

PGAA Tax Interview Preparation Guide



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Checklist

Review yourself

Check in with yourself.

Why do you want to get to know this interview panel?

Why do you want this job?

What makes you awesome to work with & qualified for the job?

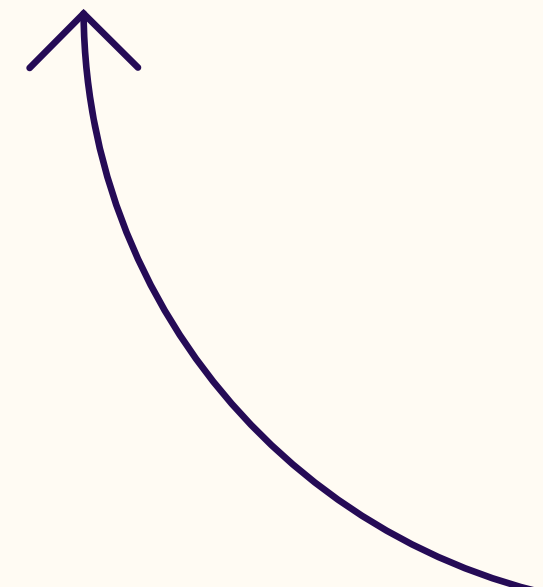
Review your resume side-by-side with the job description.

Write in the margins examples of your experience for each duty.

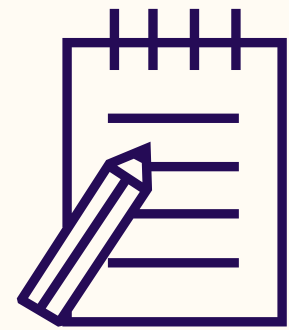
*if writing is not your thing, record yourself on audio. It might feel strange, but it helps to keep the information fresh in the mind and mouth.

Be Ready for the "Tell Me About Yourself" question.

Read our blog on how to answer it [here](#).



Review them



Re-read our position description.

Make a note of the technical aspects of the job.



Research the company (website, LinkedIn, ZoomInfo, Dun & Bradstreet)

Be well-versed in their history and growth over the years.

Look for relevant press releases in the news or trade publications.



Read the interview panel preparation deck we provided.

Understand each interviewer's role within the organization and ensure you answer their questions with a nod toward their expertise.

Be ready with questions for each interviewer but focus on responsibility-related issues, not "what's in it for me" questions.

While the interviewer scrutinizes your resume, employment history, and technical skills, the interview is a nuanced and subjective aspect of the job hunt. Impressions are formed, and your compatibility with the organization's needs is evaluated. The interviewer assesses **their ability to collaborate with you** in the given role.

In essence, establishing a **genuine connection** and communication is key to making a **positive** impression.

Be sincere, polite, and enthusiastic, share industry knowledge, showcase your teamwork skills in your story-like answers, and **prepare to pivot if necessary**.



In the interview

Both sides are working to give (and get) what they want from the conversation.



The key to a great interview is to be a great listener.

Please be sure to listen because thinking of answers while someone is talking is not listening. Let pauses happen to ensure you are letting their words sink in so your answer is packed with what they need to hear. Be positive, be honest, and recall specific situations with actions taken and measurable results. Don't ramble.



Rules for Bringing Your Best Self



Arrive early, but not more than 10 minutes early.

Be personable as well as professional.

Remember, they might be nervous!

Be polite to everyone you meet—every person in a company matters.

Do a mock interview, review behavior-based interviewing and S.T.A.R. answering techniques

Be sure you know how to pronounce everyone's name correctly.

Assume all questions are asked for a good reason and answer accordingly.

Answer all questions honestly but in the most favorable light.

NEVER badmouth previous employers.

Feel free to pause for a few seconds and ask for clarification before answering a question.

Take time before the interview to exercise, meditate, and say some positive affirmations to boost your confidence.

Do not assume your interviewer can elicit the information they seek.



Your questions are important.

While the best interviewers feel like conversations, and we hope you asked a few questions throughout the interview, the interviewer usually asks if you have questions at the end. Always ask one. This is your chance to **show your thoughtfulness and attention to detail**. Leave compensation and benefits questions until later with HR.

Make sure your questions cannot be answered through your research.

Good topics to build a question from:

- The competitive environment in which the organization operates
- Executive management styles
- What obstacles the organization anticipates in meeting its goals
- How the organization's goals have changed over the past three years
- What resources are available from the company and what must be found elsewhere to reach position objectives
- What do they feel are the critical factors in their retention at the company?
- How are decisions made?
- What would indicate my success in this role if I were to join your team a year from now? 5 years from now?



If you freeze or draw a blank...

Take a breath. One inhale, one exhale. Through the nose is best.

Take a sip of water.

Repeat, restate, or clarify the question.

Acknowledge that their question is a good one. For example, "Great question." "Hmm, there are a few examples I can think of, but the best one is probably when..."

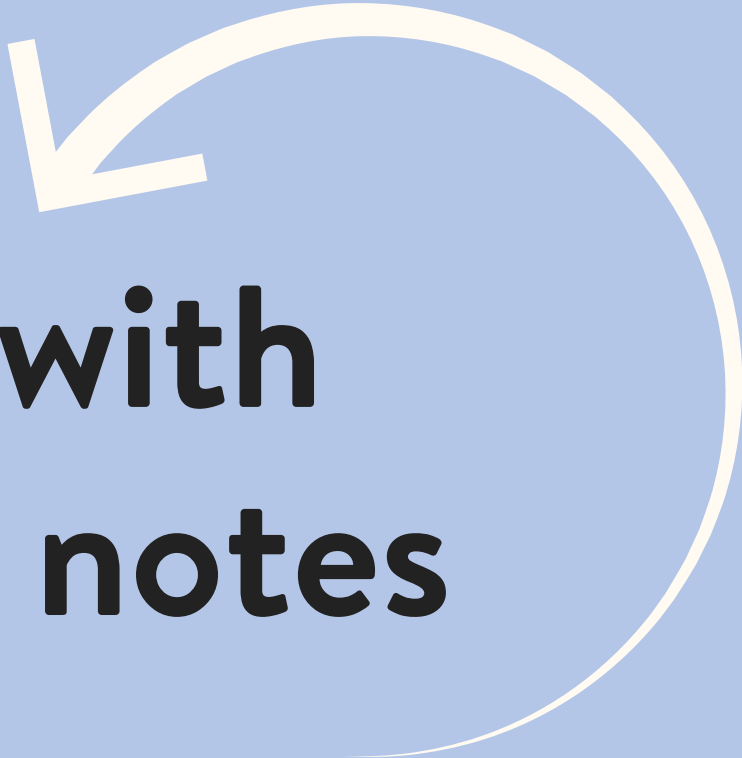
Silence can feel long, but rambling and evading the question wastes their time.





Follow up with your recruiter

It's important that you connect about how your interview went so your recruiter can give the company feedback. Don't worry about timing - even a quick call in the parking lot would be perfect.



Follow up with thank-you notes

Interviews are grueling for the hiring team. Send a thank you email within 24 hours of the meeting. Send them separately, and make them personalized to each interviewer. Be brief. Review your formatting and grammar before pressing send.

Write down or voice memo your thoughts, questions, and potential second interview questions while it is fresh in your mind!

Dear *[interviewer]*,

Thank them for
their time +

Mention something about
your conversation that
you found interesting or
helpful +

Reiterate your interest
in the job/company's
mission +

Emphasize your specific
experience/skills that
make you a good fit for
the job

Best, *[you]*

Tips & Tricks

The interview is all about getting to know one another.

And you are an expert on you, so that is a great start!

The interviewer and interviewee are trying to answer, "Do you have what I need to be successful?" The goal is for everyone to confidently answer, "YES!"



Power Poses: stress reliever and confidence booster!



Body Language: Louder than words

Not only is your **posture, eye contact, and engaging body language** during the interview important, but research also shows that you can improve your mindset with certain poses before an interview. Standing in the superwoman pose (hands on hips, feet slightly wider than hips) or the Mick Jagger pose (hands up like you have a crowd cheering for you) for 2 minutes increases testosterone and decreases cortisol in the body, allowing your brain to be more agile, think more abstractly and do better in stressful situations (like interviewing for a job).

To learn more about this, watch [Amy Cuddy's TedTalk](#).

Don't Talk Too Much

by Michael Neece, founder of Interview Mastery

The gift of gab can be something of a curse during an interview. You could end up talking your way right out of the job. It's important to remember that interviewers are only human, and their attention wanes as you speak. Fully understanding this is critical to effectively communicating during any interview. Your response should be less than a minute and a half when an interviewer asks you to "tell me about yourself." Why?

You'll have that interviewer's attention for just about 90 seconds.

The average interviewer's attention span looks something like this:

- As you begin speaking, the interviewer is listening with nearly full attention.
- After about **10 seconds**, they begin listening with less intensity.
- After **60 seconds**, their mind begins to wander, and they are devoting less than half their attention to you. The interviewer starts asking questions about your response or begins formulating their next question.

After you've been speaking for 90 seconds without interruption, the interviewer is barely listening at all.



An interviewer's attention level can be nearly impossible to detect because most people are skilled at nodding and saying "hmmm" while looking at you, all to disguise their wandering minds. The longer you speak without interruption, the less attention the listener gives you. Hence, when you provide a long answer that builds to an important conclusion, often, the interviewer is no longer listening. This is particularly important when responding to an interviewer's request to tell them about yourself because there is so much you can say on the subject. You can't be sure what part of your background the interviewer is most interested in learning about. **Asking questions keeps your interview panel engaged.**

Stand out.

Ask questions they
are excited to
answer.

Be outstanding.

Skilled interviewers will pose behavioral-event questions, asking you to describe specific examples of your experience. Your response can easily last much longer than 90 seconds in these situations. In such cases, interrupt yourself by asking the interviewer questions like, "Is this the level of detail you are looking for?" or "Is this the type of example you're interested in?" This strategy helps to reengage your listener and promotes two-way communication.

According to Kent Kirch, the global director of recruiting at Deloitte, interviewers are more impressed with your questions than any selling points you try to make. "What's really disappointing to an interviewer is at the end of an interview, and I ask the candidate, 'Do you have any questions I can answer for you?' and he says, 'Nope, I think you answered them all,' and that's the end of it; it's just really frustrating," he says. "It all goes back to preparation, and [your questions] tell the interviewer you thought about this interview before you walked in the door."

Asking questions can also give you a strategic edge. "People love to talk about themselves," says Austin Cooke, the global recruitment director at Sapient. "So if you as a candidate can kind of get interviewers talking about themselves, you're one step up."

Your interview goals are to make sure you understand and to make the best presentation of your talents. Engaging interviewers in two-way communication by asking questions helps ensure they listen while you deliver your response.

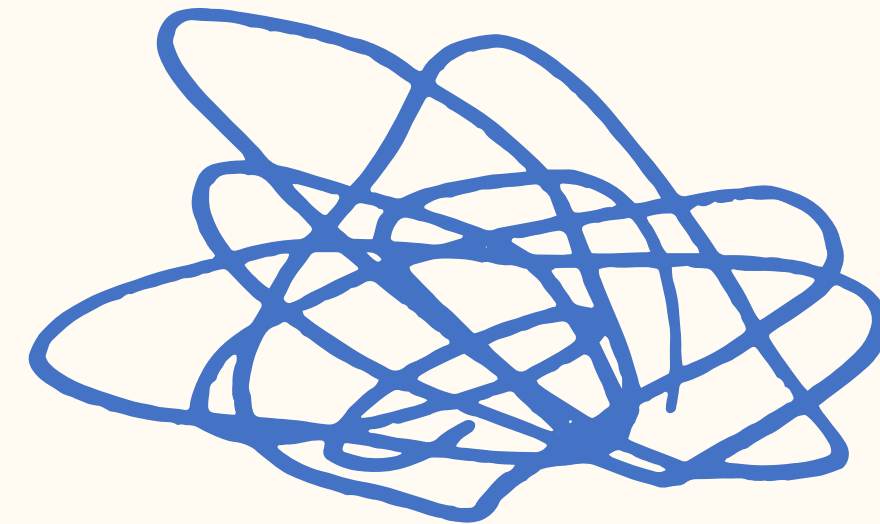
Confusing an Interview with an Interrogation

Most candidates expect to be interrogated. An interrogation occurs when one person asks all the questions, and the other gives the answers. An interview is a business conversation in which both people ask and respond to questions. Candidates who expect to be interrogated avoid asking questions, leaving the interviewer in the role of reluctant interrogator.

Making a So-Called Weakness Seem Positive

Interviewers frequently ask candidates, "What are your weaknesses?" Conventional interview wisdom dictates that you highlight a weakness like "I'm a perfectionist" and turn it into a positive. Interviewers are not impressed because they've probably heard the same answer a hundred times. If asked this question, highlight a skill you wish to improve and describe what you are doing to enhance your skill in this area. Interviewers don't care what your weaknesses are. They want to see how you handle the question and what your answer indicates about you.

Whoopsies. Interview Mistakes



Waiting for a Call

Time is your enemy after the interview. After you send a thank-you email to every interviewer, follow up a couple of days later with either a question or additional information. Contact the person who can hire you -- not the HR department. HR is famous for not returning calls. Additional information can include your talents, a recent competitor's press release, or industry trends. Your intention is to keep everyone's memory of you fresh.

Researching the Company But Not Yourself

Candidates intellectually prepare by researching the company. Most job seekers do not research themselves by taking inventory of their experience, knowledge, and skills. Formulating a talent inventory makes responding to any question about your experience easy. You must be prepared to discuss any part of your background. Creating your talent inventory refreshes your memory and helps you immediately remember experiences you would otherwise have forgotten during the interview.

Leaving Your Cell Phone On

We may live in a wired, always-available society, but a ringing cell phone is inappropriate for an interview. Turn it off before you enter the company.

Failing to Ask Questions

You've heard this enough times now. Every interview concludes with the interviewer asking if you have any questions. The worst thing to say is that you have no questions. Having no questions prepared indicates you are not interested and not prepared. Interviewers are more impressed by your questions than the selling points you try to make. Before each interview, make a list of five questions you will ask. "I think a good question is, 'Can you tell me about your career?'" says Kent Kirch, director of global recruiting at Deloitte. "Everybody likes to talk about themselves, so you're probably pretty good asking that question."

Interview Checklist



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Pre-Interview Preparation

- Research company: understand its history & growth. Look for press releases & relevant news.
- Review job description: write down 2-3 examples of your experience in each responsibility/duty
- Review your resume: write down 2-3 measurable examples of experience in each responsibility/duty
- Review common interview questions (see our guide on behavioral-based interviews and STAR answer technique)
- Write down and memorize your 3-part answer to the common “tell us about yourself” question
- Prepare an answer to “What are your weaknesses?”
- Consider doing a mock interview with a former employee at the company or hire a professional mock interviewer on Fiverr
- PGAA Tax will provide a biography deck of your interviewers to review. Prepare a question specific to each interviewer’s area of expertise

The Interview - Before & Day Of

- Bring copies of your resume and references
- Bring a notepad and pen
- Try on your interview attire before the day of the interview; bring a spare outfit just in case coffee spills
- Dry clean or press outfit, polish shoes
- Exercise, meditate, do some power poses, and do a visualization of you nailing the interview (example [here](#))

The Interview - Questions

- Prepare a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview

Post Interview

- Call your recruiter right away to discuss how the interview went
- Send thank you notes to each interviewer within 24 hours



Phil Guillen & Associates LLC specializes in recruiting and placing leadership tax professionals in all areas of Corporate Taxation on a national level. Our team has more than 23 years of combined tax recruiting experience.

We partner with clients and tax professionals helping them achieve their goals by building long-term relationships based on trust, integrity, professionalism, and results.

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