

Common Interview Questions

Although it can be difficult to know exactly which questions to expect during your interview, here are some of the most commonly asked interview questions. Write out your answers, remembering to focus on how your accomplishments would benefit the company. Then, either conduct a mock interview with a friend, practice in front of a mirror, or videotape yourself answering the questions. The more practice you get, the more poised and confident you will be.

»» **Tell me about yourself.**

Employers ask this question for a variety of reasons. Some may want to hear a brief summary of your work experience (including your current job), while others use it as an icebreaker to get a sense of your personality and what motivates you. Many human resources professionals recommend keeping your answer **brief**, stating two professional accomplishments and one personal fact. What you choose to say, and how you say it, says a great deal about you.

»» **Name your three greatest strengths.**

Employers ask this question because they want to know what your strengths are, but more importantly, they want to know if you're capable of discussing your strengths. Now is not the time to be bashful. Emphasize strengths that can be directly applied to the job.

»» **What is your greatest weakness?**

Most of us would like to respond, "I don't have any," but that's not what the interviewer wants to hear. After all, who doesn't have a weakness? However, be cautious. Think about what you want to reveal. Pick a weakness that is not important in this job or one that you have taken steps to strengthen. Always try to transform your weakness into a strength.

»» **What are your most significant accomplishments within and outside of the workplace?**

Emphasize accomplishments that are most relevant to the job. Don't waste time talking about details that would not be of any use to the employer. Be as specific as possible without revealing too much about your former employer, especially proprietary or confidential information. Don't downplay your achievements; instead, mention any difficulties you may have had (without being negative) and how you overcame them. If you are asked to describe a personal accomplishment, you may want to mention something you've accomplished outside of work that is related to your professional development.

»» **What attracted you to the company/position? Why do you want to work for us?**

Interviewers ask this question to find out how much you know about the company. Having done your company research, talk about the needs of the company or business and how your skill set can contribute to their goals. Talk about your work experiences and how they have prepared you for this particular position. Also, point out your own career goals.

➤➤➤ **How do you feel about your most recent position? What was your reason for leaving?**

Interviewers ask this question because they want to find out if you were successful in your last/current position. Avoid terms such as illness, quit, personal reasons, fired, or didn't like my supervisor. Remain positive; never badmouth a former employer. Use positive reasons such as pursuing degree, relocated, or simply state you are seeking an opportunity to further your professional growth.

➤➤➤ **Describe a conflict with a manager or coworker. How was it resolved?**

Everyone has experienced workplace conflict at some point. The interviewer is assessing your ability to solve problems and interact with others. Don't use this as an opportunity to say negative things about your former manager...state the problem and describe steps you took to resolve the issue. Do not say that you have never had a conflict: it is too unbelievable.

➤➤➤ **What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself in five years, ten years?**

Interviewers ask this question because they want to find out if you're likely to stay with the company for a while. Don't proclaim that you'd like to be promoted within a year or that you see this position as a way to get your next job. Try to keep your answer brief and focused on how your career goals are in alignment with the company's needs.

➤➤➤ **Why are you changing careers?**

If you are in fact changing careers, be prepared for this question. Interviewers will want to know if you have thoroughly researched your new career, and are not switching jobs on a regular basis. Stress how your skills can transfer to your new career.

➤➤➤ **Tell me about the best/worst supervisor you've ever had.**

Interviewers want to find out how your work style fits with the management style of the company. Be sure to emphasize positive experiences. If you have to mention a worst case, try not to dwell on it. Instead, mention the strategies you developed in order to work under less-than-perfect circumstances.

➤➤➤ **Are you interviewing with other companies?**

Interviews might try to find out if they need to act quickly. Don't mention any specifics. Say that you are extremely interested in the company, but are keeping your options open.

➤➤➤ **Will you relocate?**

Interviewers may be asking if you would relocate, or they may be testing your flexibility and a willingness to consider new things. Be honest in your answer. If the job seems perfect and you are very interested, say you may need some time to think about it and would be open to discussing the possibilities.

»» **What kind of compensation/salary are you seeking?**

Usually, a first interview is not the time to discuss salary. An interviewer may just be testing you to see how you react. At this point, it's best to say that it's negotiable or that you're interested in a competitive salary.

 **Tips for Dealing with Illegal Interview Questions**

US Government legislation exists to discourage employers from using certain information about you when they are making hiring decisions. In order to avoid any problems, try to keep your answers free from information about your:

- Age or health
- Race
- Religion
- National origin (an employer can, however, ask if you are legally able to work in the U.S.)
- Gender and/or sexual preference
- Marital status
- Family and children

If you are asked a question about one of these areas during an interview, just explain that the area in question (e.g. sex, age, marital status, etc.) will not affect your ability to perform the job duties of the position. It really can be as simple as that!