

COMMON OPEN-ENDED BANKING QUESTIONS

Why do you want to work in investment banking?

- You've made it to the interview stage for either an internship or a graduate role: congratulations! The chances are you've made up your mind that you want a career in investment banking, but you must be able to articulate why.
- Everyone knows investment banking is full of intelligent people and that you learn a lot. And let's face it, saying you want a challenge is hardly insightful. So don't reel off these platitudes: you need to personalize your answer.
- Draw on your past experiences to show that you understand what the Industry's about and that you've used that knowledge to formulate your opinion on it.
- Using your own experiences shows that you've thought your application through and applied it to your own life.
- More on this later, but every answer should be used to demonstrate your commercial awareness. Nod to the turbulent time the industry has faced of late, but don't be negative. Why has this not deterred you from seeking a career in investments banking – or better still, why has it inspired you?

Why do you want to work at this bank?

- While you may have applied to lots of different banks, it's important to do your homework on each, especially if you get to this stage in the recruitment process.
- Everybody who's made it to the interview stage is likely familiar with the bank's website, so, in order to stand out, you need to use the information carefully – don't regurgitate it.
- Find out if the bank has a niche specialism that interests you and learn as much about it as possible. Or find out about a director of the division you want to work in that's had an interesting career and expand on this at the interview. Show that you've done your homework and that you know what makes the bank different from others.
- Interviewers will expect you to know what sort of work the bank has done, so find out as much as you can about high-profile deals they've worked on. You should be able to say why you've found them interesting and why they encouraged you to apply.
- Most banks have campus events, which provide a great chance to speak to employees and to find out why they enjoy working there. Use it as a chance to find out about the bank's culture and don't be afraid to name drop at the interview.

What are the biggest issues facing the US economy?

- Banks will test your macroeconomic mettle from as early as your initial online application and will return to it throughout the process. Trying to lodge hundreds of articles in your mind the night before an interview is foolish, so if you don't read the WSJ start now.
- Don't overcomplicate your answers. In order to truly understand something, you should be able to explain it in the simplest possible terms, so don't use acronyms and terminology if you can't substantiate them.
- Hone in on two or three economic issues in some detail, rather than scratching the surface of ten. Use examples you're most confident in talking about.

Tell us about a time you overcame a challenge.

- As well as convincing the interviewers that banking's the right line of work for you, you need to persuade them that you're right for them. A large part of this will be done through competency-based questions.
- Think of all your qualities and list examples of when you've used them ahead of time. Have about ten good stories ready.
- Perhaps you've captained a sports team and used your motivational skills. Maybe you've worked in a restaurant and had to diffuse a situation that was threatening to get heated? Be creative, but don't lie.
- Remember, all "challenges" are relative, so while you may not think your history of volunteering or part time work is that impressive, it's the kind of experience employer's love.
- Strike a balance: be confident, but not arrogant. If you've successfully managed a group of people, for instance, don't take all the credit. Being able to work as part of a team is another vital attribute for investment bankers.

Describe the lifecycle of a trade.

- If hired, you'll receive full technical training, but banks will question you on some semi-technical issues at interview stage as well. The good news is the answers are readily available to those who seek them.
- As with previous answers, it's important not to overcomplicate things: Know the main stages of and departments involved in the lifecycle of a trade by heart, but also make sure you can explain them when asked to.
- Perhaps the best method is to draw it out in diagram format again and again until you've got it down.
- There are numerous great resources for information like this: websites like mergerandacquisitions.com

Tell me about a time when you worked on a team and there was someone who wasn't pulling their weight. How did you deal with the situation?

- Make sure your example is honest and specific with emphasis on what you did to resolve the problem, a class project, sports team, an organization you were involved with all can provide examples.