

The background of the entire page is a photograph of the MIT Sloan School of Management building. The building is a modern structure with a mix of light-colored stone or concrete panels and large glass windows. Some windows are tinted green. In the foreground, there is a low concrete wall with a planter box containing tall, dry grass. A sign on the wall reads "MIT SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT". A blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the title text and the MIT Management logo. Bare tree branches are visible on the left side of the frame.

MFIN INTERVIEW PREPARATION PACKET

MIT
MANAGEMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

MIT SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

Types of Interview Questions

■ Traditional / Standard

Traditional / standard questions often focus on your education, work experience, or career interests and are meant to encourage a simple exchange of information. You may also be given the opportunity to ask questions about the firm. The ideal interview flows like a conversation, with a dynamic exchange of information and ideas so both parties get to know each other.

■ Behavioral / Competency

Behavioral or competency interview questions are based on the principle that “past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior”. Consequently, these questions focus more on your past behavior and actions in specific situations rather than on individual job tasks. The interviewer will select situations relevant for your targeted position (based on “competencies” the company has identified) and ask you for examples of how you dealt with that situation from previous experience. “Tell me about a time when you were given an unreasonable deadline? How did you handle the situation?” Armed with an understanding of how you handled a specific situation in the past, the interviewer is in a position to predict with reasonable confidence how you will respond in similar circumstances.

■ Case

A case interview is often used by firms to measure your problem-solving skills, ability to navigate ambiguity, and communication skills within several different dimensions. Firms want to know how well you identify, structure and think through problems. They also want to see how well you listen, summarize, and articulate your conclusions while “thinking on your feet”. Your approach to a case is often more important than the specific content of your answers. Case interviews are common with Consulting firms and typically fall into three areas: Operations and Strategy, Market Sizing, and Brain Teasers.

■ Technical or Function / Knowledge

Employers will also probe to see if you possess the technical or function-specific skills and knowledge necessary for a specific position. Technical and function interviews are common when interviewing for financial services roles, including Investment Banking, Sales & Trading, Quantitative Research, and Investment Management. Employers might ask questions about broad topics such as analytical and quantitative skills, or narrow topics like what factors would you consider in evaluating a stock. Preparation for these types of questions requires research on skills and characteristics unique to the role for which you are interviewing, preparing specific examples from your previous work experience that highlight your success in using the skill or knowledge, and practice, practice, practice!

Please remember that throughout any interview, employers will ask questions to ensure that the candidate is a “fit” for the job. They will probe to ensure the candidate has done thorough research to understand the nature of the job, the tasks of the job and the personality characteristics of successful individuals in those job roles.

What to Expect in the Interview

Introduction

- Informal / casual conversation
- Reason for attending MIT Sloan program
- Overall career objectives



Traditional Questions

- Tell me about yourself
- Why Quant Research? Sales & Trading? Investment Banking?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Why should we hire you?

Behavioral Questions

- Tell me about a difficult situation and how you turned it around
- Major accomplishments / areas of weakness
- What was the most challenging class you have ever taken? Why?
- How would your teammates describe you?
- Describe a time when you had to work with a difficult person. What did you do?

Case (depends on job function)

- Presents a hypothetical (or real) business situation for analysis and discussion.

Technical or Function / Knowledge Questions

- Questions that test your knowledge of your industry and, more specifically, your job function. Refer to the industry / functional specific interview questions on page 8 for examples.

Wrap Up

- Candidate has chance to ask interviewer questions
- Interviewer might discuss next steps
- Candidate reiterates interest and summarizes key selling points
- Candidate demonstrates appreciation for the interview

The Interview

What Recruiters Are Looking For

Specific skills and attributes will vary in importance by company, but virtually all are looking for:

- Interesting and well-rounded candidates
- Proven teamwork and leadership ability
- Strong analytical / technical skills
- Excellent communication skills
- The ability to persuade and influence others
- The ability to think quickly and independently
- Business acumen
- Candidates they and their colleagues would enjoy working with



Recruiter's Objectives

- 1. Assess your fit for the position**
 - a. Understanding of the responsibilities of the job?
 - b. Realistic expectations and passion of / for the job?
 - c. Understanding of how you can add value?
- 2. Evaluate your fit for long-term employment potential**
- 3. Decide if they will interview you further**
- 4. Sell the company and the job**

Your Objectives

- 1. Establish rapport with the interviewer**
- 2. Sell yourself:**
 - a. Work experience
 - b. Transferable skills
 - c. Skills gained from MIT Sloan
 - d. Energy / enthusiasm
- 3. Evaluate overall fit**
- 4. Get your questions answered and gather information on which to base future decisions about the job**

Tell Me About Yourself

During the course of every interview, the interviewer will ask you to “tell me about yourself.” This question gives you an ideal opportunity to describe yourself in a very positive manner. Your response should cover your recent professional and internship experiences.



■ Highlight Accomplishments

The results of performance have greater impact than duties and responsibilities. Show the results of your actions and impact of your work, not just what you did.

■ Back Up Statements with Concrete Examples

Some examples of how your employer may have benefited from your performance are increase in sales, generated alpha, time savings, operational efficiencies, and created materials for clients.

■ Highlight Advantages for the Role

Advanced degrees, relevant internship, professional or research experience, and technical skill sets are just a few valuable pieces of information to be mentioned, if relevant.

■ Relate Strengths to Job Qualifications

Keep in mind that your experience will not impress the employer if it does not complement the duties and responsibilities of the job in question.

■ Show Progression

Describe assignments of increased responsibility, any promotions or return offers if applicable, or indicate other ways in which you have grown within the business world.

■ Explain Reasons for Changing and Exploring Different Functions and Roles

These statements should reinforce your progression and demonstrate that your abilities have been recognized by others and transitions have been deliberate.

■ Be Brief and Concise

If uninterrupted, this response should last no longer than two minutes and no less than 45 seconds; however, the interviewer may interrupt your story and encourage you to expand upon certain aspects of your background.

This presentation should be well prepared and rehearsed in front of someone who can criticize your performance. However, you should not recite a memorized script.

6 Tips for Non-Verbal Communication in Interviews

1. Make a great first impression.

If having a video interview, get comfortable with the technology you will be using and give yourself plenty of time to log in and get settled. Make sure you have a professional background. Smile and introduce yourself. If having an in-person interview, plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early to the building to allow time for you to go through security protocols and arrive to the office 5-10 minutes before your interview start-time.

Technology Tips: Download an **MIT Sloan background** – we have several options linked on Your CDO. Test out your interview clothes and virtual background before the interview, sit and move as you would normally, and make sure everything looks as you expect it to.

2. Dress for the industry and role.

Dress depends on the company. A suit is common practice for interviews in finance and consulting industries. For CDO-organized recruiting events, the dress code will be specified in Career Central. Always feel free to ask a member of the CDO to clarify dress code. How you present yourself to the interviewer is a good indication of how you would present yourself to a client.

3. Maintain comfortable eye contact during the interview.

It is okay to look away when thinking about a question or situation, but connect back with your interviewer throughout your answer (even if he / she is not looking at you!). If your interview is virtual, be sure to look at the camera and do not use cue cards or read directly from notes.

4. Use facial expressions and body language to convey your enthusiasm.

In addition to eye contact, smiling, sitting up straight / leaning forward slightly, or using your hands in appropriate gestures can help you tell your story with energy. Answering questions with energy and enthusiasm is an effective way to convey your passion for the role.

5. Take cues from the interviewer on posture, energy level, and volume.

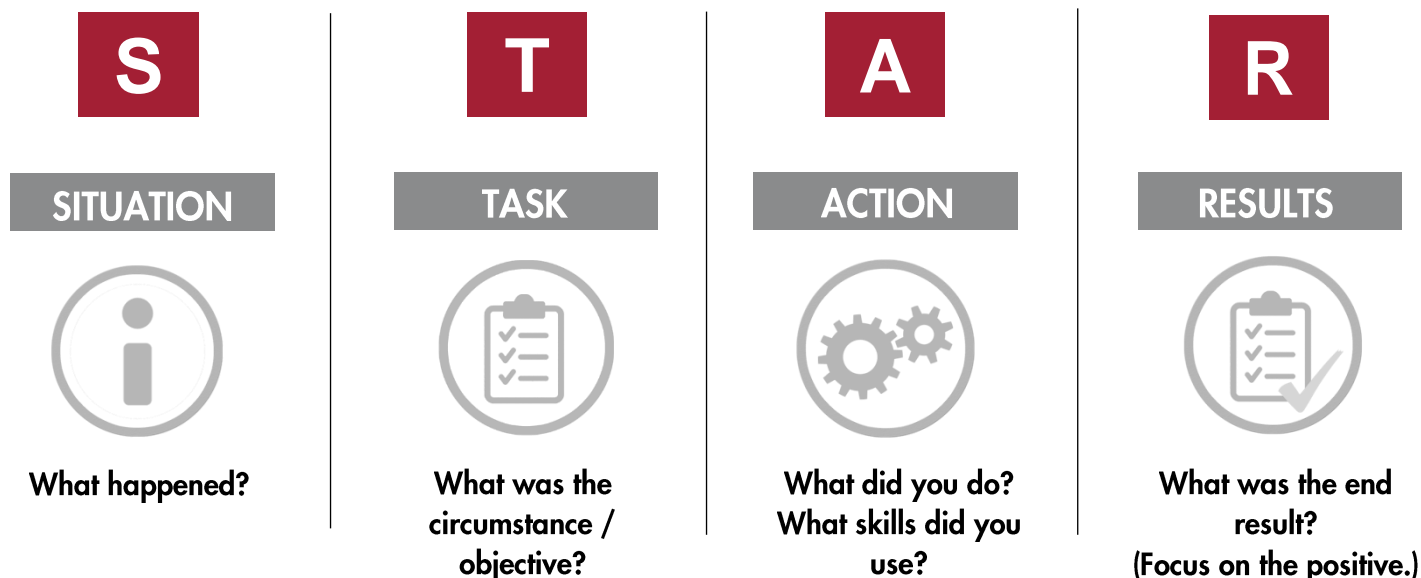
Your interviewer may be very energetic or somewhat relaxed. It is often a good idea to follow the style the interviewer demonstrates, with the caveat of never being too relaxed or casual. As you progress through the interview, continue to look for signals from the interviewer's body language to see if you are on the right track.

6. Know how you respond in stressful situations.

Do you fidget when you are in uncomfortable situations? Do you grimace whenever you think of a particular challenging situation at your last job? Do you rely on "ummm," "like", or other filler words? Practice positive non-verbal signals to connect and make a great impression during the interview. When reflecting on difficult experiences of the past, focus on the important things you learned from them in order to keep your response positive.

STAR Method

The STAR Method is a useful strategy that can help you deliver targeted answers to interview questions, and is particularly helpful when answering behavioral questions. The STAR Method encourages you to frame your responses in terms of:



More Interview Suggestions

Be prepared.

Prepare to discuss areas that you may find uncomfortable to discuss. For example, a gap in employment or an area you feel is a weakness. Expect that these topics will come up, and develop a strategy for answering the question thoughtfully, honestly, and positively. Focus on the positive outcomes or elements of the situation and avoid negative language, particularly regarding people from your past. Wrap positive outcomes around negative situations and address weaknesses as developmental areas that you are actively working to improve.

Do your company / job position research. Ask in-depth questions.

Use the research you have done on the company to contribute meaningfully to the interview. Your research may also help you nudge the conversation in a direction that will allow you to emphasize your strengths and abilities. Ask questions about the company, and possibly about the interviewer's own experience at the company. The knowledge you gain will help you formulate more targeted answers. If you have an opportunity to learn the name of the interviewer in advance and look him / her up on LinkedIn.

Practice.

Practicing answering questions out loud is the most effective way to learn how to formulate answers that are clear, complete and concise.

Typical Interview Questions

■ Selling Your Skills and Experience

- Walk me through your resume. Describe your experiences, explaining major decisions you have made.
- Explain the difference between what you did in your last internship or job and what you want to do now.
- Tell me 3 reasons why we should hire you.
- What distinguishes you from other candidates we might interview?
- Sell yourself to me. Prove to me that I should seriously consider you for our firm.
- If you weren't working in this industry / job before, how do we know you'll succeed in it now?
- What have you done so far that relates to this job?

■ The Industry

- What attracts you to a career in this industry or job function? Why are you a good match for this position?
- What are key drivers in the industry and what impact will this have in the near future?

■ The Company

- What do you know about our company and culture?
- What departments / groups are you interested in and why?
- With whom have you spoken within our company? What did you learn about our company?
- Why are you interested in working in our ____ office (London, Asia, etc.)?
- What are the similarities / differences between our company and our competitors?
- What exactly do you think you will be doing here?
- What do you envision yourself contributing to our organization, both short- and long-term?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this position? In this organization?
- If you were in my position, interviewing candidates for this job, what qualities would you seek? How would you evaluate candidates?

■ Your MIT Sloan Experience

- Why did you decide to pursue a Master of Finance degree?
- Why did you decide to apply to / attend MIT Sloan? Did you apply to other programs? Which ones?

- What have you enjoyed most about your MIT Sloan experience? What would you change?
- What has been most difficult for you at MIT Sloan and how have you dealt with it?
- What MIT Sloan courses have you liked / disliked the most? Why?
- How has your MIT Sloan coursework helped you to develop skills relevant to this job?
- What courses are you taking next semester?
- What is your MIT Sloan GPA? What was your GMAT / GRE scores? (A question frequently asked by consulting firms and investment banks).

■ Career Goals and Job Search

- What interests you most about this position?
- What are your career goals? How does this position and organization fit into your career development plans?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years? Is this different from what you imagined when you entered MIT Sloan? If so, how?
- Where else are you interviewing and with what effect?
- Do you have geographic preferences? What are your thoughts about travel or relocation?

■ Leadership and Teamwork

- What characteristics do you think a leader must have?
- Describe your leadership style.
- Describe where you have demonstrated leadership / management skills.
- Do you cooperate well with others?
- Where have you successfully managed a process and what was your role in it?
- Talk about teamwork on projects where you had difficulty. How did you manage to overcome them?
- Give an example where you pushed your team too hard. What did you do?
- What have you done in the past to contribute toward a good teamwork environment?
- Describe how you build relationships in a new job.
- Where have you managed and invoked change? Describe your difficulties and successes.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a highly ambiguous situation. How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- How do you evaluate your success or the success of others?
- If I asked your teammates for 5 words to describe you, what would they say?
- Tell me about a time when, due to your boss's decision, you were forced to do something with which you disagreed tactically or strategically (not ethically). How did you handle this situation?
- Tell me about a team project of which you are particularly proud. What was your specific contribution?
- Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?

- Tell me about an unsuccessful team of which you were a member. What could you have done differently?
- Describe a leadership role you have had, and tell me why you committed your time to it.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project or task effectively.
- Describe a situation in which you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.

■ Analytical / Problem Solving / Specific Knowledge

- Tell me about a project you worked on that demonstrates your analytical skills.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
- Tell me about a job or project for which you had to gather information from many different sources and then create something with the information.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Brain teasers

Example 1: Imagine you have a giant cube made up of 1000 individual cubes (10x10x10 cubes). If you remove the outer layer of cubes, how many cubes remain?

Example 2: Imagine you are given a scale and 9 weights that all look alike but weigh different amounts. You need to balance these weights between 2 points and are given 2 trials to get it right. How would you approach the problem?

- How might we successfully transfer new knowledge across our operations worldwide?
- Where do you think "X country's" economy will go in the coming year?
- Give an example of how our product / service might solve a problem for a particular industry.
- Tell me something you've read in the news today and how you think it might impact the markets.

■ Behavioral Interview Questions

Persuasive Communication / Influence

- Describe a situation in which you were able to persuade someone to see things your way.
- Describe the best idea you have ever sold to a peer or supervisor. What was your approach and result?
- Please describe a situation in which you had to use a multidimensional communication strategy.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to be assertive in order to get a point across that was important to you.

Conflict / Crisis Management

- Tell me about a difficult person with whom you have had to deal with. Why was he / she difficult and what did you do?
- Tell me about the last significant crisis situation you faced in your work. Were you part of the solution?

Decision-Making / Working Under Pressure

- Describe a time when you faced unreasonable deadlines or expectations. How did you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

Goal-Oriented / Result-Driven

- Give me an example of an important goal that you set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.

Adaptability / Flexibility

- Give an example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to meet multiple deadlines in a short period. How did you do it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to react quickly to a rapidly evolving situation.

Initiative / Innovation

- What do you think has been your most significant accomplishment within the past year?
- Describe the last time you did something which went well beyond the expected in school / work.

Client Focus

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client / stakeholder service issue.
- Tell me about a situation with a client that, in retrospect, you would have handled differently.
- Describe a situation in which you acted as an advocate within your organization for the needs of a particular stakeholder, during which there was some organizational resistance to overcome.

Dealing with Failure

- Can you tell me about a time when you led a team and failed? How did you explain this failure to your team?
- Think of something that you consider a failure in your career. What did you learn from it?
- Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time.

Personal (Including Strengths and Weaknesses)

- How would you best describe your personality?
- How would your teammates / colleagues describe your strengths and weaknesses as a teammate / colleague?
- If I were to contact your last supervisor, what would he / she say are your greatest strengths and opportunities for development?
- What is your biggest achievement until now? Why are you proud of this?
- What books have you read lately?
- How do you spend your time outside MIT Sloan?

- Do you like movies? What movie have you seen recently? What does it reveal about your personality?

■ Potential Stress Questions

These questions may require you to draw on specific knowledge, explain an awkward situation, or reveal negative information. They may also pressure you to reveal your job search strategy.

- Explain your weaknesses.
- Tell me something about you that isn't on your resume.
- What did you think of the article criticizing our company in today's Wall Street Journal?
- Please describe an ethical dilemma you faced at work. How did you handle the situation?
- What was the last negative feedback your previous boss gave you?
- What are the 3 biggest disadvantages of the job you are after?
- If we offered you a job right now, would you take it?
- If I were to offer you this job right now, what are the two or three key questions that would go through your mind when you were deciding whether to accept it?
- Aren't you better matched with company "X" (a competitor) than with my organization?

Know that personal questions about family background, marital status, religious beliefs, sexual preference, etc., are illegal in the U.S. You may be asked such questions during interviews, however, so consider in advance how you will respond. In these situations, you want quickly to address the interviewer's concerns or fears about some aspect of your personal profile and assure him / her of your ability to perform successfully in the job being discussed.

■ Curveball / "Unexpected" Questions

- Talk about your side interests that you've listed on your resume because that is obviously the stuff for which you've prepared a story.
- Tell me about your best friend.
- What makes you tick?
- Tell us a joke.

■ Wrap Up Questions

- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
- Is there anything important you haven't had the chance to tell me?

Researching Companies

Interviewers expect you to have in-depth knowledge of the company's:

- Mission statement and culture
- Business model
- Products and services
- Competitors and potential areas for growth

Key Resources

Capital IQ	Company financials, leadership, transactions, securities data, ownership, governance, regulatory filings, events; news on private and public companies.
PitchBook	Deals, valuations and multiples, funds, fund performance and people in the global private equity and venture capital markets.
Factiva	Top business news articles. Company and industry information, including company snapshots and reports and industry overviews.
Preqin	Comprehensive global research on the investment industry. Includes modules which offer detailed information and analytics on firms, funds, deals, and portfolio companies.
Contacts	Review the MFin Post-Grad & Internship Directories on Your CDO to see where prior MFin have interned and accepted full-time roles. Also, you can find company and recruiting contacts within Career Central.

The databases above are available on **Your CDO** (<https://cdo.mit.edu>).

Be prepared to answer:

- Why are you interested in this company?
- What is unique about the role at our company?
- How would you describe our company's culture?
- What is the company's business model?
- Around what business lines and channels is our company structured?
- Where is the company's growth expected to come from?
- What differentiating initiatives has our company recently introduced?
- Who are the company's primary competitors? How does the company differ from its competitors?
- What is the company doing right? What can they improve?
- What untapped opportunities exist for our company?
- What recent news is there about the company? (acquisitions, products, etc.)
- Who are the company's top leadership?

Researching Industries

Company representatives expect you to show a passionate interest in their industry and will expect you to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of:

- Industry trends and developments
- Major players and market share
- Challenges within the industry
- Opportunities within the industry
- Trends that will shape the industry in the coming decades

Key Resources

Your CDO Communities	Resources for Finance, Consulting, Data Science / Analytics, Technology, Sustainability and other career communities.
Vault	Employer and industry guides; providing overviews of companies within various industries and fields.
Plunkett Research Online	Industry information, including market overviews, trends, and company profiles.
D&B Business	Source for analysts' reports and in-depth industry coverage on publicly-traded companies.
Wall Street Journal	Read the Wall Street Journal and other industry news sources on the day of your interview.

The databases above are available on **Your CDO** (<https://cdo.mit.edu>).

Be prepared to answer:

- Why do you want to work in this industry?
- What is it about the industry that excites you?
- What are the major trends that have shaped the industry over the last decade and will shape it over the coming decade?
- What are the major challenges and opportunities facing this industry?
- Who are the major competitors in this industry?
- How are the major players in this industry positioned?
- What are the major players' market share, business models and products?
- What issues in the industry have drawn significant media / public attention?

Interview Preparation Checklist

Company & Industry Research

- ☐ Have you researched the company, including their major business lines, clients, services and / or products?
- ☐ Have you researched the industry in depth, including major competitors?
- ☐ Have you read any recent news on the company, including company press releases and earnings reports if applicable, so you are aware of the latest developments?
- ☐ Have you reviewed your notes from company presentations / coffee chats / other events so you can easily recall the names of company representatives you have met? (NOTE: Look up company representatives on Career Central.)
- ☐ Have you spoken with any returning 18-month students who interned at the company last summer?
- ☐ If a publicly traded company, have you checked the latest closing price of the company's stock and other relevant financial information?

Answer Preparation and Practice

- ☐ Have you prepared and practiced for the interview without memorizing or over-rehearsing your answers?
- ☐ Have you written out notes / bullets on key stories that showcase your accomplishments in various areas? Did you chart your skills and experiences or build a matrix of skills and stories? (NOTE: Watch the Behavioral Interviews webinar for more information on these exercises.)
- ☐ Have you identified three key selling points that you want to get across in the interview?
- ☐ Have you conducted mock interviews and practiced improving on any weaknesses? (NOTE: The CDO, clubs, classmates and Alumni Advisors Hub are all mock interview resources.)
- ☐ Are you articulating what you can do for the company, not what the company can do for you?
- ☐ Have you prepared a list of questions to ask at the end of your interviews?

Logistics

- ☐ If you know the names of your interviewers, have you looked them up on LinkedIn to identify possible commonalities?
- ☐ Have you selected your interview outfit, ensuring that it is appropriate for the position?
- ☐ If technology is being used for the interview, do you know what technology, and are you fully prepared to use that technology before your interview?
- ☐ Do you have an updated copy of your resume easily accessible if needed?