

APPLICATION GUIDE

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About This Guide

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The purpose of this guide is to be a starting point for learning about the recruitment process, it will help you learn the basics, avoid unnecessary pitfalls and point you in the right direction for further learning. This guide is mainly aimed towards investment banking, management consulting and related industries. However, much of the general advice is applicable regardless of where you are applying.

Thinking about the recruitment process probably creates a heavy feeling in your chest, you are not alone. However, it's an inevitable challenge on each and everyone's path to success – a skill that needs to be mastered. Don't think of the recruitment process as a personal hearing, it is a necessary and effective tool for companies to ensure themselves of your greatness. The key to success is being prepared for this challenge, which is why we at HankInvest felt necessary to create this guide - to help you on your way.

The HankInvest board would like to especially thank Jesper Lundkvist for writing this guide and Tito Pipping and Edvin Engman for their valuable help along the way.

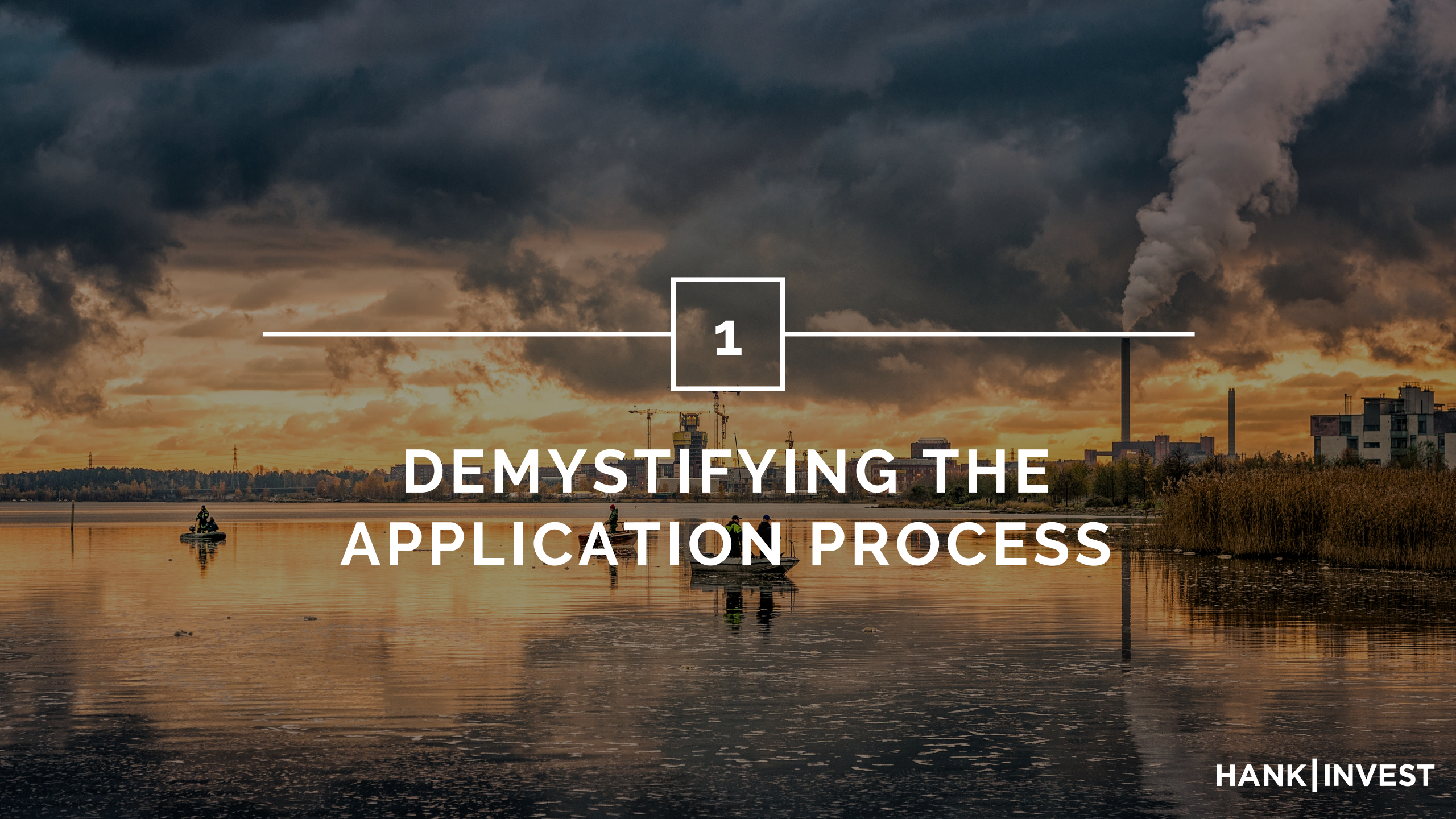
Please feel free to write to board@hankinvest.org for corrections or ideas on what could be included in the guide.

HankInvest Board

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1

DEMYSTIFYING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

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Preparation for applications should start during the summer

What to apply for?

- Consulting? Investment Banking? Asset Management? Private Equity? Other?
- Hard to apply to all industries at the same time, focus your time on a couple of them
- Be among the first ones to apply!
- Apply to as many places as possible within your chosen industries – this will naturally increase your odds of getting an interview

Prepare your application and practice interviews

- Prepare you CV and Cover Letter well in time, no great application was done in one day
- Practice online tests (numerical tests), case interviews, technical questions
- Firms often have fast moving application processes, usually there's less than a week between being invited to an interview and the interview itself so prepare ahead of time

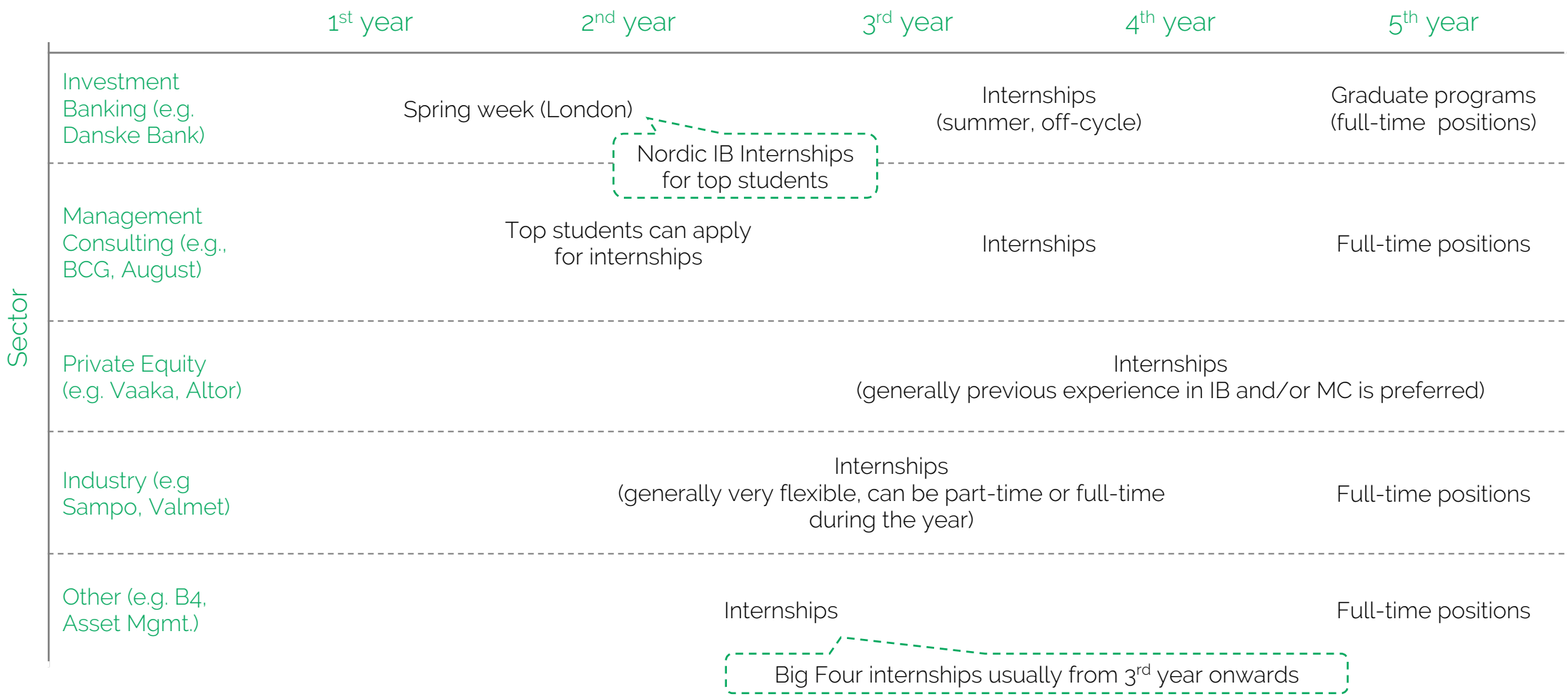
Conduct research

- Find out which firms you want to apply to (banks, consulting firms, investment firms, industry)
- Contact alumni and ask for tips/advice for the recruiting process
- Research what the firm has done (deals, projects) from e.g. FT, WSJ, Kauppalehti, Mergermarket

Attend recruiting events

- Attend as many networking / recruitment events as possible
- Many of these act as a pre-screening and you can get valuable contacts within the firm, who can later help you get the initial interview

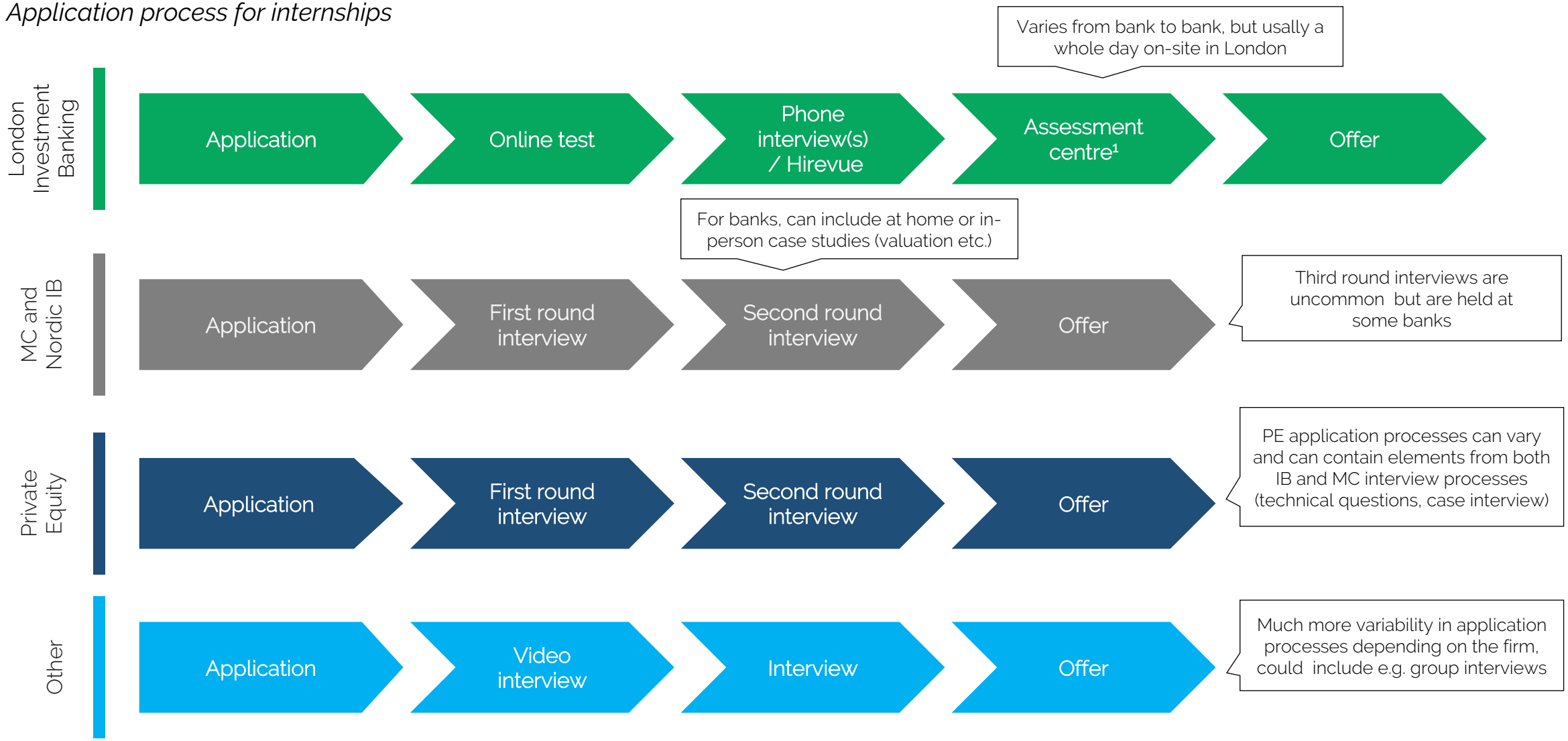
General overview of internship timelines



Main recruiting season occurs during the fall and the recruiting process can occur over 1 year before the internship starts, so apply early. Further, many banks recruit on a rolling basis, thus by applying immediately you increase your chances of getting an interview!

Generally, application processes are similar among industries

Application process for internships



Note: 1) Tips on how to ace your assessment centre: https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/emea-recruitment-assessment-centers/

How to get your foot through the door?

Networking

- Apply to all recruiting events, try to talk with as many company representatives as possible
- Recruiting events are usually used as a pre-screening method, so being memorable helps
- Prepare some interesting questions and participate actively in the discussion
- Show genuine interest for the company and the industry

Follow-ups

- After events and other meetings, send follow-up emails to thank them for taking time to meet you
- Same after interviews, thank them for the interview and state that you hope to hear back soon
- After you have submitted your application online, let recruiters and representatives know that you have applied, so they can flag you in their system

Being proactive helps tremendously when applying for competitive positions. Reach out to alumni on LinkedIn, it is a good way to get in contact and people are generally very helpful

General Tips for Interviews

Have templates for online applications

- Most banks (and consulting firms) make you fill in a lot of info online
- Have templates (copy paste information from) which saves time and helps to avoid unnecessary mistakes

Be aware of online tests

- Practice tests beforehand (numerical, verbal, situational) and read up on what kind of test to expect (esp. Pymetrics)
- Often you need to score above a certain threshold to even be screened

Phone interviews are important

- Call in a quiet place without distractions (e.g. at home) with good reception
- Speak clearly and keep your answers short, might be helpful to print out your notes

Come prepared to interviews

- Talk to alumni about their recruitment process and what to prepare for
- Could be useful to memorize some basic information about the company (e.g. CEO etc.)

Assessment centre (London IB)

- Could contain interviews, group cases, individual cases, role plays etc.
- Varies from bank to bank, but can last from 8am to 3pm, consisting of ~4-5 interviews

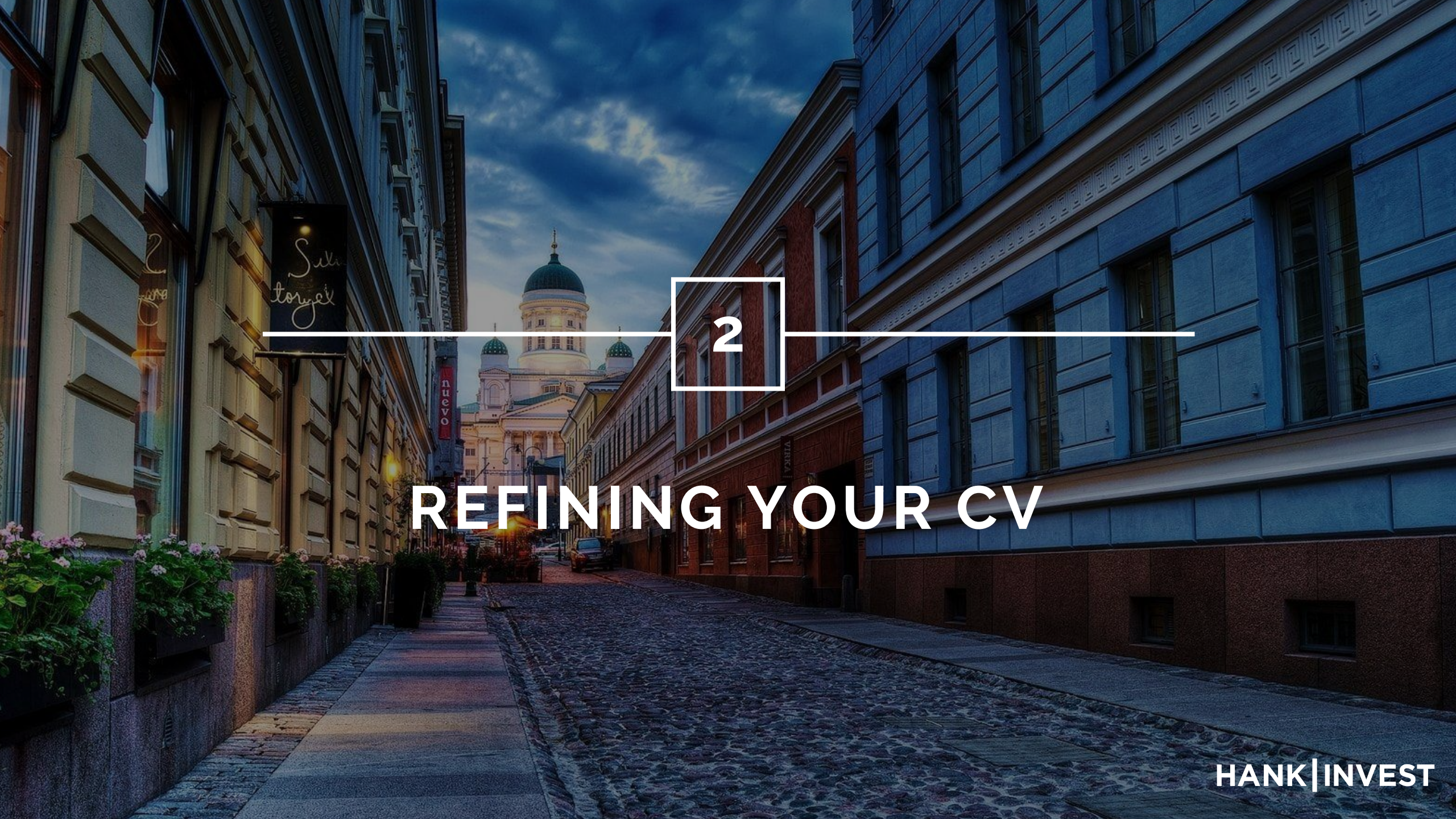
Ask questions after the interview

- Prepare 2-4 questions to ask the interviewer after the interview, avoid too generic questions
- Demonstrates interest, builds rapport with the interviewer and shows that you've prepared

Useful resources

Resources:

- Wall Street Oasis
  - Finance related discussion forum
- Breaking into Wall Street
  - Everything you need for breaking into IB
- 10xEBITDA
  - Useful articles, presentations etc.
- Multiple expansion
  - Finance-related articles, reading list
- A Simple Model
  - Intuitive financial modelling tutorials



2

REFINING YOUR CV

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General CV Dos and Don'ts (1/2)

What to do?

One page only. Sought after positions receive hundreds of applications and recruiters scan through them quickly. Usually, they are printed so they view only one page

Look professional. Use a professional and simple font. Be consistent throughout the entire CV with formatting. Generally, should be written in the same language as the job ad

Be relevant and tailor your CV. Although you might have an interesting background, only present relevant information for the position you are seeking. Highlight skills that are sought after for the industry you are applying for

Include interests and hobbies. Including interests and hobbies gives the recruiter more flavor about the candidate and helps you stand out. Usually great talking points during interviews

Use keywords. Many larger firms use applicant tracking software (APS), which often search for keywords found in job descriptions

Include non-academic achievements. Top tier firms often look for people who know how to succeed regardless of field (e.g. sold most ice creams at your first job when you were 14)

Attention to detail. Even very minor errors can result in you not getting the interview, APS looks for errors. Focus on grammar, punctuation, consistency etc. and have someone else read through your cv many times

Simple formatting. APS does not recognize dashboards, icons, pictures, etc. so avoid them. Simple formatting also makes the resume easier to read and skim through

General CV Dos and Don'ts (2/2)

What not to do?

Do not lie. Most firms will conduct background checks and call your previous employers/references etc. Definite showstopper if caught

Do not state the obvious. Do not waste valuable space on references, the interviewer will ask for them if needed. Think about it this way, what does the reference section on your CV tell about you? Not so much.

Being unstructured. You need to have a clear structure and format throughout the whole CV making it easy to skim through.

Generic explanations. Resumes with only job titles, contact details and a brief sentence, but no in-depth explanations of what was done brings little value to recruiters

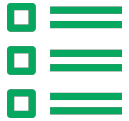
Do not use word format. Always send your CV in PDF format. Formatting can change when different persons open the CV and it also makes it easier to detect spelling errors

No fancy colors and/or icons. Yes, they might look pretty, but a recruiter usually spends roughly 15 seconds per CV. Lots of colors and icons make the CV harder to read and are not detected by APS (e.g. language skills)

List every job. Keep it to 2-4 (max) jobs and describe them well and in detail. This way you can better convey a message to the reader

Competencies that you don't master. For example, one summer internship at a finance department does not make you excellent at SAP nor financial modelling

Key points to think about when structuring your CV



Divide into different sections

- Clear headings with enough white space in between so the reader easily recognizes different sections immediately
- You can use different font sizes for headings
- Recommended to use a bottom border to clearly separate sections making skimming through the CV easier



Simple format that makes it readable

- Use clean and simple fonts and not too small font size (e.g. Helvetica, Arial, Calibri, Garamond etc.)
- Consistent formatting throughout the entire CV
- For example: no dots after bullets, dates in same format (e.g. 01/2019), same font, same font size, same spacing etc.



Most important sections first

- Think about what you want the reader to focus on first
- Usually, education on top since it is the most important aspect when you are still a student
- Generally for students, the overall structure should be: Education → Work Experience → Other (e.g. extracurricular activities)

Overview of CV headings and information to include

1 Name and Contact Details

- Write your name with a big and clear font on the top of your resume (centered)
- Phone number in international format
- Professional personal email address (or university email)
- A photo could be included in Finnish applications, however, do not include photos on international applications
- What not to include: gender, relationship status, residential address

2 Education

- English name of school with each word uppercased
- Major, minor and expected graduation
- Include overall and major GPA
  - If the other is significantly weaker, it may be worth to leave out
- Other things to that could be included: relevant coursework, exchange semester, high school (however, this gets less relevant the more experience you have), honors

3 Work Experience

- 2-4 previous job positions is usually sufficient, depending on background
- Job title, company worked for, time period, tasks, achievements, detailed description
- What not to include: exact dates (e.g. 20.1.2019), very old positions unless relevant for the job you are applying for

4 Extracurricular / Leadership Exp.

- Student clubs, military or other applicable leadership experiences
- Things in this section do not have to be recent (can be older experiences, if relevant)
- Include: specifically what you did, results, how many people you managed, outcomes etc.

5 Skills & Interests

- Languages (fit into one row if possible and do not lie about your skills)
- IT skills with focus on data bases, statistics etc. (not mandatory to include)
- Interests, include sports and other activities, mention level of sports (e.g. Finnish champion) and be specific
- What not to include: what drivers license you have, irrelevant IT/technical skills (irrelevant programs used in studies etc.), MS Office skills (demonstrate these through previous experiences)

TRIPLE CHECK FOR ERRORS

KEEP IT ON ONE PAGE

DO NOT INCLUDE REFERENCES

Example CV – Easy to read, clear formatting and informative

[Name]

[Phone Number] | [Email Address]

EDUCATION

[University Name] **[City], [Country]**
Bachelor of [Science] in [Major] Expected graduation [Month/Year]

- **Cumulative GPA:** [xx], Major GPA: [x]
- **Honors:** [x], [if not relevant you can change for e.g. Bachelor's Thesis topic and grade]
- **Relevant Coursework:** [Economics / Accounting / Finance, anything business related]

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

[Company Name] **[City], [Country]**
[Position Title] [Month/Year] – [Month/Year]

- [Summary sentence stating what you did and the overall results of your work]
- Selected [Client / Project / Transaction] Experience:
  - [Project #1; Led team to do xx, which resulted in more efficiency / time or money saved / higher sales]
  - [Project #2, Analyzed xx and concluded that key factor was xx, which made project viable / not viable; resulted in company proceeding with project]

[Company Name] **[City], [Country]**
[Position Title] [Month/Year] – [Month/Year]

- [Summary sentence stating what you did and the overall results of your work]
- [Led team's efforts to do xx by creating/managing xx; resulted in increased sales / profits / cost savings]
- [Analyzed options available for xx and recommended xx based on time and resource considerations; implementation led to successful marketing of xx]
- [Developed strategy for marketing to new prospective clients / fund-raising / promoting brand; resulted in increased awareness / capital commitments]

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

[Student Club Name] **[City], [Country]**
[Position Title] [Month/Year] – [Month/Year]

- [Summary sentence stating what you did and the overall results of your work]
- [Recruited over xx members to club with promotional campaign]
- [Organized conferences, speaker events and community events]

SKILLS, ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

Languages: Fluent in [x]; Conversational Proficiency in [x]
Technical Skills: [List any programming languages – **not** MS Office/Excel]
Certifications & Training: [Any extra courses or programs relevant to finance]
Activities: [Student Clubs, Volunteer Work, Independent Activities]
Interests: [Keep this to 1-2 lines and be specific; do **not** go overboard]

Things to note

- Focus on relevant experience, better to write more of a few relevant jobs than to include your last 7 summer jobs
- Mention where, when, how, outcomes (results and what you learned) and be specific (for example use numbers to describe outcomes if applicable)
- Generally a project-centric approach for IB/MC/PE/VC experience is recommended and a task-centric approach for any other experiences
  - Project–centric means focusing on the projects/deals you worked on and what your areas of responsibilities were
  - Being task-centric highlights certain larger tasks and what specifically you did and outcomes of your work
- Do not overexaggerate your experience (sounds silly), but do bring forward the positive aspects
- Easily understandable, benchmarkable and specific (numbers etc.) results so that reader understands them
- Short and effective bullet points, not whole sentences
- Mention skills and keywords that are used in the job application
- Try to reword bullets so that they are either one row or ≥1.5 rows to avoid clumsy formatting
- Writing concisely and effectively might take several iterations so start preparing your CV well in advance

Think of this CV format as a framework/guidance, rather than a definitive format to follow!

Source: BIWS (https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/free-investment-banking-resume-template/) slightly modified to better fit Nordic background

CV Deep dive – Professional experience section

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Large Debt Fund — **City, State**
Summer Analyst — June 2019 – August 2019
- Conducted and presented credit analysis of leveraged buyouts, mergers, and recapitalizations designed to meet both the client and firms needs as well as balance internal risk and return requirements.
- Built and maintained financial models across management, expected, and stress scenarios incorporating historical performance, company guidance, and industry projections to assess credit metrics, covenant compliance, and cash flow generation for repayment analysis.
- Completed full due diligence of [Company] deal and ultimately pitched [invest/don't] in front of the investment committee and senior leaders including the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Credit Officer, and the Head of Asset Management.

Tiny Hedge Fund — **City, State**
Equity Research Intern — June 2018 – March 2019
- Developed investment reports consisting of financial models and qualitative analysis including quality of management, competitive advantages, KPIs, and debt analysis.
- Performed an Advanced Bankruptcy Analysis; included analyzing debt and loan covenants that were used in the final decisions of potential investments.
- Pitched a sell recommendation for "Funko" (FNKO) at $28.15 based on product trends and market sentiment, resulting in a 60% decrease in share price.

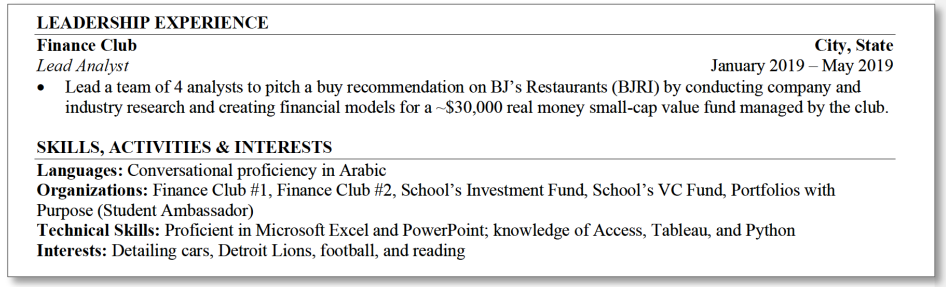
School's Endowment Fund — **City, State**
Special Project — June 2018 – July 2018
- Analyzed and recommended a Venture Capital fund investment opportunity to the Director of Investments based on the firm's investment strategy, management team, market opportunities, and performance history.
- Calculated a Venture Capital fund's public markets equivalent; calculated correlation to the S&P 500 and created a Waterfall Analysis of cash flows to visually observe the J curve effect on its investments.
- Reviewed PPMs and Due Diligence Questionnaires and summarized key terms for an internal memorandum.

For inspiration

Professional experience

- "*There is no such thing as bad publicity*", neither is there such thing as bad experience, you need to rephrase and highlight aspects of your experience to make it more relevant to the position you are applying for
- Try to start each bullet with an action verb, see this HBS list for useful words (p. 4)
- Avoid sub-bullets unless you want to highlight something specific
- You can switch the position of the name of the firm and title of your position if you do not have experience from well-known companies in the industry
- Try to highlight experience about tasks that are expected in the position you are applying for which are often mentioned in the job ad

CV Deep dive – Extracurricular experience and Skills, activities & interests



LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Finance Club — **City, State**

Lead Analyst — January 2019 – May 2019

- Lead a team of 4 analysts to pitch a buy recommendation on BJ's Restaurants (BJRI) by conducting company and industry research and creating financial models for a ~$30,000 real money small-cap value fund managed by the club.

SKILLS, ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

Languages: Conversational proficiency in Arabic
Organizations: Finance Club #1, Finance Club #2, School's Investment Fund, School's VC Fund, Portfolios with Purpose (Student Ambassador)
Technical Skills: Proficient in Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint; knowledge of Access, Tableau, and Python
Interests: Detailing cars, Detroit Lions, football, and reading

For inspiration

Extracurricular / Leadership experience

- Focus on results, how many people you managed, what you did, try to make it interesting
- This can be military services, student unions, or other clubs in school or in your free time
- Important to have it in this section, not in 'work experience' section

Skills and Interests

- Be honest here, list your real interests, do not try to modify this too much
- Results oriented where possible (running → running, competed in 4 half marathons across Europe in 2018)
- Do not underestimate this section, interests will help being more memorable and act as talking points during your interview


3
WRITING A KILLER COVER LETTER
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General Cover Letter Dos and Don'ts (1/2)

What to do?

One page only. Keep it to one page and less than 500 words, nobody has time to read through more than this. Usually, companies print cover letters when screening them, so they view only one page

Include contact details. Important to have phone and email at the top of CL for the recruiter to easily contact you. Also make your name easily visible

Attention to detail. No spelling mistakes, no formatting mistakes, triple check that you have the correct name of the employer. Make sure sentences are easily understandable

Clear story line. Why the job? Why the firm? What previous experiences and personal attributes do you possess that makes you a strong candidate for the job? Have a clear storyline throughout your CL

Use a template. Use a template that is tailored towards an industry (investment banking, consulting etc.) but always tailor your introduction and make slight adjustments to content based on where you are applying to. The truth is, do not put too much time on CLs, at many firms' people do not even read them

Use same style of formatting for CV & CL. Use the same style of formatting for both of you CV and Cover Letter (heading with your name, font etc.) so that when you put them next to each other you can see that they match

General Cover Letter Dos and Don'ts (2/2)

What not to do?

Being too generic. Everyone can write, "I'm super analytical", but it does not mean anything if you cannot provide facts or a specific example of when you've demonstrated it

Focus too much on yourself. Yes, it is important to state why you are the best candidate, But it is also crucial to write about why the industry and the specific firm interests you

Overdoing it. Keep it concise, usually even 300-400 words will suffice.

Not backing up your claims. If you say you're great at something, you must identify something on your CV that validates the claim or have something else to supports your statement. However, do not copy your CV to your CL, they should support each other

Forget to name-drop. It is important to name-drop or put down any referrals in the beginning of the cover letter. It is a very efficient way to make the reader remember you. However, ask permission or make sure that the other person knows you

Irrelevant and key-word stuffing. Forget information not relevant for the job, do not fill your CL with beautiful key-words

Structuring your cover letter properly

Heading	• Your name with big font, phone number, email address or other contact information • Name of recipient/firm
First paragraph (who you are and why you are writing)	• Brief summary of the position you are applying to, who you are, and how you come to apply • Name-drop, subtly, if you have met with any professionals at the firm - Avoid mentioning people that you have not had a conversation with/cannot back you up • Include info such as good GPA, school, major, what you admire about the firm, etc.
Second paragraph (why the company and industry)	• Why the industry and the company? Focus on why you want to work in the chosen sector - Dynamic environment, wide scope of projects, fast-paced environment, client exposure • Company specific points – show them you have done research (transactions, projects, culture)
Third paragraph (why are you a good fit)	• One paragraph should focus on relevant skills and qualities you possess that make you a strong candidate (why are you a good fit for the company) • Use results-oriented, concrete examples to strengthen your points (leadership, analytical)
Conclusion (call to action)	• Closing paragraph where you briefly summarize why you would be a good fit, thank the reader and state that you would be eager to tell more about yourself in person • One sentence on how to reach you (e.g. mail & phone)
Salutation / signature	• Beginning: Dear [company] representative, Dear X – DO NOT USE: To whom it may concern, Dear reader, Hi X, etc. • Signature: Kind regards, Yours sincerely, Sincerely – DO NOT USE: Thanks, Best, only name etc.

! Especially this section should be tailored for each application

Examples for your cover letter introduction

Introduction	My name is [first name] [last name], I am a 4th year student at Hanken School of Economics majoring in Finance with a GPA of 4.7/5. I am interested in the X position at Y, due to A B C
Name-dropping	At your [name of event] event, I had many discussions with [name of firm] employees, all of whom left a long-lasting impact of the culture at [name of firm]. Especially X mentioned Y about your culture which impressed me highly.
Culture	What I appreciate most about X is your lean and meritocratic culture, giving talented and driven people like myself the opportunity to develop as professionals and individuals.
Recent work	Your recent involvement in X merger with Y spark a particular interest for your firm. Having the ability to work on such a complex and impactful transaction would be a tremendous learning experience for me.

Use these as inspiration rather than copying/pasting them

Example cover letter



[Name]

[Phone Number] | [Email Address]

[Date]

Dear [*Company* representative, *name of recruiter*]

My name is [Name] and I am currently [a Year in School and Major / Business School / Major Student at [School Name]. I was recently introduced to your firm via [Friend / Contact at Firm / Presentation / Networking Event] and was impressed with what I learned of [Your Culture / Working Environment / Company-specific info]. [Add one sentence highlighting your interest towards the industry you are applying for here]. Therefore, I am interested in pursuing an [Role you are applying for] position at your firm.

I have previously [Completed internships in Investment Banking / Consulting etc.]. Through this experience [Working on Transactions / Performing Analyses etc.], I have gained [Go into anything relevant to the industry you are applying for, such as Analytical / Leadership / Teamwork / Communication / Problem-solving] skills and honed my [Any other relevant skills]. I also had the opportunity to work on [High-impact project], which [Describe specific results].

Given my background in [Summarize internships / work experience] and my [Summarize skills] skills, I am a particularly good fit for the [Position Name] position at your firm. I am impressed by your track record of [Transactions / Clients] at [Firm Name] and the significant responsibilities given to [Position Name], and I look forward to joining and contributing to your firm.

I would welcome an opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you and learn more about [Company Name] at your earliest convenience. I can be reached at [Phone Number] or via email at [Email Address]. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

[Kind regards, Sincerely, Yours sincerely,]

[Your Name]

Things to note

- Think of the cover letter as a writing test where you have to express yourself succinctly, highlight relevant skills & experiences and have no errors
- Follow the same design and formatting as your CV so that both your cover letter and CV are visually similar (same font, header layout etc.)
- Customize your cover letter so that it highlights skills that are sought after in that specific industry and then use it as a template when applying for other internships within the industry
- Format your cover letter into appropriate paragraphs, having a wall of text makes it impossible to quickly skim through your cover letter
- Three quarters of a page is the ideal length, keep it concise

Think of this cover letter format and structure as a framework/guidance, rather than a definitive format to follow!

Source: BIWS (https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/investment-banking-cover-letter-template/) slightly modified to better fit Nordic background


4
MASTERING FIT QUESTIONS
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Overview – Fit / Competency questions

Tell me about yourself

- 99% of all interviews start with introducing yourself with a short story (tell me about yourself or similar)
- Telling your story is the one question you know that will certainly be asked so prepare well!
- A good story will make you stand out and might ultimately compensate for shortcomings in other areas
- It's crucial to be able to tell your story concisely in max 2-3 minutes in a logical and well-argued way

Tell me about a time when…

- These types of questions allow you to demonstrate soft skills (e.g. teamwork, leadership) through storytelling
- Structuring your answer logically is key, a recommended structure is STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
- Focus on what you did or achieved instead of what the team did, and give specific details
- Keep your answers short, ideally under 1 min and be prepared to answer follow-up questions

Strengths & Weaknesses

- Can come in various forms such as "Tell me the feedback you received in your last internship"
- Focus on strengths that interviewers are looking for (e.g. attention to detail, analytical skills, attitude) and ideally give a brief example of when you demonstrated these strengths
- When giving weaknesses, give a real weakness but not a showstopper (e.g. not meeting deadlines, inability to work in teams) and include how you have improved on your weakness

Preparation & Practice

- Preparing for fit questions is essential as they are often the easiest way to stand out from other candidates
- No need to memorize 50+ answers, instead prepare talking points (bullet points or similar) which will help you structure your answers and sound more natural
- Practice telling your story since it is almost guaranteed to be asked in every interview

Example Structure – How to effectively convey your story

1. Introduction
   - One to two sentences about where you grew up, your university and major, keep it short and be concise
   - If possible, include something that makes you stand out (i.e. if you have lived abroad etc.)
2. "Spark"
   - What made you interested in your major/why you chose to study your major/why you chose to study at your university
   - Ideally, if you can talk about a specific experience, event or person that sparked your interest it helps to make you stand out and be more memorable
   - Examples to think about: events, activities, family, clubs or a project you have worked on
3. Growing interest / Walkthrough of your experiences
   - In this part you should explain your previous experiences, what skills you learned (keeping in mind what skills are required for the position you're applying for), what you liked and what you wanted to change (which led to your next experience, however, be positive)
   - The goal is to highlight skills that are needed for the position you are applying for and to show interest
   - Keep this brief to max 3-4 experiences and group them together if needed to make your pitch more streamlined
   - If you have limited previous professional experience, try to leverage classes, clubs, volunteering etc.
4. Why you are here today
   - Conclude by expressing your interest towards the company and the position you are interviewing for and ideally demonstrate that you've done your research (i.e. by mentioning deals or anything specific the company has worked on)
   - Once again, be concise

Remember to not spend too much time on the introduction, try to be chronological, be specific and keep it under 3 minutes

Source: BIWS (https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/walk-me-through-your-resume/)

The Dos and Don'ts of Your Story

Elements of a good story

- ✓ 2-3 minutes long
- ✓ Follows a chronological order
- ✓ Tie together well with your CV and Cover Letter
- ✓ Highlights skills and experiences, ties them together logically and clarifies how they have led you to pursue this opportunity
- ✓ Answers many of the common fit questions already in advance: why did you choose to study your major/at your uni., why would you like to work here etc.
- ✓ Gives specific details that help you stand out
- ✓ Concludes on why you are interviewing and why you want the position
- ✓ Practice using an outline rather than a full script, this will help you sound more natural
- ✓ Slightly tailored to suit the position you are interviewing for

Pitfalls to avoid

- ✘ Being too short (under 1 min) or too long (over 4 min)
- ✘ Not being chronological and missing a clear structure
- ✘ Spending too much time on the introduction
- ✘ Only listing your experiences without highlighting skills you've developed and not tying them together
- ✘ Having too many "plot twists" – try to simplify and group your previous experiences if necessary
- ✘ Including irrelevant or too much information /experiences that do not help your case
- ✘ Not taking the time to prepare and practice
- ✘ Not being positive and including negative language

Source: BIWS (https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/banker-blueprint/)

How to prepare for “Tell me about a time when…” questions

General comments

- These types of questions are present in almost all interviews, they require stories to answer and allow you to demonstrate soft skills. At some companies they are a crucial part of the interview process (e.g. McKinsey PEI, P&G)
- The interviewer will almost certainly ask follow-up questions related to your story, so prepare to answer additional questions about the stories
- Common themes: leadership, teamwork (often involving a conflict), failure, achievements, problem solving (facing a complex problem, handling large amounts of data etc.), working under pressure and interpersonal skills (e.g. disagreement with a manager)

Structure is key

- Structuring your answers is crucial when answering these types of questions, a recommended structure is STAR (Situation, Task, Action Result)
    - Situation = give relevant background/context to the specific situation you were facing
    - Task = describe the problem you were trying to solve or task at hand
    - Action = describe specifically what action you took, not what the team did. The more specific you can be, the better
    - Results = describe what the actions resulted in and once again, the more specific you can be, the better
- Keep your answer ideally to ~45 sec and let the interviewer guide the discussion further through follow-up questions

How to prepare?

- You should not memorize 10+ different stories but rather prepare a few (3–4) that cover the common topics such as leadership, teamwork, failure, success, these stories will cover most of the “Tell me about a time when” questions since they can be used to answer multiple different types of these questions
- It might also be helpful to think about a couple of subjects related to more uncommon topics that you can quickly work into a story if they are asked
- Remember, it is very important to always be structured when answering and having a story to tell

Checklist - What to Prepare for Fit / Competency Questions



Your story to answer the “tell me about yourself” question



3 – 4 “mini-stories” to answer “tell me about a time when…” questions (e.g. leadership, teamwork, failure, success etc.)



Strengths & Weakness and specific example(s)



Short summary (couple of sentences) for each work/extracurricular experience to discuss through your CV / experiences and be prepared to answer follow-up questions



Making sure you can talk about 1–2 activities or interests outside of work (sports, hobbies, volunteering), this is important to make the interview more relaxed and more personal

Source: BIWS (https://www.mergersandinquisitions.com/banker-blueprint/)

Examples of Fit / Competency questions

- What is the achievement you are proudest of? Least proud of?
- Why are you interested in working in/at Industry/Company?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Where do you see yourself in 10 years / What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?
- What would you like me to know most that is not in your resume?
- What kinds of people do you have trouble getting along with? Why?
- What do you value in teammates?
- Can you describe you a leadership experience you've had and the impact that you had as a leader
- How would your friends describe you in three words?
- What would your colleagues/teachers/other students describe about you?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate or colleague who was not doing their share of work. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way?
- Tell me a time of working under intense time pressure or deadline. How did you handle it and react?
- Tell me about a goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with large amounts of data?



5

KNOWING YOUR TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

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Introduction to technical questions

What are technical questions?

- Technical questions are usually encountered in interviews for positions in investment banking, private equity and related industries
- The technical part of an investment banking interview provides insight into the candidate's technical knowledge of finance, accounting, valuation and in very rare cases financial modelling
- In contrast to fit questions, technical questions have a right answer but keep in mind that the interviewer is also interested in your thought process so talk through your thinking
- Mastering technical questions (especially advanced) takes a lot of time, however, with a finance major you have a head start

What is the interviewer looking for?

- Candidates who understand the theory behind their answer (i.e. is not simply citing a textbook or giving a rehearsed answer)
- Candidates who can elaborate on their answers and preferably apply the theory to real-world examples
- Demonstrating problem-solving skills and simple math

Relax, it's not rocket science

- The technical part of the interview is a method through which the interviewer can determine if you know the basic concepts of finance
- Successful answers to the technical questions also show that you have done your homework (i.e. you are interested and committed)
- As long as you prepare well and practice, you won't have any problems passing this part of the interview

Accounting questions

Why is accounting knowledge important?

- A large (if not the largest) part of a junior investment banker's work is centred around basic accounting principles and methods
- Without grasping accounting, it is impossible to work with or analyse a company's financials (which is what you will be doing most of the time)
- Understanding the principles of the three financial statements is the foundation for any kind of financial modelling

The five most important accounting concepts:

1. The three financial statements (P&L, balance sheet, cash flow statement), their major line items and what each one means
2. How the three financial statements link together (and how to answer questions where one or several items on the statements change)
3. What the major individual items on the statements actually mean, e.g. goodwill, other intangibles, minorities, shareholders' equity etc.
4. How net working capital works and what it is made up of
5. The most commonly used profitability metrics and how to get to each one (gross profit, EBITDA, EBIT, Net income etc.)

Example questions

- Walk me through the three financial statements
- Walk me through how depreciation going up by 10€ would affect the financial statements?
- Define net working capital and what is it?

Enterprise Value (EV) / Equity Value questions

Why is knowledge about the "EV to Equity bridge" important?

- EV is used in many valuation methods and it is therefore essential to know how to calculate it
- EV represents the value of the company that is attributable to all investors, while equity value only represents the portion available to shareholders
- Because EV is a capital structure-neutral metric, it is useful when comparing companies with different capital structures
- EV is essentially the "price" of the company, should you buy it and pay off its debt (using the cash at hand as well)
- Questions about the EV to Equity bridge is asked in almost all technical interviews

Common financial metrics where EV and Equity Value are used

- Enterprise Value: capital structure-neutral metrics
  - Examples: EV / Sales, EV / EBITDA, EV / EBIT, EV / FCF
- Equity Value
  - Examples: P/E (price-to-earnings), Market-to-book value

Example questions

- What is the formula for Enterprise Value? (i.e. what is the EV to equity bridge)
- Why do you need to add minority interest when calculating enterprise value?
- What could interest-bearing debt include?

General valuation questions

The fundamentals of valuation methods

- In this section you will be asked about different valuation methods and there are a few key things you need to know about them:
  - The common valuation methods and a few less common ones
  - How, why and when they are used
  - Which ones generally produce the highest or lowest values and why (and some exceptions to these rules)
  - Some advantages and disadvantages of each valuation method
  - The most common multiples (EV/EBITDA etc.) used in valuation and which multiples are common for what sectors

How the valuation methods are used

- An important thing to understand is that these methods (mainly DCF, LBO, precedent transactions, trading comparables and merger models) are often performed side-by-side, as they provide different values of a company
  - Many valuation methods are heavily dependent on the assumptions made (e.g. growth rates, WACC, financing, exit multiple), which is why the end result should be seen as an estimate rather than an exact value of the company
  - The methods provide rough valuation ranges that together can be used to create a so called "football field chart", that indicates an estimate (a range of values) of the company's value

Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) / Leveraged Buyout (LBO) questions

Most important things to know about a DCF:

- General "walkthrough" of a DCF
- Why and when it is used
- How to get from revenue to Free Cash Flow (FCF), the formula for Free Cash Flow
- The difference between Levered FCF and Unlevered FCF
- What discount rate to use and how to calculate it (WACC/Cost of Equity)
- How to calculate terminal value (growth/exit multiple)
- Which variables that impact a DCF the most

Example questions:

- How do you calculate WACC?
- If you use Levered FCF, what should you use as the discount rate?
- How would you determine the risk-free rate used in a DCF, and what is it currently at?
- Does the WACC increase or decrease when you increase the amount of debt?

Most important things to know about an LBO:

- General "walkthrough" of a basic LBO model
- Why and when it is used
- How entry and exit multiples are chosen
- What a great Private Equity (PE) case looks like (i.e. the characteristics of an ideal company for an LBO)
- How a PE firm can create value through an LBO (operative improvements, multiple expansion and leverage)
- How the Balance Sheet is adjusted in an LBO
- Why a LBO sets the "floor valuation" for a company
- How the different variables affect the LBO output and which variables impact the most

Example questions:

- Why is leverage used in LBOs?
- Why are Goodwill & Other Intangibles created in an LBO?
- Who would generally pay more for a company, a "financial buyer" (PE firm) or a "strategic buyer", and why?
- What is a typical IRR target for PE firms?

Other valuation methods questions (less frequently asked)

Merger Model

- Used to answer the question: "is the merger accretive or dilutive to the acquiring firm's EPS?"
- If the EPS for the combined entity post-transaction is higher than the standalone EPS of the acquirer pre-transaction, the transaction is accretive
- A merger model is performed by (1.) Making assumptions about the acquisition, (2.) Making projections about the financials (similar to a DCF) (3.) Performing a valuation of each business (4.) Combining the two companies' financials and making pro forma adjustments (5.) Performing an accretion/dilution analysis

Sum of the Parts (SOTP):

- Values a company's divisions separately from each other and adds them together to reach the combined value of the company
- Useful when valuing large conglomerates with many different, unrelated divisions
- Investors might be interested in the SOTP because a business selling for less than the sum of its parts may be "cheap"

Liquidation Valuation:

- Values the company's assets separately
- Used in bankruptcy scenarios when you need to determine whether equity shareholders will benefit more from selling off all the company's assets or from trying to sell the company as a whole

Replacement Value:

- Valuing a company based on the cost of replacing its assets, i.e. how much would it cost to create a similar company to the one you are valuing
- The key difference between replacement valuation and liquidation is that you only consider assets that the company uses in its daily operations when calculating replacement value, while all assets are taken into consideration in a liquidation valuation

Tips & tricks / Resources

General advice for technical interviews:

- While you should always try to demonstrate your knowledge – if you don't know the answer to a question, admit it rather than trying to guess the answer or make it look like you do know the answer (the interviewer can tell if you know what you are talking about or not)
- As technical question interviews won't necessarily be divided into the different concepts or follow the same order as portrayed in this section, you need to have an overall understanding so that you can answer questions that may involve more than one of the concepts
    - You may also receive follow-up questions, which is why you need to know the theory and rationale behind your answer
    - If the interview asks you to calculate anything, calculate aloud to show your logic/thinking

Resources:

- Breaking into Wall Street's "The 400 Investment Banking Interview Questions & Answers You Need to Know"
    - This guide covers basically everything you need to know to pass a technical interview for an internship of an entry-level job in IB
    - All of the concepts and example questions mentioned here are covered in the guide
    - If you are uncertain about which parts of the guide that are most essential, use this section as a reference (i.e. *not all questions are equally important to grasp*)
    - NOTE: If you are applying for your first job in finance or IB, the "basic" sections of each concept should be enough to get you through your interview, however, it might be worth to skim through the advanced questions of EV/Equity Value, Accounting and DCF



6

ACE THE CASE

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Case interviews in a nutshell

Overview

- Case interviews are used by consulting firms to assess candidates on their problem solving and communication skills
- Case interviews are often modelled after the course of actions real consultants do in real projects
- For Finnish-speaking candidates, cases can be in Finnish/English (usually Finnish is not required for larger consultancies)
- Keep in mind that the analytical process is more important than arriving at the correct answer
- Do not be intimidated by case interviews, they are not rocket science!

Different types of cases

- Case interviews can cover almost any kind of topic, however, most cases fit into some of the basic categories, so it is worth devoting time especially to these types of cases
- Typical cases: Profitability/revenue cases (profitability/revenue is flat/declining, why?), market context cases (market entry, new product, expansion etc.), M&A case (acquisition, synergies), valuation (how much is a company/patent etc. worth), operations cases (optimization of something, e.g. increase output of factory or build new?)
- Cases are usually either candidate-led or interviewer led

Market sizing

- Market sizing questions are a particular type of case interview question where you are asked to estimate the size of a market or basically anything (e.g. how big is the butter market in Finland?)
- These questions seem harder than what they are, the interviewer is more interested in the process of getting to the answer rather than the answer itself (however you cannot be magnitudes away from the "correct" answer)
- Market sizing questions can also be a smaller part of another case (e.g. in market context cases)

Preparation & practice

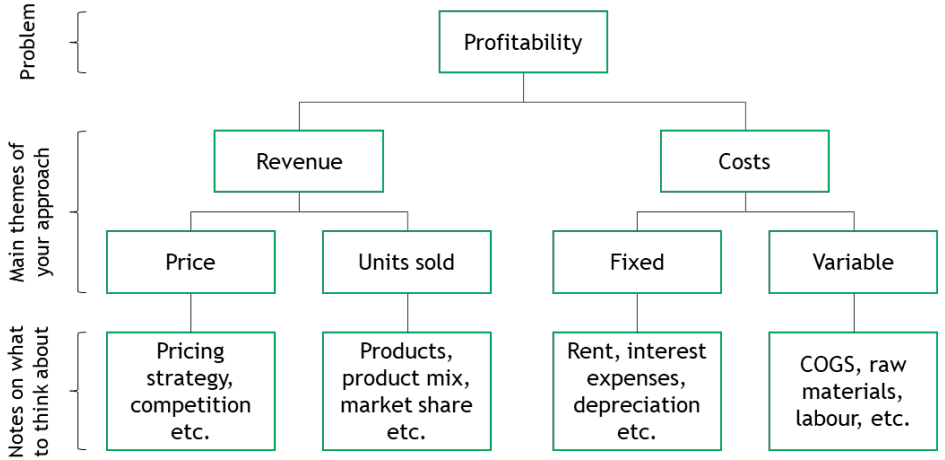
- Practice cases with friends so that you are the interviewer and interviewee, this will boost your progress more than anything and you will also gain experience on how the interviewer thinks. **Practicing with friends is the key to success!**
- Practice simple math and calculating in your head and on paper (use an app, create your own problems etc.) – do not underestimate this, almost all case interviews will involve math as a crucial part of the case interview
- Practice some market sizing questions to get acquainted with the concept of how to solve them

Starting the case – How to get the case rolling?

Tips on starting the case

- Getting started on the right foot is a very important part of the case interview, it will set the tone for the rest of the case and will allow you to demonstrate many of the qualities that the interviewer is looking for. During the beginning you can also demonstrate that you understand what the problem is and show that you have a structured approach for solving the problem
- Listen carefully and take notes – note the most important parts of the problem and any figures given
- Repeat key highlights of the given case and ask at least 1- 2 clarifying questions – you will usually receive a lot of information in the beginning of the case, make sure you get the right numbers and ask if you do not understand something/specific terms
- Ask for a minute to set up your structure - take your time to collect your thoughts and structure your thinking on how to approach the case
- Start with the big picture - think about what is the big picture problem before diving into the details, when presenting your approach start with reiterating the problem
- Learn some of the most common frameworks, but do not apply them blindly - adapt your structure to be relevant for the case, some cases will require you to apply parts of many frameworks in one case and build upon existing frameworks
- Try to be hypothesis driven in your communication – good article explaining the hypothesis driven approach (this is valid throughout the case)
- Draw up a "decision tree framework" to structure your thinking - usually (but depending on case context), it is worth to draw up a decision tree to structure your approach, this will also help when you are presenting since you can visually show the different steps.

Example of how to draw a profitability framework for solving a case



During the case and ending the case

Tips what to think about during the case

- Starting the case is a fairly similar process regardless of the case, however, during the case it might be more interviewer led or interviewee led (you are expected to drive the case forward). Generally, interviewer led cases are more common
- Talk through your thought process – whether it is analysing data, graphs or doing calculations always talk through your thinking
- Engage the interviewer and ask questions – think of the case as a discussion rather than a test, you are working together with your interviewer to solve the case. The interviewer also wants to see you succeed, ask questions if you are stuck
- Get acquainted with different types of graphs – many cases will involve different types of graphs, get comfortable with reading and understanding them
- Be ready to brainstorm ideas with the interviewer – some cases can involve brainstorming ideas with the interviewer so always be ready to come up with additional suggestions

Tips on ending the case on a high note

- Ending the case is also a crucial part of the case where you can show that you understand what is relevant and can synthesize the analysis you've done into a crisp recommendation
- Always have a recommendation – when the case comes to its end, you always need to have a recommendation
- Ask for time to structure your answer – you might not always get the time to structure your answer in the end, however, you should ask for it to structure your recommendation
- Keep your recommendation short and sweet – keep your recommendation short and do not reiterate irrelevant analysis/information
- Example ending: The problem we analysed was X and my recommendation is Y due to three reason. First,... and so on.

Case Interview Resources

Resources:

- BCG interview resources
  - Interactive cases to do on your own and good interview tips
- McKinsey interview resources
  - Good practice cases available
- Bain interview resources
- Victor Cheng YouTube series on case interviews
- Victor Cheng's website
- Useful basic frameworks for case interviews
- Example on how to "solve" a case
- Preplounge case interview resources

Practice cases:

- Ross case book
- London Business School case book
- My Consulting Coach free case library

Books:

- Marc Cosentino: "Case in Point: Complete Case Interview Preparation" (go-to book for case interviews)