

Job Interviews

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The job interview is one of the most important part of the job search process; it can also be the most daunting. The fact that you were requested for a job interview is very encouraging and suggests that the employer has seen something in the resume that he/she likes. However, it's not all one sided. This process will help you determine whether you like the job as well, and to see whether the job is a good "fit" for both parties.

The interview is giving you a chance to convince the employer that you are the best person for the job. The goal of the job interview is to show the employer that you have the skills, background, and ability to do the job and that you can successfully fit into the organisation and its work cultures. Employers do not usually hire on merits alone, they will look for an individual who is confident, enthusiastic, positive and is an effective communicator. Showing these qualities are all vital to the job interview process, so be prepared.

The job interview is a communication process, if you can impress your employer with your communication skills, experiences, and interests then there is a good chance that the employer will remember you. It is important that you can show the employer how you can be an asset to the company.

Interview Questions

To assist you with your job searching process we have listed for your information 10 popular interview questions.

10 Popular Interview Questions

1) **"Tell me about yourself?"**

This is not an invitation to ramble on. If the context isn't clear, you need to know more about the question before giving an answer. In such a situation, you could ask, "Is there a particular aspect of my background that you would like more information on?" This will enable the interviewer to help you find the appropriate focus and avoid discussing irrelevancies.

Which ever direction your answer ultimately takes, be sure that it has some relevance to the world of your professional endeavours. The tale you tell should demonstrate, or refer to, one or more of your key behavioral profiles in action--perhaps honesty, integrity, being a team player, or determination. If you choose "team player" (maybe you're the star player on your team tennis group), you can tell a story about yourself outside of work that also speaks volumes about you at work. In part, your answer should make the connection between the two, such as, "I put my heart into everything I do, whether it be sports or work. I find that getting along with teammates--or professional peers--makes life more enjoyable and productive."

Or you might describe yourself as someone who is able to communicate with a variety of people, so give an example from your personal life that indicates an ability to communicate that would also apply at work.

This isn't a question that you can answer effectively off the cuff. 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 for your interviewer.

2) **"Why do you want to work here?"**

To answer this question, you will need to have researched the company and built a dossier. Reply with the company's attributes as you see them. Cap your answer with reference to your belief that the company can provide you with a stable and happy work environment--the company has that reputation--and that such an atmosphere would encourage your best work.

"I'm not looking for just another pay cheque. I enjoy my work and am proud of my profession. Your company produces 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."

3) **Why should I hire you?**

Your answer should be short and to the point. It should highlight the areas from your background that relate to current needs and problems. Recap the interviewer's description of the job, meeting it point by point with your skills.

Finish your answer with: "I have the qualifications you need [itemize them], I'm a

team player, I take direction, and I have the desire to make a thorough success."

4) **"What did you like/dislike about your last job?"**

The interviewer is looking for incompatibilities. If a trial lawyer says he or she dislikes arguing a point with colleagues, such a statement will only weaken--if not immediately destroy--his or her candidacy.

Most interviews start with a preamble by the interviewer about the company. Pay attention: That information will help you answer the question. In fact, any statement the interviewer makes about the job or corporation can be used to your advantage.

So, in answer, you liked everything about your last job. You might even say your company taught you the importance of certain keys from the business, achievement, or professional profile. Criticising a prior employer is a warning flag that you could be a problem employee. No one intentionally hires trouble, and that's what's behind the question. Keep your answer short and positive. You are allowed only one negative about past employers, and only then if your interviewer has a "hot button" about his or her department or company; if so, you will have written it down on your notepad. For example, the only thing your past employer could not offer might be something like "the ability to contribute more in different areas"

You might continue with, "I really liked everything about the job. The reason I want to leave it is to find a position where I can make a greater contribution. You see, I work for a large company that encourages specialisation of skills. The smaller environment you have here will, allow me to contribute far more in different areas." Tell them what they want to hear--replay the hot button.

Of course, if you interview with a large company, turn it around. "I work for a small company and don't get the time to specialise in one or two major areas."

5) **"What would you like to be doing five years from now?"**

The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded as a true professional and team player. As far as promotion, that depends on finding a manager with whom you can grow. Of course, you will ask what opportunities exist within the company before being any more specific: "From my research and what you have told me about the growth here, it seems operations is where the heavy emphasis is going to be. It seems that's where you need the effort and where I could contribute toward the company's goals." Or, "I have always felt that first-hand knowledge and experience open up opportunities that one might never have considered, so while at this point in time I plan to be a part of [e.g.] operations, it is reasonable to expect that other exciting opportunities will crop up in the meantime."

6) **"What are your biggest accomplishments?"**

Keep your answers job related. You might begin your reply with: "Although I feel my biggest achievements are still ahead of me, I am proud of my involvement with . . . I made my contribution as part of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line."

7) **"Can you work under pressure?"**

You might be tempted to give a simple "yes" or "no" answer, but don't. It reveals nothing, and you lose the opportunity to sell your skills and value profiles. Actually, this common question often comes from an unskilled interviewer, because it is closed-ended. As such, the question does not give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked a closed-ended question, mentally add: "Please give me a brief yet comprehensive answer." Do that, and you will give the information requested and seize an opportunity to sell yourself. For example, you could say: "Yes, I usually find it stimulating. However, I believe in planning and proper management of my time to reduce panic deadlines within my area of responsibility."

8) **"Why should I hire you?"**

Your answer should be short and to the point. It should highlight areas from your background that relate to current needs and problems. Recap the interviewer's description of the job, meeting it point by point with your skills. Finish your answer with: "I have the qualifications you need [itemize them], I'm a team player, I take direction, and I have the desire to make a thorough success."

9) "How do you take direction?"

The interviewer wants to know whether you are open - minded and can be a team player. Can you follow directions or are you a difficult, high-maintenance employee? Hopefully, you are a low-maintenance professional who is motivated to ask clarifying questions about a project before beginning, and who then gets on with the job at hand, coming back to initiate requests for direction as circumstances dictate.

This particular question can also be defined as "How do you take direction?" and "How do you accept criticism?" Your answer should cover both points: "I take direction well and recognise that it can come in two varieties, depending on the circumstances. There is carefully explained direction, when my boss has time to lay things out for me in detail; then there are those times when, as a result of deadlines and other pressures, the direction might be brief and to the point. While I have seen some people get upset with that, personally I've always understood that there are probably other considerations I am not aware of. As such, I take the direction and get on with the job without taking offence, so my boss can get on with her job. It's the only way."

9) "What is the most difficult situation you have faced?"

The question looks for information on two fronts: How do you define difficult? and, what was your handling of the situation? You must have a story, one in which the situation was tough and one which will allow you to show yourself in a good light. Avoid talking about problems that have to do with co-workers. You can talk about the difficult decision to fire someone, but emphasise that once you had examined the problem and reached a conclusion you acted quickly and professionally, with the best interests of the company at heart.

"What are some of the things that bother you?" "What are your pet hates?" "Tell me about the last time you felt anger on the job."

These questions are so similar that they can be treated as one. It is tremendously important that you show you can remain calm. Most of us have seen a co-worker lose his or her cool on occasion--not a pretty sight and one that every sensible employer wants to avoid. This question comes up more and more often the higher up the corporate ladder you climb, and the more frequent your contact with clients and the general public. To answer it, find something that angers conscientious workers. "I enjoy my work and believe in giving value to my employer."

10) "Do you prefer working with others or alone?"

This question is usually used to determine whether you are a team player. Before answering, however, be sure you know whether the job requires you to work alone - then answer appropriately. Perhaps: "I'm quite happy working alone when necessary. I don't need much constant reassurance. But I prefer to work in a group--so much more gets achieved when people pull together."

More Interview Questions

Job Interview Questions, Tips, Answers and Advice

Below are more questions to help you prepare for you interview. Each section gives a situation, a sample question, appropriate answer and advice for those questions.

1. Question regarding "**Personal Weakness**"

More often than not, you will be asked about your weaknesses in an interview. If this seems daunting, follow the interview tips below;

Sample Question: "Looking at your own resume, what do you think your weaknesses are regarding this job?"

Answer: "I believe that my skills and abilities are a good fit for this position. Do you have any specific concerns?"

Advice: Take the opportunity to turn the question around and find out what they think your weaknesses are.

2. Question regarding "**Hard Work Ethics**"

When interviewing with companies, you will often be asked questions that seem straightforward to answer. However more often than not - a 'yes' 'no' answer is not good enough. Always try to back up what you are saying with examples, as this will validate what you are trying to say.

Sample Question: "Would your current boss describe you as the type of person who goes that extra mile?"

Answer: "Absolutely. In fact, on my annual evaluations, he writes that I am the most dependable and flexible person on his staff. I think this is mostly because of my ability to prioritise."

Advice: Share an example or experience that demonstrates your dependability or willingness to tackle a tough project. If you describe "long hours of work," make sure that you prove the hours were productive, and not the result of poor time management.

3. Question regarding **"Standing Out"**

Often in an interview, you will be asked to separate yourself from other candidates who may be more qualified or may be less of a risk-factor.

Sample Question: "What new skills or ideas do you bring to the job that our internal candidates don't offer?"

Answer: "Because I've worked with the oldest player in this industry, I can help you avoid some of the mistakes we made in our established markets."

Advice: This question addresses your motivation in adding "true value" to the job. Evaluate the job carefully, considering current limitations or weaknesses in the department and your unique abilities. Your ability here to prove "I offer what you need and then some" could land you the job.

4. **Being Specific**

Sometimes in interviews, you will be asked questions that lend themselves to be answered vaguely or with lengthy explanations. Take this opportunity to direct your answer in a way that connects you with the position and company, and be succinct and support your answer with appropriate specific examples.

Sample Question: "Why did you choose this particular career path?"

Answer: "I chose advertising because I have always been a strong communicator with a good eye for design. I have a particular interest in

creating dynamic eye-catching pieces that support a new product being introduced to the market. I also like the fast-paced high-energy environment that seems to be commonplace in the advertising industry."

Advice: Your answer needs to convince the interviewer that your skills are exactly what they want. They want to know if you have a realistic view of what it is like to work in their industry. Be specific; show them that their industry and your career goals are in sync

5. Tough questions regarding your past

There may be times an interviewer may ask a question regarding your past that can be hard to dodge. You should answer these carefully and try to come up with answers that can turn a potentially negative experience into a positive response.

Sample Question: I see that you didn't finish school.

Answer: "I decided to leave school because I was working 30 hours a week waiting tables to support myself. I felt that I did not have enough time to devote to my schoolwork. When I do anything, I always give 150%."

Advice: The interviewer is trying to gauge what kind of a risk you are. So you tend to complete things or just let them fall by the wayside? Give a good reason why you did not finish or explain why any issues related to it are in the past.

6. Questions about how you can "Contribute to the company"

Before an employer makes his/her decision to hire you, they will need to know how you have performed in the past and any other special contributions that you can bring to the company

Sample Questions: "Tell me about a special contribution you have made to your employer."

Answer: "In my last job, I ran the Fund raiser campaign for three consecutive years. I believe it is an important cause, and I know it is difficult for the company to find volunteers."

Advice: Don't give long boring answers, instead focus your answers on the actions you took and the positive results that you obtained.

7. Questions regarding "**Helping the Company**"

When you are looking for a job, an employer will want to know what you can do to help or improve their company. Now is the time to tell them of your proven skills and knowledge that you gained at some of your other previous jobs.

Sample Question: "Give me an example of how you can help my company."

Answer: "In my previous career my biggest contribution was my ability to accurately measure customer satisfaction and to continually feed this information back to our design and production departments. I developed special questionnaires, used focus groups and personally spent 10% of my time talking to customers. This attention to customer satisfaction is relevant in your industry as well. I look forward to adopting my quality program to a new type of product."

Advice: Use an example of a significant contribution you made in your past job that impacted the bottom line. Show how this ability transfers across industries from one functional area to another.

8. Questions regarding "**Salary Expectations**"

Everyone wants to make a lot of money working the job they love. You should be honest here, saying that you will be ok working for \$30,000 when you think you are worth \$40,000 is not a very smart idea. Experience will show that you will lose interest in the job pretty quickly.

Sample Question: "Tell me about your salary expectations."

Answer: "Current salary information published by our State Association indicates a range of \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year. While I'm not certain how your salaries compare to this industry, my feeling is that my value would certainly be in the upper half of this national range."

Advice: You should answer this question in general terms. Mention the

market value for yourself.

9. "In Five Years..."

Employers will want to know your drive and a sense of what your future holds for you. They would prefer to hire someone with a sense of purpose. Employers may ask you to describe what you see yourself doing in the years to come, whether you will be at one company or another. Telling them you see yourself doing their job may not be the best way to get hired.

Sample Question: "Where do you want to be in five years?"

Answer: "In five years, I would like to have progressed to the point where I have bottom-line responsibility and the chance to lead an operations unit."

Advice: Avoid the urge to describe job titles; this makes you seem unbending and unrealistic, since you do not know or control the system of promotion. Describe new experiences or responsibilities you'd like to add in the future that build on the current job you are applying for.

10. Question regarding "Previous Bosses"

There will be times in an interview where questions about past co-workers and old bosses will pop up. Telling them how pathetic and bad they are is generally a bad career move.

Sample Question: "Tell me about your relationship with your previous bosses."

Answer: "My bosses would tell you that I've often been a sounding board for them. With all of my bosses, I developed a close rapport."

Advice: The interviewer is looking for a fit between the two of you. As you describe each previous boss, the interviewer will be making mental comparisons between your old bosses and themselves. Be honest but never sound too negative as your employer may consider that as you being a hard person to work with.

Questions about your qualifications

- How do you think a friend or someone who knows you well would describe you?
- What do you think is your greatest weakness?
- Can you summarize the contribution you would make to our organisation?
- What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
- Tell me about your experiences at school.
- What has been the most rewarding university experience?
- Please tell me about the greatest professional assignment you've ever handled.
- Tell me about your most significant work experience.
- How would those who have worked with you describe you?
- Why are you the best candidate for this position?
- Have you ever supervised anyone?

Questions about your ability to work for the Company

- Why are you interested in this job?
- What do you know about us?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- Are you a team player?
- How do you handle conflict?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What major problem have you encountered and how have you dealt with it?
- How competitive are you?
- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her

Questions about your career choices

- What are your long-term career goals? When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- Are you willing to relocate?

Difficult to answer questions

- Did you ever have a group leader or boss you disliked? Why did you dislike him/her?
- How would someone who dislikes you describe you?
- Talk about a group situation in which there were problems. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome? What role did you play in the group? How could the group improve its performance?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure and how you reacted to it.
- Tell me about a time when you were under considerable pressure to meet one or more goals.
- Describe a situation where you had to resolve a problem at work and explain how you resolved it.
- Give me an example of how you are a risk taker.
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- What motivates you?
- Why do you want to work for us and not for our competitor?
- Why should we hire you over everyone else we spoke to today?
- What do you think is the most important/difficult ethical dilemma facing corporations today?
- Give a one sentence positioning statement of yourself.
- How do you go about deciding what to do first when given a project?
- Tell me about an experience you have had in a working environment (school, work, or community).
- Describe a situation where you did not agree with something your boss asked you to do and how you resolved the problem.
- Can you work under pressure?
- What did you like/dislike about your last job?
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?

Interview Tips

Job interviews can be a stressful process but they don't need to be, especially if you have prepared well in advance. Below are some job interview tips you can follow. As with all things, preparation is the key. Take these interview tips with you and practice them with a friend or family member and remember, you can never prepare enough.

Don't be late. There is no worse way to begin an interview

First impression counts. You should dress suitably. Wear your best work outfit. The things to remember are cleanliness, simplicity and no strong or 'loud' colours. Do not chew gum or smoke. Your clothes should be clean & ironed...

Be yourself. Speak clearly and enthusiastically about your experiences and skills. Be professional, but don't be afraid to let your personality shine through.

Listen carefully. There is nothing worse than to ask a question that the employer has already talked to you about. You will want to remember what you learn about the job, and you will want to answer the questions that were asked. Don't be afraid to ask them to repeat a question.

Address the job criteria. Nervous energy is good but not if you come to the job interview unprepared. It's to your advantage to carefully research the job and the company. This can be done in many ways. You can request information personally, or go to the company's website for material about job descriptions and company annual reports.

Be positive. Don't talk about your bad feelings or give any excuses about a negative experience. If you are asked why your grades are low, then don't give excuses, instead, focus on stating the positive facts and what you have learned from your experiences.

Be poised. Pay attention to non-verbal behaviour. Look the interviewer in

the eye, sit up straight with both feet on the floor. You should also control nervous habits such as fingernail biting and giggling.

Practice makes perfect. This maxim can't be more true with job interview. Make sure your answers are clear and succinct. You should practice answering with a friend or with your family members. When practicing avoid terms such as "like" and "you know" and don't sound too rehearsed, as though you have memorised each answer.