

Executive Assistant interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Executive Assistant roles tend to focus less on technical skill and more on judgement, discretion and how you handle competing priorities under time pressure. Expect the panel to probe specific past situations rather than hypotheticals, since most of what an EA does well shows up in how they've actually handled real conflicts and confidential information.

- **Behavioural:** Past examples of managing conflicting priorities, difficult stakeholders or confidential situations, usually framed as 'tell me about a time'.
- **Scenario-based:** A hypothetical situation, such as a double-booked executive or an urgent request from two departments at once, testing how you'd prioritise on the spot.
- **Technical/process:** Questions about your working knowledge of calendar tools, document systems and project tracking software, and how you structure your own workflow.
- **Discretion and judgement:** Questions probing how you handle sensitive information, confidential documents or situations where you had to use independent judgement without direct instruction.

Most EA interviews open with a walkthrough of your current or most recent role, move into two or three behavioural or scenario questions on prioritisation and discretion, then close with a practical discussion of tools, availability and how you'd approach the first few weeks supporting the specific executive.

1. Tell me about a time you had to manage two urgent, conflicting demands on an executive's time. How did you decide what came first?

Why they ask

This is the core of the job: prioritisation under pressure without the executive available to make the call themselves.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and the two competing demands, your task, the specific action you took to assess urgency and communicate the trade-off, and the result, including how the executive reacted afterward.

Example answer

"An executive I supported was double-booked for a board call and an urgent client meeting that had been moved forward without warning. I checked which commitment had external stakeholders waiting and which could realistically be delayed by fifteen minutes without damage. I called the client's EA directly, negotiated a short delay, and briefed my executive in two minutes flat before they walked into the board call. Both meetings happened with minimal disruption, and my executive later said they trusted me to make that call again without checking in first."

2. Walk me through how you manage an executive's calendar day to day, from incoming requests to final confirmation.

Why they ask

Interviewers want to see your actual process, not just that you 'use Outlook', since calendar management is the daily backbone of the role.

How to structure your answer

Give a clear step-by-step walkthrough: how requests come in, how you triage and check against existing commitments, how you confirm with the executive when needed, and how you handle changes.

Example answer

"Requests come in through email, Teams messages or direct calls, and I log all of them in Outlook against a colour-coded system for internal, client and personal commitments. I check for conflicts and travel time buffers before confirming anything, and I flag anything requiring the executive's own judgement rather than deciding it myself. Recurring commitments get locked in early each quarter, which leaves more room to handle last-minute changes without the whole week falling apart."

3. You're asked to prepare a briefing on a market trend with only a few hours' notice before an executive meeting. How would you approach it?

Why they ask

Tests research and synthesis skills under time pressure, a task the role description specifically calls out.

How to structure your answer

Judgement-under-pressure structure: state how you'd scope the request quickly, prioritise sources, and package the output so it's usable in the time available, then note what you'd flag as a limitation.

Example answer

"I'd start by confirming exactly what decision the briefing needs to support, since that shapes what's relevant. I'd pull from a couple of trusted sources I already monitor rather than starting research from scratch, summarise the key points in half a page with a short so-what statement at the top, and flag clearly that it's a rapid briefing rather than exhaustive analysis so the executive knows its limits going in."

4. Describe a situation where you had to handle confidential or sensitive information. How did you manage it?

Why they ask

Discretion is central to executive support, and panels want concrete evidence rather than a general assurance.

How to structure your answer

STAR, with particular attention to what specific safeguard or decision you made to protect the information, not just that you 'kept it confidential'.

Example answer

"During a restructure, I was drafting correspondence about role changes before anything was announced. I kept those documents in a separate access-restricted folder in SharePoint, didn't discuss the content with colleagues who asked, and double-checked recipient lists before sending anything related. When a colleague fishing for details asked me directly, I redirected them without confirming or denying anything, which the executive later said they appreciated."

5. What project management tools have you used, and how do you keep a multi-stakeholder project on track?

Why they ask

The role involves coordinating cross-functional projects, so the panel wants to know you can run process, not just admin.

How to structure your answer

Direct technical/process answer: name the tools, describe your method for tracking milestones and dependencies, and give one example of catching a project slipping.

Example answer

"I've used Asana and Monday.com to track deliverables and owners across departments. I set up a shared board with clear due dates and flag dependencies so people can see what's blocking them. On one project, I noticed a supplier deliverable was two days behind schedule before it affected the downstream finance sign-off, so I raised it early with the project lead and we adjusted the timeline before it became a real problem."

6. How would you handle a situation where an executive gives you an instruction you think is a mistake?

Why they ask

Tests independent judgement and communication, since good EAs are expected to push back diplomatically, not just follow orders silently.

How to structure your answer

Scenario-based judgement structure: describe how you'd raise the concern, what tone you'd use, and how you'd proceed if the executive still wants to go ahead.

Example answer

"I'd raise it privately and briefly, framing it as a question rather than a correction, for example asking if they'd seen a particular detail that might change the approach. If they'd already considered it and still wanted to proceed, I'd follow the instruction and document the decision in case it came up later. The goal is to make sure they have the full picture, not to override their call."