

CASE INTERVIEW PREPARATION

You've done the hard work to network, form your resume, and tailor your cover letter, and now you have landed an interview! It is no easy feat to make it to the case interviews, so congratulations! Now it's time to prepare...

What are employers looking for in a case interview?

- How do you think? How are your logical thinking and organizational skills?
- Do you have the analytical ability to think through quantitative questions?
- What is your tolerance for ambiguity and data overload?
- How are your poise, self-confidence, and communication skills under pressure?
- What is your personality?
- Are you genuinely excited by problem-solving?

How are you going to prepare?

There is a large amount of preparation that needs to go into getting ready for case interviews. The interviewers expect you to come in prepared, with solid frameworks and structured ideas, which can only come with practice. Here are some steps to get you ready for the interview:

- Read case interview prep books. Read them once, read them again, and then read them again. These books lay out frameworks that can be applied to many cases that you will face. Some resources to consider include:
 - Case in Point, Ace the Case, Crack the Case, Case Interview Success
- Understand the different types of case questions. More details on the following can be found in Case in Point and other resources:
 - Market sizing case
 - In this case type, you will be asked to guesstimate how large the market is (in \$) for a particular item. You'll walk the interviewer through your thought process, and make reasonable assumptions throughout.
 - While there is some basic information you should have in your mind, you are not expected to know industry-specific information. This is not about getting the right number; it is about showing how you break down a problem and use logical thinking to backup your answer.
 - Business strategy case
 - You will typically be presented with a business situation and be informed of a problem the company is facing. Depending on the interview, you may be expected to probe the interviewer with questions to determine the cause of the problem or, in some cases, the interviewer will guide you with pointed questions. Be ready for either – the free form or the guided case. Free form is more challenging, but it allows you to demonstrate more of your knowledge and creativity.
 - Types of business cases:
 - Profit and Loss, Entering a New Market, Pricing, Growth strategies
- Practice your mental math. It may sound silly, but interviewers expect you to do calculations in your head or quickly do them on paper. Being comfortable doing percentages and working with large numbers is important for these interviews since you will undoubtedly be given quantitative questions. A good resource to use for timed math problems is caseinterview.com.
- Keep a Case Journal. As you do cases, write down the problem in the case, the solution, and what you didn't think of when you first did the case. Then review your case journal before your case interviews to refresh your memory.
- Practice cases from a variety of resources: company websites (BCG, McKinsey, Bain, Deloitte), Case Questions Interactive (CQI), business school consulting clubs, etc.
- Attend a case interview workshop. Several firms will also hold case interview workshops prior to their on-campus interviews to help get students prepared. Remember, employers want you to do well!
- Practice case interviews with a variety of people to help you discover different tips and interview styles. The best people to do practice interviews with are professionals at the firms at which you will be interviewing. They know what their specific firm is looking for and can give you cases that will be similar to the ones you will see in your interview. Consider reaching out to BC alumni in the field through LinkedIn, as they're often very willing to help you!
- Ensure you are finding time for your own wellness. Make time to relax, destress, and focus on other aspects of your life as well. Preparing for a case interview is time consuming, and you want to make sure you are well-rested, relaxed, and able to fully commit to the process during your allocated prep time.

What is going to happen on interview day?

- Bring plenty of paper or a padfolio, a pen, and enthusiasm to the case interview!
- Maintain your poise. Interviewers want to see how you react under pressure and they may challenge you.
- Maintain eye contact. Treat the case like a conversation and the interviewer as one of your teammates.
- Take the time to think through your framework in the beginning. This will save you time later and help you structure your thoughts throughout the case.
- Follow this framework for answering questions:
 - Summarize the question back to your interviewer. This gives you time to think and fill the silence, while ensuring that you wrote down the accurate information.
 - Verify the objective.
 - Do you need to clarify any information? Some interviewers will not give you all of the information you need, so it is your job to realize this and ask for the relevant information. Instead of asking, “Do you have any additional data?” try to think about the specific data that you need, such as, “Do you have any information on the revenue trends for the industry over the past three years?”
 - Lay out your structure.
 - State a hypothesis. It does not need to be correct, but you will refer back to it throughout the case as you prove or disprove it.
- Double-check your math and do a quick reality test before stating the answer. The interviewer wants to know if they can put you in front of a client, and no one wants to see someone blurt out a number that isn’t in the ballpark range.
- Lay out your notes, and only write on one side of the paper. This way you will not get confused flipping between pages, especially on the longer cases that could take 4-5 pages of notes.
- Make a clear recommendation and stick by it. Interviewers will often challenge your choice, so you want to stand by it to show that you are not easily swayed. However, if they bring up a point that you forgot to consider, you may need to reevaluate your decision.
- Always end the case by providing a summary. Even if you are not specifically asked to summarize, it shows that you can connect all of the data to support your recommendation. This will be easier if you underline or star key points as you go through the case. It is also your opportunity to bring up “Next Steps” or other creative ideas you may have thought of that could set you apart from other interviewees.
- Even in case interviews, there will often be 5-10 minutes at the end for you and the interviewer to chat. Have a few questions and/or talking points prepared. Since you only have a few minutes you’ll want to demonstrate your interest in the position and why you are the best fit. Know how to answer “Why Consulting, Why X Company, and Why You?”

After the Interview

- Send a thank you email to all of your interviewers the day of your interview. Try to be more personalized than the standard thank you email and mention something you discussed.
- If there is a time delay between your interview and decisions coming out, mail a written thank you note to your interviewers. This is a nice touch that sets you apart from most other interviewees who will not take the time to do so.
- Get back to practicing! Often times the first and second round are only days apart, so don’t slack off on case prep after the first interview.
- Don’t be intimidated, but you must conduct several practice case interviews and several live case interviews before you gain any level of proficiency. Get the mistakes out of the way quickly so that you can be successful.

Congratulations again on getting to this point! Know that you would not have been selected for this interview if the employer didn’t think you had strong potential. Stay confident! You have every reason to believe you can succeed.

Note: this handout is intended specifically for case interviewing. For behavioral interviews and general interview tips, see the Career Center’s Interviewing handout.



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