

The Policy Jobs Toolkit

A No-Nonsense Guide to Resumes, Cover Letters & Interviews!



CV? Resume? What is the difference?

Ever wondered whether you should send a CV or a resume when applying for a job? You're not alone! Many people use the terms interchangeably, but they're actually fairly distinct. Sending the wrong one might not ruin your chances, but it's always best to share exactly what the document that the employer asks for.

The Key Differences

1. Length & Detail

- A resume is a concise, one or two-page summary of your work experience, skills, and education. It's meant to be quick and easy to read.
- A CV (Curriculum Vitae) is more detailed and can run several pages. It includes a full record of your academic background, research, publications, and professional experience.

2. Purpose

- A resume is typically used for jobs in the private sector, such as business, marketing, or technology roles. It focuses on relevant experience and achievements.
- A CV is common in academia, research, medicine, and certain public sector jobs. It provides a full picture of your professional journey.

CV? Resume? What is the difference?

3. Format & Flexibility

- Resumes are more flexible—you tailor them to each job application, highlighting only the most relevant skills and experiences.
- CVs follow a more structured format and keep growing over time, as you add new achievements and publications.

Does it really matter?

Employers request specific documents for a reason, and sending the wrong one might make you seem inattentive. If a job listing asks for a CV, send a CV. If it asks for a resume, send a resume. When in doubt, check with the recruiter!

Understanding the difference helps you present yourself in the best possible way—so always double-check what's needed before you hit 'send'!



Crafting a Standout Resume: A Friendly Guide

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Your resume is your first impression—it needs to be sharp, relevant, and easy to read. Here's how to get it right.

The Essentials

- **Contact Info:** Name, phone, email, LinkedIn (if relevant). Keep it clean and professional.
- **Personal Tagline (1-2 lines):** A compelling, catchy line that sums up who you are. Avoid just listing skills.
- **Work Experience:** List in reverse chronological order (latest job first). Stick to 3 bullet points per role, focusing on responsibilities, activities, and impact.
- **Education & Certifications:** Only include relevant degrees and certifications. No need to list high school if you have higher qualifications.
- **Skills:** Highlight hard skills (data analysis, project management, coding) and transferable skills (problem-solving, leadership).
- **Achievements:** Keep them to a single bullet per accomplishment. Quantify impact where possible. Put a number, to your narrative wherever feasible.
- **Formatting:** Keep it clean, structured, and professional. Use a readable font and clear headings.

Crafting a Standout Resume: A Friendly Guide

- **File Format** – Always send your resume as a PDF unless instructed otherwise.

What to Avoid

- **Too Much Information:** Stick to relevant experience. If it doesn't strengthen your application, cut it.
- **Clichés & Buzzwords:** Words like “passionate,” “goal-oriented,” and “team player” don't add value—demonstrate these qualities through your experience.
- **Unexplained Gaps:** If you took a break, mention it briefly (e.g., “Career break for skill development” or “Health-related sabbatical”).
- **References:** No need to include unless explicitly requested.
- **Unnecessary Personal Details:** No need for age, marital status, or hobbies unless they're directly relevant to the role.



Crafting a Standout Resume: A Friendly Guide

Example Layout

[Your Name]

[Your Email] | [Your Phone] | [LinkedIn Profile]

Personal Tagline: Strategic thinker with a knack for simplifying complex problems.

Work Experience

Policy Analyst | XYZ Organisation (2022 – Present)

- Led a research project on [topic], resulting in [impact].
- Developed policy recommendations adopted by [organisation].
- Managed a team of [number], improving efficiency by [percentage].

Research Associate | ABC Institute (2020 – 2022)

- Conducted data analysis on [topic], influencing [policy/decision].
- Wrote reports published in [publication or organisation].
- Coordinated stakeholder meetings with [specific groups].

Education

- Master's in Public Policy, [University Name], [Year]
- Bachelor's in Economics, [University Name], [Year]

Skills

- Quantitative & Qualitative Research
- Policy Analysis & Development • Stakeholder Engagement
- Project Management

Certifications

- Data Analysis for Policy Making (Coursera, 2023)
- Advanced Excel for Research (Udemy, 2022)

Crafting a Standout Resume: A Friendly Guide

Final Checks

- **Grammar & Formatting:** Run a spell check and proofread. Length – 1 page if under 5 years of experience, 2 pages max otherwise.
- **Customisation:** Tailor your resume for each job. Highlight what's relevant.
- **Hyperlinks:** Basically a 100% of the Resumes/CVs are read on a device - it's a good idea to hyperlink your linkedin, or personal website or online work portfolio.
- **Confidence:** Don't disqualify yourself. That's the hiring team's job if you're not a fit for the role. Apply anyway!



Cracking the Cover Letter Code

Crafting Your Cover Letter

Applying to a role? The toughest part is often clearing the Resume stage and getting to interviews. A great cover letter is your chance to show why you're the perfect fit and share more about yourself beyond what a Resume can capture.

A strong cover letter isn't just about showing enthusiasm—it's about clearly answering four key questions:

1. **Who are you?** – What's your background, and how does it connect to the role?
2. **Why should you be considered over others?** – What unique skills, experiences, or insights do you bring?
3. **Why this organisation and role?** – Why does this opportunity align with your interests and career goals?
4. **What's next for you?** – How does this role fit into your larger professional journey?

Structuring Your Cover Letter

1. Start Strong

Your opening should be direct and well-defined. Get straight to the point—mention the role, why you're applying, and what makes you a strong candidate.

Example:

"I am excited to apply for the Policy Analyst role at [Company Name] because of my experience in public policy research and my interest in using data-driven insights to influence equitable policymaking."

Crafting Your Cover Letter

2. Show Why You're the Best Fit

This is your chance to stand out. Use specific examples of your work to highlight the skills and impact you bring. Avoid rehashing your CV; go beyond listing experiences and instead explain the value you added in previous roles. Whenever possible, quantify your achievements.

Example:

"At [Previous Organisation], I led a policy evaluation on urban mobility, analysing commuter data to develop recommendations that increased accessibility for 200,000+ people. My experience in data-driven policy recommendations aligns well with your organisation's approach to evidence-based solutions."

3. Why This Organisation?

Employers want to know that you've done your research. Reference specific projects, policy initiatives, or organisational values that resonate with you. This is your opportunity to show that this isn't just a random application—it's a deliberate choice.

Example:

"Your recent initiative on equitable healthcare policies caught my eye, as my experience includes drafting health policy recommendations that directly impacted underserved communities. I am particularly drawn to your organisation's commitment to participatory governance and policy innovation."

4. What's Next for You?

Finally, connect the role to your broader career goals. Show that this isn't just a job but a meaningful step in your professional trajectory.

Crafting Your Cover Letter

Example:

"With my background in policy analysis and stakeholder engagement, I see this role as an opportunity to deepen my expertise in policy impact assessment. I am keen to contribute to your team while further developing my skills in regulatory analysis and strategic policymaking."

Closing with Confidence

Wrap up on a strong note. Express interest in discussing your application further without sounding overly formal or passive.

Example:

"I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my skills align with this role. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Final Thoughts

- Keep your cover letter concise—ideally one page, but no more than two.
- Customise it for each role. Generic applications rarely stand out.
- Avoid repeating your CV. Use the cover letter to explain your impact, not just list experiences.
- Keep your tone professional yet natural—avoid unnecessary jargon or overly formal phrasing.

A well-crafted cover letter should make it immediately clear why you're the right fit for the role and why the role is right for you. If you answer these four key questions well, you'll have a strong, compelling application.

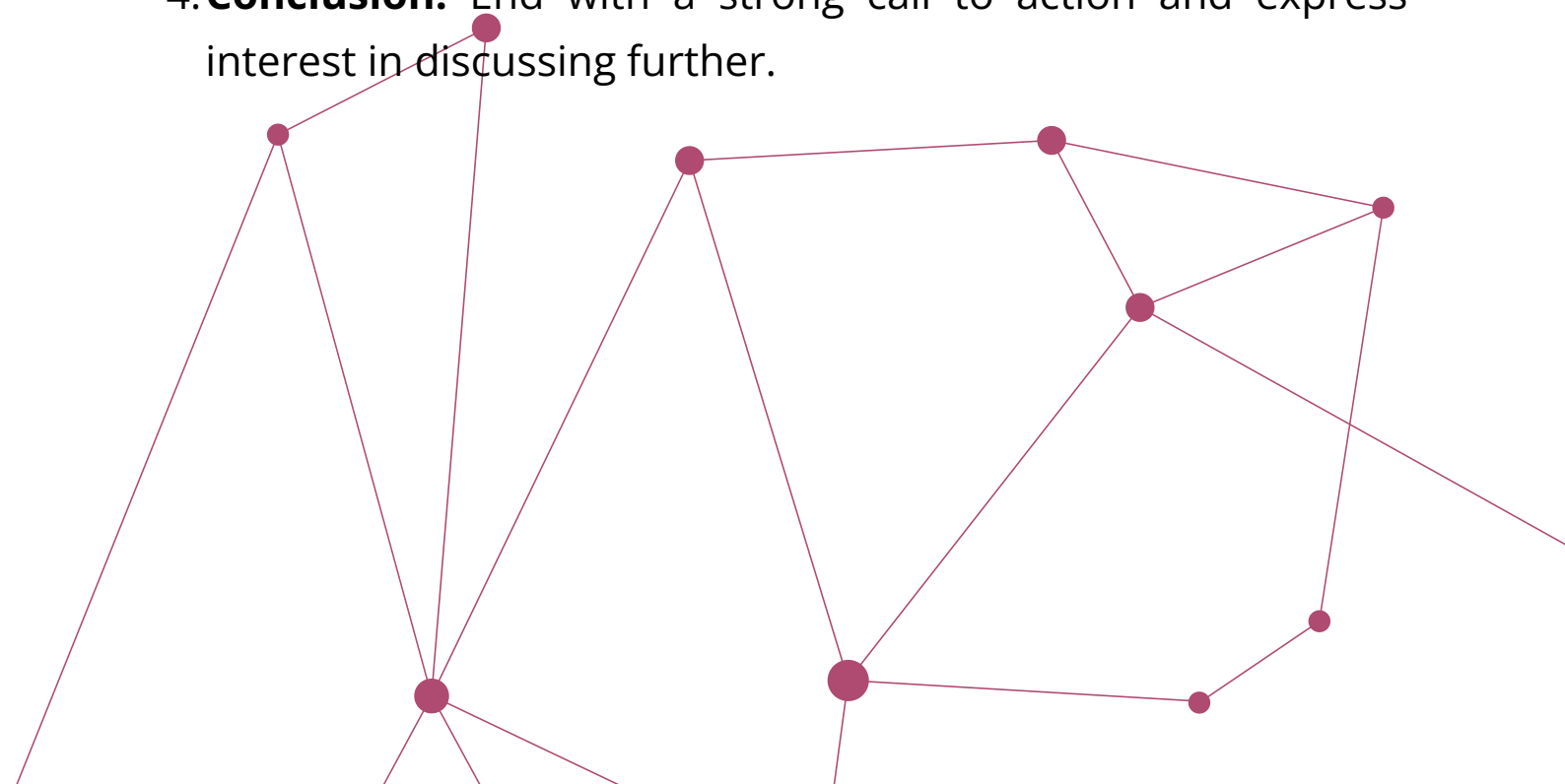
Customising Your Cover Letter for Different Roles

A well-crafted cover letter tailored to the specific role you're applying for can significantly increase your chances of landing an interview. While your CV outlines your experience, your cover letter should tell a compelling story about why you're the right fit for the job. Here's how to customise it for different fields:

General Structure of a Cover Letter

Regardless of the industry, your cover letter should follow a clear structure:

1. **Introduction:** Briefly introduce yourself, mention the position you're applying for, and express enthusiasm.
2. **Why You?** Highlight relevant skills and experiences that align with the role.
3. **Why Them?** Show your knowledge of and alignment with the organisation's mission.
4. **Conclusion:** End with a strong call to action and express interest in discussing further.



Customising Your Cover Letter for Different Roles

1. Policy Analyst Roles

What employers look for: Strong research skills, data analysis, policy evaluation, and excellent writing abilities.

How to customise:

- Emphasise your ability to research and interpret policy documents, legislation, and data.
- Highlight experience in writing policy briefs, reports, or recommendations.
- Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills with examples.
- Show familiarity with government agencies, think tanks, or legislative bodies.

Example line: "In my previous role at [Organisation], I conducted policy research on urban development, leading to a policy brief that informed municipal planning decisions."

2. Social Impact & Advocacy Roles

What employers look for: Passion for and experience in social impact projects, stakeholder engagement, programme management, and communication skills.

How to customise:

- Highlight experience in grassroots work, advocacy campaigns, or social programmes.
- Showcase project management or community engagement skills.
- Demonstrate the ability to work with diverse stakeholders, including government, NGOs, and communities.

Customising Your Cover Letter for Different Roles

Example line: "During my tenure at [Organisation], I collaborated with policymakers and grassroots activists to develop a public awareness campaign on gender equity, reaching over 10,000 people."

3. NGO & Non-Profit Roles

What employers look for: Alignment with the organisation's mission, fundraising skills, project coordination, and impact measurement.

How to customise:

- Show your commitment to the cause by referencing relevant volunteer or professional experience.
- Highlight fundraising or grant-writing experience if applicable.
- Demonstrate impact through measurable results from past work.
- Emphasise teamwork and adaptability in dynamic, resource-limited environments.

Example line: "At [Non-Profit], I managed a youth empowerment programme that provided leadership training to 500 underprivileged students, increasing their access to higher education."

4. International Development Roles

What employers look for: Cross-cultural experience, knowledge of global policies, project implementation skills, and adaptability.

Customising Your Cover Letter for Different Roles

How to customise:

- Showcase experience working with international stakeholders or in multicultural settings.
- Highlight experience with policy development, capacity building, or fieldwork.
- Mention language skills or experience in specific regions.

Example line: "Working with an international development organisation in East Africa, I supported policy research on sustainable agriculture, leading to a pilot project that benefited 1,000 farmers."

5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & ESG Roles

What employers look for: Knowledge of sustainable business practices, stakeholder engagement, data-driven impact assessment, and communication skills.

How to customise:

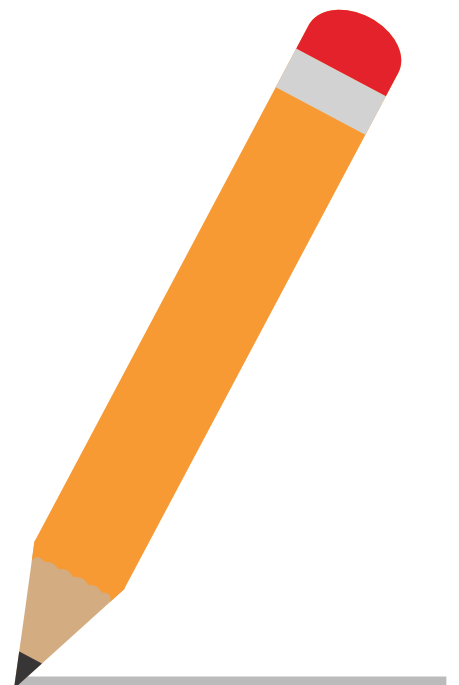
- Demonstrate experience aligning social impact initiatives with business goals.
- Highlight your ability to analyse and report on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) metrics.
- Show project management experience in sustainability or community outreach.

Example line: "As a CSR associate at [Company], I developed a sustainability initiative that reduced carbon emissions by 20% while enhancing community engagement."

Customising Your Cover Letter for Different Roles

Extra Tips for a Standout Cover Letter:

- **Personalise it** – Address the hiring manager if possible.
- **Keep it concise** – Aim for 3-4 paragraphs, one page maximum.
- **Show enthusiasm** – Express genuine interest in the organisation's work.
- **Quantify impact** – Use data to highlight past achievements.
- **End with a call to action** – Request an interview or discussion.
- **The question about AI tools** – Never a bad idea to take the support of an AI tool to draft your pointers and a rough draft. But never submit whatever draft an AI tool has generated. It isn't too difficult for recruiters to figure it out.



**Now,
let's get you
prepped
for
the
Interview!**

Interview Prep Checklist

No one can really predict what questions will come up in a job, fellowship, or internship interview. But what you can be fully prepared for is:

- a) Knowing your resume, cover letter, and application essays (if any) inside out. The next question someone asks you during the interview might stem from the ongoing response you're giving in response to their previous question.
- b) Practising 10-15 key questions that give you a solid base of responses, helping you tackle a much wider range of questions that might come up.

Also, depending on the role, interviews can sometimes take different formats—think case studies, role plays, or problem-solving exercises. So, be ready for some curveballs too!

Start with a Bang: “Tell Me About Yourself”

Master the **Present-Past-Future Framework**:

Present: Start with your current role or status.

Example: “I’m currently a Policy Associate at [Organisation], where I analyse policy proposals and collaborate with stakeholders to implement public health initiatives.”

Past: Highlight relevant experiences that showcase your skills.

Example: “Previously, I worked on designing a pilot project for renewable energy access in rural areas, which resulted in a 20% increase in energy availability for 500 households.”

Future: Connect your goals with the company’s mission.

Example: “I’m excited to bring my experience in policy analysis to [Company], where I hope to drive impactful legislative changes.”



Interview Prep Checklist

Answering Behavioural Questions: The CARL Framework

Example Question: "Tell me about a time when you led a team."

Context: "During my role at [Organisation], I was tasked with managing a team to deliver a policy briefing within two weeks."

Action: "I divided the tasks based on team strengths, organised daily check-ins, and implemented a feedback loop for quality assurance."

Result: "We submitted the briefing three days ahead of schedule, which was praised by the client and led to a follow-up project."

Learning: "This taught me the importance of adaptive leadership and proactive communication."

Handling Situational Questions: The RCS Framework

Example: "What would you do if a major project faced unforeseen delays?"

Rephrase: "So, you're asking how I'd manage unexpected project delays while ensuring quality and stakeholder satisfaction?"

Clarify: "Could you specify the nature of the delay—resources, approvals, or external factors?"

Structure: "I'd evaluate the root cause, communicate transparently with stakeholders, and propose an adjusted timeline with contingency measures."

Interview Prep Checklist

Polish Your Thank You Email

Sending a thank you email after the interview leaves a positive impression.

Example:

Subject: Thank You for the Opportunity

Dear [Interviewer's Name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to discuss the [Role Name] at [Company Name]. Our conversation about [specific topic discussed] reinforced my enthusiasm for contributing to your team.

I'm particularly excited about [specific project or value of the company], and I'm confident that my [specific skill or experience] can make a meaningful impact. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need any more information.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity. I look forward to the possibility of working together.

Best regards,
[Your Name]

Basics - but ensuring the correct spelling, language, punctuations etc. makes a big difference.

Interview Prep Checklist

Mock Interviews and Practice

- Use tools like ChatGPT or Google Gemini to simulate interview scenarios.
- Example Prompt: "You are a hiring manager for [Role]. Ask me behavioural, technical and situational questions relevant to the role and provide feedback on my answers."

Tips for Public Policy Roles

- **Research is Key:** Stay updated on recent policy changes, the organisation's focus areas, their past initiatives in the broader government affairs, regulatory engagement or policy ideation/implementation space and relevant case studies.
- **Highlight real Skills:** Demonstrate that the you're actually well-versed with the skills listed on your resume and/or area of work (this is again where personal website, online work portfolio etc. come in handy) and prepare well for a wide-ranging conversation around the same.
- **Show Commitment to Equity:** Use examples of how you've worked to address the needs of marginalised communities'.



Types of Job Interviews and What to Expect

Job interviews can take different forms depending on the role, industry, and employer's approach to assessing candidates. Here's a guide to the most common types of interviews and how to prepare for each:

1. Traditional One-on-One Interview

This is the most common format, where you meet with one interviewer (usually a hiring manager or HR representative) and answer questions about your skills, experience, and suitability for the role.

How to prepare:

- Research the company and role thoroughly.
- Practice responses to common interview questions.
- Have examples ready that showcase your achievements.

2. Panel Interview

In this format, you'll be interviewed by multiple people at the same time, often a mix of HR, team leads, and senior management.

How to prepare:

- Maintain eye contact with all panel members, not just the one who asks the question.
- Be concise and structured in your responses.
- Expect follow-up questions from different perspectives.

3. Case Study Interview

Common in consulting, policy, and business roles, this interview involves solving a real-world business problem or policy challenge.

Types of Job Interviews and What to Expect

How to prepare:

- Practise structuring your thoughts clearly and logically.
- Think out loud to showcase your problem-solving approach.
- Use frameworks like SWOT analysis, cost-benefit analysis, or policy evaluation methods.

4. Role-Play Interview

Often used for customer-facing roles, NGOs, or advocacy jobs, this format tests how you'd handle real-life situations relevant to the job.

How to prepare:

- Be confident and engage naturally with the scenario.
- Focus on problem-solving, communication, and empathy.
- Stay adaptable, as the interviewer may change the situation mid-way.

5. Behavioural Interview

This type of interview assesses how you've handled past experiences using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

How to prepare:

- Prepare real-life examples that highlight your skills.
- Focus on measurable outcomes and specific actions.
- Be honest and reflective about challenges you've overcome.

6. Stress Interview

Designed to test how you handle pressure, this format might involve rapid-fire questions, interruptions, or challenging remarks.

Types of Job Interviews and What to Expect

How to prepare:

- Stay calm and composed, even if the interviewer appears confrontational.
- Maintain professionalism and confidence.
- Take a deep breath before responding to difficult questions.

7. Technical Interview

Used for roles in fields like IT, engineering, and finance, this interview tests your domain-specific knowledge and problem-solving abilities.

How to prepare:

- Brush up on relevant technical skills and theories.
- Practise coding problems, financial models, or case scenarios.
- Be ready to explain your thought process clearly.

8. Group Interview

Involves multiple candidates being interviewed together, often to assess teamwork, leadership, and communication skills.

How to prepare:

- Be assertive but not dominant in group discussions.
- Listen actively and engage with others' points.
- Demonstrate leadership without overpowering teammates.

Being aware of these different interview styles and preparing accordingly can help you feel more confident and perform better, no matter what comes your way!

50 Most Asked Interview Questions

Interviews can be nerve-wracking, but knowing what to expect makes a huge difference. Here's a list of 50 common interview questions, with sample answers for the top 10 to help you prepare.

1. Tell me about yourself.

This is usually the first question and sets the tone. Keep it concise, relevant, and engaging.

Example answer:

"I'm a marketing professional with three years of experience in digital campaigns and brand strategy. I thrive on data-driven decision-making and creative problem-solving. In my last role, I led a social media campaign that increased engagement by 40%—I love turning insights into impact!"

2. What are your strengths?

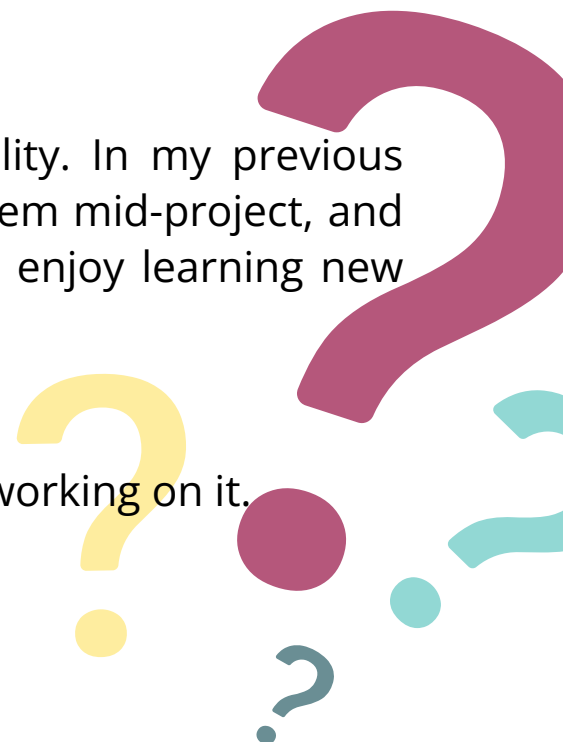
Focus on strengths relevant to the job. Use examples to back them up.

Example answer:

"One of my biggest strengths is adaptability. In my previous role, I had to quickly learn a new CRM system mid-project, and within a month, I trained my team on it. I enjoy learning new skills and taking on challenges."

3. What are your weaknesses?

Pick a real weakness but show how you're working on it.



Example answer:

"I used to struggle with public speaking, but I've been actively improving by taking on more presentation opportunities. Recently, I led a training session for 30 people, which was a big confidence boost!"

4. Why do you want to work here?

Show you've done your research and align your goals with the company's values.

Example answer:

"I admire your company's commitment to sustainability, and I'm excited by the prospect of contributing to such impactful work. My background in eco-friendly product marketing aligns perfectly with your mission."

5. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Show ambition but keep it realistic and aligned with the role.

Example answer:

"In five years, I'd love to be leading a team in this industry, ideally at a company that values innovation. I'm eager to develop my skills in project management and grow into a leadership role."

6. Why should we hire you?

Sum up your skills and how they fit the role.

Example answer:

"I bring a mix of creativity and analytical thinking that's ideal for this role. My experience in data-driven marketing has helped brands grow their audience, and I'm confident I can do the same for your team."

7. Can you tell me about a challenge you faced at work and how you handled it?

Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result).

Example answer:

"A major client was about to drop us due to a delay in project delivery. I stepped in to communicate openly, restructured the timeline, and ensured we met their priority needs first. In the end, we retained the client and strengthened our relationship."

8. How do you handle pressure or stress?

Employers want to know if you can stay calm and productive.

Example answer:

"I break tasks into priorities and focus on solutions. In my last role, a last-minute project change required a quick turnaround, so I delegated effectively and kept communication clear. We met the deadline without compromising quality."

9. What are your salary expectations?

Do your research and give a range, not a fixed number.

Example answer:

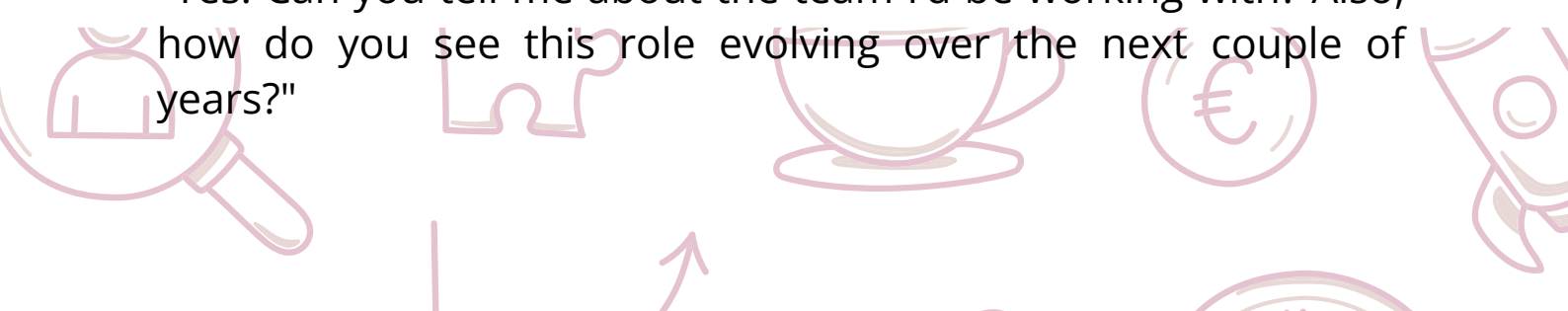
"Based on my experience and market research, I'd expect a salary in the range of ₹50,000-₹60,000, but I'm open to discussing based on the full benefits package."

10. Do you have any questions for us?

Always have a couple of thoughtful questions ready.

Example answer:

"Yes! Can you tell me about the team I'd be working with? Also, how do you see this role evolving over the next couple of years?"



Other Common Interview Questions

- What do you know about our company? (Show you've done your homework.)
- Why did you leave your last job? (Keep it positive, even if you left on bad terms.)
- Describe a time you worked in a team. (Highlight collaboration skills.)
- Tell me about a time you showed leadership. (Even if it wasn't in a formal role.)
- What motivates you? (Link it to the job role.)
- How do you prioritise your work? (Show how you stay organised.)
- Describe a time you made a mistake and how you handled it. (Show accountability and learning.)
- What kind of work environment do you prefer? (Align it with the company culture.)
- How do you deal with difficult colleagues? (Show diplomacy and professionalism.)
- What would your previous manager say about you? (Keep it honest and positive.)
- How do you handle feedback? (Show openness to growth.)
- Describe a time you went above and beyond. (Make it measurable if possible.)

- Have you ever had to learn a new skill quickly? (Show adaptability.)
- What do you do outside of work? (Show personality but keep it professional.)
- How do you stay updated in your field? (Mention industry blogs, courses, or events.)
- Have you ever disagreed with a manager? (Show how you handled it professionally.)
- Describe your ideal manager. (Avoid criticising past bosses.)
- What do you enjoy most about your current/last job? (Keep it positive.)
- What's the most difficult decision you've had to make at work? (Use the STAR method.)
- How do you manage competing deadlines? (Give an example.)
- Have you ever worked remotely? (Discuss time management and communication skills.)
- What's your proudest professional achievement? (Make it relevant to the role.)
- Do you prefer working independently or in a team? (Show flexibility.)
- How do you handle repetitive tasks? (Show enthusiasm and efficiency.)
- Have you ever had to work with limited resources? (Show problem-solving skills.)

- What would you do if you disagreed with a company policy? (Show professionalism.)
- How do you balance work and personal life? (Demonstrate time management skills.)
- What would you do in your first 30 days in this role? (Show initiative.)
- What's your approach to continuous learning? (Mention professional development.)
- How do you measure success? (Link it to job performance and impact.)
- Have you ever had to deal with an unhappy customer/client? (Show problem resolution skills.)
- How do you ensure attention to detail? (Give an example.)
- What's a professional risk you've taken? (Show calculated risk-taking.)
- What do you think makes a great team? (Mention collaboration, trust, and communication.)
- If you were hiring for this role, what would you look for? (Describe qualities that match yours.)
- How do you handle change in the workplace? (Show adaptability.)
- Can you give an example of innovative thinking? (Mention a creative solution.)
- What's your approach to networking? (Mention professional relationships and growth.)

- If you could improve one thing about yourself, what would it be? (Show self-awareness.)
- Do you have any concerns about this role? (If you do, phrase it positively.)

💡 ***Tip: Interviews are a make or break stage in any hiring exercise — use examples, keep answers concise, prepare well, show up on time, and don't dress shabbily!***

