

Job Search

Practice Interview Questions

The following are some common interview questions you could expect an employer to ask you. Each question includes helpful information as to why an employer would ask the question. Several days before your interview, you may wish to have a friend or family member ask you each question (a “mock interview”) so you can practice what you would say. Be sure your answers are truthful.

General interview questions about you and what you offer the company:

1. Tell me about yourself.

The interviewer is asking you to explain the main skills or knowledge that you offer the company. Do not share your life story or details about your private life. Think of 3-5 things you would like to mention in your answer.

2. What do you know about our company?

The interviewer wants to know if you did any research on the company, including its history, culture, mission, products, services, and any recent (positive) news. Demonstrate your desire to work for the company by highlighting information

3. Why do you want to work for this company?

A related question is “What do you hope to gain from this work experience and why?” The interviewer want to know what is appealing to you about the company and/or the job. This relates to the research you have done on the company.

4. Why should I hire you?

The interviewer wants to know why you are a better fit for the position than the other applicants are. Think of how your skills and experience make you the best, and how you can use both to benefit the company. Always frame your answer in a positive way. Can you save them money and/or time? Why?

5. What are your strengths?

Related questions are “Tell me something you are extremely good at and why” and “What accomplishments are you are most proud of?” The interviewer want to know what makes you unique. What can you do that other people can’t? Or can you do something better than other people can? What strengths will you mention? Why?

6. What are your weaknesses?

A related question is “Name something about yourself that you can improve on and how you would do it.” This is a hard question, although interviewers like asking it to see what you will say. Be ready for it by thinking of two examples of weaknesses (not character flaws), and then explain how those weaknesses can be seen as strengths.

7. What is one mistake you have made in your job and how did you correct it?

Every person has made at least one mistake at his or her job or at school. The interviewer is more interested in how you corrected the mistake than what it was. Pick a mistake you made and then emphasize what you did to fix the situation, and what you learned from it.

8. What hours are you available to work?

The interviewer is checking on your time commitments. If you are unable to work on a certain day or at a certain time, tell the employer. It is not necessary to say why. If asked when you can start work, and if you are currently employed, be sure to say you will need to give the required number of days/weeks notice to your current employer.

9. Why did you leave your last job?

A related question is “Will your former employer give you a good reference?” The interviewer wants to know why you are looking to change jobs and/or whether you and your previous employer parted on good terms. When you answer this type of question, always try to be positive about your current or former employer. If you are asked about something you do not like in your current or previous position, choose one job duty you do not like and briefly and honestly explain why. If you were fired from a job and you are asked about it, tell the truth but be brief.

10. What do you expect as a starting salary?

A related question is “How much money would you like to earn?” The interviewer wants to see if you will eliminate yourself from the running by overpricing yourself, or if you will work for a very low salary. Do not mention a salary! You may turn the question back to the interviewer by asking what salary they had in mind for the position.

11. Are you able to perform the job duties of this position with or without an accommodation?

The interviewer is asking in a legally acceptable way whether any disability that you may have would make you unable to do the job. Ask for the job description before you answer this question to make sure that you are physically able to perform all job duties.

Questions about your education and training:

12. Tell me about your education and training background.

The interviewer is asking whether you have the education and training that the job requires. Be careful not to just repeat what is already on your resume. What aspects of your education and training will you highlight?

13. Do you plan on continuing your education?

The employer may be asking this to see if you are planning to go back to school at some point, if you are open to more training or education, or to hear about your feelings about school.

14. What was your favorite subject or activity in school? Why?

This question may be one for the interviewer to see what you think about school, or it may help the interviewer get a sense of you as a person. When you answer this question, think of school subjects you enjoyed, projects in school, school activities, or a class that you really liked. If your favorite subject or activity relates to the job, make sure to highlight it in your answer.

15. What is/was your least favorite subject or activity in school? Why?

This question is similar to questions about your weaknesses. When you answer it, be positive with your answer.

Questions about how you get along with other people:

16. What is your formula, method, or philosophy for getting along successfully with other people even when you have different points of view?

The interviewer wants to know how you handle conflict. Think about a situation in which you have been in conflict with a co-worker and how you resolved the problem in a positive way.

17. Is there a teacher at school or a co-worker you really do not like and why?

A related question is “Give me an example of how you handled a conflict between you and a teacher or co-worker.” This question is an insight into your personality for the interviewer, and not a way for you to get back at a teacher or co-worker. Handle this question very carefully and avoid naming the teacher or co-worker.

18. How do you handle stress?

Every job has some kind of stressful aspects to it. The employer wants to know how you can manage that stress and still maintain a high quality of work.

Questions about your goals and dreams:

19. If you could be hired for any job in the world, what would it be and why?

A related question is “Describe your ideal job.” The interviewer may ask this to get a sense of your work values and your goals.

20. What are your long-term career plans (five years or more from now)?

A related question is “What are your top five goals for the next two to three years?” The interviewer may ask this question to see whether you are thinking about staying in your current line of work, or to see if you are interested pursuing additional training in your field.

21. How do you define success?

This is a question about your values. What is important to you in life?

When you are not at work:

22. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

The interviewer wants to get a more rounded picture of you as a person. What hobbies or leisure activities will you mention?

23. Do you have questions for me?

For every interview, you should have at least two to three questions you are prepared to ask. What questions will you ask?