COMPLETE INTERVIEW PREPARATION PACKAGE

System & Network Administrator

Full-time On-site Role — Johar Town, Lahore

Gap Analysis | 27 Questions + Model Answers | Deep Technical Review | Whiteboard Scenarios | Salary Strategy | 2-Day Study Plan

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Candidate: Muhammad Afzaal — IT Administrator & MSP Support Engineer
Experience: 4+ years (KK Networks → CrecenTech Systems → WADIC)
Interview: ~Friday, 24 July 2026 (2 days from prep date)
Prepared: 22 July 2026

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How to use this package: Read Section 1 first so you know exactly where you are strong and where to steer the conversation. Then work through Sections 2–4 **out loud** — spoken practice is worth 5× silent reading. Section 7 tells you exactly when to do what. The mock interview (Section 8) happens live in the chat after you finish reading.

1 Gap Analysis — Every JD Bullet vs. Your Resume

Legend: **DIRECT** = you have done exactly this and can give examples. **ADJACENT** = you have closely related experience; bridge it. **GAP** = little/no hands-on; use the honest script provided.

1.1 Key Responsibilities — line by line

R1. "Manage and maintain servers, network infrastructure, switches, routers, firewalls, and domain environments." DIRECT

Your evidence: WADIC — Linux/Windows servers across dev, staging, QA, production; designed and deployed a full office network (MikroTik routing, TP-Link switching, Omada wireless). CrecenTech — Active Directory, GPOs, pfSense. KK Networks — MikroTik, ISP/datacenter infrastructure. This bullet is essentially your career summary. Lead with the WADIC office relocation project — it covers routers, switches, wireless, and segmentation in one story.

R2. "Configure, monitor, and manage firewalls to ensure network security and traffic control." DIRECT

Your evidence: pfSense (configured firewalls + OpenVPN at CrecenTech), Fortinet (NSE 3 certified, listed skill), MikroTik firewall rules/NAT/port-forwarding at KK Networks. Be ready to talk specifics: rule ordering (top-down, first match), NAT vs. filter rules, WAN/LAN interface zones, blocking vs. allowing by default (default-deny inbound), and logging.

R3. "Implement and manage Active Directory, Group Policies (GPOs), user permissions, and access controls." DIRECT

Your evidence: CrecenTech — user management, security groups, OUs, GPO implementations. WADIC — onboarding/offboarding with account provisioning and MFA. Also MS-102 training. Have 2–3 concrete GPOs you actually deployed ready to name (e.g., password policy, drive mapping, USB restriction, screen lock).

R4. "Ensure data security through endpoint protection, backup management, disaster recovery planning, and vulnerability prevention." ADJACENT → mostly DIRECT

Your evidence: Intune compliance enforcement + Cisco Duo MFA (endpoint protection ✔), backup operations at CrecenTech datacenter (✔), SonarQube/Trivy scanning (vulnerability prevention ✔). The softer spot is **formal DR planning** — documented RTO/RPO, tested restore runbooks.

> **Script for the DR-planning part:** "*I've run backup operations hands-on — VM-level and file-level backups in our on-prem datacenter — and I've done restores when teams needed data back. What I haven't yet owned end-to-end is authoring a formal DR plan with defined RTO/RPO tiers, but I understand the framework well: classify systems by criticality, set recovery objectives per tier, choose backup frequency and retention to match, and — most importantly — test restores on a schedule, because an untested backup is only a hope. That's actually one of the things I'd want to build here in my first 90 days.*"

R5. "Install, configure, troubleshoot, and maintain Windows, Linux, and macOS operating systems." Windows/Linux DIRECT, macOS ADJACENT

Your evidence: Windows Server and Ubuntu are all over your resume. **macOS is the one OS the JD names that your resume does not.** Expect them to probe it.

> **Script for macOS:** "*Most of my endpoint fleet has been Windows with Linux servers, so macOS is my lightest of the three. That said, I've supported mixed SaaS environments for remote US users where device platform didn't matter much — MFA, mail, VPN, Slack, RingCentral all behave the same — and macOS is Unix underneath, so my Ubuntu command-line experience transfers directly: same shell, similar networking tools, plist/launchd instead of systemd. If you have Macs in the fleet, I'd get comfortable with your MDM enrollment flow — Apple Business Manager plus Intune or Jamf — within the first couple of weeks.*"

Prep action (do this before the interview): Spend 45 minutes reading macOS admin basics so the script above is true-in-spirit: Apple Business Manager + automated device enrollment (ADE/DEP), FileVault (disk encryption), Gatekeeper & XProtect, Keychain, `launchd` vs cron, System Settings → Sharing/Network, and that Intune can manage macOS. Being able to drop "FileVault" and "Apple Business Manager" naturally converts this gap into a near-adjacent.

R6. "Monitor network performance and system health using tools such as Zabbix, PRTG, Nagios, or similar." DIRECT (Zabbix)

Your evidence: Zabbix at KK Networks for ISP/datacenter monitoring — that is literally their first-named tool. PRTG/Nagios are concept-identical (agents/SNMP/ICMP checks, thresholds, alerting). Say: "I've run Zabbix in production for ISP-scale monitoring — hosts, templates, triggers, escalations. PRTG and Nagios differ in packaging (PRTG is sensor-licensed and Windows-based, Nagios is plugin/check-based), but the discipline — baseline, threshold, alert, escalate — is the same."

R7. "Manage LAN/WAN, VPNs, Wi-Fi infrastructure, and remote access systems." DIRECT

Your evidence: VPNs (OpenVPN, IPsec, PPTP), ISP management & load balancing, Omada/UniFi wireless, remote access for US-based users, port forwarding, DNS/DHCP. This is a headline strength — the WADIC office network build plus multi-ISP load balancing at KK is a great WAN story.

R8. "Develop and enforce IT security policies, SOPs, and compliance standards across the organization." ADJACENT

Your evidence: You *enforced* plenty (Duo MFA rollout, Intune compliance policies, security configurations) — the gap is *authoring formal written policy/SOP documents*.

> **Script:** "*I've been on the enforcement side of policy — I rolled out Cisco Duo MFA org-wide and built Intune compliance policies that actually blocked non-compliant devices, and I documented onboarding/offboarding checklists so provisioning was repeatable. Writing formal top-level security policy documents has usually sat with management, but I've written the operational SOPs underneath them, which is where policy either works or dies. I'd be comfortable owning both layers here.*"

R9. "Perform regular system updates, patch management, antivirus monitoring, and security audits." ADJACENT → strong

Your evidence: Intune update/compliance rings, Ubuntu server maintenance (`apt` updates), endpoint security via Intune/Duo, Trivy vulnerability scanning ≈ audit activity. If asked about a formal patch cycle, describe the discipline: monthly Patch-Tuesday-aligned cycle, test ring → broad ring, maintenance windows, rollback plan, and reporting on compliance percentage.

R10. "Provide technical support for hardware, software, networking, and system-related issues across departments." DIRECT

Your evidence: Entire career. L1/L2 within SLA at KK Networks, international clients at CrecenTech, US remote users at WADIC, Jira Service Management + Syncro RMM ticketing. Mention SLA awareness — the JD's parent theme is reliability.

R11. "Maintain IT asset inventory and coordinate hardware procurement, upgrades, and replacements." DIRECT

Your evidence: WADIC — "hardware procurement, vendor coordination, laptop inventory management, endpoint lifecycle operations." Word-for-word match. Have one vendor-negotiation or lifecycle example ready (e.g., standardizing laptop models, warranty tracking, staged refresh).

R12. "Ensure proper documentation of systems, configurations, policies, and recovery procedures." ADJACENT

Your evidence: Real but implicit — network diagrams for the office build, onboarding/offboarding runbooks, ticket documentation in Jira/Syncro. Resumes rarely list documentation; interviews always ask.

> **Script:** "*Every network I've deployed, I've documented — the office relocation came with an IP addressing plan, VLAN map, and device inventory, because the next engineer shouldn't need me on the phone to understand it. My onboarding and offboarding processes are checklist-driven for the same reason. If your documentation lives in a wiki or Jira/Confluence, that maps directly onto how I already work.*"

1.2 Requirements — line by line

Requirement	Status	Your one-line proof (say it like this)
2–5 years in System & Network Administration	DIRECT	"Just over 4 years across three companies — ISP/NOC, then enterprise systems, now MSP/IT administration." You are dead-center of their band — neither too junior nor too expensive.
Networking: firewalls, VPNs, routing, switching, security	DIRECT	"MikroTik and Cisco switching with VLANs, pfSense and Fortinet firewalls, OpenVPN and IPsec in production, plus multi-ISP load balancing." (CCNA-trained, Fortinet NSE 3.)
Active Directory, domain management, GPOs	DIRECT	"Two years of AD administration at CrecenTech — OUs, security groups, GPO design — plus hybrid identity with Entra ID and Intune."
Data security, backup, DR, access management	ADJACENT	Backups + access management strong; formal DR planning is the stretch — use the R4 script.
Windows Server, Linux, macOS	ADJACENT	Windows + Linux direct; macOS via the R5 script + 45-min prep.
Zabbix / PRTG / Nagios familiarity	DIRECT	

		"Zabbix in production at ISP scale." Their first-listed tool. Easy win.
Troubleshooting, analytical, problem-solving	DIRECT	Prove it in the scenario questions (Section 2C) with structured OSI-model methodology, not just answers.
Communication & documentation	DIRECT	Supporting US-based remote users in English + the R12 documentation script.

Bottom line: You match this JD at roughly 85–90%. Only two genuine soft spots: **macOS** and **formal DR/policy authorship**. Both have scripts above, both are fixable with a couple of hours of prep, and both are things you can honestly frame as "first-90-days" growth items. Everything else, you should answer from lived experience, not theory. Your extra credit — AWS, Intune/M365, Docker, DevSecOps tooling — makes you look like a sysadmin who can grow with them, which justifies the top of their salary band.

2 27 Likely Interview Questions with Full Model Answers

Practice these **out loud**. Model answers are written in first person so you can rehearse them verbatim, then loosen them into your own voice. STAR = Situation, Task, Action, Result.

2A. Behavioral Questions (STAR, built from your resume)

Q1. Tell me about yourself. (Guaranteed opener — this must be flawless.)

Model answer (60–75 seconds, three chapters): "I'm an IT and infrastructure engineer with just over four years of experience, and my career has moved through three layers of the stack. I started at KK Networks as a NOC and network engineer, where I lived in Zabbix monitoring ISP and datacenter infrastructure, MikroTik routing, VPNs, DNS and DHCP — that gave me a very strong networking foundation and SLA discipline. Then at CrecenTech I moved up to systems: two years administering Microsoft 365 and Exchange Online, Active Directory and Group Policy, Intune endpoint management, VMware ESXi virtualization, pfSense firewalls, and backup operations in an on-prem datacenter. Currently at WADIC I run IT administration end-to-end — I designed and deployed the complete network for our new office, I manage Linux and Windows servers from dev through production, I support AWS-hosted infrastructure alongside the DevOps team, and I own onboarding, endpoint lifecycle, and security like our Duo MFA rollout. What attracts me to this role is that it combines exactly those three layers — networks, systems, and security — with clear ownership, and it's on-site in Lahore where I'm based. I'm looking for a place to take deeper ownership of infrastructure reliability."

Why this works: chronological arc = growth story; every phrase name-drops a JD keyword; ends with why-them, not just why-you.

Q2. Tell me about the most complex infrastructure project you've delivered. (STAR — use the office network build.)

S: "At WADIC, the company relocated to a new office. The new site had zero IT infrastructure — no cabling plan, no network, no wireless — and teams needed to work from day one after the move."

T: "I owned the design and deployment of the entire network: ISP connectivity, routing, switching, wireless, and segmentation, on a fixed move-in deadline."

A: "I started with requirements — headcount per area, device counts, which teams needed isolation. I designed an addressing plan with VLAN segmentation separating staff, servers/infrastructure, VoIP, and guest Wi-Fi. I deployed a MikroTik router as the core handling inter-VLAN routing, firewalling, and ISP failover; TP-Link managed switches with trunk ports carrying tagged VLANs; and Omada access points under a centralized controller broadcasting separate SSIDs mapped to the right VLANs. I configured DHCP scopes per VLAN, set firewall rules so guest traffic could only reach the internet, and coordinated ISP activation and cabling with vendors ahead of the move. I documented the whole thing — IP plan, VLAN map, device inventory."

R: "The office came online on schedule; staff walked in and worked on day one. The segmentation still pays off — guest and staff traffic never mix, and troubleshooting is faster because every subnet has a purpose. Management now uses that documentation as the template for any future site."

Q3. Tell me about a time you improved security in an organization. (Use the Duo MFA rollout.)

S: "At WADIC we had remote US-based employees accessing company SaaS and infrastructure with password-only authentication — a single phished credential could have been a full compromise."

T: "I was tasked with implementing multi-factor authentication across cloud and endpoint environments without disrupting a distributed, multi-timezone workforce."

A: "I implemented Cisco Duo. I piloted with the IT and DevOps group first to catch enrollment friction, wrote a short enrollment guide with screenshots for non-technical staff, then rolled out in waves by team so support load stayed manageable across timezones. I integrated Duo with our critical access points, enforced policy at the platform level so it couldn't be skipped, and handled the exception cases — users with new phones, offline codes — through a defined recovery process instead of ad-hoc disabling."

R: "We reached full enforcement across the target user base with minimal tickets after the first wave, and MFA became a hard requirement in our onboarding checklist, so every new hire is protected from day one."

Q4. Describe a time you had to work under pressure to meet an SLA or deadline.

S: "At KK Networks I worked in the NOC where every incident had an SLA clock. One shift, Zabbix alerted on a connectivity outage affecting multiple enterprise customers simultaneously."

T: "As the engineer on shift, I had to isolate the fault, restore service inside the SLA window, and keep affected customers informed."

A: "I resisted the urge to jump at the first symptom. I checked the monitoring dashboard to find the common point — all affected customers hung off the same upstream segment, which told me it wasn't customer-side. I verified the upstream device, confirmed the failure point, coordinated with the senior team and the ISP-side vendor for the fix, and in parallel gave customers proactive status updates instead of waiting for them to call. I logged everything in the ticket as I went."

R: "Service was restored within SLA, and my incident notes became the reference for a recurrence a few weeks later — the next engineer resolved it in a fraction of the time. It taught me that finding the common denominator fast beats fixing symptoms fast."

Q5. Tell me about a time you dealt with a difficult user or stakeholder.

S: "Supporting US-based remote employees at WADIC, I had a senior team member repeatedly frustrated by our security requirements — MFA prompts, device compliance — and pushing to be exempted."

T: "I needed to keep security policy intact without turning a senior stakeholder into an enemy of IT."

A: "I took it off email and got on a call. Instead of quoting policy, I asked what specifically was painful — it turned out the friction was re-prompting caused by their setup, not MFA itself. I fixed the actual friction, showed them the remembered-device option, and explained in one sentence why the control existed: one phished password from any account is an incident for everyone. I followed up a week later to confirm it was smooth."

R: "They went from requesting an exemption to being fine with the policy, and I learned that most 'policy resistance' is really unreported UX friction — fix the friction and the resistance disappears."

Q6. Tell me about a time you had to learn a technology quickly.

S: "When I joined WADIC, part of the environment was AWS-hosted — EC2, RDS, S3 — supporting production applications. My previous depth was on-prem: VMware, Windows Server, physical networking."

T: "I needed to become effective on cloud infrastructure quickly enough to support production alongside the DevOps team."

A: "I mapped cloud concepts onto what I already knew — a VPC is a virtual datacenter network, security groups are stateful firewalls, EC2 is a VM, Route53 is DNS. Then I did structured learning — AWS training through Corvit — while shadowing real changes: I'd review how DevOps handled an incident, then take the next similar one myself with them reviewing. I kept notes that became my own runbook."

R: "Within a couple of months I was independently handling infrastructure support tasks on AWS, and that on-prem-to-cloud mapping skill is exactly how I'd approach anything new in your stack — macOS management included."

(That last clause deliberately pre-answers their macOS concern.)

Q7. Why are you leaving your current job / why this role?

Model answer: "It's a pull, not a push — I'm on good terms at WADIC and I've learned a lot there. But my current role spreads across IT admin, MSP support, and vendor coordination, and what I most want to deepen is core infrastructure ownership — networks, servers, security, monitoring — which is exactly what this role centers on. It's also full-time on-site in Lahore, which suits me, and the JD reads like it was written from my last four years. I'm looking for a seat where I own reliability end-to-end and grow with the infrastructure." **Never** criticize the current employer, salary, or workload — those read as flight risk.

2B. Technical Conceptual Questions

Q8. Explain the difference between a domain, a workgroup, and Azure AD / Entra joined devices.

"A workgroup is peer-to-peer — every machine keeps its own local accounts, nothing is centralized; fine for five PCs, unmanageable at fifty. A domain centralizes identity on Active Directory domain controllers: one account works everywhere, Group Policy pushes configuration, Kerberos handles authentication, and admins manage from one place. Entra-joined (Azure AD-joined) devices take the same idea cloud-native — the device trusts Entra ID instead of an on-prem DC, sign-in works from anywhere without VPN, and Intune replaces GPO for configuration. Many real environments are hybrid-joined — on-prem AD for legacy, synced to Entra via Entra Connect, with Intune layered for modern management — which is the setup I administered at CrecenTech."

Q9. What happens, step by step, when a domain user logs into a Windows PC?

"The machine locates a domain controller through DNS — it queries SRV records like `_ldap._tcp.dc._msdcs.domain` — which is why broken DNS is the number-one cause of 'can't log in.' Then Kerberos authentication: the client sends an AS-REQ to the KDC on the DC, gets a Ticket Granting Ticket if the password checks out (this is time-sensitive — more than 5 minutes of clock skew breaks Kerberos), then requests service tickets for whatever it accesses. The DC builds the user's token with group SIDs, the client applies Group Policy — computer policies at boot, user policies at

logon, refreshing roughly every 90 minutes — and the profile loads. So when logins fail, my checklist is: DNS first, time sync second, secure channel/machine account third, then account status and GPO."

Q10. Explain VLANs and inter-VLAN routing. Why segment a network at all?

"A VLAN splits one physical switch into multiple logical networks — each VLAN is its own broadcast domain and usually its own subnet. Ports are either access ports, belonging to one VLAN for end devices, or trunk ports carrying multiple VLANs with 802.1Q tags between switches and to the router. Since VLANs are separate L2 domains, traffic between them must be routed — either router-on-a-stick with sub-interfaces, which is what I ran on MikroTik for our office, or a layer-3 switch with SVIs at larger scale. Why segment: security — guest Wi-Fi physically cannot reach servers, and firewall rules control what crosses between segments; performance — smaller broadcast domains; and manageability — an addressing plan where the subnet tells you what the device is. In our office I ran separate VLANs for staff, servers, VoIP, and guest, with default-deny between guest and everything internal."

Q11. Compare the VPN protocols you've used — OpenVPN, IPsec, PPTP. When would you choose each?

"PPTP first: I've maintained it on legacy MikroTik setups, but it's cryptographically broken — MS-CHAPv2 is crackable — so my answer today is 'migrate off it,' and saying that in 2026 is itself the right answer. IPsec is the standard for site-to-site tunnels: IKE negotiates the keys in Phase 1, ESP encrypts the traffic in Phase 2; it's fast, widely supported on firewalls like pfSense and FortiGate, but stricter about NAT traversal and configuration matching on both ends. OpenVPN is my preference for remote-access/road-warrior use: SSL/TLS-based, certificate-driven, runs over any single TCP or UDP port (usually UDP 1194) so it passes through NAT and restrictive networks easily, and I've deployed it on pfSense for remote users at CrecenTech. Rule of thumb: site-to-site between offices → IPsec; individual remote workers → OpenVPN (or WireGuard, which is the newer, leaner option I'd evaluate for greenfield)."

Q12. How does DHCP work, and what happens when two DHCP servers exist on the same LAN?

"DORA: the client broadcasts Discover, servers respond with an Offer, the client broadcasts a Request for one offer, the server confirms with an Ack. Leases renew at 50% of lease time via unicast to the original server. If a rogue second DHCP server appears — classically someone plugs a home router in backwards — clients take whichever offer arrives first, so half the floor ends up on 192.168.0.x with the wrong gateway and 'the internet is down for some people.' I've diagnosed exactly this pattern: `ipconfig /all` on an affected machine shows the rogue server's address in the DHCP Server field, then you trace the switch port by MAC address and unplug it. Prevention is DHCP snooping on managed switches — only trusted ports may answer DHCP."

Q13. Explain backup types (full/incremental/differential), the 3-2-1 rule, and RTO vs RPO.

"A full backup copies everything; an incremental copies only changes since the last backup of any type — small and fast to take, but restore needs the full plus every incremental in the chain; a differential copies changes since the last *full* — bigger each day, but restore is just full + latest differential. Typical scheme: weekly full, daily incrementals. The 3-2-1 rule: three copies of the data, on two different media/systems, one off-site or offline — the offline copy matters most now because

ransomware actively hunts and encrypts online backups. RPO is how much data you can afford to lose — it sets backup frequency; RTO is how long you can afford to be down — it sets your restore architecture. A payroll database might be RPO 15 minutes/RTO 1 hour, needing replication; a file archive might be RPO 24h/RTO a day, fine on nightly backups. And none of it counts until you test restores — an untested backup is a rumor."

Q14. ESXi vs Hyper-V — compare them, and explain snapshots vs backups.

"Both are type-1 hypervisors. ESXi is VMware's — managed standalone or through vCenter/vSphere for clustering, vMotion live migration, HA and DRS; it's what I've run most, provisioning and maintaining VMs for development and operations teams. Hyper-V is Microsoft's, a Windows Server role — attractive when you're licensing Windows anyway, managed via Hyper-V Manager or SCVMM, with live migration and replicas as the counterparts. Feature parity is close; the choice is usually ecosystem and licensing cost. On snapshots: a snapshot freezes a VM's disk state and writes changes to a delta file — perfect before a risky patch, but it is **not** a backup: it lives on the same datastore as the VM, and long-lived snapshots grow, degrade performance, and can fill the datastore. Rule I follow: snapshot before a change, delete it within days once verified; backups go to separate storage on a schedule."

Q15. How would you design a patch management process for ~100 endpoints and a dozen servers?

"Four principles: inventory, rings, windows, verification. First, you can't patch what you can't see — asset inventory via RMM or Intune tells me every device and its patch level. For Windows endpoints I'd use Intune update rings (or WSUS on-prem): a pilot ring of IT plus a few volunteers gets patches within a day or two of Patch Tuesday; if nothing breaks in 3–5 days, the broad ring deploys with a deadline and forced restart window. Servers are separate: monthly maintenance windows out of business hours, patched in dependency order — non-critical first, DCs and database servers last and never both DCs the same night — with a pre-patch snapshot or backup as rollback. Linux servers get `apt` updates on the same cadence, security patches faster. Third-party apps — browsers, Java, VPN clients — via RMM scripting, since they're where many exploits actually live. Finally, verification: a monthly compliance report of patch percentage, and anything critical with active exploitation (CISA KEV list) jumps the queue as an emergency out-of-band patch."

2C. Scenario / Troubleshooting Questions — 8, with full methodology

The meta-skill they're testing: Not whether you know the fix — whether you diagnose in a **structured order** instead of guessing. Anchor every answer to a spine: **(1) Scope it → (2) What changed? → (3) Walk the layers (OSI, bottom-up or divide-and-conquer) → (4) Fix → (5) Verify → (6) Document & prevent.** Say the spine out loud before diving in — interviewers reward the method as much as the answer.

Q16. "A user can't connect to the VPN. Walk me through your diagnosis."

1. **Scope & gather:** "First I scope it: is it just this user or multiple? If multiple, I look at the VPN server/firewall first, not the client. Assuming one user: what's the exact error and at what stage — can't reach the server, authentication failed, or connects-but-nothing-works? Those are three different problems. And what changed — new laptop, new network, password recently reset, new location like a hotel?"

2. **Client's local network:** "Confirm they have working internet at all — can they browse? No internet means it's not a VPN problem yet."
3. **Reachability to the VPN endpoint:** "Can they resolve the VPN hostname (nslookup) and reach the port? Hotel/office guest networks often block non-standard ports — OpenVPN on UDP 1194 or IPsec UDP 500/4500 get filtered. Quick test: does it work on mobile hotspot? If hotspot works, it's their network blocking, and the fix is a TCP-443 fallback profile."
4. **Authentication stage:** "If the tunnel reaches the server but auth fails: expired/locked account, recently changed password not updated in the client, expired certificate (very common on OpenVPN — client cert validity), or MFA issues — Duo push going to an old phone. Server-side auth logs tell me exactly which."
5. **Connected but can't reach resources:** "That's routing/DNS, not connectivity: check they received the right internal DNS servers, check split-tunnel routes push the internal subnets, check firewall rules from the VPN subnet to the destination, and check for subnet overlap — home router on 192.168.1.0/24 colliding with an office 192.168.1.0/24 is a classic; the fix is renumbering the VPN or office side to something unusual like 10.x."
6. **Server side (if multiple users):** "Service status, certificate expiry on the server, license/session limits, recent firewall rule changes, WAN IP change if DNS points at a static that moved."
7. **Verify & document:** "After the fix, the user confirms access to the actual resource they needed — not just 'connected.' I note root cause in the ticket; if it's the third hotel-blocking case this month, that's my cue to deploy the TCP-443 profile to everyone proactively."

Q17. "Users say 'the internet is slow.' Diagnose it."

1. **Turn a feeling into a measurement:** "'Slow' isn't data. Slow for whom — one user, one department, everyone? Slow to what — everything, or one app like Teams/YouTube? Since when, and is it constant or peak-hours?"
2. **Check monitoring first:** "Before touching anything I open Zabbix: WAN interface utilization, router CPU, packet loss on the ISP link. If the WAN graph is pinned at 95–100%, it's saturation — find the top talker."
3. **If saturation:** "Identify the flow — MikroTik Torch or interface accounting shows which internal IP is eating bandwidth. Usual suspects: cloud backup running at 2 PM, someone's massive upload, malware beaconing, or a wireless client re-transmitting. Fix the flow, then implement queues/QoS so VoIP and business traffic get priority permanently."
4. **If not saturation:** "Test in layers from a wired machine: ping the gateway (LAN health), ping 8.8.8.8 (ISP path — look at latency and loss, not just success), then resolve names (DNS — if IP ping is fast but browsing is slow, DNS is the villain; test with `nslookup` against the configured server vs 8.8.8.8)."
5. **Wireless-specific:** "If only Wi-Fi users complain: check AP client counts and channel utilization on the Omada controller — co-channel interference, one overloaded AP, or 2.4 GHz congestion. Fix is channel planning, band steering, maybe an extra AP."
6. **ISP path:** "Persistent loss/latency beyond my edge: traceroute to see where it degrades, then open a ticket with the ISP with evidence attached — graphs and traceroutes get action; 'it's slow' gets a queue."
7. **Prevent:** "Baseline dashboards + an alert at 80% WAN utilization, so next time I call it before users feel it."

Q18. "A user can't log into the domain — 'trust relationship between this workstation and the primary domain failed.' What do you do?"

1. **Recognize it:** "That exact message means the computer's machine-account password is out of sync with AD — the secure channel is broken. Common after restoring a machine from an old image/snapshot, or a long-offline laptop."
2. **Get in:** "Log in with a local admin account (or cached domain credentials while disconnected)."
3. **Modern fix:** "Don't unjoin/rejoin — that nukes the SID relationships and profile links. Use PowerShell: `Test-ComputerSecureChannel -Repair -Credential DOMAIN\admin`, or `Reset-ComputerMachinePassword -Server DC01 -Credential DOMAIN\admin`. Reboot, done, profile intact."
4. **If it recurs on many machines:** "That's a pattern, not an incident: check for VM snapshot reverts (dev VMs restored from old snapshots re-break constantly), imaging without sysprep causing duplicate SIDs, or time skew breaking Kerberos. Fix the practice, not just the machine."
5. **Verify & document:** "User logs in with domain creds, GPO applies (`gpresult /r`), note the root cause."

Q19. "You get a ransomware alert on a file server at 2 PM on a workday. What are your first 60 minutes?"

1. **Contain first, investigate second:** "Minute one: isolate. Disconnect the file server from the network — pull the cable, disable the switch port, or isolate the VM's vNIC. Do **not** power it off yet; memory may hold forensic evidence and encryption keys, and powering off can corrupt in-flight state. Isolation stops spread; shutdown destroys evidence."
2. **Find patient zero:** "Ransomware on a file server usually comes *through* a user machine writing to the shares. Check the owner on the encrypted files / ransom notes — that username's machine is patient zero. Isolate that endpoint immediately and disable that user account."
3. **Protect the backups — this decides everything:** "Immediately verify backups are intact and **disconnect/lock backup targets** so they can't be encrypted next. Modern ransomware hunts backup systems first. If backups survive, this is a bad day; if they don't, it's a catastrophe."
4. **Assess blast radius:** "Which shares, which other servers, any signs on DCs? Check AV/EDR consoles and Zabbix for anomalies. Change privileged credentials — assume admin creds are compromised if patient zero had elevated access."
5. **Communicate:** "Notify management with facts, not panic: what's affected, what's contained, what's the recovery plan and ETA. Tell users to stop opening files from the affected shares. Escalation and (depending on data involved) legal/compliance notification are management decisions — my job is giving them accurate information fast."
6. **Recover:** "Never pay, never trust the encrypted machine: rebuild the server from clean media, restore data from the last known-good backup — verifying the backup predates infection — and re-admit patient zero's machine only after a full wipe and reimage."
7. **Post-incident:** "Root cause (phishing? exposed RDP? unpatched service?), then close that door: patch, tighten firewall, user training, and re-verify the 3-2-1 backup posture with an offline copy. Write the incident report — this becomes the DR plan chapter for next time."

Q20. "Half the office suddenly has no network; the other half is fine. Diagnose."

1. **The pattern is the clue:** "A clean 'half-and-half' split screams shared infrastructure — one switch, one AP group, one VLAN, or one DHCP scope — not fifty individual problems."

2. **Map affected users to hardware:** "Which desks/ports/APs? If everyone affected patches into the same access switch: check that switch — power, uplink light, trunk port. A dead switch or unplugged uplink after cleaning staff moved something is embarrassingly common."
3. **If it maps to a VLAN, not a switch:** "Check inter-VLAN routing on the core: did the VLAN interface go down, did a firewall rule change, did the DHCP scope for that VLAN exhaust or the relay break? An affected user's `ipconfig` tells me instantly: 169.254.x.x = no DHCP; correct IP but no gateway ping = routing/gateway; everything pingable but no internet = upstream/NAT/DNS."
4. **If Wi-Fi-only:** "Omada controller: are the APs in that area up, did they lose PoE (a PoE switch failing is a great half-office outage), correct SSID-to-VLAN mapping?"
5. **What changed:** "Any config pushed this morning? Any electrical work? Change log check takes 30 seconds and solves a third of these."
6. **Fix, verify, prevent:** "After restoration, confirm with an actual affected user, then: monitoring on every switch and AP (uplink down alerts in Zabbix), spare switch on the shelf, and labeled cabling so the next diagnosis is faster."

Q21. "Emails from your company are landing in customers' spam folders. Fix it."

1. **Scope:** "All recipients or one domain (e.g., only Gmail)? All senders or one user? New problem or gradual? One recipient domain = their filter; everywhere = our reputation/authentication."
2. **Check authentication trio — this is the answer 80% of the time:** "Grab a rejected message's headers from a test Gmail account and read the authentication results: **SPF** — does our DNS TXT record list every server/service that sends as us (including the newsletter tool marketing added last month without telling IT)? **DKIM** — is signing enabled and the selector's public key in DNS? **DMARC** — is there a policy, and do reports show failures? A new sending service missing from SPF is the classic trigger."
3. **Check blacklists:** "MXToolbox the sending IP against RBLs. If listed: find why — compromised mailbox blasting spam (check outbound queues and sign-in logs, reset that account, then request delisting), or an open relay misconfiguration."
4. **Content & volume factors:** "Sudden bulk sends, spammy content, or a marketing blast from the corporate domain can tank reputation — bulk mail belongs on a separate subdomain/service."
5. **Fix & verify:** "Correct SPF/DKIM/DMARC records, wait for DNS TTL, verify headers now pass on a test send, monitor DMARC aggregate reports for a week."
6. **Prevent:** "Move DMARC from `p=none` toward `quarantine/reject` gradually, and make 'tell IT before buying anything that sends email' a standing rule."

Q22. "A critical server's disk will be full in 2 hours. Production is running on it. Go."

1. **Triage the clock:** "Two hours means act now, root-cause after. First: what's consuming space and how fast? Linux: `df -h`, then `du -xh --max-depth=1 /` down the biggest branch; Windows: TreeSize/WinDirStat. Also check deleted-but-open files holding space (`lsof +L1`) — a rotated log a process still holds is a classic invisible eater."
2. **Fast safe wins:** "Compress/rotate logs, clear package caches and temp, empty old crash dumps, move (not delete) large archives to another volume. On VMware, delete forgotten old snapshots — a months-old snapshot's delta file is one of the most common 'datastore suddenly full' causes, and consolidating it can recover huge space."
3. **Buy headroom if virtual:** "If it's a VM (most are): expand the virtual disk from the datastore and grow the filesystem online — LVM/ext4/xfs and modern Windows both grow live, no downtime. That's the real 2-hour solution."

4. **Never do:** "Don't blindly delete anything you can't identify, and never touch database files directly — shrink databases through the DB engine, not the filesystem."
5. **Root cause:** "Why did it fill — runaway log (fix log level + rotation), growing DB (capacity plan), backup dumped locally (redirect it)? Fix the source or you're back in a month."
6. **Prevent:** "This should never have been a 2-hour surprise: Zabbix disk triggers at 80% warning / 90% critical, with trend prediction. That alert is the difference between a calm ticket and an emergency."

> **Q23. "A user reports their machine is 'acting weird' and you suspect malware. Steps?"**

1. **Clarify + err on caution:** "'Weird' how — popups, slowness, redirected browser, files renamed, fan screaming (cryptominer)? While asking, I'm already treating it as potentially compromised."
2. **Isolate proportionally:** "Disconnect from network (keep powered on). On Wi-Fi, that's one click; wired, pull the cable. This costs the user minutes and could save the company the file server."
3. **Investigate:** "Full AV/EDR scan; check autoruns/startup items, scheduled tasks, recently installed programs, browser extensions; Task Manager/Process Explorer for unsigned or misspelled processes; check what the user did last — attachment opened, USB inserted, 'free download' installed."
4. **Credentials:** "If there's any sign of infostealing or the user typed credentials anywhere suspicious: reset their passwords from a *clean* machine and check MFA logs / mailbox rules for attacker persistence (auto-forward rules are a favorite)."
5. **Clean vs reimage:** "Adware/PUP: clean and verify. Anything with persistence, unknown droppers, or credential access: reimage — you can never fully trust a cleaned rootkit, and with a standard image + cloud data, reimaging is often faster than deep cleaning anyway."
6. **Close the loop:** "Root cause → prevention: block the vector (mail filtering, USB policy via Intune, browser extension control), quick note to the team if it was a phishing lure others may have received, ticket documented."

2D. Curveball & Stress Questions

> **Q24. "Tell me about a time you made a mistake that caused downtime."**

The trap: claiming you've never caused an outage (dishonest or inexperienced) or telling a catastrophic story with no lesson. Pick a real, medium-severity, fully-owned mistake. Model shape (adapt to your true story):

"Early at CrecenTech I pushed a firewall rule change on pfSense during working hours to tighten access, and I ordered the rule wrong — it sat above a broader allow rule and blocked legitimate remote users' VPN access for about twenty minutes until I saw the pattern in the connection logs and reverted. I owned it immediately — told my lead before users escalated, reverted, then re-applied the change correctly after hours with a rollback plan written down. Three permanent changes came out of it: I don't push firewall changes to production during business hours without a strong reason; I always note the exact pre-change state so revert takes seconds, not minutes; and I test rule logic mentally top-down the way the firewall reads it, because rule order *is* the configuration. I'd rather hire someone who's made that mistake once and built habits from it than someone who hasn't yet — and that's who I am now."

Delivery notes: no blaming tools or colleagues; state the fix time (shows monitoring awareness); end on the systems you built, not the guilt.

Q25. "You clearly have cloud/DevOps exposure — AWS, Docker, Intune. Why do you want a sysadmin role? Won't you leave for a DevOps job in six months?"

"Fair question. I see my cloud and automation exposure as making me a *better* system administrator, not a different one — infrastructure today is hybrid, and someone who understands both the on-prem network and the AWS side, or can script a task in Bash instead of clicking it 50 times, delivers more reliability, which is what this role exists for. I've deliberately built my career on the infrastructure track — NOC, then systems, then IT administration — and this role is the natural next step in that track: broader ownership, not a lane change. And practically: I'm in Lahore, this is on-site in Lahore, and I'm looking for a place to build for years, not a stepping stone."

Q26. "Rate yourself 1–10 on networking, Windows Server, Linux, and security. Justify each number."

The trap: all 9s = no self-awareness; all 6s = no confidence. Give differentiated, justified numbers with growth framing:

"Networking — 8: it's my foundation; I've designed and deployed networks end-to-end, CCNA-trained, and I've run ISP-grade infrastructure. I hold back the last points for deep BGP/service-provider routing, which I haven't needed at enterprise scale. Windows Server and AD — 8: two-plus years of daily administration, GPO design, hybrid identity with Entra and Intune; I'd want more reps on large multi-site AD topologies and advanced DFS/replication scenarios. Linux — 7: confident daily driver on Ubuntu servers — services, storage, troubleshooting, scripting; the gap to 9 is deep performance tuning and large-scale config management like Ansible, which I'm actively building. Security — 7.5: strong on the practical layer — firewalls, VPN, MFA rollout, Intune compliance, vulnerability scanning with Trivy; growing on the governance layer — formal policy frameworks and DR planning, which honestly is part of why this role appeals to me."

Q27. "It's 3 AM, the server room is down, and you can't reach your manager. What do you do?" (Testing judgment & ownership)

"I act — with judgment about what's reversible. First, triage remotely: monitoring tells me if it's power, network, or host-level; a total simultaneous drop of everything points at power or the upstream link, not twelve coincidences. If remote access is dead, I go on-site — that's part of owning infrastructure. On-site: safety first (any burning smell/water = power off and don't be a hero), then power/UPS status, then bring systems up in dependency order — network core, then storage, then virtualization hosts, then domain controllers, then application VMs — because booting apps before their storage and DCs just creates a second incident. Throughout, I document timestamps and actions, and I keep trying the escalation chain — manager, then whoever's next; a 3 AM message they read at 7 is still better than them finding out from users. What I *don't* do is take irreversible destructive actions alone — restoring over live data or reinitializing storage waits for a second pair of eyes unless the business is bleeding and the call genuinely can't wait. Ownership means acting; maturity means knowing which actions can't be undone."

3 Deep Technical Review — 11 Core Topics

Each topic has three layers: **Plain English** (so you truly understand it), the **Interview-Ready Version** (memorize the rhythm, not the words), and the **Likely Follow-Up** with its answer (this is where they test depth).

3.1 Active Directory & Group Policy

PLAIN ENGLISH

AD is the company's phonebook plus security guard. Domain controllers hold a database of every user, computer, and group. When you log in anywhere, your PC asks a DC "is this person real and what are they allowed to do?" — using Kerberos tickets, so your password isn't sent around. Objects are organized into OUs (folders), and Group Policy is the rulebook you staple onto those folders: "everyone in the Sales OU gets this wallpaper, this drive mapping, this password policy." Computers check for new rules at boot/logon and roughly every 90 minutes after.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"Active Directory is centralized identity and access — domain controllers authenticate via Kerberos, authorize through group memberships, and I structure users and computers into OUs so Group Policy can apply configuration by role. I follow least-privilege with security groups (ideally role groups nested into resource groups), and I treat GPO precedence — Local, Site, Domain, OU, with the closest OU winning — as the first thing to check when a policy 'isn't applying.'"

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A GPO ISN'T APPLYING TO A USER. HOW DO YOU TROUBLESHOOT?"

"On the client, `gpresult /r` (or `rsop.msc`) shows which GPOs applied and which were filtered out and why. Common causes in order: the user/computer object isn't in the OU the GPO links to; security filtering — the object isn't in the filtered group (and after MS16-072, Authenticated Users needs read on the GPO); the setting is user-side but the GPO only links to a computer OU (or vice versa — that's what loopback processing exists for); WMI filter excluding the machine; or replication/refresh lag — `gpupdate /force` and check SYSVOL replication between DCs. If gpresult says it applied but behavior differs, another GPO with higher precedence or 'Enforced' is winning — check with the Group Policy Results wizard in GPMC."

3.2 Firewalls — Concepts, pfSense & FortiGate

PLAIN ENGLISH

A firewall is a bouncer with a written list. Traffic arrives; the bouncer reads the list top to bottom and applies the first rule that matches — everything after is ignored. Modern firewalls are stateful: if you're allowed *out*, the reply is automatically allowed back *in*, because the firewall remembers the conversation. The golden default: block everything inbound, allow what's needed outbound, and log what you block. NAT is the related trick of hiding many private IPs behind one public IP.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I've administered pfSense in production — firewall rules, NAT, and OpenVPN for remote access — plus MikroTik firewalling and Fortinet through NSE 3. My rule philosophy is default-deny inbound, explicit least-privilege allows, rules ordered specific-before-general because evaluation is first-match top-down, and logging on deny rules so troubleshooting is evidence-based. Firewalls also enforce my internal segmentation — guest and staff VLANs only talk through explicit rules."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATEFUL AND STATELESS FILTERING? AND WHERE DO NAT RULES FIT IN PFSENSE?"

"Stateless looks at each packet in isolation against the rule list — you'd need mirror rules for return traffic. Stateful tracks connections in a state table: one rule permitting the outbound SYN implicitly allows the established flow back, which is both more secure and simpler. In pfSense, port-forward (NAT) rules translate the destination first, and the associated firewall rule then evaluates against the *translated* internal address — a classic gotcha when a port forward 'doesn't work' because the linked filter rule is missing or wrong. And on FortiGate, policies combine interface pairs, addresses, services and can add NAT and security profiles — IPS, AV, web filtering — on the same policy, which is the 'next-gen' part."

3.3 VLANs, Subnetting & Switching

PLAIN ENGLISH

Subnetting is slicing one big IP range into labeled streets so routers know where to send traffic and broadcasts stay local. A /24 is 256 addresses (254 usable); each halving of the network (/25, /26...) doubles the number of subnets and halves their size. VLANs are the switch-level version of the same idea: one physical switch pretends to be several isolated switches. Access ports serve one VLAN to a desk; trunk ports carry many VLANs between switches with a tag (802.1Q) on each frame saying which VLAN it belongs to.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I design networks with one subnet per VLAN per function — staff, servers, VoIP, guest, management — sized with growth headroom: a /24 per user VLAN is rarely wrong for an office our size. Access ports face devices, trunks carry tagged VLANs between switches and up to the router or L3 switch that does inter-VLAN routing, and firewall policy controls what crosses segments. I deployed exactly this at WADIC's new office on MikroTik plus managed switches plus Omada."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "QUICK MATH — HOW MANY USABLE HOSTS IN A /26, AND WHAT'S THE SUBNET MASK? AND WHAT'S A NATIVE VLAN?"

"/26 = 255.255.255.192 = 64 addresses = 62 usable (minus network and broadcast). The pattern to say out loud: /24=254, /25=126, /26=62, /27=30, /28=14, /29=6, /30=2 (point-to-point links). Native VLAN is the one VLAN on a trunk whose frames go untagged — it must match on both ends of the trunk or you get VLAN leakage/mismatch errors, and best practice is moving the native VLAN off VLAN 1 for security."

3.4 VPN Protocols & Remote Access

PLAIN ENGLISH

A VPN builds a private, encrypted pipe across the public internet. Two shapes: site-to-site (office router to office router — whole networks talk) and remote access (one laptop dials into the office). IPsec is the industrial standard for site-to-site: two phases — first agree on keys (IKE), then encrypt traffic (ESP). OpenVPN wraps traffic in SSL/TLS over one port, so it slips through hotel Wi-Fi and NAT easily — ideal for individual users. PPTP is the 1990s option: fast, universally supported, and broken — don't defend it. WireGuard is the modern minimalist — tiny codebase, very fast — worth name-dropping.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I've run OpenVPN on pfSense for remote users — certificate-based, UDP 1194 with a TCP-443 fallback profile for restrictive networks — and IPsec for site-to-site tunnels, plus legacy PPTP on MikroTik that I'd migrate off today given MS-CHAPv2's weaknesses. My split: IPsec between fixed sites, OpenVPN or WireGuard for road warriors, always with MFA on top because a VPN without MFA is one phished password from being a corporate backdoor."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "AN IPSEC TUNNEL SHOWS PHASE 1 UP BUT PHASE 2 KEEPS FAILING. WHAT'S WRONG?"

"Phase 1 up means the peers authenticated — pre-shared key and IKE proposals match. Phase 2 failing means the ESP negotiation disagrees: almost always mismatched Phase 2 selectors — the local/remote subnet definitions ('interesting traffic') don't mirror each other exactly on both ends — or mismatched Phase 2 proposals (encryption/hash/PFS group). I compare both configs side by side; the subnets must be exact mirrors. If it establishes but traffic flows one way only, then it's firewall rules on the tunnel interface or NAT accidentally applying to tunnel traffic — you exempt VPN subnets from NAT."

3.5 Monitoring — Zabbix (and how PRTG/Nagios map to it)

PLAIN ENGLISH

Monitoring is smoke detectors for infrastructure. You watch three ways: ping/ICMP (is it alive), SNMP (ask network gear for its counters — bandwidth, CPU, errors), and agents (a small program on servers reporting disk, memory, services). Values feed triggers ("disk > 90%"), triggers fire alerts (email/Slack), and history becomes graphs so you can see that the WAN link has been creeping toward saturation for a month. The maturity ladder: no monitoring → users are your monitoring → alerts after failure → alerts *before* failure (trends and forecasts).

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I ran Zabbix in production at KK Networks monitoring ISP and datacenter infrastructure — SNMP for network devices, agents on servers, templated items and triggers with severity-based escalation. My philosophy: monitor causes, not just symptoms — interface errors and disk trends, not only 'host down' — and tune thresholds so alerts stay actionable, because an alert channel people ignore is worse than none. PRTG and Nagios do the same job with different packaging: PRTG is sensor-based and licensed per sensor, Nagios is check/plugin-based; the discipline transfers one-to-one."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "HOW WOULD YOU MONITOR A NEW BRANCH OFFICE FROM SCRATCH, AND HOW DO YOU PREVENT ALERT FATIGUE?"

"Discover and inventory first, then: ICMP + SNMP on the router, switches and APs (status, uplink traffic, errors, CPU); agents on any servers (disk, memory, services, backup job results); a synthetic check through the WAN — ping/HTTP from HQ to the branch — because device-up doesn't mean users-are-working; and certificate/DHCP-scope checks if applicable. Against alert fatigue: severity tiers (critical pages someone, warning goes to a queue), dependencies so a dead WAN link sends *one* alert instead of forty 'host down' children, time-based maintenance windows for patching, and a monthly review where any alert that fired but required no action gets retuned or deleted."

3.6 Windows Server Core Services (DNS, DHCP, File/Print, Roles)

PLAIN ENGLISH

Windows Server is a toolbox of roles. The big four for this job: AD DS (identity, covered above), DNS (the phonebook mapping names to IPs — AD literally cannot function without it), DHCP (hands out IP addresses with lease times), and File Services (shared folders with two permission layers — share permissions and NTFS permissions, where the *most restrictive combination* wins). Everything else — print services, IIS, Hyper-V — is added per need.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"Day-to-day Windows Server for me means AD-integrated DNS — I check SRV records and scavenging when 'the domain is acting weird,' because AD problems are DNS problems until proven otherwise — DHCP with per-VLAN scopes, reservations for printers and infrastructure, and file shares where I keep share permissions simple (Authenticated Users – Change) and do real access control in NTFS via security groups, following AGDLP so access is role-driven, auditable, and offboarding-proof."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A USER CAN ACCESS A SHARE BUT GETS 'ACCESS DENIED' ON ONE SUBFOLDER — EVEN THOUGH THEIR GROUP HAS FULL CONTROL ON THE SHARE. WHY?"

"Because effective access is the most restrictive intersection of share and NTFS permissions, and NTFS is evaluated per folder/file. The subfolder has either inheritance disabled with narrower explicit ACLs, or an explicit Deny — and Deny beats Allow. I'd check Effective Access on the subfolder for that user, look for broken inheritance, and also check group membership propagation — if they were added to the group today, their token still lacks the SID until they log off and back on. That last one solves a surprising number of 'permissions are right but it still fails' tickets."

3.7 Linux Administration (Ubuntu)

PLAIN ENGLISH

Linux servers are managed by text: config files in `/etc`, services run by systemd, logs in `/var/log` (read with `journalctl`), software via `apt`. The daily verbs: `systemctl status/restart` for services, `df -h` / `du` for disk, `top/htop` for CPU and memory, `ip a` / `ss -tulpn` for network and listening ports, `ufw`/iptables for the host firewall, cron for scheduled jobs, and SSH keys (not passwords) for access.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I administer Ubuntu servers across dev to production — service management with systemd, log-driven troubleshooting with journalctl, apt patching on a schedule with security updates prioritized, storage with LVM so I can grow filesystems online, SSH hardened to key-only with root login disabled, and Bash scripting for anything I'd otherwise do twice. I also run Docker on Linux for developer environments, which increasingly is how services get deployed anyway."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A WEB SERVICE ON UBUNTU IS DOWN. WALK ME THROUGH THE FIRST FIVE COMMANDS YOU'D RUN."

"`systemctl status nginx` — is it running, and if it died, what does the status excerpt say; `journalctl -u nginx -n 50` — the actual error: config syntax, permission, port conflict; `ss -tulpn | grep :80` — is something else holding the port, or is it listening but unreachable (then it's firewall/network, not the service); `df -h` — full disks silently kill services, especially logging ones; `nginx -t` — validate config before restarting, because restarting with a broken config turns an incident into a longer incident. Then restart, verify with curl from local and remote, and root-cause why it stopped — a service that died once will die again."

3.8 macOS Administration (your prep-up topic — read twice)

PLAIN ENGLISH

macOS is Unix with an Apple management layer. Your Linux skills transfer: same shell (zsh/bash), same networking commands mostly, `launchd` plays the role of systemd/cron, and Homebrew is the apt-equivalent. The enterprise layer is what's different: **Apple Business Manager (ABM)** registers company-bought Macs so they auto-enroll into your **MDM** (Intune or Jamf) on first boot — that's Automated Device Enrollment. Security stack: **FileVault** = BitLocker (disk encryption, escrow the recovery key in MDM), **Gatekeeper** = only signed/notarized apps run, **XProtect** = built-in malware scanning, **Keychain** = credential store. Local accounts matter more than domain accounts — binding Macs to AD is legacy; modern practice is local accounts + MDM + Platform SSO to Entra.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"My fleet experience is deepest on Windows with Linux servers, and macOS is the platform I've touched least — but it's Unix underneath, so my command-line and troubleshooting carry over directly, and the management model maps cleanly onto what I already run: Apple Business Manager feeds automated enrollment into MDM — Intune, which I administer, manages macOS too — FileVault is the BitLocker counterpart with key escrow, and Gatekeeper plus XProtect cover app control and malware. Give me your enrollment workflow and I'll be productive on Mac support within a couple of weeks."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A NEW EMPLOYEE GETS A MACBOOK. HOW DO YOU SET IT UP SECURELY?"

"Ideally it was purchased through Apple Business Manager, so on first boot it auto-enrolls into MDM and pulls our baseline: FileVault enforced with the recovery key escrowed, a compliance policy (OS version, password rules, firewall on), Wi-Fi and VPN profiles, required apps, and the user signs in with company identity for SSO. If it wasn't ABM-purchased, I manually enroll it into Intune, then the same baseline applies. Offboarding is the mirror: MDM lock/wipe, account disabled, FileVault key means the disk stays unreadable. The principle is identical to my Windows Intune flow — only the enrollment doorway differs."

3.9 Virtualization — ESXi/vSphere & Hyper-V

PLAIN ENGLISH

A hypervisor lets one physical server run many virtual servers, each believing it owns the hardware. ESXi is the hypervisor installed on the metal; vCenter/vSphere is the management brain that clusters multiple hosts and enables the magic: vMotion (move a running VM between hosts with zero downtime), HA (if a host dies, its VMs auto-restart elsewhere), DRS (auto-balance load). Storage lives on datastores; VMs are just files. Hyper-V is Microsoft's equivalent baked into Windows Server. Golden rules: don't overcommit memory recklessly, watch datastore free space, and snapshots are parachutes for changes — not backups.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I've provisioned and maintained VMs on ESXi and vSphere for development and operational teams — sizing, templates for consistent builds, snapshot discipline around changes, and datastore capacity watching, because a full datastore pauses every VM on it. I've also worked with Hyper-V; feature-wise they're close, and the real decision is licensing and ecosystem. I treat hosts as cattle-adjacent: patched in rotation using vMotion/maintenance mode so guest workloads never notice host maintenance."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A VM IS RUNNING SLOW. HOST OR GUEST PROBLEM — HOW DO YOU TELL?"

"Look at the host's view of the VM, not the guest's. The killer metric is **CPU Ready time** — how long the VM waited for physical CPU; high ready time (say >5–10%) means the host is oversubscribed and it's a host/placement problem regardless of what Task Manager inside says. For memory: ballooning or swapping at the host level means host memory pressure. For disk: datastore latency — high latency hits every VM on that datastore, so compare neighbors; also check for an old snapshot chain dragging I/O. If host metrics are clean, then it's genuinely in the guest — an app or OS issue — and I troubleshoot it like any server. That host-first habit prevents hours of chasing ghosts inside the guest."

3.10 Backup, Disaster Recovery, RTO/RPO

PLAIN ENGLISH

Backups answer "can we get the data back?" DR answers "can we get the *business* back, how fast, and how do we know?" RPO = maximum data loss you tolerate (drives backup frequency). RTO = maximum downtime you tolerate (drives architecture — restore from tape vs. failover replica). 3-2-1: three copies, two media, one off-site/offline — offline because ransomware deletes reachable backups. DR planning = classify systems by criticality → assign RTO/RPO per tier → design backup/replication to meet them → write the runbook → **test restores on a calendar**, because the only backups that exist are the ones you've restored.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I've run backup operations for on-prem datacenter infrastructure — VM-level and file-level — and performed real restores. My framework: tier systems by criticality, set RPO to drive backup frequency and RTO to drive recovery design, apply 3-2-1 with an offline or immutable copy as the ransomware survival guarantee, and schedule test restores because backup success logs prove nothing about recoverability. If your DR documentation needs building out, that's a first-90-days deliverable I'd genuinely enjoy owning."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "MANAGEMENT ASKS: 'ARE WE PROTECTED AGAINST RANSOMWARE FROM A BACKUP PERSPECTIVE?' WHAT DO YOU CHECK TO ANSWER HONESTLY?"

"Five questions. One — is at least one backup copy offline or immutable, unreachable with stolen admin credentials? If every backup is on a share the domain admin can touch, the answer is no. Two — does retention reach back further than a realistic dwell time, since attackers often sit for weeks before encrypting? Three — have we actually test-restored recently, and how long did it take versus our RTO? Four — are backup *systems* themselves hardened — separate credentials, MFA on the console? Five — do backups cover everything that matters, verified against inventory, not assumptions? Whatever gaps that audit finds becomes the remediation plan — and that's an honest answer management can act on."

3.11 Patch Management & Endpoint Security (Intune-flavored)

PLAIN ENGLISH

Patching is preventive medicine with side-effect risk, so you run it like a clinical trial: small test group first, then everyone, with a rollback plan. Endpoints get rings (pilot → broad) with deadlines and forced restarts; servers get maintenance windows in dependency order with pre-change snapshots. Antivirus/EDR is the seatbelt worn everywhere, reporting to a console someone actually reads. Compliance means measuring: what percentage of devices are current, and which stragglers need chasing. Anything under active exploitation jumps every queue.

INTERVIEW-READY VERSION

"I've enforced endpoint security and compliance through Intune — compliance policies that gate access, configuration baselines, update management — layered with Duo MFA, and vulnerability scanning with Trivy on the DevSecOps side. My patch model is ring-based for endpoints — pilot, soak a few days, broad with deadlines — and windowed for servers with snapshots as rollback and DCs never patched simultaneously. I report compliance monthly because 'we patch regularly' isn't a metric; '96% of endpoints within 14 days of release' is."

LIKELY FOLLOW-UP: "A CRITICAL PATCH BREAKS A BUSINESS APPLICATION ON HALF THE MACHINES THAT RECEIVED IT. WHAT NOW?"

"Contain: pause the deployment immediately so the unaffected half stays unaffected — this is exactly why rings exist, and if it got to 'half the fleet' I'd also ask whether my pilot ring represented real users using that app, and fix that. Remediate: uninstall/rollback the patch on affected machines via Intune or RMM script, or apply the vendor's workaround if the app vendor has one — checking known-issue notes, because Microsoft frequently ships Known Issue Rollback for exactly this. Risk-manage: the patch was critical for a reason, so I don't just skip it — I mitigate the underlying vulnerability another way (firewall rule, disable the vulnerable component) until a fixed patch or app update lands, and document the exception with an expiry date so it can't silently become permanent. Then the lesson goes into the pilot-ring design."

4 Whiteboard / Practical Scenarios — 5 Live Talk-Throughs

For live scenarios, structure beats detail. Open every answer with a one-line frame ("I'd approach this in four parts: requirements, design, security, operations"), then fill the parts. Draw as you talk if there's a whiteboard — even boxes and arrows signal clear thinking.

Scenario 1 — "Design a network for our new 60-person office."

Your frame: "Requirements → addressing & segmentation → hardware → wireless → security → operations." (You have literally done this — say so, then design.)

1. **Requirements first (asking = senior):** "Before designing: how many wired vs wireless users, any servers on-site or all cloud, VoIP phones, guest visitors, growth expectation, one ISP or two, budget tier?" Assume: 60 staff, VoIP, some on-site infra, guests, growth to 100.
2. **Segmentation & addressing:** VLAN 10 Staff (10.10.10.0/24), VLAN 20 Servers/Infra (10.10.20.0/24), VLAN 30 VoIP (10.10.30.0/24), VLAN 40 Guest (10.10.40.0/24), VLAN 99 Management (switches/APs/iLO). "The subnet tells you what a device is — that alone halves troubleshooting time."
3. **Hardware:** Edge router/firewall (MikroTik or pfSense/FortiGate depending on budget) doing inter-VLAN routing and rules; 2× 48-port managed PoE switches (PoE feeds APs and phones), trunked; APs — roughly one per 15–20 users plus coverage geometry, centrally managed (Omada/UniFi).
4. **Wireless:** Corporate SSID → VLAN 10 with WPA2/3-Enterprise if we have RADIUS, otherwise strong PSK + planned upgrade; Guest SSID → VLAN 40, client isolation on, bandwidth-limited, internet-only.
5. **Security policy:** Default-deny inbound; guest reaches only the internet; staff reach servers on defined ports; management VLAN reachable only from IT; VPN (OpenVPN/WireGuard) for remote access with MFA.
6. **Resilience & operations:** Dual ISP with failover (or load balancing — "I've run ISP load balancing in production"), UPS on the rack, Zabbix monitoring every switch/AP/WAN link from day one, and documentation: IP plan, VLAN map, physical diagram, labeled patch panel. Close with: "This is essentially the network I deployed for WADIC's office relocation, scaled up."

Scenario 2 — "A new employee starts Monday. Walk me through setting up their access."

Your frame: "Identity → device → access → security → verification — driven by a checklist, because onboarding is where inconsistency creates security holes."

1. **Before day one:** HR ticket triggers the checklist. Create the AD/Entra account from the role's template (correct OU, correct security groups → correct GPOs, drives, and app access by role, not by copying some random colleague — copied accounts accumulate permission barnacles). Mailbox and license (M365), Slack/RingCentral/SaaS per role matrix.
2. **Device:** Laptop from inventory, enrolled (Intune/Autopilot or imaged), disk encryption on, EDR/AV checked in, asset tag recorded against the user in inventory.
3. **Security non-negotiables:** MFA enrollment (Duo) completed during day-one setup — not "later"; password set via secure first-login flow; VPN profile if remote.
4. **Day one:** Fifteen-minute IT welcome: how to reach IT, how tickets work, phishing one-liner. This converts users into early-warning sensors instead of incident sources.
5. **Verify & close:** User confirms mail, shares, VPN, printing all work; checklist signed off in the ticket. "And offboarding is the exact mirror with a deadline of hours, not days: disable account, revoke sessions/MFA, reclaim device, transfer mailbox/files to the manager — I've run both directions for US-based remote staff, where you can't just walk to their desk, so process discipline is everything."

Scenario 3 — "You arrive and our monitoring shows nothing — we only find out about outages from user complaints. Fix our monitoring."

Your frame: "Inventory → coverage in layers → alerting that humans respect → trend/prevention."

1. **Inventory:** "You can't monitor what you haven't listed — network scan + asset records + a walk of the server room. Output: every device with an owner and a criticality."
2. **Deploy in layers (Zabbix, since I've run it at ISP scale):** Layer 1 — ICMP up/down on everything with an IP. Layer 2 — SNMP on network gear: interface status, bandwidth, errors, CPU. Layer 3 — agents on servers: disk, memory, services, and crucially backup-job results. Layer 4 — synthetic/user-view checks: HTTP checks on internal apps, mail flow probe, VPN port check — because "server up" is not "users working."
3. **Alerting design:** Severity tiers (critical → phone/Slack ping; warning → queue reviewed daily), dependencies so one WAN failure = one alert not forty, maintenance windows so patch nights don't page anyone.
4. **Prevention layer:** Disk-trend forecasts, certificate expiry checks, WAN utilization warning at 80% — "the goal is that the phrase 'users noticed first' becomes extinct."
5. **Deliverable framing:** "Week one: inventory plus ICMP on everything. Week two-three: SNMP and agents on critical systems. Week four: synthetic checks, alert tuning, dashboard on the wall. Then a monthly review that deletes every alert that fired without requiring action."

Scenario 4 — "Ransomware alert on a shared drive, right now, live — talk me through it."

Your frame: Say the doctrine first: "Contain, protect backups, identify patient zero, communicate, recover clean, then learn." Then walk Section 2C/Q19's steps. Live-delivery tips:

- Speak in decisive present tense: "I isolate the server now — cable out or switch port down — powered on for forensics."
- The line that wins the room: "My second move is protecting the backups before anything else, because whether this is a bad afternoon or a company-threatening event is decided entirely by whether backups survive."
- Show communication maturity: "Management gets facts and an ETA from me every 30 minutes — silence during an incident is how IT loses trust."
- Show the boundary: "Paying ransom or notifying regulators are management/legal calls; giving them accurate information fast is mine."

Scenario 5 — "Our file server is 8 years old and out of warranty. Propose what we do."

Your frame: "Assess → options with costs and risks → recommendation → migration plan." This tests business thinking, not just tech.

1. **Assess:** Data size and growth, who uses it, current backup state, what breaks if it dies today (that's the risk we're pricing).
2. **Options (present three, like a consultant):** (a) New physical server / NAS — familiar, capex, still a single site; (b) Virtualize onto existing ESXi/Hyper-V cluster — my usual pick if a cluster exists: HA, snapshots, easier backup/DR, no new metal; (c) Cloud — SharePoint/OneDrive for collaborative docs (licenses may already include it) or a hybrid with Azure Files — opex, off-site by nature, but bandwidth/latency and migration effort must be honest numbers.
3. **Recommendation with reasoning:** "For most 60-person offices already on M365: collaborative documents to SharePoint/OneDrive, remaining bulk/departmental data to a VM on the cluster or a quality NAS — best cost/resilience blend, and the old server's risk retires."
4. **Migration plan:** Inventory and permission-map shares → replicate data (robocopy with ACLs) while old stays live → cutover on a weekend with DFS namespace or login-script repointing so users see no path change → old server read-only for two weeks as safety net → decommission, wipe disks, update documentation and backups.
5. **Close:** "And the new home gets what the old one lacked: monitoring, tested backups, and a documented restore procedure."

5 Questions to Ask Them — Grouped by What They Reveal

Ask 3–4, chosen live based on how the interview went. Asking zero questions reads as low interest; asking about leave policy first reads as wrong priorities. These are ordered so the early ones make you look senior.

Group A — Scope & Expectations (shows ownership mindset)

1. "If I'm sitting in this seat six months from now and you're thrilled with the hire — what will I have fixed or built that isn't working today?" (Their answer is your real job description and reveals current pain points.)
2. "Is this a new position or a replacement? If a replacement, what does the transition/handover look like?" (New = growth or unmanaged chaos; replacement = ask gently why the person left.)
3. "How is the infrastructure documented today — and would improving documentation be welcomed or seen as stepping on toes?" (Signals your documentation habit while probing their maturity.)

Group B — Team & Escalation (reveals whether you're alone)

1. "How is the IT team structured — who would I work with day-to-day, and where do I escalate something beyond my access or authority?" (One-person IT vs. team changes everything about the role.)
2. "How does after-hours and emergency coverage work — is there an on-call rotation, and how often do real out-of-hours incidents happen?" (Asks the workload question professionally instead of 'will I be called at 3 AM?')

Group C — Tooling & Environment (reveals technical reality)

1. "Can you give me a quick picture of the current environment — roughly how many users and servers, Windows/Linux/macOS mix, on-prem vs cloud, and which firewall and monitoring platforms are in place today?" (You'll tailor every remaining answer to their reality — and it shows structured thinking.)
2. "What's the current state of backups and DR — is there a tested recovery process, or is that an area you'd want strengthened?" (Plants your Section-1 growth narrative as a value-add.)

Group D — Growth & Culture (last, and briefly)

1. "How does the company support certifications and training for the IT team?"
2. "What do the people who do best here have in common?" (Culture question that flatters them and informs you.)
3. "What are the next steps in the process, and is there anything about my background you'd like me to expand on or any concern I can address right now?" (Always close with this — it surfaces objections while you can still answer them.)

6 Salary & Logistics — Lahore Market, Negotiation, Notice Period

6.1 Know the market band (Lahore, System & Network Admin, 2–5 yrs)

Ranges vary by company type. Verify current numbers on Rozee.pk salary insights, Glassdoor Pakistan, and by asking peers before the interview — but as an orientation for a 4-year candidate with your stack (AD + networking + firewalls + virtualization + M365/Intune + AWS exposure):

Company type	Typical monthly range (PKR)	Notes
Small local business / non-tech	~120k – 180k	Often expects one person to do everything; budget-capped.
Mid-size software house / tech company (this JD's profile)	~180k – 300k	Your realistic zone. Top of band justified by your cloud + security extras.
Large enterprise / bank / telco / foreign-facing	~250k – 400k+	More process, sometimes shift work; certifications weigh more.

You sit at 4 years — the top of their 2–5 band — with skills beyond the JD (AWS, Intune/M365, Docker, DevSecOps tooling, MFA rollout experience). Anchor accordingly.

6.2 The conversation — scripts

If asked "What's your current salary?"

> *"I'd prefer to focus on the value of this role rather than my current package — but I can tell you the range I'm targeting: for a role with this scope, I'm looking at [X–Y], and I'm flexible for the right environment and growth path."* **If they insist** *(common in Pakistan): state it calmly and immediately pivot: "Currently I'm at [amount]; given the broader ownership in this role and my four years across networking, systems, and security, I'm targeting [target]."*

If asked "What are your salary expectations?"

> *"Based on my four years covering exactly this JD — networks, AD, firewalls, virtualization, monitoring — plus the cloud and endpoint-security experience I bring beyond it, I'm targeting the range of [X to Y]. I'm open to discussing the full package — what does the band for this position look like on your side?"* *(Giving a range then asking theirs keeps the dialogue open without you bidding against yourself. Set X at the number you'd be genuinely happy with, not your minimum — they will remember X, not Y.)*

Rules of thumb

- Never give a number in the first interview if you can defer gracefully: "I'm sure we can align on compensation if we agree there's a fit — could we discuss the range once you've decided I'm your candidate?" But **have your number ready** in case they push — hesitation reads as unpreparedness.

- Total package questions to ask before accepting: salary review cycle, medical/OPD coverage (self or family?), fuel/travel allowance, leave count, provident fund/EOBI, bonus structure, certification sponsorship, on-call compensation.
- If their offer is below target: negotiate once, specifically, and with a reason: "I'm very interested. I was targeting [X] based on [scope/market]. Is there flexibility to meet at [midpoint], or could we agree on a documented review at 6 months tied to [deliverable — e.g., monitoring overhaul, DR plan]?" A written 6-month review tied to deliverables is often winnable when the headline number isn't.

6.3 Notice period & joining date

> *"I'm currently employed and I'd want to hand over responsibly — my notice period is [30/60] days. I can join on [date]. If you need someone faster, I can discuss an early release with my current employer, but I wouldn't walk out on a handover — and frankly, that's the same reliability you'd want from me here."*

That last clause converts a "weakness" (can't join tomorrow) into a character proof. Never badmouth the current employer; never promise a joining date you can't keep — reneging offers travels fast in Lahore's IT circle.

6.4 Logistics for the day

- **Location:** Johar Town — plan the commute at the actual interview hour; Lahore traffic can double travel time. Target arrival: 15 minutes early, not 45 (waiting rooms breed nerves).
- **Documents:** 3 printed CV copies, CNIC, education certificates, training/cert certificates (AWS/Corvit, MS-102, CCNA, Fortinet NSE 3, Google/Microsoft/IBM certs), last salary slip *only if asked*, and a pen + small notepad (taking brief notes during their answers reads senior).
- **Dress:** Lahore tech-company standard = smart formal: collared dress shirt, dress trousers, polished shoes; blazer optional but never wrong in an interview. Ironed. Light on fragrance.
- **Phone:** Silent before entering the building, not the room.

7 2-Day Study Schedule — Hour by Hour

Built around one principle: **spoken practice beats silent reading 5:1**, and sleep the night before beats one more hour of cramming 10:1. Adjust clock times to your actual routine; keep the block order.

Day 1 (tomorrow) — Build depth

Time	Block
09:00 – 09:45	**Section 1 Gap Analysis, full read.** Highlight your two soft spots (macOS, DR planning). Read each gap script aloud twice.
09:45 – 10:00	Break — walk, water, no phone scrolling.
10:00 – 11:30	**Section 3 Deep Technical Review, topics 3.1–3.6** (AD/GPO, firewalls, VLANs, VPN, monitoring, Windows Server). For each: read plain-English, then say the interview-ready version out loud from memory, then read the follow-up.
11:30 – 11:45	Break.
11:45 – 13:00	**Topics 3.7–3.11** (Linux, macOS ×2 reads, virtualization, backup/DR, patching). Give macOS double time — it's your one true gap. Watch one 15-min "macOS for IT admins / Apple Business Manager" video to make it concrete.
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch + genuine rest.
14:00 – 15:30	**Section 2A + 2B (Q1–Q15).** Q1 "tell me about yourself": rehearse aloud 5 times, record on your phone once, listen back, fix the weakest sentence. Then each behavioral STAR aloud once.
15:30 – 15:45	Break.
15:45 – 17:15	**Section 2C troubleshooting (Q16–Q23).** For each: cover the answer, speak your own diagnosis first using the spine (scope → what changed → layers → fix → verify → prevent), then compare. This is the highest-value 90 minutes in the plan.
17:15 – 18:00	**Subnetting drill:** write the /24→/30 table from memory 3 times (254/126/62/30/14/6/2 + masks). Then Section 2D curveballs read-through; personalize Q24's mistake story with your real incident.
Evening	**Logistics:** confirm interview time/address/interviewer name; check commute route and time on Google Maps for that hour; iron the outfit; print CVs and certificates; put documents in a folder by the door. Then STOP studying. Sleep normally.

Day 2 (interview eve → interview day)

Time	Block
09:00 – 10:00	**Live mock interview** (Section 8, in chat) — answer the 5 questions out loud, get feedback, redo the weakest one.
10:00 – 11:00	**Section 4 whiteboard scenarios:** talk through all 5 aloud; sketch Scenario 1's network on paper twice until the diagram flows without thinking.
11:00 – 11:15	Break.
11:15 – 12:00	

	Section 5: pick your 4 questions to ask and write them in your notepad. **Section 6:** decide your exact salary range and say the scripts aloud until the numbers come out of your mouth without a wobble.
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch + rest.
13:00 – 14:00	**Weak-spot sweep:** re-read only what felt shaky yesterday (macOS 3.8 and DR 3.10 for most people). One final aloud run of Q1 and your mistake story (Q24).
14:00 – 15:00	**Skim, don't study:** flip through the whole PDF once at reading speed — this consolidates memory without adding stress.
After 15:00	**Hard stop.** Exercise or walk, normal dinner, prepare clothes/documents/charged phone, set two alarms, sleep 7–8 hours. Cramming past this point subtracts points; sleep adds them.
Interview day, T-2h	Light breakfast; re-read ONLY: Q1 answer, your 4 questions to ask, salary range. Nothing else.
T-45m → arrival	Leave with traffic buffer. In transit: no notes — music or silence. Arrive 15 min early. Phone silent. Shoulders back. You've done the work.

8 Live Mock Interview

The mock interview is conducted **live in the chat**, not on paper — because the whole point is answering out loud without seeing the question in advance.

> **How it works:** In the chat, Claude will ask you **5 questions, one at a time** — a mix of the opener, one behavioral, one technical, one troubleshooting scenario, and one curveball. Answer each in your own words (type it as you would say it, or dictate). After each answer you'll get: (1) what worked, (2) what to fix, (3) a sharper version of your weakest line — then the next question. Total time: ~45–60 minutes if done properly.

Rules for getting value from it: Don't peek at the model answers before answering. Answer at spoken length (60–120 seconds of speech ≈ 100–250 words), not essay length. If you blank, say what you'd say in the real room ("Let me structure this…") — practicing recovery is half the benefit.

The first question is waiting for you in the chat right now.