

CAREER PLANNING > FINDING A JOB > INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

Top 20 Common Job Interview Questions With Answers

By [Alison Doyle](#) | Updated on December 11, 2022

✔ Reviewed by [Colleen Ramos](#)

In This Article

Take the Time to Prepare for an Interview

20 Most Common Interview Questions and Best Answers

More Interview Questions and Answers

Tips to Answer Common Interview Questions

How to Make the Best Impression



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If you interview frequently, these common job interview questions will grow quite familiar. During your interview preparation, think about possible answers that will pertain to the job you're applying for, while highlighting your skills and experience. Also brush up on your [interview skills](#), so you're prepared to make the best impression.

Take the Time to Prepare for an Interview

The goal of anticipating interview questions isn't to memorize responses, but rather to get comfortable talking about these topics. This advance preparation will help you feel more confident and less on the spot during the interview.

Note

As you develop your answers, select anecdotes and specific examples from your previous work experiences to share with your interviewers.

20 Most Common Interview Questions and Best Answers

Start with these questions you'll most likely be asked at a job interview, plus the best answers. Then review other [questions specifically related to the position](#), so you're prepared to ace the interview.

1. Tell me about yourself.

What They Want to Know: Asking about you is a way to break the ice at an interview and make you feel more comfortable. It's also a way for the interviewer to determine if [you're a good fit for the job](#).

which is a quick synopsis of your background, is a good way to prepare a response.

Example Answer

I'm an electrician with ten years of experience in residential construction. After earning my electrician's certificate at ABC Tech, I apprenticed with Jones Brothers, and then they hired me as a journeyman electrician. Four years later I earned my certification as a master electrician.

More Answers: [Interview Question: "Tell Me About Yourself"](#)

2. What were your responsibilities?

What They Want to Know: Know what's on your resume, so you can discuss what you did at the other jobs you've held. When you're describing your responsibilities, try to mention those that match the new job's requirements.

Showing that you have done similar work will be an asset during the interview. Focus on the responsibilities that most closely align with the job for which you're interviewing when you respond to the recruiter.

Example Answer

As a special ed teacher, I've worked with grades K-6 at a large inner-city school, partnering with parents and other teachers to design IEPs and support the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

3. What did you like or dislike about your previous job?

What They Want to Know: What you liked – and what you didn't like – about your last job or the company you worked for is an indicator of how you might feel about this position if you were to be hired.

Be careful what you say when you're interviewing for a similar job. If the roles are alike, you may want to keep what you didn't like to yourself. It's important to be positive and enthusiastic about the job for which you're being considered.

Example Answer

I liked the progressive, staged training program my employer used to teach new hires the ins and outs of financial services – there was always something new to learn, and we knew we would be steadily promoted as we became more experienced. I didn't like the commute, though, which is why I'm now applying for jobs closer to home.

More Answers: [How to Answer Interview Questions About Your Previous Job](#)

Watch Now: Watch Now: How to Answer 7 Tough Interview Questions



4. What were your starting and final levels of compensation?

What They Want to Know: Hiring managers will want to learn how much you earned to see if you're a competitive candidate for the company from a salary perspective. Be honest when discussing how much you were paid because employers may be able to ask about salary when [checking your background](#).

However, also be aware that in some locations [employers are prohibited from asking about your prior wages](#). Some employers have also implemented policies that restrict questions about salary from being asked.

Example Answer

When I started my entry-level job as an accountant, my annual salary was approximately \$42K; I then became a CPA and currently take home around \$80K.

More Answers: Interview Questions About Your Salary History

What They Want to Know: With this question, the interviewer is trying to understand how you handle issues and problems. Can you figure out solutions and workarounds when there is a problem? How adept are you at problem-solving? Do you enjoy a challenge, or do you get nervous when there's a glitch?

Example Answer

When I was first hired as store manager, our turnover rate was 75% and we were chronically understaffed. I implemented performance incentive programs that reduced attrition by 63% and significantly improved our talent pipeline by focusing on internal training and promotion.

More Answers: [Interview Question: How Did You Handle a Challenge?](#)

6. What is your greatest strength?

What They Want to Know: When answering questions about your strengths, focus on the abilities you have that are key to success in the job for which you're interviewing. Don't be too humble. It's important to make the hiring manager aware of your qualifications.

Example Answer

My greatest strength is my ability to learn new processes quickly. When placed in a new environment, I actively observe how other people do things so that I can easily pull my weight on the team. I'm also open to testing new ways of doing things in order to optimize our efficiency.

7. What is your greatest weakness?

What They Want to Know: There are different ways to tackle questions about weaknesses. One is to turn a negative into a positive by sharing an example of how something you considered to be a weakness actually helped you on the job. The other is to speak about additional skills you now have because you worked on those that needed an upgrade.

Example Answer

I'm an introvert, which I used to regard as being a weakness because I was always shy about reaching out to people. However, part of being an introvert is that I'm a great listener, and I find this has really helped me as a Help Desk Technician. I'm able to focus on our customers' issues, ask the right questions to elicit information, and resolve their tech issues.

More Answers: [Interview Question: What is Your Greatest Weakness?](#)

8. How do you handle stress and pressure?

What They Want to Know: What you do when work gets stressful? Do you stay calm under pressure? Or do you have a difficult time in stressful situations? If you're interviewing for a high-pressure position, the interviewer will want to know that you can deal with the stress.

Example Answer

I'm pretty good at recognizing when I'm beginning to feel stressed. When this happens, I take five minutes to focus on my breathing. I also practice guided meditation in the morning before work for 30

More Answers: [Interview Question: How Do You Handle Stress?](#)

9. Describe a difficult work situation or project and how you overcame it.

What They Want to Know: When you're responding to questions about what you did on the job, be prepared to share an actual example of a challenging situation at work, what the issue was, and how you helped resolve it.

Example Answer

Our team, already understaffed, was thrown for a loop when a major customer demanded that we complete our deliverables two weeks ahead of schedule. Normally we try to accommodate such requests, but this time it wasn't possible. I explained the situation to the client, and told them we could either charge them more to support the cost of hiring a temp or, if they accepted the original deadline, we'd give them a 20% discount on their next order. They opted for the latter.

More Answers: [What Are the Most Difficult Decisions to Make?](#)

10. What was your biggest accomplishment (or failure) in this position?

What They Want to Know: What are you proudest of? Was there a time something didn't work out, but you were able to learn from it? Let the hiring manager know what you achieved, again sharing examples from your most recent job.

I'm most proud of having convinced our CEO to implement an internal training and promotion program that allowed our personnel to steadily advance within our organization.

More Answers: [Interview Questions: What Were Your Biggest Successes and Failures?](#)

11. How do you evaluate success?

What They Want to Know: Your answer to this question will give the interviewer a sense of your work ethic, your career goals, and your life goals. Tailor your response to fit what you expect to achieve if you were to be hired by this employer.

Example Answer

When I wake up each morning enthusiastic about going to work, then lock the clinic at night knowing that we've made a difference in people's lives, I figure the day has been a success.

More Answers: [Job Interview Question: How Do You Define Success?](#)

12. Why are you leaving or have left your job?

What They Want to Know: There are many different reasons for leaving a job. You could be moving on because you want more opportunities for growth, you may be looking for a salary increase, perhaps you're relocating, or you have another [reason you're leaving your job](#). Be consistent in your answer when meeting with representatives of a prospective employer, because they may compare notes.

Example Answer

Our business was sold and, although I was invited to transition to the acquiring company, I decided that this was the perfect opportunity for me to explore new career opportunities.

More Answers: [Interview Question: Why Are You Looking For a New Job?](#)

13. Why do you want this job?

What They Want to Know: Why did you apply for this position? What do you find most interesting about the job and the organization? With this question, the employer wants to know why you think this job is a match for your career objectives. Take the time to [describe how your qualifications are a match for the job](#). The more you can show you're qualified, the easier it will be to get hired.

Example Answer

From the time my appendix burst as a kid and I spent a week in the hospital, I've wanted to be a nurse – preferably here at James Memorial. Although I went away for nursing school, I'm eager to move back home and care for our local community now that I've become a licensed RN.

More Answers: [Answer the Interview Question About Your Interest in a Job](#)

14. Why should we hire you?

What skills and attributes do you have that will benefit the organization?
What will you achieve if you were to be hired? This is an opportunity to [sell yourself to the hiring manager](#).

Example Answer

I am a superb consultative salesperson, never failing to surpass my quotas and break prior personal sales records because I truly enjoy working with customers to match them with the brands I know they'll love as much as I do.

More Answers: [Interview Question: Why Should We Hire You?](#)

15. What are your goals for the future?

What They Want to Know: When you respond to questions about your future goals, it's a good idea to mesh your objectives with what the company might offer as a [career path](#). At the least, make sure your goals involve staying with this company for more than a short-term basis.

Example Answer

My goal is to sign on with a national retail organization where I can eventually advance to a role as a regional sales manager.

More Answers: [Interview Questions About Your Goals for the Future](#)

16. What are your salary requirements?

answering this question is to say you're flexible, based upon the entire compensation package including benefits.

Example Answer

I average around \$39K annually, and I know from online salary calculators that the approximate salary here for professionals with my experience ranges from \$38K to \$40K. But I'm open to negotiation, depending upon your benefits package.

More Answers: [Salary Negotiation Tips \(How to Get a Better Offer\)](#)

17. Who was your best boss and who was the worst?

What They Want to Know: This question is designed to discover what type of leadership and management style works best for you. Be careful answering, and don't be too negative. Even if you had a terrible boss, how you speak about them can leave the interviewer wondering how you will speak about other supervisors if you didn't get along with them.

Example Answer

My best manager had an open-door policy where we were always welcome to speak to her privately about issues. I've never had a bad manager. I'm not as comfortable with those who prefer to micromanage my work, but when this happens I try to gain their trust so that they'll feel more confident about giving me some autonomy.

18. What are you passionate about?

What They Want to Know: What's most important to you? What do you love doing? The answers to this question don't have to be all about work. The company is looking to determine if you're a well-rounded person, and what you enjoy doing outside of work can give them insight into the type of employee you'd be if you were hired.

Example Answer

I am passionate about folk music, and love to attend festivals during the summer. I also play fiddle with a local band on the weekends.

More Answers: [Interview Question: "What Are You Passionate About?"](#)

19. Questions about your supervisors and co-workers.

What They Want to Know: Did you get along with your manager? Have you worked with difficult colleagues? How you interact with supervisors and co-workers will provide the interviewer with insight into your [interpersonal](#) and [communication skills](#).

Example Answer

I think I get along well with both my manager and my colleagues, because I approach everyone with respect. When issues arise, I try to ask for clarification and find points of agreement we can use to resolve differences of opinion.

20. Do you have any questions for me?

What They Want to Know: The last question at a job interview is usually one about what you want to know about the job and the company. Be ready with [a list of questions to ask](#). You may seem disinterested if there isn't anything you want to learn more about.

Example Answer

Do you have a formal schedule and mechanism for performance reviews? How soon after hiring would I receive my first review?

More Answers: [Best Questions to Ask in a Job Interview](#)

More Interview Questions and Answers

Review the most frequently asked [interview questions](#), tips for responding, and examples of the best answers.

Tips to Answer Common Interview Questions

Here are a few more tips to help you build your confidence before your interview.

Practice Answering Interview Questions Aloud

Ask a friend to role-play the part of your interviewer so that you can practice maintaining eye contact as you “think aloud.”

Some interviewers like to ask their prospective hires challenging questions—or even questions where there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, in order to see if they can keep their cool under pressure. Review these [curveball questions](#) so you won’t be taken by surprise.

Know What Employers Shouldn’t Ask

Not all potential interview questions are fair game for hiring managers. Before your next job interview, it’s a good idea to familiarize yourself with [illegal job interview questions](#), such as, “How old are you?” or “Is English your first language?” Should you encounter one of these, you can later decide if you’d prefer not to work for an organization that asks these questions, or whether you’ll chalk their misstep up to carelessness.

How to Make the Best Impression

Remember that, in your job interview, you will be evaluated not only upon your response to questions, but also upon [how well you listen to your interviewers](#). Pay careful attention to them as they speak, without interrupting, especially when they describe the culture of their organization and their expectations for whomever they hire.

It’s also a good idea to take brief notes during your meeting. Use these immediately afterwards to craft a thank you note for the interview to express your gratitude, reaffirm your interest in the position, and touch upon any points you forgot to make during the interview.

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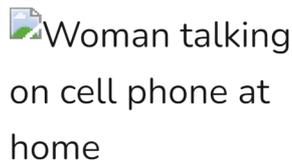
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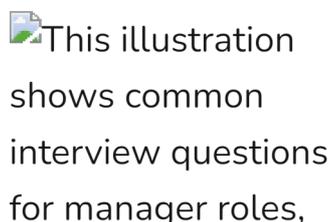
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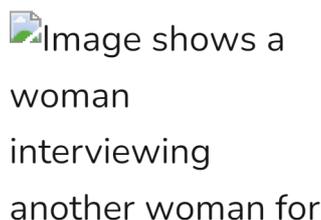
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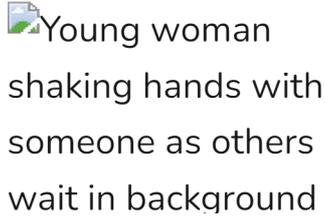
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