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Tippie Undergraduate Career Services

Case Interviewing Kit

Your Ultimate Toolkit for Case Interview Mastery: A Guide for Tippie Undergraduates

WHAT IS CASE INTERVIEWING?

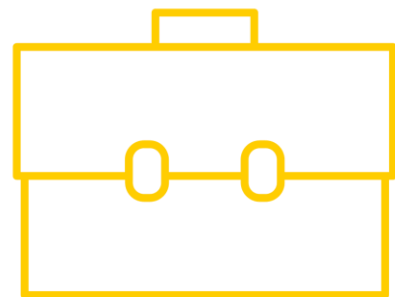
Case interviews are a type of interview in which you aim to develop a recommendation or answer to a business problem. They are a common interview method companies use to assess candidates' problem-solving skills, analytical abilities, and business acumen. Case interviews can simulate what a job will be like by placing you in a hypothetical business situation. Many case interviews are based on actual projects the company or interviewer has worked on. Case interviews can cover any industry (e.g. retail, consumer packaged goods, financial services) and a wide range of business situations (e.g. new market, product launch, acquisitions).

What industries or positions use case interviews?

Case interviews are particularly used in management consulting firms (such as McKinsey, BCG, Bain, and Deloitte). Common industries include Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG), Oil & Gas, Manufacturing, Financial Services, Healthcare, Private Equity/Investments, Pharmaceuticals, Airline, Media, and Technology. In recent years, however, many organizations across industries have adopted case interviews or mini-case interviews to assess candidates' problem-solving abilities, analytical thinking, aptitude for identifying key issues, and skill in developing structured, effective solutions. Mini-case interviews are a shorter and more focused version of a traditional case interview but still enable employers to evaluate how candidates tackle complex, real-world challenges.

What are employers looking for from you?

- Active listening
- Logic, ability to integrate and organize data
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Creativity and entrepreneurial drive
- Confidence and poise under pressure
- Company culture fit
- Strong ability to communicate and present your findings
- Tolerance for ambiguity and information overload



HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PREPARE?

First: Understand the different types of case interviews

- Each area and industry has its own case study topics, questions, and format. With most case interviews, you will not know the topic before the interview. This is why you must prepare and know different types of case interviews that are typical.
- For more information on case interviewing types, go to <https://www.myconsultingoffer.org/case-study-interview-prep/types/> to hear from a former McKinsey Engagement Manager
- **TIP:** SAVE job descriptions of positions you apply to and utilize them to help determine which type of case study you will receive

Second: Understand the different deliveries of case interviews

- You will most likely have multiple case interviews throughout the interview process for one company. In addition to traditional case interviews, firms are increasingly adopting online case interview formats.
- The delivery of your case interviews will vary as well. Different industries generally follow different structures (unlike the topic, you will know the delivery of your case prior).
 - Verbal Case (Live Case): this is typically what people think of when case interviews come to mind. It consists of a problem being presented, and the interviewee working through a solution in real time. These could be:
 - Interviewer led (structured)
 - Candidate led (open-ended)
 - Group case (you are working with other interviewees as a team)
 - Written case: information is sent in advance to review, prepare, and present a brief analysis.

Third: Key considerations for case interviews

- Do specific research into the company, industry, target audience, and financial reports (if the company is public)
 - A SWOT analysis and a company history of the past 6 months is a good place to start
- Ask clarifying questions around problem statements and talk through your thought process out loud
- If the interviewer can't clarify, make assumptions, and speak to them out loud
- Use silence appropriately. Don't be afraid of silence, it's a good idea to take a moment, pause, and organize your thoughts before beginning.

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- Take notes during the case! You don't want to miss any important points – section out your notes and underline important information.
- Review and use “simple math” to assist in finding your solutions
- You don't need to know everything, nor are you expected to. Don't panic if the answer isn't apparent. Bring high-level frameworks into perspective (*this is where case interviewing books come in handy*) and focus on a thoughtful, structured response.
- Address a mistake if one is made (e.g. “Now that I've noticed this, let me correct XYZ...”)
- You can get the case wrong, and still get the job! There are many different solutions to a case, the interviewer isn't looking for the right answer but to understand how you got to your solution.
- Don't forget about other interview questions!
 - In addition to case interviews, candidates for consultant positions will also have interviews where they will be asked standard interview questions along with behavioral questions focused on the skills they are seeking in a candidate (i.e., analytical, problem-solving, communication, initiative, etc.)
- You usually won't get formal feedback from a case interview. Still, at the end of the interview, you can ask, “Are there any considerations that I didn't take into account that you feel would drastically change the outcome of this analysis?”
- The interviewer wants to be part of your brainstorming process and wants you to do well!
- Just like any interview, be sure to have some questions ready for the end! You don't want to finish without asking anything—it's a great way to show interest.

Fourth: Practice, practice, and practice

- Interviewers expect you to come prepared, with solid frameworks and articulate ideas/solutions. This comes from a blend of practice, and research on the specific company you are interviewing with. Below are some tips and resources to help you practice:
 - Schedule a regular time to practice a different case each week
 - Practice case interviewing with a variety of people to help you discover different tricks and interview styles OR designate a case interviewing partner to practice with
 - Time and record yourself when you practice (or stand in front of a mirror)
 - Keep a case “journal” as you do different cases so you can review previous cases before an interview
 - Establish a strategy for notetaking that works for you before your interview
 - This webpage gives helpful information on notetaking during a case interview: <https://strategycase.com/mastering-note-taking-in-case-interviews/>
 - CaseCoach (<https://casecoach.com/tippie/>): Tippie Undergraduate Career Services offers FREE personalized case interviewing prep through CaseCoach, an online tool that offers interactive coaching sessions and expert guidance
 - Dive into case interview prep books, which provide valuable frameworks that can be applied to a wide range of cases you'll encounter. These are what we recommend:

- [*Crack the Case System: How to Conquer Your Case Interviews*](#) by David Ohrvall
- [*Case in Point: Complete Case Interview Preparation*](#) by Marc P. Cosentino
- [*Case Interview Secrets: A Former McKinsey Interviewer Reveals How to Get Multiple Job Offers in Consulting*](#) by Victor Cheng
- Check out consulting company's websites for additional case-specific materials. For example, McKinsey and Deloitte have great resources:
 - <https://www.mckinsey.com/careers/interviewing>
 - <https://caseinterviewprep.deloitte.com/>
 - If you don't have a direct resource from the company, check out www.glassdoor.com to find out questions/topics other interviewees had
- <https://www.mbacase.com/> offers a variety of resources for free, all you need to do is create an account
- Check out Tippie Career Services' recorded Webinars on case interviewing:
 - Alumni Perspectives on Case Interview Success:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRkD65VeC0g>
 - Case Interviewing Foundations with James Martin:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1ldzgXZLr8>
- Consider participating in a case competition or consulting club!
 - Case competitions are a great way for students to practice their communication, problem-solving, and career readiness with a team. Not to mention, students get to network with corporate partners and recruiters. Teams are selected by staff from the Tippie UPO and Frank Business Communication Center. This can also be a great way to satisfy the Tippie RISE requirement. To be considered, students can fill out an interest form on the Case Competition webpage: <https://students.tippie.uiowa.edu/undergraduates/get-involved/case-competitions>
- Tippie Consulting Club offers students hands-on experience in the consulting sector, they are open to all majors. Check out how to get involved on the club's page: <https://students.tippie.uiowa.edu/undergraduates/get-involved/student-organizations/consumer-experience-cx-consulting-club>

SAMPLE CASES

- Your client is a Telecom company, and they are considering entering the business services market. What are the different ways they could enter? What are the pros and cons of each? Which do you recommend? (Market Entry/Strategy)
- Your client is a glass manufacturer and is considering adding a new product type. Do you think they should add a new type of glass bottle? What would be the costs associated with this move? Will it be profitable? (Product Development/Profitability)
- Your client is a long-distance telecom / high-speed internet provider. Revenue is going down and competition is up. The company is looking to diversify into managed services. How can it do this and what does it need to think about? (Diversification/Strategy)
- Your client has decided to automate much of its HR function through a new website. Benefits, pay, enrollment, etc. will no longer be done face-to-face with local HR representatives. How would you communicate this to the entire company via a memo? (Communication/Organizational Change)
- You have 9 balls and a balance scale. All of them are the same weight except for one. What is the least number of times you could use the scale and still determine which is of non-uniform weight? (Quantitative/Logical Problem)

Note: While the scenarios below demonstrate the subject matter and problem types you might encounter in a case interview, an actual case interview typically includes many clarification questions and additional details. These questions are case "prompts" that are meant to introduce you to the topics you'll likely encounter in a case interview, but they should not be taken as a full interview format.

QUESTIONS? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

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Schedule an appointment through MyUI with a Career Specialist at Tippie Career Services for specialized help or contact us directly at tippie-careerservice@uiowa.edu.