

Tough Interview Questions/General Questions*

1. Tell me about you!

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

2. What do you know about our company?

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

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person.

This is a behavioral-based interview question. These types of questions are based on the theory that past experience predicts future performance. Respond with the STAR acronym, that is, give the Situation, Task, Action and Results of the situation.

6. Why should we hire you?

Because of your knowledge, experience, abilities and skills.

7. What do you look for in a job?

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

8. Please give me your definition of a (the position for which you are being interviewed).

Keep it brief -- give an action- and results-oriented definition.

9. 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.

10. How long would you stay with us?

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

*adapted from Monster.com

Interview Styles

Screening Interview

- Short duration
- Determine whether candidate has sufficient basic qualifications
- Usually conducted by one person
- Often done by phone to decide whether to invite person for interview
- Screen-out function to save organization money

Behavioral Interview

- Employer selects certain performance dimensions and defines situations
- Candidates are asked how they have handled similar situations
- Based on belief that past behavior is a good predictor of future behaviors
- Typically look at logic, creativity, resourcefulness, conceptual ability, verbal communication skills
- Gives candidates opportunity to give a wider range of information, qualifications, and experiences

Employment Interviews

Preparation

- Determine the requirements of the job.
- Research the organization (philosophy, values, etc.).
- Determine the interviewer's name, title, and status in the organization.
- Prepare answers for the questions you are likely to be asked about your qualifications and achievements, your feelings about work, school, and your interests.
- Know how you will handle illegal questions if confronted with them.
- Develop relevant questions to ask.
- Plan your appearance. Look professional! (Shoes shined and clothing wrinkle free!)
- Take a list of questions and copies of your resume to the interview in a briefcase or portfolio.
- Double-check location and time of the interview. BE ON TIME! (Actually early.)

Initial Stages of the Interview

- Greet the interviewer by name, with a smile and direct eye contact.
- Offer a firm but gentle handshake if the interviewer extends a hand.
- Take a seat only after the interviewer invites you to be seated or has taken his or her own seat.
- Sit with an erect posture, facing the interviewer.
- Listen for cues that tell you what the interviewer wants to hear. (Listen to both the wording of the question and the emotions/attitude behind it.)
- Assume a calm and poised attitude.
- Avoid gum chewing, smoking, and other displays of nervousness.

Body of the Interview

- Maintain a "YOU" attitude with focus on "employer" needs and interests.
- Display a genuine, not artificial, smile at appropriate times.
- Convey interest and enthusiasm.

- Listen attentively and actively so you can give intelligent responses.
- Take NO NOTES, but remember key points and record them later.
- Sell the interviewer on hiring you.
 - Relate your knowledge and skills to the position you are seeking.
 - Stress your positive qualities and characteristics.
- Answer questions wisely.
 - Keep responses brief, clear, and to the point.
 - If you do not know the answer to a question, say so.
 - Avoid exaggeration, and convey honesty and sincerity. Self-appraisal is acceptable but not self-praise.
 - Avoid slighting references to former employers. Stress the positive. Never criticize anyone or anything.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages if you are interviewed over lunch.
- Answer "NO" only when you add a positive qualifying statement.

Salary Discussions

- Let the interviewer initiate the discussion of salary.
- If asked, state that you would like to receive the standard salary for the position in question.

Closing Stages of the Interview

- Watch for signs that the interview is about to end.
- Tactfully ask when you will be advised of the decision on your application.
- If you're offered the job, ask for time to consider the offer.
- With a warm smile and a handshake, thank the interviewer for meeting with you.

Interview Follow-up

- Send a thank-you letter immediately following the interview.
- Stress your positive impressions; highlight your strongest qualifications again.
- DO NOT constantly check on status of decision.
- Evaluate your interview performance.

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