

Sample Interview Questions & Answers (unnamed source)

Sample interview questions of the common type are listed below. Answers are included. But perhaps suggestions for tailoring your responses is a better way to put it, since specific answers are impossible to provide. Practice answering these sample interview questions out loud to yourself or ask a friend or relative to help you.

Don't feel that you have to answer right away. Interviewers know that you're nervous and expect you to think a bit, so do think carefully before you answer. But don't hesitate too long or it'll appear that you're stalling. Interviewers will ask open-ended questions to see where you'll go with them, so try not to ramble while you're thinking of a real answer.

Q. Tell me about yourself.

A. This is the dreaded, classic, open-ended interview question and likely to be among the first. It's your chance to introduce your qualifications, good work habits, etc. Keep it mostly work and career related.

Q. Why do you want to leave your current job? (Why did you leave your last job?)

A. Be careful with this. Avoid trashing other employers and making statements like, "I need more money." Instead, make generic statements such as, "It's a career move."

Q. What are your strengths?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job.

Q. What are your weaknesses?

A. Everybody has weaknesses, but don't spend too much time on this one and keep it work related. Along with a minor weakness or two, try to point out a couple of weaknesses that the interviewer might see as strengths, such as sometimes being a little too meticulous about the quality of your work. (Avoid saying "I work too hard." It's a predictable, common answer.) For every weakness, offer a strength that compensates for it.

Q. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

A. Answer with positive, work-oriented adjectives, such as *conscientious*, *hard-working*, *honest* and *courteous*, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well.

Q. What do you know about our company?

A. To answer this one, research the company before you interview.

Q. Why do you want to work for us?

A. Same as above. Research the company before you interview. Avoid the predictable, such as, "Because it's a great company." Say why you think it's a great company.

Q. Why should I hire you?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job, and the good job you've done in the past. Include any compliments you've received from management.

Q. What past accomplishments gave you satisfaction?

- A.** Briefly describe one to three work projects that made you proud or earned you pats on the back, promotions, raises, etc. Focus more on achievement than reward.
- Q.** What makes you want to work hard?
- A.** Naturally, material rewards such as perks, salary and benefits come into play. But again, focus more on achievement and the satisfaction you derive from it.
- Q.** What type of work environment do you like best?
- A.** Tailor your answer to the job. For example, if in doing your job you're required to lock the lab doors and work alone, then indicate that you enjoy being a team player when needed, but also enjoy working independently. If you're required to attend regular project planning and status meetings, then indicate that you're a strong team player and like being part of a team.
- Q.** Why do you want this job?
- A.** To help you answer this and related questions, study the job ad in advance. But a job ad alone may not be enough, so it's okay to ask questions about the job while you're answering. Say what attracts you to the job. Avoid the obvious and meaningless, such as, "I need a job."
- Q.** How do you handle pressure and stress?
- A.** This is sort of a double whammy, because you're likely already stressed from the interview and the interviewer can see if you're handling it well or not. Everybody feels stress, but the degree varies. Saying that you whine to your shrink, kick your dog or slam down a fifth of Jack Daniels are not good answers. Exercising, relaxing with a good book, socializing with friends or turning stress into productive energy are more along the lines of the "correct" answers.
- Q.** Explain how you overcame a major obstacle.
- A.** The interviewer is likely looking for a particular example of your problem-solving skills and the pride you show for solving it.
- Q.** Where do you see yourself five (ten or fifteen) years from now?
- A.** Explain your career-advancement goals that are in line with the job for which you are interviewing. Your interviewer is likely more interested in how he, she or the company will benefit from you achieving your goals than what you'll get from it, but it goes hand in hand to a large degree. It's not a good idea to tell your potential new boss that you'll be going after his or her job, but it's okay to mention that you'd like to earn a senior or management position.
- Q.** What qualifies you for this job?
- A.** Tout your skills, experience, education and other qualifications, especially those that match the job description well. Avoid just regurgitating your resume. Explain why.
- Q.** Why did you choose your college major?
- A.** The interviewer is likely fishing to see if you are interested in your field of work or just doing a job to get paid. Explain why you like it. Besides personal interests, including some rock-solid business reasons might show you have vision and business sense.

Other General Questions

Work History

- Name of company, position title and description, date of employment
- What were your expectations for the job and to what extent were they met?
- What were your starting and final levels of compensation?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?
- Which was most/least rewarding?
- What was the biggest accomplishment/failure in this position?
- What was it like working for your supervisor? What were his strengths and shortcomings?
- Why are you leaving?

About You

- Describe a typical work week
- How many hours do you normally work?
- How would you describe the pace at which you work?
- How do you handle stress and pressure?
- What motivates you?
- What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?
- If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
- Give some examples of team work.
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- Describe a difficult work situation/project and how you overcame it.
- How do you evaluate success?

The New Job and Company

- What interests you about this job?
- What applicable attributes/experience do you have?
- Why are you the best person for the job?
- What do you know about this company?
- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What can you contribute to this company?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Is there anything I haven't told you about the job or company that you would like to know?

The Future

- What are you looking for in your next job? What is important to you?

- What are your goals for the next five years/ten years?
- How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- What are your salary requirements - both short-term and long-term?

Behavior Based Interviews

The behavioral based interview is founded on the premise that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. Rather than asking you directly if you have a particular skill or trait (to which you would probably answer "yes!"), the interviewer asks you to provide an example of a time when you demonstrated the skill or trait that they are seeking. These questions will often begin with phrases such as: "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation in which...".

An effective response to a behavioral based interview question will possess certain characteristics. It will be specific in describing the example situation or problem, clearly spell out the action taken by the candidate to resolve the situation, and state the result of that action or intervention.

The following are examples of behavioral based interview questions listed under the area that the interviewer is trying to probe:

Professional or technical knowledge

Q. Describe a situation where your professional/technical expertise made a significant difference.

Decision making

Q. Tell me about a time when you took a public stance on an issue and then had to change your position?

Q. Describe a situation where you handled decisions under pressure or when time limits were imposed?

Enthusiasm

Q. Relate a scenario where you were responsible for motivating others.

Q. Describe a really tough or long day and how you dealt with the situation?

Personal attributes or qualities

Q. Tell me about a time when you set and accomplished short term, medium range and long term goals? What were the differences in your approach to each?

Unpleasant situations

Q. Relate a personal story in which you persuaded someone to do something that initially did not appeal to them.

Team Work

Q. Tell me about a time when, if it hadn't been for teamwork, your goal might not have been achieved.

Leadership

Q. Describe a scenario in which you have gone above and beyond what was expected of you.

Q. Describe a time in which you took initiative rather than waiting to be told what to do.

Flexibility

Q. Narrate a situation during college in which you experienced a particularly high level of stress.

Q. Describe a project or goal that has caused you frustration.

Communication

Q. Tell me about a time when you did your best to resolve a customer or client concern and the individual still was not satisfied. What did you do next?

Q. Describe an opportunity in which you've had to make a presentation to a large group. Describe an opportunity in which you've had to make a presentation to a small group. What did you do differently to prepare for each?

(Source: Unknown)