

Interview Questions

Most people dread interviews but they are your opportunity to prove to the interviewer that you are the best person for the job.

Be enthusiastic and confident when responding to questions. Don't rush your answers, but don't ramble on and on, either. Try to, um, avoid, like, using unnecessary words, right? And um, repeating yourself or, like, annoying phrases, you know?

A good technique is to write out your answers to the questions you anticipate, and then edit them to make them more concise. Then practice your polished answers out loud, over and over.

If you can have someone help you do a "mock interview," that would be the best way to do this.

Most questions will relate either to your ability to do the job or to the type of employee you will be. Employer's objective is to find the best person for the job, what they want to know is:

Can you do the job? (Skills, abilities, qualifications)

Will you do the job? (Interest, attitude & motivation)

How will you fit into the organisation? (Personality)

Typical interview questions.

Tell me about yourself?

"Can you sell yourself and is most people's nightmare question. Remember that you should 'aim to intrigue not to inform'"

Keep your answer to one or two minutes; don't ramble. Use your CV as a starting point. Focus on both your personal and professional values. Always be honest, but talk about your best traits only, especially those that relate to the position for which you are applying. Highlight experiences and accomplishments you are most proud of.

Remember to tailor your response to the specific job. By studying the job description, you'll have a good idea of the skills and experience the employer is looking for. Work those into your response.

What do you know about our company?

"Have you taken the time to find out what we do?"

Do your homework before the interview. This will help you stand out from the other candidates. Spend some time researching the company. Find out as much as you can for example, the service they provide, products, size, reputation, skills and company background. Be able to demonstrate an informed interest; let the interviewer tell *you* about the company.

Explain how your qualifications and goals complement the company's mission, vision and values (use specific examples).

If you are applying for a position in a company for which you already work, explain how you'll be able to apply and expand on the knowledge and experience you've gained from your current position, to the role for which you are applying.

Why do you want to work for us?

"Can you add value to the company?"

Don't talk about what you want; first, talk about their needs: You would like to be part of a specific company project; you would like to solve a company problem; you can make a definite contribution to specific company goals.

Relate past experiences that show you've had success in solving previous employer problem(s) that may be similar to those of the prospective employer.

Where would you like to be in five years time?

"How committed and motivated will you be?"

If you do have some insight into where you are heading, think of some of the functions and responsibilities you would hope to have. Otherwise, explain that you would be looking to make a success of the role you are applying for before moving up the ladder.

Why did you apply for this job?

"How motivated are you?"

Explain why you want this job and not why you are looking to leave yours, unless there is an obvious link and it adds weight to your answer.

Tell them why you think this position will give you an opportunity to use your skills, to perform and be recognised.

Why should we hire you?

"What makes you different to the other candidates?"

Elaborate on your knowledge, experience, abilities and skills.

For example: "I've got extensive experience in Retail Sales and have the specific skills you are looking for. I'm a fast learner who adapts quickly to change. I'm dedicated and enthusiastic about helping your company meet its goals, and will provide top-quality results with minimal effort. I'm an outstanding performer who takes pride in my work."

Don't try to say you are the best qualified person, because you don't know the qualifications of the other applicants.

How do you handle stressful situations?

"Can you cope with problems efficiently?"

Give some examples of stressful situations you've dealt with in the past. Tell how you use time management, problem-solving or decision-making skills to reduce stress. For example, tell them that making a "to-do" list helps. Don't be afraid to admit that you will ask for assistance if you need to.

If it's true, say you actually work better under pressure.

What is your greatest strength?

"To discover reasons for hiring you."

This is a great chance to highlight your best skills. Don't pick just one, focus on your top three or four. Some examples are: leadership skills, team-building skills, and organizational skills. Determine which strengths would fit best with the position for which you are applying.

Mention that besides the work skills, training and experience that you would offer, you also offer job-related qualities such as reliability, enthusiasm, dependability, flexibility and efficiency.

What is your greatest weakness?

"Are you self-aware and capable of developing?"

Be original and state a true weakness, but talk about what you've done to overcome it. For example: "I've had trouble delegating duties to others because I felt I could do things better myself. This has sometimes backfired because I'd end up with more than I could handle. But I've taken a course in time management and learned effective delegation techniques, and I feel I've overcome this weakness."

What salary do you expect?

"How do you rate yourself?"

Don't undersell (or oversell) yourself. Research the market rate for similar roles and either give a salary you consider appropriate or a range to show you're prepared to be flexible but to also play them at their own game!

What if / scenario questions

"Can you think on your feet?"

Be prepared for the unexpected /scenario type question, that's designed to see how you cope with the unexpected.

What do you do in your spare time?

"Are you a rounded person?"

Go over your outside interests quickly, emphasising any work-related skills they give you.

THE INTERVIEW IS A TWO-WAY PROCESS

At the end of the interview; the employer will usually ask if you have any questions about the job or company, so always prepare a few in advance. This is a good chance to clarify any points of doubt - after all, you need to make sure that the job is exactly what you expected and what you want.

Don't ask any question that shows that you have not done your research about the company.

Do not ask questions related to you, such as "When will I be eligible for my first raise?" or "How often will I be subjected to a performance review?"

In addition to specific questions you develop based on what the company does, here are some questions to ask:

- What are the opportunities for career progression?
- What are the training opportunities?
- What are my precise responsibilities?
- How much travel is involved?
- What are the targets for the first 6 months?
- How long will it take you to make a final recruitment decision?

Throughout the interview:

- To listen carefully, seek clarification
- Illustrate answers with real examples and evidence
- Be positive – constructive criticism
- Keep answers specific and succinct
- Take time to respond
- Be alert to interviewer's body language
- To speak clearly, smile and show enthusiasm
- Know what you want to say, and find the opportunity

What creates a bad impression?

- Poor personal appearance
- Negative attitude – evasive, using excuses
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Lack of preparation
- Poor knowledge of role
- Failure to give concrete examples of skills
- Over emphasis on money/rewards
- Lack of career plan

