

Tough Job Interview Questions

Going to a job interview can be nerve-racking. Once you're in front of a potential employer, what do you say? Here are some questions and answers to help you out.

General Questions

- Tell me about you!

Keep your answer to one or two minutes. Don't ramble. Use your resume summary as a base to start.

- What do you know about our company?

Do your homework before the interview. Spend some time online researching the company. Find out as much as you can including products, size, income, organizational structure, reputation, image, management talent, people, skills, history, and philosophy. Project an informed interest; let the interviewer tell you about the company.

- Why do you want to work for us?

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.

- What would you do for us? What can you do for us that someone else can't?

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.

- What about the job offered do you find the most attractive? Least attractive?

List three or more attractive factors and only one minor unattractive factor.

- Why should we hire you?

Because of your knowledge, experience, abilities, and skills.

- What do you look for in a job?

An opportunity to use your skills, to perform, and be recognized.

Please give me your definition of a ... (the position for which you are being interviewed). Keep it brief - give an actions-and results-oriented definition.

- How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

Not long at all - you expect only a brief period of adjustment to the learning curve.

- How long would you stay with us?

As long as we both feel I'm contributing, achieving, growing, etc.

Industry Trend Questions

- What important trends do you see in our industry?

Keep your answer to two or three trends.

Experience and Management Questions

- You may be overqualified for the position we have to offer.

Strong companies need strong people. A growing energetic company is rarely unable to use its people talents. Emphasize your interest in a long-term association, pointing out that the employer will get a faster return on investment because you have more experience than required.

- What is your management style?

"Open-door management" is best. And you get the job done on time or inform your management. Discuss your preference of micromanagement (hopefully not!), employee empowerment, or collective decision-making (Japanese style of management) styles.

- Are you a good manager? Give an example. Why do you feel you have management potential?

Keep your answer achievement-and-task oriented; emphasize management skills - planning, organizing, controlling, interpersonal, etc.

- What do you look for when you hire people?

Skills, initiative, adaptability.

- Did you ever fire anyone? If so, what were the reasons and how did you handle it?

You have had experience with this and it worked out well (i.e. verbal warnings, cautionary letters, harassment, etc.)

- What do you see as the most difficult task in being a manager?

Getting things planned and done on time within the budget.

- What do your subordinates think of you?

Be honest and positive - they can check your responses easily.

- What is your biggest weakness as a manager?

Be honest and end on a positive note, e.g. "I don't enjoy reprimanding people, so I try to begin with something positive first."

Quantifying Your Experience and Accomplishments

- Have you helped increase sales or profits? How?
- Have you helped reduce costs? How?
- How much money did you account for?
- How many people did you supervise on your last job? What job levels were they?
- Do you like working with figures more than words? Why?
- In your current or last position, what features did you like the most? Least?
- In your current or last position, what are or were your five most significant accomplishments?
- Refer to the key accomplishments already identified on your resume.

Job Search Questions

- Why haven't you found a new position before now?

Finding a job is easy; finding the right job is more difficult.

- Had you thought of leaving your present position before? If yes, what do you think held you there?

Challenge, but it's gone now.

- What do you think of your boss?

Be as positive as you can.

- Would you describe a situation in which your work was criticized?

Be as positive as you can.

- What other types of jobs or companies are you considering?

Keep your answer related to this company's field.

- Don't you feel you might be better off in a different size company? Different type of company?

Depends on the job - elaborate slightly.

- How do you resolve conflict on a project team?

First you discuss the issues privately.

- What was the most difficult decision you ever had to make?

Try to relate your response to the prospective employment situation.

Salary Questions

- How much are you looking for?

Do your research! Compensation comprises of many factors including education, experience, industry, and achievement. Give a range of what you understand your education, skill level, and experience is worth in the marketplace.

- How much do you expect, if we offer this position to you?

Be careful; the market value of the job may be the key answer, e.g., "My understanding is that a job like the one you're describing may be in the range of \$_____.

- What kind of salary are you worth?

Have a specific figure in mind. Don't be hesitant. You will never get what you don't ask for!

Personality Questions

- Do you generally speak to people before they speak to you?
- What was the last book you read? Movie you saw? Sporting event you attended?
- What is the toughest part of a job for you?
- Are you creative? Give me some examples
- How would you describe your own personality?
- Are you a leader? Give examples.
- What are your future goals? Where do you want to be in five years?
- What are your strong points?
- Give at least three and relate them to the company and job you are interviewing for.

- What are your weak points?

Don't say you have none because no one is perfect. Turn a negative into a positive: "I get wrapped up in the detail sometimes so I tell myself to take a step back and refocus my thoughts."

Your Career Goals

- If you could start your career again, what would you do differently?
- What career options do you have at the moment?

"I see three areas of interest..." Relate those to the position and industry.

- How would you describe the essence of success? According to your definition of success, how successful have you been so far?

Do not, do not, do not.....express this in terms of quantitative value. "Well I made \$_____ last year and want to increase that."

"I am driven and very ambitious and set tough, yet attainable goals for myself. I set on a path knowing that it will take many years to accomplish my goal (i.e. completing a university degree part-time) and define my success by having the discipline to follow through to completion. Looking at my resume, I feel that I have demonstrated that by making huge sacrifices in my personal life."