
Career & Employment Center

Common Job Interview Questions

Before going on a job interview, it is essential to be prepared for some of the questions asked by employers. Here are some frequently asked questions you may be called upon to answer in an interview, and some possible strategies for responses.

1. Tell me about yourself.

Be sure that your answer has some relevance to your professional endeavors. Basically the employer or manager wants to know three things: 1. Can you do the work? Spend 15 seconds talking about your training, skills, accomplishments, and your ability to learn quickly. 2. Will you do the work? Give a few examples to talk about some of your work accomplishments and proven ability to work hard. 3. Are you cooperative? You might describe yourself as someone who is a team player, able to communicate with a variety of people. Take some time in advance to think about yourself, and those aspects of your personality and/or background that you'd like to promote or feature.

2. What specific training have you had for this kind of work?

This is one of the most important questions. Concisely state why you are qualified for the position. What have you done before that was similar?

3. Why do you want to work for this company/ organization?

To answer this question, you must have researched the company. Before you go on the interview, visit that company's website. Get an overview of the company's key products and services. Google the company name for news. Find out who they are, what they do, and why you want to work for them. Reply with the company's attributes as you see them. "Your company makes a superior product/ provides a superior service. I share the values that make this possible, which should enable me to fit in and complement the team."

4. What type of work environment do you like best?

This question is usually used to determine whether you are a team player. Before answering, know whether the job requires you to work alone. Then answer appropriately. "I'm happy working alone when necessary, but I also like working as part of a team."

5. Why did you leave your last job? Or, why do you want to leave your current job?

Never say anything negative about your current or last employer. Good responses to this question are, "I am looking to grow professionally and am not able to in my current position." Or, "The commute is too long. I am moving to a new area, etc."

- 6. In what ways has your job prepared you to take on greater responsibility?**
This is one of the most important questions you will have to answer. The interviewer is looking for examples of your professional development, perhaps to judge your future growth potential, so you need to tell a story that demonstrates it. Talk about your accomplishments and special training you received on the job, or discuss the skills you have developed through working in your current or previous position.
- 7. What was your most significant accomplishment in your last position?**
It is important to identify your contributions and accomplishments so you can talk about them, even if you don't think they were significant. Everything you do successfully for a company or employer using your skills is an accomplishment.
- 8. What was the greatest challenge you faced in your last job?**
This is an opportunity to show how you perform under stress, and how well you adapt to change in the work place. Perhaps you had to fill in for someone who was absent and learn how to do their job in addition to your own. This question may also allow you to describe how you handle conflict, whether it was facing an angry client/customer, or taking responsibility for an error.
- 9. What are your long-range career goals?**
The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded as a professional and a team player. As far as promotion, that depends on whether the position will allow you to grow and take on more responsibility. You can ask what opportunities exist within the company before being more specific. Or, if you don't have a long term goal, it is OK to express your openness about the future.
- 10. What do you think are your weaknesses?**
Answering this question requires a bit of creativity. Never talk about your personal life. Consider describing a work-related weakness in the past tense. This means that you take a weakness from "way back when" and show how you overcame it. It answers the question but ends on a positive note. For example, "I used to feel anxious when I had many different projects going on at once. My anxiety was the result of dwelling on the "big picture." Now I keep a notepad with all my projects on it, broken down into specific tasks for each one. As I move down the list, I check things off. This helps me to feel like I am getting things accomplished and focus on one thing at a time rather than getting overwhelmed and allowing anxiety to make me ineffective.
- 11. When you have multiple projects how do you prioritize your work?**
This is a question about your time management skills. Be prepared to describe a system you use for time management. For example, sorting and assigning different priorities to projects.

Behavioral Interview Questions

The latest trend in interviewing is called, “Behavioral Interviewing,” whereby the interviewer selects questions that focus on your past behavior on the job, in order to guess what your behavior will be like if you are hired. The following questions are examples of this style of interviewing that you can answer on your own, drawing from your past experience. They should help to activate your memory and give you an idea of the kinds of examples you might need to provide.

1. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
2. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
4. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
6. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
7. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
8. Tell me about a difficult decision you’ve made in the last year.
9. Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish didn’t succeed.
10. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
11. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
12. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
13. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
14. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
15. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of how you have done this.

16. Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.

17. Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?

18. Do you have any questions?

Always answer, "YES!" Usually, this is a sign that the interview is drawing to a close, and that you have one more chance to make an impression, AND obtain enough information to help you make a decision if the job is offered to you.

Questions for YOU to ask THEM

Remember that you are interviewing the company to see if the job will be a good match for you. See if the job meets your expectations. Be sure to ask intelligent questions that look out for your own welfare and happiness. Review the list below, add a question or two of your own, but don't ask more than a few questions in the interview. It is wise not to ask about money or benefits until the job is offered to you.

1. Would you describe a typical workday and the things I would be doing?
2. Which duties are most important for this job?
3. Why is this job open?
4. How will I be trained or introduced to the job?
5. How long should it take me to get my feet on the ground and become productive?
6. How would I receive feedback on my performance?
7. Who are the people I'd be working with and what do they do?
8. If hired, would I report directly to you, or to someone else?