Interview Questions

Below are typical interview questions, organized according to five major areas of employer interest. Review each and prepare responses that combine your knowledge of yourself and your career goals, your strengths and accomplishments, your knowledge of the industry or field, and the prospective employer’s needs for the position.

Questions an Interviewer May Ask You

Overall Sense of You

- Tell me about yourself.
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
- Why should I hire you?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your work?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How long do you plan to stay with us if you get this position?
- Would you be willing to travel/relocate?
- Why are you reentering the workforce at this time?
- Will you be available during the hours required of this job?

Knowledge

- What do you know about this field?
- What do you think are the most pressing issues in this field?
- What challenges does this position present?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in this organization?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this company?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What do you know about our company?
- What do you think is the most critical public issue of our time?
- After a graduation: How will your degree benefit the organization?

Readiness/Experience (transferable skills)

- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses.
- What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- How do you react to pressure?
- What types of decisions are most difficult for you?
- How have your prior experiences and education prepared you for this job?
- What has been your biggest frustration to date? How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever supervised anyone in a work setting? Have you ever hired or fired anyone?
- What experience do you have in this field? How have you prepared yourself to switch fields?
- Have you influenced productivity and results in your previous work experiences?
- How have you prepared yourself to assume the challenges of this position?
- How do your current skills apply to this position?
- In what ways do you expect your relationships with current peers to change? How will you manage this shift?

Goals & Motivation (reasons for change)

- Why are you leaving your current position/company?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- Why are you leaving your current field? What did you like about it? What didn’t you like?
- Why do you think you will like this field?
- Why are you reentering the workforce at this time?
Questions to Consider Asking

The interview is a two-way exchange. Just as the employer is evaluating your qualifications and fit for the position, you are evaluating the employer and assessing if the position meets your needs. Ask questions as appropriate, particularly to clarify information related to the job. Avoid asking questions that are answered in the company’s written material or that you could easily find online. Be sure that your questions demonstrate a basic knowledge of both the position and the organization. Ask questions out of genuine interest, rather than because you think it is expected.

- What organizational goals are being supported by this position?
- What would my initial assignments be?
- How would you describe your company culture? management style?
- What do you most enjoy about working for this company?
- What characteristics do successful people in this organization possess?
- What qualities do you seek in new employees?
- How would you describe the work environment in this organization?
- How would you describe the professional environment here?
- What do you offer for professional development?
- How does the department in which I would be working relate to other departments within the organization?
- Would I have contact with outside organizations?
- What are the plans for the future of my potential department and XYZ Corporation?
- To whom would I report? Where would I fit in the organization?
- How much travel might there be in the job?
- What is the typical career path in your company for someone with my background?

Appropriate Questions to Ask in a Second Interview

- What type of training program or on-the-job mentoring is provided?
- Does the company have a policy of promoting from within? Would I need a further degree to be promoted?
- What department/functional area has been the major supplier of top management people? Why?
- How will my performance be evaluated? On what will my evaluation be based?
- Are salary reviews incorporated into each performance evaluation? On what are salary reviews based (e.g., performance, experience, cost of living)?
- When do performance evaluations/salary reviews occur?

Behavioral interview questions

Traditional interview questions allow you to project how you might fit in a certain environment or respond to a given situation. Behavior-based questions target your previous experiences and responses on the premise that behaviors you demonstrated in the past are likely to be repeated. Behavioral interviewing is also designed to help minimize subjective impressions by focusing on your previous experience.

Behavior-based interview questions will ask you to focus on specific examples that will target behaviors the interviewer believes are needed for success in the position. Sample questions might include:

- Tell me about a situation in which you solved a problem as a member of a group or team. What was your role?
- Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it.
- This position requires meeting frequent deadlines. Please give me an example of a time you had to work under time pressure.
- Tell me about a time you had to handle a difficult person. How did you handle the situation and what happened?
- There will often be follow-up questions to explore further your behavior and work style, and probe for consistency, such as:
  - Can you give me an example?
  - What did you do? What was your role?
  - How did you feel in that situation?
  - What were you thinking when that happened?
  - What was the end result?
How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

- Identify before the interview some recent situations that would illustrate favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving leadership, teamwork, initiative, problem solving, planning/organizing, or other skills you feel would be beneficial in the position for which you are applying.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, middle and end. In general, you should describe the situation you faced, the task you hoped to accomplish, the action you took to reach that goal, and the actual result. Be sure to stop talking when the story is over; the interviewer will ask follow-up questions as needed.
- Be honest. Embellishments or omissions discovered later in the process can damage your credibility. Sharing what you learned from the situation or what you would do differently the next time can provide the interviewer with equally valuable information.
- Be specific. Do not try to generalize about several different events; give a detailed account of one specific situation.