

CALVANESE ADVISORY

Free Resource Guide

What to Use Before You Talk to Anyone

This is a curated list of free resources I would point any candidate to before they spend a dollar on preparation. They are organized by phase of the recruiting process, in the order you will encounter them.

This guide is deliberately short. The consulting interview prep industry is full of noise. Most of it exists to sell you something. What follows is what is actually worth your time.

PHASE 1: CV AND APPLICATION MATERIALS

Your CV is the first evaluation. At most firms, a human reviewer will spend under two minutes on it. The goal is not to be creative. The goal is to make the reviewer's job easy.

The most useful tool you already have access to is AI. Ask any major model how consulting firms evaluate CVs, then paste your CV and ask it to rewrite each bullet for consulting-specific standards. The feedback will be immediate and surprisingly specific. Key principles to push for: quantify your impact with real numbers, lead every bullet with the outcome rather than the activity, and keep descriptions concise.

One thing to avoid: do not over-optimize your CV for automated screening tools or AI resume checkers. The large majority of consulting firms still rely on human reviewers to read applications. Write for a person, not an algorithm.

PHASE 2: ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

Most major firms now include an online assessment as part of their screening process. McKinsey uses Solve (a gamified problem-solving exercise). BCG uses Casey and the Chatbot Assessment. Bain uses the SOVA test.

My honest advice: do not over-invest here. These assessments are designed to screen out candidates who perform very poorly. They are not designed to identify top performers. They are one data point among many, and they will never be the reason you get an offer.

Watch a few YouTube videos to understand the format and what to expect. That is enough. If you are a strong enough candidate to eventually pass a case interview, you are smart enough to clear these screens without extensive preparation. I would not recommend paying for simulated testing environments. It is not worth the money.

PHASE 3: BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

This is where most candidates under-prepare. Many spend hundreds of hours on cases and less than five hours on behavioral. That is a mistake. A weak behavioral performance will cost you an offer regardless of how well you solve the case.

The single best free resource is the one almost nobody reads: the firm's own careers page. McKinsey publishes the exact dimensions they evaluate in the Personal Experience Interview (Connection, Drive, Leadership, Growth) along with the exact questions they ask at interviews. BCG and Bain describe what they look for in their fit interviews on their respective careers pages. Start here. The firm is telling you what they want. Read it.

McKinsey Careers — Interviewing

mckinsey.com/careers/interviewing

BCG Careers — Interview Process

careers.bcg.com/global/en/interview-process

Bain Careers — Interviewing

bain.com/careers/hiring-process/interviewing

Once you understand the dimensions, prepare six to eight stories from your professional, academic, or extracurricular experience. Each story should map to at least one of the dimensions the firms evaluate. Choose stories with real stakes, genuine difficulty, and a clear personal contribution.

Then use AI to stress-test them. Paste a story into ChatGPT or Claude and ask it to probe you the way a McKinsey interviewer would. Ask it to follow up aggressively on the weakest parts of your narrative. This will not replace a mock interview with a real person, but it will expose gaps in your stories faster than any other free method.

Story selection matters more than delivery. The best-rehearsed answer to the wrong story will not help you.

PHASE 4: CASE INTERVIEWS

There are two resources I consistently point to as a starting foundation:

Case in Point by Marc Cosentino

The standard introductory book on case interviews. It will give you a shared vocabulary with your practice partners and a basic understanding of how cases are structured. Treat it as a starting point. The frameworks in the book are useful for orientation, but do not anchor onto them. Interviewers are not looking for candidates who apply standard frameworks. They are looking for candidates who build their own structure from the specifics of the problem in front of them.

Victor Cheng — Free Case Interview Videos

[Watch the first video on YouTube](#)

His free videos are a good introduction to the thinking process behind a case interview. Be aware that these videos are over fourteen years old now and some of the advice no longer reflects how interviews are actually conducted. Use them to understand the fundamentals, but do not treat them as a current playbook.

A broader note on both resources: being polished does not help as much as candidates think. Interviewers want to see how you think. Sometimes being genuine and a little unfinished is more conducive to exposing your unique reasoning than a rehearsed, framework-perfect answer.

Beyond those two, the firms themselves publish free practice cases on their careers pages. These are the most realistic cases you will find because they come directly from the source:

McKinsey — Practice Cases

mckinsey.com/careers/interviewing

BCG — Case Interview Preparationcareers.bcg.com/global/en/case-interview-preparation**Bain** — Interviewingbain.com/careers/hiring-process/interviewing

Finally, most top business school consulting clubs publish casebooks containing dozens of practice cases. Search for “[school name] consulting casebook PDF” and you will find them. Schools like Harvard and Wharton have well-known casebooks with a wide range of case types. Be aware that quality varies across schools and across cases within the same book. Some are adapted from real interviews; others are written by students and may not reflect what you will encounter.

A note on volume: doing more cases is not always better. After ten to fifteen cases with peers, most candidates plateau. You keep practicing the same habits, and your partner is not experienced enough to identify the gaps. Volume without calibration is just repetition. The candidates who improve past this point are the ones who get honest, specific feedback from someone who knows what interviewers actually evaluate.

A FINAL NOTE

The resources above will take you a long way. They cover the mechanics of every phase of the consulting recruiting process, and they are all free.

What they cannot do is tell you where you actually stand. Free resources teach you the process. They do not calibrate your performance against the standard interviewers use to make decisions. That gap between knowing what to do and knowing whether you are doing it well enough is where most candidates get stuck without realizing it.

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