



COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

~ a guide for the keen job seeker - Part 2

The Business and Employment Centre



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When you've got a job interview coming up, good preparation is essential. By planning and practicing your answers, you can boost your confidence and increase your chances of getting the outcome you want.

Interviewers want to hear about your career history, your attributes and skills, and how your competencies match those specific to the job. They also want to know whether you're a good fit for their team. The more accurately you can predict their questions, the better you can prepare the most persuasive answers.

But how do you know in advance what you'll be asked?

The good news is that interviews tend to follow a common pattern. And most of them use very similar questions. By understanding why interviewers follow some classic lines of inquiry, you can prepare the best possible responses, and have plenty of great examples ready to use.

We've created this resource to help you to get ready for your next interview. It lists the 50 most-asked interview questions, along with advice about preparing great answers for all of them. You can read them all or click on a particular question from the list on the following pages to jump straight to it.

Some of the questions that you're asked in your interview may be phrased differently to the ones we've provided. And you should always be ready to be asked about specific aspects of the role. But, if you invest time in crafting strong answers to all the questions here, you'll be ready to perform confidently and convincingly in every interview that you face.

Preparing Your Answers - Part 2

Career History Questions

Interviewers need to assess the quality and relevance of your experience and skills. These questions give you a chance to show how suitable you are for the job.

6. How has your career so far prepared you for this position?

To prepare for this question, identify the most important skills and experience that you'll need to be successful in this role. Then, choose an achievement or lesson that you've learned in your career so far that relates to each of these Success factors. Three or four examples will be enough to make your case persuasive – as long as you include specific details and mention measurable results.

7. Why do you want to change roles?

Depending on your reasons, this can be a tough question to answer. It's important to keep your response as confident and forward-looking as possible, so that you come across as more attractive to a new employer, not less.

Don't use this question to admit to failings, or to complain about your existing role – even if you dislike your current boss or department. Instead, explain what you've learned, and why you decided it was time to move on. Phrase your answer positively. For example, you could say that you're looking for a new challenge or want to learn a new skill.

If you were let go from your previous job, be honest about it! Even setbacks like this can be phrased positively – as opportunities to refocus your goals, to learn from your experiences, to be resilient, and to forge ahead.

8. What is your greatest professional achievement?

The best example that you can give here will be something that relates to the job you're applying for. Think of an achievement that you're genuinely proud of. That way, you'll show your passion for the job, your high professional standards, and a clear understanding of what real achievement means in your field.

Prepare a few examples, so that you can choose one that showcases something that you haven't had a chance to address already. And explain them using the STAR method. This should cover:

- The Situation that you were in.
- The Task that you had to accomplish.
- The Actions that you took.
- Your successful Results.

9. Tell me about your worst boss.

This is a tricky question. So, answer it with a mix of honesty, diplomacy and positivity. Pick a real example (make sure it's not about someone working in the company you want to join) but be discreet about the person's identity.

Focus on one aspect of their behavior and explain exactly why this made it difficult for you to do your job well. Talk about how you dealt with it, what you learned in the process, and how it's influenced your own approach to leadership since.

10. Describe a conflict that you faced at work – and how you dealt with it.

Again, be honest in acknowledging that conflicts do occur, but demonstrate how you are able to handle them reasonably and professionally. Pick an example when you were able to recognize a problem and explain how you found an effective way to deal with it. Perhaps you were able to defuse some tension in a heated team meeting or encouraged people to see others' perspectives.

Remember, conflict can be valuable in some circumstances – for example, during a brainstorming session. But show that you understand when conflict becomes toxic, that you know how to anticipate it, and that you can head it off before it causes damage.

11. How good are you in a crisis?

This question allows you to define what a crisis is in your role or industry, and to outline the skills that you've developed to handle one if it occurs. Use a couple of carefully chosen examples to demonstrate key strengths, such as clear headedness, initiative, problem solving, and common sense.

This is also a chance to show that you have the confidence and the interpersonal skills needed to lead others through difficult times.

12. When have you demonstrated leadership skills?

Start by explaining what good leadership means to you, and back up your points with examples. Leadership plays a part in almost every role, to some extent, so you should be able to demonstrate leadership credentials whatever stage you're at in your career.

The STAR method (see question 8, above) is a good way to structure a clear and memorable answer. Talk about a time when you had a specific leadership challenge to overcome, and how you used skills such as strategic thinking, empathy, decisiveness, and clear communication to do so.

13. Describe a time when you showed initiative.

Initiative covers several key professional skills, including confidence, being a self-starter, spotting problems and opportunities, and coming up with creative ideas. For this answer, tell a story about a time when you not only showed initiative, but also achieved something measurable as a result.

14. When have you been innovative at work?

Again, innovation is a concept that encompasses many important attributes – the confidence to think and act differently, the creativity to find new solutions, and the flexibility to cope as things change. Think of a time when you spotted a need to be innovative. What did you do? What was the positive impact of your new approach for your team and your organization?



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