was responsible for serving customers and keeping my till accurate."



Action

What did YOU do specifically? Focus on your actions, not the team's.

e.g. "I stayed calm, apologised to the customer, and called my supervisor."



Result

What happened? Include numbers or specific outcomes where you can.

e.g. "The customer left satisfied and my manager praised how I handled it."

Top 20 Interview Questions

Know these before you walk in.

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want this role?
3. Why do you want to work for us?
4. What are your strengths?
5. What is your biggest weakness?
6. Tell me about a time you worked in a team.
7. Describe a challenge you overcame.
8. How do you handle pressure or stress?
9. Give an example of good customer service.
10. Tell me about a time you showed initiative.
11. What motivates you?
12. Where do you see yourself in 3 years?
13. What do you know about our company?
14. How do you manage your time?
15. Tell me about a mistake and what you learned.
16. How do you take feedback from others?
17. What makes you stand out from other candidates?
18. Are you comfortable working independently?
19. What are your career goals?
20. Do you have any questions for us?

Tip: "Tell me about yourself" = 60-second summary. "Why this role?" = show research. Never say "for the money."

03 | Strong vs Weak Answers

Q: What are your strengths?

"I'm really organised. When studying for GCSEs I built a revision timetable, stuck to it, and got the grades I needed. That discipline carries into everything I do."

Q: Tell me about a difficult situation.

"A group project member wasn't contributing. I spoke to them privately, found out they were struggling, and rearranged the workload. We delivered on time."

Q: Why do you want this apprenticeship?

"I've been interested in engineering since a robotics project at school. Your structured training programme is exactly what I'm looking for."

"I'm a people person and I work hard."
No example, no evidence. Anyone can say this.

"I can't really think of one."
Preparation failure – always have 2–3 STAR examples ready.

"I don't want to go to university and this pays well."
Shows no interest in the role or company.

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Pre-Interview Checklist

Complete the day before.
Do not leave it to the morning.

THE DAY BEFORE

- Research the company – what they do, their customers, recent news
- Re-read the job description and match your experience to it
- Prepare 5–6 STAR examples covering key themes
- Write down 5 questions to ask the interviewer
- Know your CV inside out – ready to talk through everything
- Plan your route – allow extra time for delays
- Bring 2–3 printed copies of your CV
- Bring ID if requested

THE DAY OF

- Prepare your outfit – clean, pressed, appropriate for the role
- Get 7–8 hours sleep
- Eat something before you go
- Arrive 10 minutes early – not 30, not 5
- Turn your phone on silent before entering the building
- Greet the receptionist professionally – interviews start at the door
- Take a bottle of water
- Take a notepad and pen

Same standards. Different setting.

TECH & ENVIRONMENT

Camera

Test camera, mic and internet the day before

Background

Use a neutral, tidy background

Eye level

Camera at eye level – not looking up from a laptop

Focus

Look at the camera when speaking, not your own face

Lighting

Window in front of you, not behind

DURING THE CALL

Apps

Close all other tabs and apps before the call

Phone

Phone on silent and out of sight

Water

Have a glass of water nearby

Notes

Notes nearby – but don't visibly read from them

Time

Join 2–3 minutes early and wait in the lobby

Body Language Do's and Don'ts

Interviewers form an impression in the first 30 seconds.

✓ DO'S

Firm handshake if offered

Smile when you enter — it signals confidence

Maintain natural eye contact throughout

Sit up straight — open posture shows engagement

Nod occasionally to show you're listening

Speak at a steady pace — nerves make people rush

Pause before answering — signals thinking, not panic

✗ DON'TS

Don't cross your arms — it looks defensive

Don't fidget with hands, pen or hair

Don't look at your phone or watch

Don't slouch — it signals disinterest

Don't speak too fast — slow down deliberately

Don't interrupt the interviewer

Avoid 'um' and 'like' — practise to reduce filler words

07

5 Smart Questions to Ask

"Do you have any questions for us?"

Always say yes.

Avoid leading with questions that are already answered in the job advert or on the employer's website.

Questions about pay, benefits, hours and holiday entitlement are completely reasonable, but are often best discussed at the appropriate stage of the recruitment process

QUESTION	WHY IT WORKS
<p>1 What does a typical day or week look like in this role?</p>	<p><i>Shows practical thinking, not just wanting the job.</i></p>
<p>2 What does success look like in the first three months?</p>	<p><i>Signals ambition and drive from day one.</i></p>
<p>3 What are the main challenges someone in this role typically faces?</p>	<p><i>Shows maturity – not assuming it'll be easy.</i></p>
<p>4 How would you describe the team culture here?</p>	<p><i>Shows you care about fit, not just the salary.</i></p>
<p>5 What opportunities are there to develop skills or progress in this role?</p>	<p><i>Strong signal of long-term thinking and ambition.</i></p>

Post-Interview Checklist

What you do after matters. Most candidates do nothing.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER

- Write down the questions you were asked – while fresh
- Note what went well and what you'd do differently
- Send a brief thank-you email within 24 hours
- Connect with your interviewer on LinkedIn after the decision
- Follow up politely if you hear nothing – once only

NEXT STEPS

- If you get the role: confirm start date and ask what to prepare
- If you don't: ask for feedback – most employers will give it
- Apply feedback before your next interview
- Keep a record of every interview and question asked
- Don't take rejection personally. One is data. Ten is a pattern.

Thank-you email – Subject: Thank you – [Role Title]

"Hi [Name], thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I really enjoyed learning more about [specific thing] and I'm even more excited about the opportunity. I look forward to hearing from you. Best regards, [Your name]"