

Radley Green Interview Guidance Pack

Your practical guide to interview prep that actually works. Built for accounting and finance professionals at every level – from entry to CFO – updated for Zoom, Teams or Meet.

What This Guide Covers

- Why interview prep starts earlier than you think
 - Pre-interview checklist (day-by-day)
 - Research beyond just the website
 - Clarifying your motivation and narrative
 - Competency-based interviews and STAR: deep dive
 - Virtual interview setup and etiquette
 - In-person interview presence, first impressions and body language
 - Panel, case study and multi-stage interview formats
 - Smart questions to ask (with examples)
 - Interview dos and don'ts
 - Salary conversation guidance
 - Post-interview follow-up
 - Sample answers to common questions
 - STAR builder worksheet
 - Tell me about yourself – two examples
 - Troubleshooting common interview hiccups
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Why Interview Prep Starts Now

Great interviews are not about the night before. Waiting until then to think about why you want the role or how to sell your strengths puts you behind. Interviews are about clarity, structure and confidence. These come from:

- Knowing your CV inside out
- Understanding the role and business context
- Preparing STAR examples in advance
- Practicing delivery so you don't waffle or freeze

Whether your interview is tomorrow or two weeks away, what you do now helps you secure the role you want. Practice, practice, practice.

Quick Prep Timeline

5+ Days Before:

- Read the job spec and highlight core competencies
- Build STAR examples to match these areas
- Research the business and industry context
- Do a mock interview with a friend, coach or Radley Green

48 Hours Before:

- Confirm interview time, date and tech setup if remote
- Read LinkedIn profiles of interviewers
- Prepare outfit appropriate to company culture

1 Hour Before:

- Re-read your CV and STAR notes
 - Load documents on screen or print if preferred
 - Silence devices and set up a calm interview environment
 - Deep breath. You are ready
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First Impressions Count

- Dress appropriately: ask your Radley Green consultant what is best for the company culture
 - Introduce yourself confidently and professionally, but remain friendly
 - Handshake: firm but natural
 - Eye contact and open body language show confidence and engagement
 - Be polite to everyone, including reception – their feedback can matter
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Know Your CV

Interviewers will probe your CV. Be ready to speak to:

- Your role in projects – not just team outcomes
- Budget size, team size, reporting lines
- Systems and tools used (ERP, Excel, BI tools)
- Tangible results: savings, efficiency, revenue, audits passed

Mark 3 key achievements on a printed version for quick reference if nerves kick in.

Research That Stands Out

Basic research is expected. Better research makes you memorable.

Go Beyond the Website:

- Companies House filings, PitchBook or Crunchbase for PE/VC-backed firms
- Industry press and competitor analysis
- LinkedIn trends: hires, headcount growth

Understand:

- What they sell and who to
 - Ownership structure: listed, founder-led, PE-backed
 - Growth story: expansion, restructuring, M&A
 - Top 2-3 challenges you could help solve
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Clarify Your Motivation

Hiring managers want to know why you are applying and why now. Be ready to explain:

- Why you are open to a move
- What you have outgrown in your current role
- What excites you about this opportunity
- How it aligns with your goals

Keep it concise and honest. Bullet point if needed.

Competency-Based Interviews and STAR

What is a competency-based interview?

It tests whether you have done the things a role requires. Questions include:

- Tell me about a time when you improved a process
- Give an example of how you handled a tight deadline
- Describe a situation where you had to influence a difficult stakeholder

It is about proof, not potential. Use the STAR method to answer.

STAR Method (Expanded)

S – Situation

Set the scene briefly. When, where, what team, what challenge

T – Task

Your responsibility or objective

A – Action

What you did, tools used, decisions made, leadership or contribution

R – Result

Outcome. Use numbers where possible. What changed? What did you learn?

Tips:

- Use first person
- Keep answers under 2 minutes unless asked for more
- Prepare 6-8 STAR examples in advance
- Label examples by theme: process improvement, cost saving, stakeholder influence, team management

Example (Finance):

Q: Tell me about a time you improved a reporting process

- **S:** Group reporting took 12 days post month-end across 6 entities in 4 currencies
- **T:** Reduce it to 7 days without increasing headcount
- **A:** Introduced pre-close checklist, trained local controllers, automated FX sheets in Netsuite

- **R:** Closed at day 7 within four months, reduced post-close adjustments by 60 percent, highlighted in board report

STAR Themes to Prepare:

- Cost control or margin improvement
 - Month-end acceleration
 - Budgeting and forecasting accuracy
 - Team mentoring or onboarding
 - Business partnering with Sales, Ops, Product
 - Systems implementation or migration
 - Data integrity and compliance
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Virtual Interview Tips

- Check display name and profile photo
 - Quiet, well-lit space
 - Camera at eye level
 - Use headset if possible
 - Look at camera, not yourself
 - Keep notes nearby but avoid reading them
 - Mute when not speaking
 - Be early
 - If something goes wrong, pause and reset, call or message your Radley Green consultant
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In-Person Interview Tips

- Dress appropriately to company culture
 - Be polite to everyone, including reception
 - Bring printed CV and notepad
 - Eye contact, smile, open body language
 - Sit upright with hands visible
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Interview Formats

Phone/Screening: CV walkthrough, salary, notice – clear concise answers

Hiring Manager: Deep dive into experience – use STAR and motivations

Panel: 2-5 people – include everyone in eye contact

Case Study: Data or scenario-based – structure response

Final/Exec: Culture fit, big picture – show strategic thinking

Salary Conversation Guidance

- Never raise salary in early interviews unless prompted
 - Main priority is securing the role first
 - Radley Green consultants will guide timing and negotiation strategy
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Closing the Interview

- Ask all your prepared questions
 - Thank the interviewer
 - If interested and appropriate, ask what the next stage is
 - If offered a role, speak to your Radley Green consultant immediately
 - If offered a role you are unsure about, politely ask for time and speak to your consultant
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Interview Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Prepare early
- Rehearse STARs out loud
- Use data in answers
- Follow up with your consultant

Don't:

- Over-claim on your role
- Trash your current employer
- Ramble
- Talk salary too early

Troubleshooting Hiccups

- Connection drops: "Sorry, I lost audio there. Happy to pick up from your last question."
- Video freezes: "I think your screen may have frozen. I'll switch off my video for a moment."
- Background noise: Mute, fix, unmute: "Apologies, all sorted now."

Sample STAR Builder Worksheet

Competency	Situation	Task	Action	Result	Metrics	What I Learned
Cost Control
Stakeholder Mgmt
Month-End Close

Tell Me About Yourself Examples

A: Part-qualified Commercial Analyst

"I'm a CIMA finalist in a B2B SaaS scale-up partnering with sales and product on forecasting and pricing. I led process changes reducing month-end reporting by 2 days and created Power BI dashboards. I want more commercial visibility and ownership of budgeting."

B: Interim FD

"I'm an ACA-qualified FD with 8 years in PE-backed businesses. Recently led finance transformation of a consumer brand post-acquisition, migrating systems and implementing weekly cash flow forecasting. I enjoy stabilising finance for growth or exit."

Appendix: Interview Question Bank

Role & Responsibilities

- What does a successful first 6 months look like?
- What challenges will the new hire tackle first?
- How is performance measured?

Team & Structure

- How is the finance team structured?
- Who does this role report into?
- Are there any direct reports or dotted-line relationships?

Business Direction

- Key priorities over next 12 months?
- Any major system or process changes coming?

Development & Progression

- Training opportunities offered?
- Paths for progression?

Culture & Working Style

- Describe company culture
- Hybrid/remote policy

Competency-Based Questions

Leadership & Teamwork

- Tell me about a time you led a team through a difficult period
- Describe conflict management between team members
- How have you coached junior staff
- Example of influencing someone senior

Communication & Stakeholder Management

- Explain financial info to non-finance stakeholders
- Changed someone's mind through communication
- Tailoring communication to different audiences
- Situation where communication broke down

Commercial & Strategic Thinking

- Project that drove commercial decisions
- Improved profitability or reduced costs
- Challenged assumptions or flagged risk

- Recommendation that changed business direction

Problem Solving & Initiative

- Solved a problem no one else could
- Initiated a project with impact
- Handled incomplete data
- Most creative solution implemented

Resilience & Adaptability

- Coping with high-pressure deadlines
- Project did not go to plan – response
- Adapted to new systems or leadership
- Prioritising when everything is urgent

Systems, Process & Technical Ability

- Implemented or optimised financial system
- Improved month-end or reporting process
- Used Excel/Power BI/systems to streamline
- Ensured accuracy and data integrity under pressure