49th Degree Aviation

Interview Prep Package

Version 1

Purpose of this Package

This package is designed to help members of 49th Degree Aviation prepare for upcoming aviation interviews by offering a selection of practice questions and reflection prompts. The content is drawn from real mentorship conversations and common industry topics to help candidates develop greater self-awareness, confidence, and clarity in professional interviews.

Legal Disclaimer

This package is intended as a general advisory tool to support interview preparation. It is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or representative of any specific airline or employer. The information provided should not be considered a definitive or exclusive source of interview preparation material. Users are encouraged to seek additional resources and use this document as a supplemental guide only.

This document was created by the members of 49th Degree Aviation in collaboration with industry professionals. Combining their years of experience in facilitating, and taking part in interviews.

Executive Summary

This interview preparation package is designed to support aspiring aviation professionals in navigating the recruitment and interview process within the industry. It provides a detailed overview of common interview formats, including HR interviews, technical evaluations, virtual interviews, and simulator assessments. The guide outlines expectations, preparation strategies, and actionable tips for success, helping candidates approach each stage with greater confidence and professionalism.

In addition to general guidance, the package includes insights into airline aptitude testing and simulator evaluations, emphasizing the importance of communication, trainability, and structured thinking. It also highlights the nuances of professional presentation, verbalization, and composure during evaluations.

At the end of the package, you'll find a comprehensive question bank compiled by industry professionals, categorized by theme to assist in structured preparation. The package also includes optional activities that can be completed alone or with a mentor or peer to simulate interview environments and encourage deeper reflection and skill-building.

This resource is intended as a supplemental study guide and **does not guarantee success or reflect any one airline's specific hiring criteria**. It encourages thoughtful preparation, self-reflection, and continuous growth for those pursuing careers in commercial aviation.

Interview Overview

Whether you're applying to a regional carrier, charter operator, or a major airline, aviation interviews typically follow a multi-stage format. Understanding what to expect at each stage will help you feel more prepared, confident, and ready to present yourself professionally.

This section outlines the three most common types of interviews in aviation hiring: the Phone Screen/HR Interview, the Technical Interview, and the Behavioral/Situational Interview. Each stage is designed to assess a different set of competencies — from qualifications and operational knowledge to interpersonal skills and decision-making ability.

While every company has its own style, these formats are widely used across the industry and offer a strong foundation for your interview preparation.

Some airlines offer Open Houses to facilitate recruitment where pilots, recruiters and leadership are present to answer questions about what it's like to work for their respective airlines.

Remember: your interview is a two-way conversation. It's as much about the company getting to know you as it is about you learning whether the company is the right fit for your goals and values.

Open Houses are also informal interviews. Be polite, dress professionally, act professionally, be a professional. The recruiters take notes looking for exceptional candidates or candidates to avoid.

A detailed question bank is included at the end of this interview package.

In all interactions with the recruiting process, they are looking for 3 fundamental qualities.

Professional

Safety Focused

Crew Resource Management (CRM) Ability to work in a team

1. Phone Screen / HR Interview

Purpose:
This is typically the first stage of the hiring process, conducted by a recruiter or HR representative. The focus is on confirming qualifications, assessing communication skills, and understanding your interest in the company.

What to Expect:

- Verification of hours, licenses, and recency.
- Questions about your motivations, goals, and current employment.
- Confirmation of your eligibility to work in the country.
- High-level discussion about your availability, flexibility, and interest in instructional roles.

Tips for Success:

- Be concise and confident when discussing your background.
- Keep your logbook, resume, and license details on hand.
- Prepare to explain your career path and goals clearly.
- Minimize distractions and conduct the call in a quiet setting.

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2. Technical Interview

Purpose:
This part of the interview process assesses your operational knowledge, aircraft systems expertise, performance calculations, and decision-making in technical scenarios. It is usually led by a pilot or someone with technical experience.

What to Expect:

- Aircraft-specific questions based on types you've flown.
- System knowledge (piston and/or turbine).
- Performance and planning scenarios.
- IFR procedures and navigation interpretation.
- Practical decision-making and safety considerations.

Tips for Success:

- Review key systems, limitations, and emergency procedures for your current or most recent aircraft.
- Be familiar with performance charts, CAP GEN references, and IFR planning.

- Practice explaining complex technical concepts in simple, confident terms.
- Think out loud during calculations or scenario-based questions to demonstrate your process.

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3. Behavioral / Situational Interview

Purpose:
This interview evaluates your interpersonal skills, judgment, professionalism, and how you react under pressure. Employers use this to assess cultural fit and your ability to work safely and effectively as part of a crew.

What to Expect:

- Questions based on past experiences.
- Emphasis on soft skills like conflict resolution, communication, leadership, and accountability.
- Scenarios that explore your adherence to procedures, ethical decision-making, and growth mindset.

Tips for Success:

- **Use the STAR method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result) to structure your answers.
- **Pause before answering.** If you need a moment to think after a question is asked, take it. Composure under pressure is valuable — use that pause to plan and deliver a clear, structured response. This applies to **ALL** interview questions.
- **Reflect on past training, work, and flight experiences** that show growth and professionalism.
- **Be honest, thoughtful, and self-aware** — recruiters value reflection and humility.
- **Highlight examples that demonstrate teamwork, adaptability, and responsibility.**
- **Remember: you're in control.** You decide what to share and how to frame it. Stay intentional and focused — not every detail needs to be included if it doesn't serve your message.

Interviews are not just about proving your technical skills or qualifications — they are an opportunity to demonstrate your mindset, communication, professionalism, and readiness to grow within the aviation industry. By understanding the types of interviews you may encounter and preparing with structured, reflective responses, you'll enter each conversation with more confidence and clarity.

Remember, no interview is perfect — what matters most is your ability to show that you are self-aware, willing to learn, and committed to a safe and collaborative flight deck environment. Use this package to guide your preparation, reflect on your experiences, and build answers that are true to who you are.

Answer Planning Tools

Preparing for an aviation interview goes beyond memorizing answers. It's about telling your story with clarity, confidence, and professionalism. Interviewers often look for structured thinking, situational awareness, and sound judgment — all of which can be demonstrated through strong communication. The tools below are commonly used to organize your responses and are especially helpful for behavioral, HR-style, and reflective interview questions.

STAR Method

Situation – Task – Action – Result

This method is ideal for answering behavioral questions like "Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a colleague." It ensures you explain the context, your specific role, the actions you took, and the outcome.

Example:
Q: *Tell me about a time you had to make a quick decision under pressure.*

- Situation: During a cross-country flight in a PA30, we encountered unexpected weather conditions near a mountainous area.
- Task: We needed to make a decision quickly to ensure the safety of the flight and remain within legal weather minima.
- Action: I coordinated with ATC to request a deviation, double-checked the alternate airport options, and briefed my co-pilot on the diversion.
- Result: We landed safely at our alternate, avoided potential IMC in an unsafe area, and debriefed the event to improve our planning.

The STAR format keeps your story structured and impactful, while showing both technical and decision-making skills.

SAO Format

Situation – Action – Outcome

A more concise alternative to STAR, SAO is useful in interviews with limited time or when the question doesn't require extensive background.

Example:
Q: *Have you ever helped a colleague who was struggling with a task?*

- Situation: A fellow student pilot was having difficulty with steep turns during simulator training.
- Action: I offered to review the maneuver with them after hours and walked them through my process.
- Outcome: Their confidence and performance improved, and they passed the next session.

SAO is a great default when you're unsure how much detail is expected — it helps you stay focused without overexplaining.

CARE Method

Context – Action – Reflection – Evaluation

CARE is especially helpful when you're asked to speak about your personal development, how you handle failure, or what you've learned over time. It shows maturity, emotional intelligence, and growth.

Example:
Q: *Tell me about a time you made a mistake and what you learned from it.*

- Context: Early in my training, I once was having trouble with altitude control while practicing steep turns.
- Action: I debriefed with my instructor and continued to practice during some extra dual and solo flights.

- Reflection: I realized I was not trimming the airplane enough.
- Evaluation: The extra practice that I had to help solve the problem has led to my steep turns improving.

This method is particularly strong when you're asked to discuss challenges, lessons learned, or growth in aviation.

How to Use These Tools

Each of these tools can be adapted based on the question. As a rule of thumb:

- STAR is best for full behavioral questions.
- SAO is great when you're short on time or detail.
- CARE works well when discussing learning, self-awareness, or feedback.

Tip: Practice writing out answers using each structure and time yourself. In real interviews, aim to answer behavioral questions in about 1.5 to 2 minutes. If you're in a panel or technical interview, keep things sharp and relevant to the position you're applying for.

Virtual Interviews: What to Know

In today's hiring landscape, virtual interviews are increasingly common — especially for first-round HR screens or interviews with regional and national carriers. Treating these with the same level of professionalism as in-person interviews is crucial.

1. Prepare Your Environment

- Choose a quiet, well-lit space with a neutral or uncluttered background. Do not do a Zoom interview from a vehicle.
- Minimize distractions — silence your phone, alert housemates, and close unnecessary browser tabs.
- Use a stable internet connection — test your audio, video, and platform (Zoom, Teams, etc.) ahead of time.

2. Dress Professionally

Even though you're at home, dress as you would for an in-person interview. A clean,

business-casual or professional outfit helps set the tone and shows respect for the process.

3. Mind Your Body Language

- Look at the camera, not the screen, when speaking — this helps mimic eye contact.
- Sit upright and avoid slouching or excessive hand movements.
- Nod and use subtle facial expressions to show engagement.

4. Practice Speaking to a Screen

If you're not used to virtual settings, practice with a friend or record yourself answering questions. It can help reduce awkwardness and increase confidence.

5. Have Notes, But Don't Read Them

One advantage of virtual interviews is being able to have brief notes nearby — but use them only as reminders. Don't read answers directly, or it will come across as stiff and unprepared.

6. Technical Troubles? Stay Calm

If you experience tech issues, don't panic. Apologize briefly, troubleshoot, and get back on track. If something fails completely, follow up with an email and reschedule.

What ***Not*** to Do in an Interview

While it's important to focus on what to *do* in an interview, it's just as valuable to understand what behaviors can negatively impact your performance or credibility. Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

1. Coming Unprepared

- Not knowing the company's mission, values and recent news.
- Being unfamiliar with the role you applied for.
- Failing to review your own résumé — be ready to explain every part of it.

Tip: Always research the airline or operator, their fleet, route structure, and training culture ahead of time.

2. Overusing Memorized Answers

- Reciting answers that sound rehearsed, robotic, or vague.
- Relying on clichés like “I’m a team player” without offering real examples.

Tip: Practice using authentic, structured stories that showcase your experience and judgment.

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3. Avoiding Responsibility or Blaming Others

- When asked about challenges or mistakes, avoid placing all the blame on others.
- Employers are looking for self-awareness, accountability, and growth.

Tip: Focus on what you learned from the experience and how you’ve grown, rather than just what went wrong or who was at fault.

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4. Speaking Negatively About Past Employers

- Complaining about your current job, management, or team can raise red flags.
- Keep your tone respectful, even if you’re leaving a difficult environment.

Tip: Focus on what you're seeking in your next role, rather than what you're escaping.

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5. Oversharing or Going Off Track

- Rambling or offering too much irrelevant detail can dilute your answer.
- Personal stories are great — if they’re concise and tied to the question.

Tip: Stay focused on the role, your qualifications, and aviation-specific experiences.

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6. Failing to Ask Questions

- When given the chance, not asking any questions can appear disinterested.
- But avoid questions that could easily be answered with a Google search or company website.

Tip: Prepare thoughtful questions that show your genuine interest in the team, training culture, or operational challenges.

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7. Being Too Humble or Too Overconfident

- Underselling your skills may cause interviewers to overlook you.
- Overhyping yourself without self-awareness may come off as arrogance.

Tip: Aim for professional confidence grounded in real experience and a learning mindset.

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8. Poor Virtual Etiquette

- Interrupting, multitasking, or having distractions in the background.
- Using informal greetings or joining late.

Tip: Make a conscious effort to join early, and be ready to start with the interviewer arrives.

By avoiding these common missteps, you'll put yourself in a stronger position to make a confident, professional impression — and help employers see your true potential.

Aptitude Tests in the Hiring Process

Many airlines include aptitude testing early in their hiring process to assess your cognitive, behavioral, and problem-solving abilities. These tests help employers evaluate whether a candidate has the underlying competencies to succeed in flight training and day-to-day flight operations.

What They Assess:

- Cognitive ability: Spatial reasoning, multitasking, memory retention, mental math, and logic
- Hand-eye coordination: Reaction time and motor control through interactive tasks
- Personality traits: Leadership style, teamwork preferences, stress response, and communication tendencies
- Situational judgment: How you would respond to real-world scenarios involving decision-making or conflict

Tips for Preparation:

- Practice online simulators that resemble actual aptitude platforms
- Get comfortable with multitasking under time pressure
- Rest well before the test — fatigue affects attention, reaction time, and memory
- Answer honestly on personality questionnaires — there's no perfect profile, just honesty and consistency

Important Note: These tests are not about prior aviation knowledge — they're about potential. Even experienced pilots need to prepare, as these assessments test very specific skill sets in a condensed time frame.

Simulator Evaluations

Simulator evaluations (sim evals) are a practical component of the airline hiring process. These sessions aren't about perfect flying — they're about assessing **trainability**, your ability to **follow SOPs**, and how you **work with another pilot in a multi-crew environment**, often for the first time.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Trainability:** Are you receptive to instruction? Can you apply feedback quickly? Airlines want to see if you'll succeed in a structured training program.

- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Your ability to follow SOPs, brief effectively, and use checklists is being assessed. Expect a short SOP package to review before the eval — time given can range from 30 minutes to a few days. Focus on unfamiliar procedures if time is limited.

- **Two-Crew Dynamics:** For many candidates, this may be the first time working in a two-crew setup. How you communicate, divide tasks, and support your "captain" or "FO" is a major part of the evaluation.

Typical Components of a Sim Evaluation:

- Basic handling (e.g., climbs, descents, level-off, turns)

- Vectors to an approach (ILS, RNAV, or hold)

- Departure, Hold & Approach Briefing

- Abnormal/emergency procedures (e.g., engine failure or system failure)

- CRM: Communication, workload sharing, situational awareness

Tips for Success:

- **Brief everything.** Even if it feels awkward, showing structure and communication matters.

- **Use standard callouts and flows.** This shows familiarity with SOP-driven operations.

- **Think out loud.** Verbalizing your actions shows awareness and can help your partner follow your decisions.

- **Stay calm and composed.** Errors are okay — what matters is how you manage and recover from them.

- **Dress to impress.** The sim eval could very likely be the first time you meet the hiring team in person. Though it's not labeled as an interview, this is often where first impressions are made. Try to strike a balance between comfort for the simulator and appropriate, polished interview attire.

Remember, sim evals are not designed to trick you. They are intended to gauge your potential as a crew member in a professional training environment.

Informal Interviews and Northern Operators

Considering a Move North: Bush Flying in Canada

Choosing to head north and work for a bush operation is a bold decision — one that comes with significant challenges, but also immense personal and professional rewards. Operating in some of the most remote regions of the world, northern flying demands sharp judgment, adaptability, and a deep respect for the environment and communities you serve. The ability to avoid the use of “superior skill” through the use of sound decision-making is a quality highly valued throughout the aviation industry.

Most northern operators do not follow a formal interview process. Instead, the best approach is often to show up in person — resume in hand, vehicle packed for the season, and work gloves and boots ready. Hiring decisions are typically based on in-person evaluations of your **attitude, work ethic, and willingness to contribute**. New pilots are frequently offered ramp positions to start, allowing them to learn the operation from the ground up. This ramp time also serves as an opportunity for both you and the company to assess whether the investment in training is a good mutual fit.

Many operators today offer hybrid roles that include both flying and ground responsibilities, particularly for newer pilots working toward line experience.

Ask Yourself:

- Are you mentorable? Can you learn from experienced bush pilots whose knowledge isn’t found in textbooks?
- Are you open to being fully immersed in the local lifestyle and the unique culture of Canada’s North?
- Are you ready to support and work alongside Indigenous communities, who are integral to northern aviation?

Bush flying is demanding, but for the right pilot, it can be one of the most fulfilling and formative paths in aviation.

Final Thoughts

Preparing for a career in aviation goes far beyond collecting flight hours. Success in the interview process comes from knowing yourself, understanding the role you're applying for, and being able to communicate your experience with clarity, professionalism, and confidence. Whether you're sitting in front of a recruiter, flying a simulator, or submitting your resume, every step is a chance to demonstrate how you think, how you work, and how you fit into a team.

This guide is built to support you at every stage — whether you're reviewing on your own, working with a mentor, or just starting to explore your next steps. Use it actively: reflect on the questions, practice aloud, debrief with peers, and most importantly, take ownership of your journey.

Every interview is a learning opportunity. Stay humble, stay prepared, and stay motivated.

You've got this — and we’re here to help you every step of the way.

— The 49th Degree Aviation Team

Question Bank

The following question bank has been compiled by industry professionals and reflects common themes and areas of assessment used in aviation interviews. These questions are divided into categories to help guide your preparation. Use them for self-study, mock interviews, or discussions with a mentor or peer. Remember, this is not an exhaustive list but a helpful tool to explore your readiness and reflect on your experiences.

The first question is always;

- Tell us about yourself?

This is an icebreaker for the room but can be one of the most challenging questions to answer effectively. Keep it to under 2 minutes giving a brief summary using the follow template;

- Where you're from (but nothing from before high school graduation).
- Where you got your interest in aviation.
- Where you did flight training.
- Summary of your first job and include any ground jobs or jobs outside of aviation.
- Do not ramble or try to oversell yourself.

Example;

I'm originally from Halifax and got my interest in aviation very early having come up through the Air Cadet Program earning my Glider and Private Pilot Licenses through their scholarships. After high school I enrolled in the Moncton Flight College completing my Diploma in Aviation Technology. Afterwards I worked on the ramp at the Halifax International Airport as a baggage agent until landing my first job with XXX company out of XXX airport flying XXX aircraft. We did pipeline patrols, low level surveys and on demand charters all while working in a small, family run business where we all did a bit of everything from flying, to ramp work to office duties. I've been there for XXX years and I'm looking to move on to the next step in my career.

1. Career Development & Goals

- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- What motivated you to pursue aviation (or your chosen field)?
- What challenges are you currently facing in reaching your goals?
- How do you see your career evolving in the next 5 years?
- Why do you want to work for [XXX company]?

2. Handling Difficulties & Asking for Help

- How do you handle difficulties in training?
- Do you feel comfortable asking for help when needed? Why or why not?
- Have you ever struggled with a concept or skill? How did you overcome it?

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3. Safety Orientation, Decision Making and Conflict resolution

- Tell us about your most challenging flight? (very common first question)
- How would you handle a conflict in the flight deck?
- Have you ever spoken up to a Captain that was violating SOP's or doing something you thought was unsafe?
- Have you ever had a disagreement with a colleague or instructor? How did you resolve it?
- Can you give an example of a time you had to manage a stressful situation effectively?

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4. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) & Judgment

- Have you ever deviated from SOPs? If so, what was the reason?
- How do you balance adhering to SOPs with exercising good judgment in unique situations?
- Can you think of a time when following an SOP created a challenge, and how did you handle it?

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5. Mindset & Personal Growth

- How do you handle stress and challenges in your career journey?
- What strategies do you use to stay motivated and focused?
- How do you manage time effectively between training, job searching, and personal life?

- What's one piece of advice you've received that has stuck with you?
- What do you do in your spare time?

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6. HR & Background Questions

- Who do you know at [XXX airline]? (Internal references)
- Tell me about a time you had a disagreement or conflict with a student or other pilot.
- Have you ever violated an SOP? If so, was it justified?
- What is the biggest challenge you anticipate when moving to [XXX company]?
- Do you have any violations?
- Have you ever failed a ride, PPC or training event?
- Why do you want to leave your current job?
- Are you in good standing with your current employer?
- Does your employer know you are applying elsewhere?
- Are you legally entitled to work in Canada? (Citizen, PR, work permit)
- Would you be willing to become a training captain, ground school instructor, or sim instructor?

Interview Preparation Activities

Solo Practice

1. Mirror Practice

- Stand in front of a mirror and answer common interview questions.
- Focus on body language, facial expressions, and eye contact.
- Practice smiling and speaking with enthusiasm and confidence.

2. Voice Recording

- Record your responses to a set of 3–5 questions from the question bank.
- Listen back and evaluate for tone, clarity, filler words, and structure.
- Revise and re-record to improve delivery and polish.

3. Timed Responses

- Use a timer to simulate interview conditions (aim for 1–2 minutes per question).
- This helps avoid rambling and encourages structured, concise responses.

4. Write Out STAR Responses

- For behavioral questions, write out responses using the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) format.
- Review and revise your answers to ensure they are outcome-focused and relevant.

5. Flashcard Drills (Digital or Physical)

- Create flashcards with technical or HR questions on one side and prompts or notes on the back.
- Shuffle and practice regularly to keep your thinking sharp.

6. Personal Reflection Journal

- Keep a log of past experiences (challenges, successes, conflicts) with dates, roles, and outcomes.

- This will help you quickly recall examples during interviews.

With a Mentor or Practice Partner

7. Mock Interview Sessions

- Alternate roles as interviewer and interviewee.
- Use a set of randomized questions or focus on one specific category.
- Set a timer and simulate real interview conditions, including introductions and closings.

8. Feedback Debrief

- After a mock interview, ask for detailed feedback on:
    - Clarity and relevance of your answers
    - Confidence and communication style
    - Areas for improvement

9. “Challenge the Answer” Drill

- After you answer a question, have your partner challenge it with follow-up questions like:
    - “What would you do differently?”
    - “What was the outcome?”
    - “How did others react?”
- This improves depth and adaptability in responses.

10. Technical Whiteboard Challenge

- Pick a technical scenario (e.g., aircraft performance, SOP deviation) and brief it on a whiteboard.
- Include performance numbers, decision-making rationale, and safety considerations.

11. SOP Simulation Practice

- Choose a procedure (missed approach, abnormal checklist, hold clearance).

- Verbally walk through the procedure as if you're briefing it to a captain or FO.
- Focus on standard callouts, structure, and logic.

Group or Virtual Practice

12. Virtual Interview Panel

- Organize a group call with 2–3 peers or mentors.
- Simulate a panel-style interview with rapid-fire questions from multiple interviewers.

13. Question Creation Game

- Take turns creating tough or unexpected questions and challenge each other to respond.
- Helps prepare for the "curveball" questions that may come up.

14. Resume Drill

- Ask your mentor to pick any point on your resume and ask:
    - "Tell me more about this."
    - "What was your biggest takeaway from this experience?"
- Keeps you fluent in your own background.

Supplemental Activities

15. Interview Environment Setup

- Practice setting up your space for a virtual interview.
- Pay attention to lighting, background, audio quality, and camera angle.

16. Research & Company-Specific Practice

- Practice questions specific to the airline(s) you're applying to.
- Review their values, fleet, training approach, and recent news, and tailor your

“Why us?” answers.

17. Confidence Boost Practice

- Begin every practice session with a question you answer well.
- This builds early momentum and boosts confidence.