

TEN MOST COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Prepare for your interview ahead of time by recalling your past successes so you will be able to have examples in mind and not be caught off guard by a potential employer. There is no way you can predict what the interviewer is going to ask you, but you can prepare what you want him or her to know about your past as a predictor of your future performance.

1. **“What are your weaknesses?”**

This is the most dreaded question according to many job seekers. The best way to handle this question would be to minimize your weakness and emphasize the strengths you will be bringing to the position. Avoid any discussion on personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: “I am always working on improving my communication skills in order to be a more effective presenter. I recently enrolled in a speech class at Olympic College, which I find very helpful.”

2. **“Why should we hire you?”**

The best answer to this question would be to summarize your prior work experiences: “With ten years of experience in the financial industry and my proven record of reliability, I could make a big difference in your company. I’m confident that I would be a great addition to your team.”

3. **“Why do you want to work here?”**

The interviewer is looking for an answer that indicates you have given this some thought and are not sending your resumes just because there is an opening. A response to this question may be: “I’ve selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does and your company is very high on my list of desirable choices.”

4. **“Why did you leave (are you leaving) your current position?”**

If you are currently unemployed, be sure to state your reason for leaving your previous position in a positive context: “I was able to survive three rounds of corporate downsizing, but the third round was a 15% reduction in the workforce, which included my position.” If you are employed, focus on what you want in your upcoming position: “After three years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I will be able to add to my current work experience.

5. **“What can you do for us that other candidates can’t?”**

Ask yourself, “What makes me unique?” You may want to make an assessment of all of your experiences, skills, and traits. Be sure to summarize concisely: “Because of my past military experience, I have a unique combination of strong technical skills as well as the ability to build strong customer relationships. This combination allows me to use my knowledge to break down information in a more user-friendly way.”

6. **“What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?”**

It’s time to re-examine your employment portfolio and pull out your previous performance appraisals and bosses feedback. This is a great way to brag about yourself through someone else’s words: “My supervisor has told me that I am a great designer, he can always rely on me, and that he likes my sense of humor.”

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7. **“When were you most satisfied in your job?”**

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you in the workplace. If you can relate an example of a job or project that you completed in school or at a prior work position in which you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea about your idea of preferences. An example might be, “I was very satisfied in my last job, because I worked directly with the customers and their problems. I felt a lot of satisfaction with helping customers find the right answer.”

8. **“What salary are you seeking?”**

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. However, if that does not happen, prepare yourself ahead of time by educating yourself about the going rate of employees in your area, and your bottom line or walk-away point. One possible answer might be: “I am sure when the time comes, we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?”

9. **“What are your career goals?”**

Sometimes it is best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. For example, “My immediate goal is to obtain a position in a growth-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility.”

10. **“How do you handle disagreements with your co-workers or supervisors?”**

Don't say that you never have any. Pick a situation, even a hypothetical one, and describe how you would work through it. For example, “If I were to come to a disagreement with my supervisor, I would recommend that we have a discussion, in private, about the situation. If no mutual agreement could be reached, I would consent, unless I felt compelled to stand my ground on moral or ethical issues.”