INVESTMENT BANKING & ADVISORY

15 practical interview questions for your next investment banking or advisory hire

A transaction list tells you which deals a candidate worked on. The interview should establish what they can take responsibility for in your team.

How to use this guide

Choose questions relevant to the position, use consistent assessment criteria and keep transaction discussions anonymised. There is no need to request confidential models, documents or client information.

Assess the responsibilities of the role, not personal circumstances. Offer reasonable adjustments where required so candidates can demonstrate their ability.

Use the notes beneath each question to record evidence, the candidate's personal contribution and anything requiring verification. These prompts support judgement; they are not a scoring formula.

Interview record

Candidate _____

Position _____

Interviewer / date _____

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01 Choose one transaction. Which deliverables were yours, who reviewed them, and what did they change?

Look for specific responsibilities and a clear review history. Distinguish work the candidate produced from work they coordinated or observed. Ask which revision materially improved the analysis.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

02 Walk me through the checks you would complete before sending a model for review.

Look for reconciliation to source information, formula and accounting checks, consistent assumptions and commercially sensible outputs. Ask for an error they found and how they prevented it recurring.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

03 Management has proposed three adjustments to earnings. How would you assess and present them?

Look for a reconciliation to reported earnings, supporting evidence and scrutiny of recurrence, replacement costs and double counting. Ask how they would present a disputed adjustment rather than quietly incorporate it.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

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04 EBITDA is growing, but cash generation is deteriorating. What would you investigate first?

Look for a structured reconciliation through working capital, capital expenditure and other relevant cash movements. Which records would they request, and how would they distinguish timing from a persistent operating problem?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

05 You find an unfamiliar liability in the enterprise-value-to-equity-value bridge. What do you check?

Look for its economic substance, supporting documents and the transaction’s definitions. Where leases matter, check consistency with the earnings measure and valuation approach. An account name alone is not enough.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

06 Your comparable-company analysis and discounted cash flow valuation disagree materially. What next?

Look for investigation of comparability, forecasts and methodology before averaging outputs. Which difference is most likely to change the advice?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

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07 A diligence workstream is two weeks behind. What would you do today?

Look for the missing information, decisions it blocks, accountable owners and a revised timetable. What needs immediate escalation and what can be progressed independently?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

08 A material issue emerges just before final bids. How would you assess its implications?

Look for verification, financial and commercial consequences, and appropriate specialist input. Ask who should communicate with bidders. Confidentiality and disclosure decisions should not be improvised.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

09 One offer is higher but more conditional. How would you compare it with a lower, more certain offer?

Look for the seller’s objectives, cash at completion, contingent consideration, financing, relevant regulatory approvals, conditions and timing. What would the candidate establish before recommending exclusivity?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

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10 The client wants to continue a process producing weak bids. What analysis would you prepare?

Look for credible alternatives: continuing, changing the process, pausing or retaining the business. Completion is not automatically the best outcome.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

11 The client expects a valuation your analysis does not support. How would you explain the gap?

Ask for the opening two minutes of the conversation. Look for evidence, assumptions and practical options rather than a promise to “manage expectations”.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

12 New information changes advice you gave yesterday. What do you tell the client?

Look for what changed, its significance, the revised conclusion and next action. How would they distinguish new evidence from an error and involve the appropriate senior reviewer?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

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13 Two shareholders want different outcomes. What would you clarify before proceeding?

Look for objectives, decision-making authority, constraints and an agreed basis for the advisory work. Ask which matters require senior or legal input.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

14 A buyer asks for sensitive information during a call. You are unsure whether it can be shared. What do you do?

Look for a professional holding response, verification of authority and confidentiality restrictions, and a clear follow-up. Do not reward unauthorised disclosure.

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

15 A junior’s work contains a repeated error shortly before a deadline. How would you handle it?

Look for immediate protection of the deliverable, proportionate review of related work and a plan to address the cause. What would the candidate do personally, delegate and explain afterwards?

EVIDENCE / FOLLOW-UP

For an analyst or associate, concentrate on producing and checking reliable work. For a workstream lead, examine dependencies, escalation and review. For a client-facing senior hire, require a defensible recommendation and a clear explanation of its consequences. Where useful, use a short fictional exercise and verify material claims through referees the candidate has authorised you to contact.

Discuss your next investment banking or advisory hire.