



COMMON JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1

“Tell me about yourself.”

Do not give your entire life story. Talk about an incident that made you interested in pursuing your profession. Follow up with your academic training and passion for the subject, plus relevant employment experience, make you a good fit for the job. You may choose to mention a major accomplishment as well.

“How did you hear about this position?”

If someone referred you to the position, give that person’s name and how you know them. If you heard about it from an event or article, mention that. If you found the job yourself on a job posting, state what caught your eye about the role. If you were recruited, state why you were interested enough to pursue the position.

2

3 “Why do you want to work here?”

Do your research about the company beforehand and tell them something unique that really appeals to you. Share the opportunities for future growth and state how you can possibly contribute. Why are you passionate about the job you are applying for? What excites you about possibly working at this company in this position? Be specific!

4 “Why should we hire you?”

This is your chance to sell yourself and your skills to the hiring manager! Give an answer that 1) Shows you can do the job and deliver good results; 2) That you’ll fit in with the team and company culture; and 3) That you would be a better person to hire than your competition. Demonstrate that you understand the challenges you’ll be facing and what you can bring to the table.

5

“What are your greatest strengths? What do you consider to be your weaknesses?”

When thinking about your strengths, don’t list off a bunch of random answers. Focus on one or two specific strengths that are specific to the position and give examples of how you embody those strengths. In terms of weaknesses, don’t pretend to be perfect. Employers want to know if you are honest and self-aware. Give an example of something you are struggling with but are trying to improve on, and how you are working to improve.

6 “What is Your Greatest Professional Achievement?”

Don't be modest in answering this question! Use the STAR method: Situation, Task, Action, and Results. Set up the situation and task you were required to complete. Then describe what you did (action) and what you achieved by doing so (results).

7 “When is a time that you demonstrated leadership skills?”

Think about a time where you might have headed up a project, taken initiative, or worked to motivate your team to accomplish something. Again, use the STAR method to tell the story and demonstrate the results.

8

“What is a challenge or conflict you've faced at work? How did you deal with it?”

Employers want to know that you are willing to face issues head-on and work towards a resolution. Be honest about a difficult situation, but don't vent about it. Talk about the situation calmly and professionally. Focus on the resolution more than the conflict. State what you may do differently the next time. Be prepared to answer any follow up questions.

“Tell me about a time you made a mistake or failed.”

The key to these questions are to be honest and not blame others. Explain what you learned from your mistake or failure, and what actions you took, or would take, to avoid making the same error. Employers want to know that you can admit to and learn from mistakes, are self-aware, can accept feedback, and are willing to work to do better.

“Why are you leaving your current job?” 10

Keep things positive – do not bash your current employer. Instead, show that you are eager to engage in new opportunities and that this new role is a better fit for you. If you were laid off or fired, be honest about it. State why it happened, but frame it as a learning experience. Show how you grew through that experience and how that growth can help you in your new job. If there was a gap in employment, be honest about why.

9

11 “What are your salary expectations?”

Know the answer to this ahead of time. Do research on what similar roles would pay, taking into account your experience, education, skills, and personal needs. Three strategies are recommended: 1) Give a salary range; 2) Flip the question and ask the employer what the potential salary range is; 3) Tell the employer that you would like to hear more about the role before answering.

12

“What is your work style and management style?”

Employers want to know how well you will fit in this role. How do you approach your work? What is it like to work with you? Do you work well with others? Focus on something that is important to you and that also aligns well with one of the employer's values. Keep it positive and give examples. As a manager, show that you can be strong and flexible, and show some of your best moments.

Source: The Muse Editors. “Your 2023 Guide to the Most Common Interview Questions and Answers.” *The Muse*, January 2023, <https://www.themuse.com/advice/interview-questions-and-answers>. Accessed 18 September 2023.

Other Possible Questions

1. Why are you changing career paths?: Be honest about the career decisions you have made, and show how skills from your previous jobs are transferrable to this new one.
2. How would your boss and coworkers describe you?: Be honest, and focus on traits that you perhaps haven't been able to discuss so far in the interview.
3. How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?: Talk about your go-to strategies for dealing with stress and mitigate pressure. If possible, give a specific example of a stressful situation you successfully navigated.
4. What do you like to do outside of work?: Employers may ask this to get to know more about you, your personality, and what you are passionate about. You can be honest, but keep it professional and avoid making it sound like you will spend too much time devoted to something besides work.
5. How do you manage your time?: Employers want to know that you can manage your time well, exercise good judgement in prioritizing tasks, communicate, and shift gears. Discuss any system that you have found works well for you in terms of planning. Then use a real-life example of how you reacted to a last-minute request or sudden shift in priorities in the past. Be sure to state how you evaluated what needed to be done and how you communicated with your boss and team about it.
6. How do you like to be managed?: Think about what previous bosses did that helped you succeed and grow. Pick one or two things to focus on.
7. Do you consider yourself successful?: Your answer should be "Yes!" Pick one specific professional achievement that you are proud of, especially one that demonstrates a quality or skill that could benefit you in this new position. Explain why you consider it a success, talk about the process in addition to the outcome, and don't forget to highlight your team's contributions.
8. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?: This shows that you are ambitious and can think ahead, that you are self-motivated, and that you are organized and have good time management skills. Make sure you focus on 1-2 goals in detail, explain why they are meaningful, highlight past successes, and focus on how this job can help you achieve your goals.
9. What other companies are you interviewing with?: Employers may ask this to find out how serious you are about this role or field, or to see who they are competing with to hire you? You can talk about a few jobs you have applied to and why this particular job seems like a good fit.
10. What do you think we do differently or better?: Start by discussing something positive about the company or product. Then give constructive feedback by giving some background on the perspective you are bringing and explain why you would make the change you are suggesting. This should be based on data or past experience.
11. When can you start?: Give realistic expectations that can work for both you and the company. Don't be afraid to say you must give notice to your current employer, or that you must attend to previously scheduled commitments. Also, be willing to be flexible if they need someone sooner.
12. Are you willing to relocate?: If you are willing to move for the right opportunity, say so. If you are not able to move at this time, briefly explain why, and offer an alternative, like working remotely or for a local branch/office.
13. Do you have any questions for us?: Have some less-common questions ready to go. Examples could be, "What do you like about working here?" or "What are some of your plans for growing the company?"