

# The Complete Financial Advisor Interview Guide

---

Ben Holzhauser and Jeremy Morris

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Start Here</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pre-Interview Prep</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Conducting the Interviews</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Making Your Decision</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>18</b>

# Start Here



Choosing a financial advisor is one of the most important decisions you'll make for your future. After all, your advisor should be there to help guide you toward your goals, roll with the inevitable financial punches, and help you feel confident about the future you're envisioning.

But if you've ever researched financial professionals before, you know making this decision can feel a little overwhelming. Different advisors specialize in various areas, they may charge fees for things you've never heard of, and some even appear to offer financial planning services for free.

On top of this, not all financial professionals are obligated to put your interests first. Many of our clients come to us after working with an advisor who either:

1. Recommended solutions that weren't in their best interest, or
2. Never reached out to them with updates or scheduled regular review meetings.

As fee-only fiduciary advisors, we've guided hundreds of clients who previously struggled to find the right financial partner.

That's why we created **The Complete Financial Advisor Interview Guide**. This guide is your roadmap to:

- ⚡ Identifying the kind of guidance you need and want from an advisory relationship
- ⚡ Asking focused questions that will reveal whether an advisor truly places your interests first
- ⚡ Comparing advisors objectively using a clear evaluation framework
- ⚡ Making a confident decision about who to work with, knowing you've done proper due diligence

Work through each section in order, completing the worksheets and using the notes pages to record your impressions during advisor interviews. By the final page, you'll have all the insights you need to choose an advisor who aligns with your goals and values.

Because whether you're preparing for retirement, managing significant wealth, or simply looking to make smarter financial decisions, **you deserve a partner who puts your needs first.**

To your financial success,

**Jeremy**

# Pre-Interview Prep



Before meeting with financial advisors, take some time to clarify your financial needs and familiarize yourself with some financial industry jargon. This will help you conduct more effective interviews and ultimately make a better decision about who to trust with your financial future.

Many people skip this crucial preparation step and end up making decisions based on personality rather than competence or credibility, so let's make sure you're fully prepared.

## Your Goals and Priorities

Take a moment to reflect on what you want out of the financial advisor relationship. Identifying your priorities first will ensure you're evaluating advisors against what actually matters to you – not just what they want to highlight about their services.



### Reflect: Your Goals and Priorities Worksheet

**What is causing me the most financial stress currently? (e.g., retirement readiness, tax concerns, estate planning, market volatility)**

**What financial goals am I hoping to achieve in the next 5-10 years?**

**How involved do I want to be in the financial planning and investment management process?**

**What communication style and frequency would make me feel comfortable and well-informed?**

**What is most important to me in a relationship with a financial advisor?**  
(e.g., regular communication, education about my finances, comprehensive planning, etc.)

Once you're done reflecting, you can use these insights to add your own personalized questions to the interview questions in the next section.

## Definitions to Know

Understanding a few financial industry jargon terms will help you feel confident and informed during your interviews with different financial advisors. More importantly, knowing these distinctions will help you quickly identify which advisors are truly working in your best interest versus those who may have potential conflicts.

### PLANNING APPROACHES

#### Investment-Only Planning

Focuses primarily on managing your investment portfolio without necessarily addressing other financial areas like tax, estate, or retirement planning.

**vs**

#### Comprehensive Planning

Addresses your entire financial picture, including investments, tax strategies, estate planning, insurance, retirement planning, and more.



Five Pine Wealth Management takes the comprehensive approach, as we believe that all aspects of your finances are interconnected.

## FEE STRUCTURES

### Fee-Only

Advisors are compensated directly by clients through a transparent fee structure (typically a percentage of assets managed or a flat retainer fee). They do not receive commissions from financial products.

### Fee-Based

May charge direct fees **AND** receive commissions from product sales, creating possible conflicts of interest.

### Commission-Only

Compensated entirely through commissions from selling financial products such as life insurance, annuities, and more, which may influence their recommendations; may offer financial planning for “free” with the purchase of such products.



**Five Pine operates on a fee-only model**, eliminating potential conflicts of interest from commission-based product sales.

### Fiduciary Standard

Legally obligates the advisor to act in your best interest at all times and disclose any conflicts of interest; they must recommend what is best for you, not merely what is suitable.

**VS**

### Regulation Best Interest Standard

Establishes a “best interest” standard of conduct for broker-dealers recommending securities and investment account types; also requires disclosures of any conflicts of interest.



**Five Pine adheres to the fiduciary standard**, placing your interests ahead of our own in every recommendation.

# Discovery Call Preparation

Being prepared for your initial conversations with advisors will help you make the most of these meetings and gather the information you need to make an informed decision.

Questions Advisors Will Ask You on a Discovery Call	Information to Gather Beforehand
<p><b>Be prepared to share:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⬆ Basic personal information (where you live, your profession, your family situation, etc.)</li><li>⬆ Your vision for the future and financial goals</li><li>⬆ Any concerns about your current financial situation</li><li>⬆ Specific questions you have about your finances or the advisor's process</li></ul>	<p><b>Having these details will help advisors provide more specific insights about how they can help you:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⬆ Approximate values of your current investments, savings, and debts</li><li>⬆ Estimated annual income and expenses</li><li>⬆ Major upcoming financial events or goals</li></ul>



## Pre-Call Checklist

- Prepared brief description of financial goals
  - Listed top 3 financial concerns/questions
  - Noted any upcoming major life/financial changes
  - Gathered approximate account values
  - Documented what didn't work with previous advisors (if applicable)
- This preparation will allow you to have a more productive conversation and receive tailored insights from each advisor you interview.

# Conducting the Interviews



After preparing your goals and understanding key terms, you're ready to evaluate advisors through discovery calls.

This interview stage is where you'll determine what services an advisor offers, how well they listen, whether they truly understand your needs, and if there's a good rapport between you.

## A Note on the Questions Below





We've included a variety of questions you might consider asking potential advisors, but you likely won't have the time (or desire) to ask all of them. Instead of trying to cover everything, focus on the questions that will reveal what matters most based on your priorities worksheet.

**Here are some tips to choose the questions that are right for you:**



- ⬆ Select 3-6 questions that feel most important to you based on your Goals and Priorities Worksheet above.
- ⬆ Add 1-2 custom questions addressing your specific concerns and circumstances.
- ⬆ Take notes during each interview to help with your comparison process later.
- ⬆ Pay attention not just to what advisors say, but how they say it – are they patient, clear, and focused on understanding your needs?
- ⬆ Keep in mind that many of these questions may be answered naturally during the discovery call as each advisor explains their process and how they can help.



# Advisor Interview Questions

## Process Questions: Choose 1-2







<b>Question:</b> What is your investment philosophy and approach to market volatility?	<b>Listen for:</b> A clear, easy-to-understand investment approach and how they help clients stay the course during market downturns.	 <b>Green flag:</b> Evidence-based approach that emphasizes long-term planning rather than market timing.
<b>Question:</b> Other than investment management, what additional financial planning services do you offer?	<b>Listen for:</b> Comprehensive services that address tax planning, estate planning, retirement planning, insurance analysis, and other aspects of your financial life.	 <b>Red flag:</b> Vague answers that suggest limited planning capabilities beyond investments.
<b>Question:</b> How do you help clients prepare for retirement and navigate other major life transitions?	<b>Listen for:</b> Specific processes for retirement planning, helping with inheritance decisions, or other transitions.	 <b>Green flag:</b> Examples of how they've helped clients through similar situations.
<b>Question:</b> What is your fee structure and how do you get paid?	<b>Listen for:</b> Complete transparency on how fees are earned, clarity on whether they receive any commissions, and explanations of their minimum asset requirements or other costs.	 <b>Red flag:</b> Reluctance to fully disclose all compensation sources.

## Relationship Questions: Choose 1-2

<b>Question:</b> Who are your favorite types of clients to work with and why?	<b>Listen for:</b> Whether they have specific expertise with clients who share your circumstances or concerns.	 <b>Green flag:</b> They describe clients similar to your situation with genuine enthusiasm.
<b>Question:</b> What will our relationship look like on an annual basis?	<b>Listen for:</b> Clear expectations about meeting frequency, who you'll work with directly, and what proactive services they provide.	 <b>Green flag:</b> A structured approach with regular review meetings and proactive outreach.

<b>Question:</b> How do you communicate with clients, and how may I contact you between scheduled meetings if necessary?	<b>Listen for:</b> Communication that matches your preferences, responsiveness during urgent situations, and whether they provide regular updates about your finances.	 <b>Green flag:</b> Proactive communication practices and multiple ways to reach them when needed.
<b>Question:</b> How do you ensure both spouses or partners are equally informed and involved in the financial planning process?	<b>Listen for:</b> A commitment to engaging both partners, as well as communication approaches that work for different knowledge levels and interests.	 <b>Green flag:</b> Specific strategies for including both partners meaningfully.

## Other Questions: Choose 1-2

<b>Question:</b> How do you help clients become more financially educated and confident?	<b>Listen for:</b> Any educational resources or recommendations they may have, as well as patience in explaining complex concepts.	 <b>Red flag:</b> Dismissive responses suggesting you should just “leave it to the experts.”
<b>Question:</b> What differentiates your firm from other advisory practices?	<b>Listen for:</b> Specific values, services, or approaches that set them apart, as well as whether those values align with what matters most to you.	 <b>Red flag:</b> Generic answers that could apply to any firm.
<b>Your custom question:</b>	<b>Listen for:</b>	 <b>Green flag:</b>   <b>Red flag:</b>
<b>Your custom question:</b>	<b>Listen for:</b>	 <b>Green flag:</b>   <b>Red flag:</b>

## × Choose Your Questions

Based on my priorities and goals, I will ask the following questions in my interviews:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

## Capturing Key Information

**Pro tip:** After each interview, immediately write down your impressions while they're fresh. Even the most impressive presentation can fade from memory after you've spoken with multiple advisors.

On the following pages, you'll find note-taking templates for three different advisor interviews. Use these to record key information during or immediately after each meeting. Pay special attention to:

- ⚡ Specific answers to your priority questions
- ⚡ How comfortable you felt during the conversation
- ⚡ Any areas of concern or confusion
- ⚡ The advisor's level of interest in your situation
- ⚡ Whether they asked thoughtful questions about your goals
- ⚡ Your gut feeling about their trustworthiness and expertise



**Remember:** The best advisor for you isn't necessarily the one with the most impressive credentials or the lowest fees – it's the one who understands your needs, communicates effectively, and makes you feel confident about the work you'll do together.

Ready to schedule your first discovery call? [Start with Five Pine Wealth Management!](#)

## Interview Notes: Interview 1

### Advisor Information

Name:

Company:

Contact Information:

Fee Structure:

### Key Impressions

First Impression:

What I Liked:

Any Areas of Concern:

### Notes

## Interview Notes: Interview 2

### Advisor Information

Name:

Company:

Contact Information:

Fee Structure:

### Key Impressions

First Impression:

What I Liked:

Any Areas of Concern:

### Notes

## Interview Notes: Interview 3

### Advisor Information

Name:

Company:

Contact Information:

Fee Structure:

### Key Impressions

First Impression:

What I Liked:

Any Areas of Concern:

### Notes

# Making Your Decision



After interviewing multiple advisors, you'll need a systematic way to compare them and make your final decision. This critical stage is where you'll sort through your impressions, comparison points, and intuition to find the advisor who best matches your needs.

## Advisor Comparison Scorecard

Use the scorecard below to compare key aspects of each advisor you interview. **Rate each advisor on a scale of 1-3 (3 being excellent), or simply note the specific details for comparison.** At the end of the scorecard, add the ratings to get a total number for each advisor.

By quantifying impressions, you reduce the risk of being swayed by personality alone and ensure your decision is based on substantive factors.

Criteria	Advisor 1	Advisor 2	Advisor 3	Example Advisor
Fiduciary Status (Yes/No)				Yes (3)
Fee Structure (Fee-Only, Fee-Based, Commission)				Fee-Only (3)
Fee Transparency (Clear explanation of costs)				3
Planning Approach (Holistic vs. Investment-Only)				3
Service Model (Meeting frequency, accessibility)				3
Communication Style (Clear, patient)				3
Educational Approach (Yes/No)				Yes (3)
Overall Impression (Comfort level, trust)				3
Total Score				24



**Pro Tip:** While the total score is helpful, pay special attention to how each advisor scored on the criteria that matter most to you based on your priorities worksheet.

# Background Verification

Before making your final decision, take these steps to verify an advisor's background and credentials. This due diligence step is essential to protect yourself and your finances.

## FINRA BrokerCheck | [brokercheck.finra.org](https://brokercheck.finra.org)

- ⬆ Verify registration, experience, and any disciplinary actions
- ⬆ Search by the advisor's name or their firm's name

## SEC Investment Adviser Public Disclosure | [adviserinfo.sec.gov](https://adviserinfo.sec.gov)

- ⬆ Check if the advisor is registered as an investment adviser
- ⬆ Review their Form ADV for details about services, fees, and potential conflicts

## Google My Business Reviews

- ⬆ Google the firm of the financial advisors you're considering to view any client reviews
- ⬆ Check Five Pine Wealth Management's Google Reviews [here](#).

## Background Verification Checklist:

- ⬆ Checked advisor registration status
- ⬆ Reviewed Form ADV (Parts 2A and 2B)
- ⬆ Confirmed no disciplinary history
- ⬆ Researched the firm's reputation online

# Trust Your Instincts

While the objective criteria are important, your comfort level and trust in the advisor are equally crucial. The most qualified advisor on paper may not be the right fit if you don't feel comfortable sharing personal details or if their communication style doesn't resonate well with you.

Consider these questions to check in with your gut feelings:

## Reflect: Listen to Your Gut

Did I feel respected and heard during our meeting?

Advisor 1

Yes No

Advisor 2

Yes No

Advisor 3

Yes No

Did the advisor take the time to understand my specific situation?

Advisor 1

Yes No

Advisor 2

Yes No

Advisor 3

Yes No

**Do I feel confident in their ability to help me reach my goals?**

Advisor 1

Yes No

Advisor 2

Yes No

Advisor 3

Yes No

**Can I envision working with this person for many years to come?**

Advisor 1

Yes No

Advisor 2

Yes No

Advisor 3

Yes No

## Priority Alignment Check

The final step before making your decision is to ensure that the advisor you select aligns with the priorities you identified at the beginning of this process.

Go back to your [Goals and Priorities Worksheet](#) from Section 1 and list your top three financial priorities below:

1.

2.

3.

Then, rate how well each advisor addresses these specific priorities on a scale of 1-3 (3 being the best).

Priority	Advisor 1	Advisor 2	Advisor 3
Priority 1			
Priority 2			
Priority 3			
Total			

## Final Decision Considerations

- ⚡ The advisor with the highest overall score from your [Scorecard](#) may not be the best fit if they scored poorly on your most important priorities
- ⚡ Consider whether any “deal breakers” emerged during your interviews
- ⚡ Trust your instincts about which advisor you’ll feel most comfortable working with long-term
- ⚡ Remember that this relationship will ideally last for many years, so personal rapport matters alongside technical expertise

## My Decision

Based on all factors considered, I choose to work with:

The main reasons for my decision are:



# Next Steps



Once you've selected an advisor, there are a few more steps to take before your advisory relationship officially begins. This section will help you navigate the transition process smoothly.

## Final Follow-Up Questions

As you begin your relationship with your new financial advisor, consider asking these last few follow-up questions to address any remaining concerns:

- ⬆ Can you walk me through exactly what the first 90 days of working together will look like?
- ⬆ What documents or information will you need from me to get started?
- ⬆ Are there any questions I haven't asked yet that you think are important for me to know?

## What to Expect in Your First Meeting

Most advisory relationships begin with an onboarding process. While each advisor's process may vary, here's what you can generally expect:

1. **Complete paperwork:** Sign account opening documents, agreements, and privacy policies
2. **Clarify goals:** Dive deeper into your specific goals and priorities
3. **Gather data:** Collect detailed financial information
4. **Discuss initial planning:** Have initial conversations about approaches and strategies
5. **Establish timelines:** Set expectations for ongoing updates and future meetings

## Relationship Management Tips

To get the most from your new advisory relationship:

- ⬆ Be honest about your financial standing and concerns. Your advisor is there to help you, not judge you.
- ⬆ Ask for clarification whenever something isn't clear.
- ⬆ Provide feedback about what's working for you and what would help you gain more clarity.
- ⬆ Update your advisor about life changes that could impact your financial plans.
- ⬆ Prepare for meetings by reviewing materials and noting questions beforehand.

# Schedule Your First Discovery Call with Us

By now, we hope you're ready and excited to find the financial advisor that's right for you.

We'd love to invite you to schedule your first discovery call with Ben or Jeremy at Five Pine Wealth Management. Our discovery process is comfortable, informative, and valuable – whether you become a client or not:

1. **Initial Conversation:** A relaxed discussion where we learn about you, your goals, and your concerns while addressing your most pressing questions.
2. **Exploring Possibilities:** Based on your unique situation, we'll share insights about how our team can help you pursue your financial vision.
3. **Clear Next Steps:** You'll leave the call with a clear understanding of potential solutions and what working together might look like.
4. **No Pressure Decision:** We believe in building relationships built on trust, not sales tactics. You'll have all the time you need to make your decision.

The best part about our discovery calls?

They're fun! We love getting to know our clients on a personal level, hearing about your interests and passions, as well as sharing ours with you.

In the meantime, here's what makes Five Pine Wealth Management different:



## True Fiduciary Commitment

As fee-only advisors, we eliminate conflicts of interest by never receiving commissions from product sales. Our recommendations are based solely on what's best for you and your goals.



## Educational Focus

We believe in empowering you through financial education, clarifying complex concepts, and helping you feel confident about your financial decisions.



## Comprehensive Planning Approach

We build every aspect of your financial life into your plan – not just investments, but tax strategies, estate planning, retirement planning, insurance analysis, and more – so everything is taken into account.




## Relationship-Centric Service

Our clients consistently tell us they appreciate our accessibility, responsiveness, and proactive approach to reaching out with updates and scheduling meetings.

# Ready to Take the Next Step?

Schedule your complimentary discovery call today:

 **Call:** 877.333.1015

 **Email:** [info@fivepinewealth.com](mailto:info@fivepinewealth.com)

 **Visit:** [fivepinewealth.com](https://fivepinewealth.com)



There's no obligation, and you'll gain valuable insights regardless of whether you decide to work with us.

We look forward to learning about your financial goals and showing you how Five Pine Wealth Management can help you pursue them with confidence.





---

Independent Fee-Only Advisors & Fiduciaries