

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS





Prepare

Practice interview questions and your responses to the usual questions employers ask. Your responses should include actual examples and successes from your life that you can use to describe your skills. Emphasize what you can do to benefit the company.

Role plays are very effective in preparing you to respond well to questions in the interview. You may also want to have a look at YouTube videos giving you Job Interview Tips.



The killer questions:

When faced with a difficult question, don't panic. Challenging questions will allow the interviewer to see how you can think on your feet and cope with stress. Here are some important hints and tips on what to do:

- Faced with a difficult question, there is nothing wrong with a brief contemplative pause before answering.
- Seek the opportunity to turn the question around and sell yourself, focusing on the company's needs and your abilities.
- Ask the interviewer to repeat the question if you don't understand it – try to determine what the interviewer is looking to find out.
- Remember the interview is a two-way process; you are there to demonstrate your ability not only to speak out but also to listen.
- Try not to stray from the point, offer relevant information to the question.
- Always offer positive information.



Questions and possible answers

Q: Tell me about yourself. (In other words, “I want to hear you talk”).

A: This is a common question so your response can be standardised. Write a script; rehearse it so it sounds impromptu. Briefly describe your qualifications, career history and your range of skills. Emphasise those skills that are relevant to the job on offer.

Q: What have been your achievements to date? (“Are you an achiever?”).

A: Again this is a common question so be prepared. Select an achievement that is experience related and fairly recent. Identify skills you used in the achievement and quantify the benefit.

Q: Are you happy with your career to date? (The interviewer is really asking about your self-esteem and self-confidence, your career aspirations and whether you are a happy, positive person).

A: The answer should ideally be ‘yes’ but if you have hit a career plateau or you feel you are moving too slowly, then you must qualify the answer.



Q: Tell me the most difficult situation you have had to face and how you tackled it? (What is your definition of 'difficult' and can you show a logical approach to problem solving using your initiative).

A: This can be a trap! To avoid it, select a difficult work situation that was not caused by you and which can be quickly explained in a few sentences. Explain how you defined the problem, what the options were, why you selected the one you did and what the outcome was. Always end on a positive note.

Q: What do you like about your present job? ("Will you enjoy the things the job has to offer?").

A: This is a straightforward question. All you have to make sure is that your 'likes' correspond to the skills etc. required for the job on offer. Be positive; describe your job as interesting and diverse.

Q: What do you dislike about your current role? (The interviewer is trying to find out whether the job on offer has responsibilities you will dislike or which will make you unsuitable).

A: Be careful with this one! Do not be too specific as you may draw attention to weaknesses, which will leave you open to further problems. One approach is to choose a characteristic of your present company such as its size- it's slow decision making etc.



Give your answer with as someone who takes problems and frustrations in your stride as part of the job!

Q: What are your strengths? (The interviewer wants a straightforward answer as to what you are good at and how it is oing to add value).

A: This is one question that you are going to get so there is no excuse for being unprepared. Concentrate on discussing your main strengths. List three or four explanations of how they could benefit the employer. Strengths to consider include technical proficiency, ability to learn quickly, determination to succeed, positive attitude, your ability to relate to people and achieve a common goal. You may be asked to give examples of the above so be prepared.

Q: What are your greatest weaknesses? (The interviewer is asking about your self-perception and self-awareness).

A: This is another standard question for which you can be well prepared. Don't say you have none- this will ensure further problems. You have two options- use a professional weakness such as a lack of experience (not ability) on your part in one area that is not vital for the job.



The second option is to describe a personal or professional weakness that could also be considered a strength and the steps that you have taken to combat it. An example would be, "I know my team think I'm too demanding at times- I tend to drive them pretty hard but I'm getting much better at using the carrot and not the stick". Do not select a personal weakness such as "I'm not a morning person- I'm much better as the day goes on".

Q: What kind of decision do you find most difficult? (The interviewer is really saying, "I need someone who is strong and decisive but who has a human side.").

A: Your answer must not display weakness. Try to focus on decisions that have to be made without sufficient information. This will show your positive side.

For example, "I like to make decisions based on sufficient information and having alternatives. When you have to make quick decisions you have to rely on "gut feeling and experience".



Q: Why do you want to leave your current employer? (The interviewer is trying to understand and evaluate your motives for moving. The answer will tell him several things about your attitude, career goals, professional values and sense of maturity and judgment).

A: State how you are looking for more challenge, responsibility, experience and a change of environment. Never be negative in your reasons for leaving and it will rarely be appropriate to state salary as the primary motivator. Saying you are looking for better opportunities/ prospects basically covers all this.

If you've been laid off, tell the truth, and explain how you've been unlucky. It is better to be honest and explain your position than be caught lying about your circumstances.

Sample answer: "I have put in a number of years in my current organization, performed well and risen through the ranks, but I would now like something more challenging. I believe this job will provide me with exactly such an opportunity."



Q: Why was there a gap in your employment between [insert date] and [insert date]?

A: While short gaps in employment may go unnoticed, a gap of two months or more requires an explanation. It's wise to stick with the truth. If you were fired, you ought to have a good explanation that doesn't veer very far from the truth, but does not paint you in bad light either. If you had to leave, you will have to explain why things got so bad that you had to resign without finding another job

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In any case, highlight what you've done in the interim like freelancing, consulting or volunteering. This will tell the interviewer that you've been productive during this period and broadened your skill-base.

For example: In case you left because of a conflict with your boss, say differences did not allow you to work well together. Don't forget to add what you realized in hindsight to show how the incident has helped you grow. Never badmouth your boss; act mature and accept the fact that both of you were responsible for the situation spinning out of control.



Q: Tell us about an accomplishment you are most proud of? (The answer reveals what drives you, your professional values, and suitability for the job and how you can make yourself useful to the organization).

A: It is best to stick to a professional example. Provide numbers where possible -- this is a language that interviewers love and understand.

Example: "I am extremely proud of the time we worked on a project with XXX company. The selection was a gruelling process, but we managed to land the deal. The company needed services that were of the highest standards and I am proud to say that we surpassed their expectations. In fact, we succeeded in converting them into our regular clients. As project leader, I was extremely proud of this achievement."

Q: Tell us about a time you made a mistake.

A: This is amongst the toughest questions because you are being asked to cite a specific instance of failure. It is a behaviour-based question that will give the interviewer insight into your personality and the kind of mistakes you are prone to making. It will reveal how you handle failure and whether you are capable of learning from it.



Be candid but refrain from citing an ugly truth. Be sure to talk about what you learned from the experience.

Other common interview questions:

What are you looking for in your next company/position?

Who had the most influence on your life? Why?

Why are you interested in this position?

Why are you interested in working for our company?

Why should I hire you over someone else with similar experience?

How did your education prepare you for this position?

Describe a typical day's routine for me?

Job related questions:

Tell me about your current/past positions?

What did you like most? Why?

What did you like least? Why?

How would your coworkers describe you?

How would your supervisors describe you?

How would you describe yourself?

Can you handle pressure and deadlines?

Why did you choose your particular career?

Why should we hire you?



Describe your most rewarding experience?

What were the highest priorities of your last job?

Give me an example of a time when a supervisor complimented you?

Give me an example of a time when a supervisor criticized you?

How do you get things done by deadlines?

Tell me about your toughest problem at work. How did you solve it?

How would you evaluate the company you were with last?

Tell me what you know about us?

Describe the perfect job for you?

Interpersonal questions:

Describe your method of influencing people?

Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?

Tell me about your relationships with supervisors?

Tell me about your relationships with coworkers?

Tell me about the person you admire most. Why?

Describe the supervisor you had that impressed you the most?

How would you describe yourself at work?

What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

What factors in your past career, education or other activities do you feel will contribute to your success?



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