



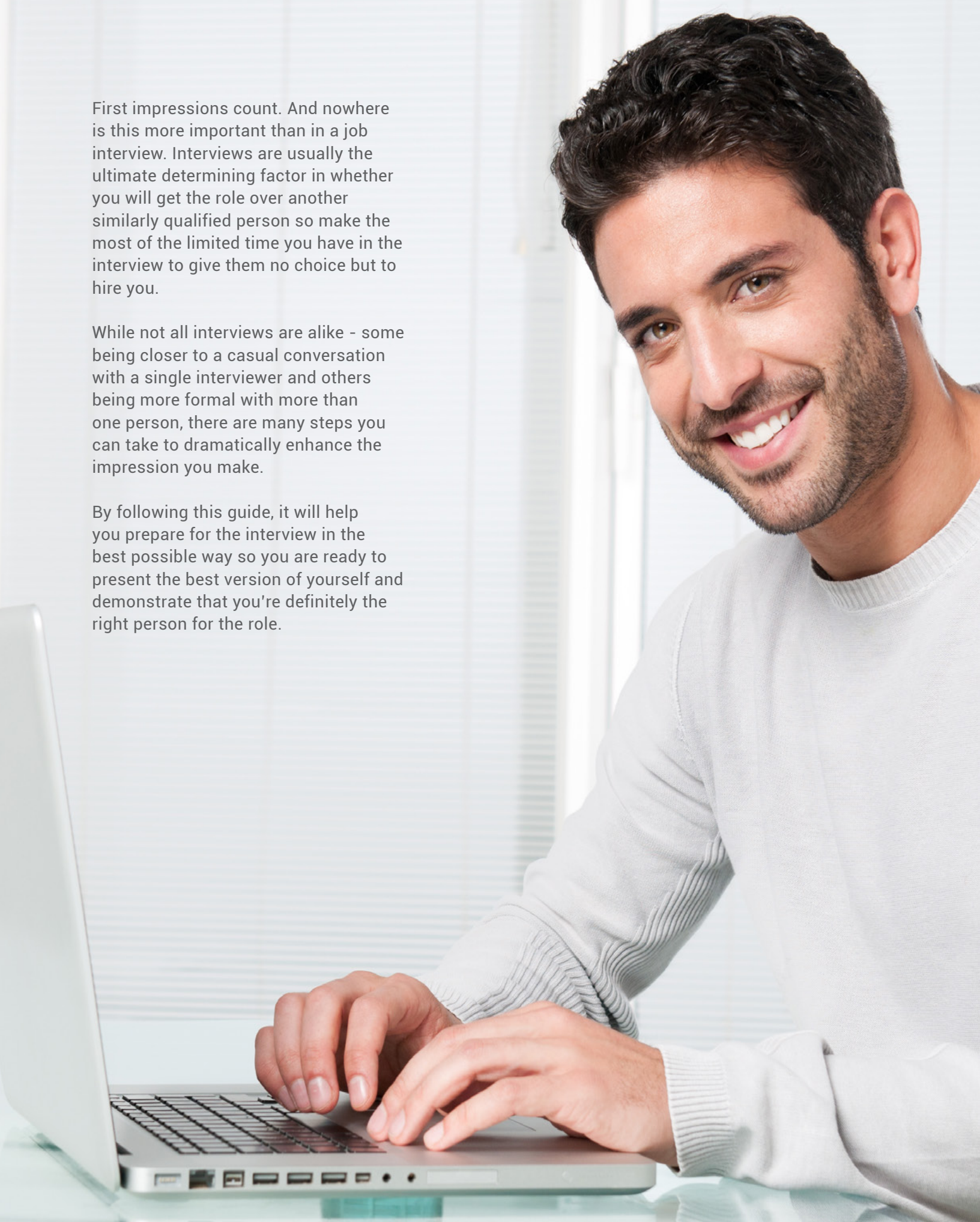
The Ultimate Guide to Improving Your Tech Interview Performance

FINITE

First impressions count. And nowhere is this more important than in a job interview. Interviews are usually the ultimate determining factor in whether you will get the role over another similarly qualified person so make the most of the limited time you have in the interview to give them no choice but to hire you.

While not all interviews are alike - some being closer to a casual conversation with a single interviewer and others being more formal with more than one person, there are many steps you can take to dramatically enhance the impression you make.

By following this guide, it will help you prepare for the interview in the best possible way so you are ready to present the best version of yourself and demonstrate that you're definitely the right person for the role.



Before the interview

Do your research

Know the where, when, and who so you have a good understanding of the company and the people who work there. What is the company's main offerings, products or services? Who are their major clients? What is the future direction and growth of the company likely to be? The company website, media reports and newspaper articles, and LinkedIn are great resources for this type of research.

Get your resume right

Ensure your resume is in line with the job description. Don't just prepare a generic resume, you need to make sure you've focused on the parts of your skill set that are most relevant to the specific role you're applying for. Highlight the projects and experiences from your work history that best demonstrate your ability to fit the demands of the role.

Download our free IT specific resume templates to help you get started.

Know your resume

Really familiarise yourself with everything you have included in your portfolio/resume. If you put it together some time ago, give yourself a refresher so the information you've included is also at the front of your mind for the interview. Be prepared to talk in detail about any aspect or detail of your resume.

Look the part

Plan what to wear. Try to match your dress style to that of the company, you won't want to wear the same thing to a small startup as to a large multinational or finance company. You want to present yourself as a good fit but its also ok to show a little personality or charisma. If in any doubt always err on the formal side or opt for neutral corporate attire. Make sure it's clean, ironed and neat.

Prepare key questions

It's likely that at some point during the interview you will be asked if there are any questions you have for the interviewer. Even if they don't specifically ask you, you should still make sure to ask one or two questions of your own at some stage. It shows real interest in the company and while also demonstrating that you're trying to determine if this is the right role for you.

You should try and have a few questions prepared that might provide insights into the role and how you would fit in rather than generic questions about the company that you could have just researched yourself. Some examples of good types of questions to be prepared to ask are:

- What would you be looking for me to focus on and accomplish in the first 90 days in the role?
- Do you provide professional development opportunities?
- Is there a clear career path in the company beginning with this position?
- What are the biggest challenges of this job?
- What is the company's management style?

During the interview

You might think that the interview process starts with your first handshake of the person interviewing you but in reality, it starts well before then. Make conversation with the receptionist and be polite and friendly to everyone you meet once you're in the building. Treat everyone you meet that day as you would your interviewer because co-workers often share their impression of candidates too. Make sure you give everyone you come in contact with a reason to see you in a positive light.

Arrive early

Plan to be early so you won't be stressed if anything holds you up. You want to come across as calm, confident and professional and that is extremely difficult if you're rushed and flustered. Being early gives you the chance to relax and take in your surroundings. Noticing small things about the company when you arrive shows you are perceptive plus it gives you some casual things you can talk about to break the ice when you first meet your interviewer. Use any small talk at the opening of the interview as an opportunity to demonstrate your interpersonal skills.

First impressions count

First impressions really do make a difference. So, when greeting the interviewer be confident and polite. Give a firm handshake and a smile and always try to look people in the eye when you're speaking to them or listening to questions. When asked a question, make sure you understand exactly what is being asked before beginning to answer. It's fine to pause and think for a few seconds before answering or to ask a reaffirming question to clarify what is being asked. It's preferable to come across as being considered and thoughtful rather than just saying the first thing that comes to your mind, which projects uncertainty and **first impressions count** nervousness.

Practice active listening

Be responsive and nod or ask follow up questions where appropriate. When giving prepared answers to questions, such as ones regarding your resume or work history, always try to relate them to the specific question you're being asked rather than just what you've already written on your resume.

Always make sure you're listening closely to the questions and tailoring your answers. You should have a general idea of how you're going to respond to most questions but don't force it if it's not natural and just be open and honest if you're asked a really unexpected question.

Project good body language

Act natural and relaxed but keep a good posture. You want to communicate that the interview is important to you but don't want to be sitting bolt upright and appear uncomfortable or too nervous. Similarly, you don't want to be slouched in your chair and coming across as so casual that you're not taking the interview or the interviewer seriously.

Areas commonly questioned

General background - you'll often be asked to summarise your general personal and professional background. But what the interviewer is really trying to grasp here is what can you bring to the company and what you would be like to work with.

Try and limit your summary to around five minutes. Take the opportunity to focus on the parts of your background most relevant to the role but also allow yourself to give some information that shows you have other interests and are likely to fit in well with others in the company.

Qualifications, certifications and skills - your qualifications will already be shown on your resume, so this isn't really the time to just rattle off what's already in front of them. Instead try to focus on any additional qualifications, certifications, or skills you might have achieved outside of formal study.

This is especially important in the tech sector where many skills are acquired outside of formal training. This was clearly demonstrated in a 2017 Stack Overflow survey of more than 64,000 people in tech, which revealed that more than 90% of surveyed professional developers had taught themselves a new language, framework or tool entirely on their own. So make sure you bring attention to any skills you may have acquired informally or can't easily be shown on a resume.

Experience - talk through your experience in previous roles, spending more time on the roles most similar to the current role. You should also weight the amount of time you spend talking through your experience to your more recent and relevant roles. Try to focus on roles or projects where you were working in a leadership or supervisory position, worked in large teams, had large operating budgets, or worked with top tier clients.

Reasons for applying - it is important here to be as genuine and honest as possible. Try to avoid just repeating what you think they want to hear and instead really think about why you've applied for this particular role. There should be a reason you're here. Is it a company you've always wanted to work for? Have you heard great things about the company culture? Is it the role you've always wanted or maybe it's a great opportunity to learn new skills and expand your capabilities? Demonstrate that you've thought about why you want this role and try and project your passion for it in the interview.

Career objectives - Give proper thought to where this job can take you and how it fits in to your longer-term career goals. You want to come across as driven and ambitious but don't want to give the impression you are ruthless or impatient. You should be looking to convey how your ambitions and goals align with the company.

Crisis management - it is very common in an interview to be asked about situations in your past working history where you were involved in a crisis or challenging situation. This type of question falls into the category of behavioral assessment where the interviewer is trying to get an understanding of your working style, personality and motivations.

When thinking about these types of questions, try to focus on the beneficial behaviors or competencies that underpin those behaviours. This includes innovative thinking, creativity, decision making, conflict resolution, and teamwork. These behaviors are valuable to companies because there are likely to be situations in the future that come up where these competencies will be called on to help solve problems or achieve difficult business objectives.

Some other common questions you may be asked are:

- Describe a time when you or your team failed to meet a key goal or objective. How did you approach or rectify the issue?
- Describe a situation where you encountered difficulty or resistance from a colleague or client?
- How did you handle this encounter and were you able to convince the other person of your point of view or get them to agree with you?
- Describe a situation where you were responsible for transforming or improving an existing process. Were you responsible for coming up with the initiative or were you responsible for instituting the change, or both? What was the final outcome?

Ask your own questions

When prompted or when it fits into the flow of topics of conversation, ask your pre-prepared questions. Be specific and ask one at a time. It's a good idea to take some notes to show you're listening and are interested in the response. You don't want to be asking questions just for the sake of it, the questions you choose should be the most pressing questions or concerns you have about the role.

Remember that the purpose of the interview isn't just about them sizing you up, it's also your opportunity to find out if this role will be a good match for your skills and whether the company culture is what you're looking for.



The technical interview

The technical interview is what really separates an interview in tech with an interview in almost any other industry. It is an opportunity for companies to identify really talented individuals who may not necessarily have the strongest looking resume or who have strong technical skills but don't otherwise interview particularly well. If you think this describes you in any way, then you should focus a lot of your planning and preparation on the technical interview as it is likely to be your strong point and your best opportunity to impress.

The technical interview may occur as part of the traditional interview or as a separate session with a senior engineer rather than a manager or HR person. In the tech sector, it is often a crucial tool in separating two candidates with a similar level of experience and similar computer science degrees so be prepared and plan for it just as much or even more than you would for the regular interview.

Technical testing provides a chance for managers to properly evaluate how potential candidates approach and solve complex problems that they may face in the role. It is also a way to better gauge the extent of a candidate's knowledge and skills using coding tasks or challenges, puzzles and brain teasers, or peer discussions on technical problems. A computer science degree doesn't necessarily prove someone's capabilities to produce high quality code that is readable, maintainable, and secure. Technical testing allows this as well as providing the freedom to set small projects or puzzles to identify particular technical strengths or experience with certain production systems.

So, if you're a developer or software engineer, whether you're interested in a junior or senior role, you should expect that some form of technical testing will likely form a part of the interview process. Ensure you have brushed up on the latest technical knowledge you would be expected to know in the role and be prepared to solve a problem on a whiteboard in front of a technical interviewer. These whiteboard tests are usually designed to test your problem-solving skills as well as your communications skills while working through the problem.

As there is no set standard for demonstrating proficiency in programming, if you're a developer you should be prepared to answer questions or code solutions to a range of technical problems; from the fundamentals through to higher level concepts. These may also be intermixed with logic problems or brain teasers to try and give you the opportunity to demonstrate a broad set of skills. So be creative and be prepared to think outside the box.

After the interview

Once your interview is over don't forget to thank the interviewer for their time. Manners cost nothing, they come for free and make more of a difference than you might think. Also make sure to call Finite and tell your consultant how the interview went and fill them in on your thoughts on the company and level of interest in the role.

Don't be discouraged if you're not made an offer right away - the modern recruitment process can be lengthy, and the interviewer will need to communicate with other interviewees and members of the company.

A final word...

Interviews can be daunting, especially if it's for your dream role. But if there's one takeaway message to improve your interview performance it is that preparation is key. Even if you need to attend multiple interviews, you need to take the time to prepare properly for each one of them. With the amount of information available on the internet and on sites like LinkedIn and Glassdoor, there's no excuse for not being knowledgeable about the company or role you're interviewing for.

Interviewers want candidates who can demonstrate they've looked beyond the surface and are aware not only of what the company does but also of the direction of the latest industry trends. You can only do this successfully if you're well prepared.

A great deal of effort usually goes into devising job descriptions so make sure you've looked into them exactly and have mapped out how your particular skill set, and expertise meets the requirements of the role. Think about your strengths and what separates you from the other candidates who will be applying for the role. Then make sure you've planned for how you can best communicate those strengths effectively in the interview, so they know you're the right person for the job.



Finite IT

Finite are experts in the Australian tech sector and can help candidates understand exactly where their skills are most in demand.

For twenty years, Finite has been helping candidates find their dream tech, digital and business transformation roles.

From humble beginnings, we've grown into a broad network of specialist recruitment professionals, who can help connect you with amazing career opportunities.

We understand that just as each job is unique, each candidate is unique. So, we focus our energy on giving you access to the best companies, leaders and roles that align with your individual personality, vision and goals.

Interested in finding out more? Get in contact with your local Finite office today.

Sydney

Level 23, Angel Place, 123 Pitt Street,
Sydney, NSW 2000

T +61 2 8243 6868 E sydney@finite.com.au

Brisbane

Level 20, 307 Queen Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000

T +61 7 3232 2300 E brisbane@finite.com.au

Melbourne

Level 33, 140 William Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

T +61 3 9617 3900 E melbourne@finite.com.au

Canberra

Level 2, 14 Moore Street, Canberra, ACT 2601

T +61 2 6243 6400 E canberra@finite.com.au

Adelaide

Level 12, 25 Grenfell Street, Adelaide, SA 5000

T +61 8 8224 3800 E adelaide@finite.com.au

Perth

Level 3, BGC Centre, 28 The Esplanade,
Perth, WA 6000

T +61 8 9219 3500 E perth@finite.com.au

Auckland

Level 10, AIG Building, 41 Shortland Street,
Auckland, NZ

T +64 9 300 3095 E auckland@finitegroup.co.nz

Wellington

Level 14, ASB Tower, 2 Hunter Street,
Wellington 6011, New Zealand

T +64 4 978 1888 E wellington@finitegroup.co.nz