

Interviews can be easily and successfully conducted when you **PREPARE**, **PRACTISE** and be **POSITIVE**. Below is a list of frequently-posed interview questions along with recommended ways to respond and, in some cases, sample answers you could use *where applicable*.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS:

1. What can you tell me about yourself? Or, describe yourself?

Take the opportunity to highlight your work-related strengths (e.g. team player, positive, quick learner, adaptable). Keep your answer brief, the interviewer will ask you to elaborate if he or she desires more information.

2. How would those who have worked with you describe you?

This is another opportunity to describe your strengths. Have a list of positive descriptors ready (e.g. I'm considered dedicated, focused, hard-working, detail-oriented, visionary, etc.) Providing examples that demonstrate the strengths will enhance your answer.

3. What are your strengths?

Have a list of at least three traits ready and be prepared to give examples of each (e.g. I'm an excellent team player. Last year, I actively participated in three successful group projects where I was responsible for allocating tasks and ensuring we stayed on schedule.).

4. Why should I hire you? Or, why are you the best candidate?

Explain how you meet the job requirements (e.g. select examples from your education and or employment history) and how the job meets your career objectives.

5. What do you consider your greatest career achievement and why?

Have one example ready and explain why you believe it to be your greatest success. Try to find an example and or an explanation that relates to the job you're seeking.

6. What are your weaknesses?

Be prepared with at least one example. Use the **C.A.R.** - Challenge Action Results model to describe your weakness as a strength. (For more information on this model see Rule #21 from *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To... My Career!*)

7. What has been your biggest professional disappointment?

Have one example ready and explain how you've learned from it. Employers want to know that you use problems as opportunities to learn.

8. Have you ever been asked to leave a position?

Be honest. If yes, be brief and explain what you learned from the experience. Do not speak negatively about your past employer or former colleagues.

9. What have you learned from mistakes on the job?

Give one example and explain what you learned from the experience (e.g. I assumed everyone on the team had all the information for the project but they didn't; this slowed the project's progress. Since then I've learned to ask if everyone if they clearly understand the task at hand and always encourage them to ask questions.)

10. How will you compensate for your lack of experience in a particular area?

Describe any experience you have that required similar skills. Explain how this similar experience combined with your ability to learn quickly, work smart and adapt will help you compensate.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CULTURAL FIT WITH THE ORGANIZATION:

11. What do you know about this organization?

Refer to the research notes you've made about the company. Be sure to check their web site for any recent press/media releases they may have issued. Use an online search engine to find out what others are saying about the company. In your answer mention the company's goals, current issues, major players, and or its last major accomplishments.

12. How do you see yourself fitting in to our culture?

Referring to your research notes on the company, point out areas where your skills and experience support the company's vision or where the company's goals align with yours.

13. Why do you think you would do well at this job?

Mention points from your research about the company and refer to the areas where your skills, experience, career goals or areas of interest align with those of the company. State any contributions you believe you could make to the company.

14. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?

Ensure your answer describes elements of the company culture as found in the research you conducted. (E.g. if the company describes itself as open and progressive, you might say you enjoy working in an environment where employee suggestions are encouraged and change is well accepted.)

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR WORK OR MANAGEMENT STYLE:

15. What motivates you?

Explain the requirements of the current position that make the best use of your strengths. Describe any similarities between the department's or company's goals that align with your career goals.

16. Do you like working alone or within a group?

If you know the job requires working in a team make sure you indicate this is how you perform best; if individual work is the norm, state this as the preference. In either case *be honest*, otherwise you'll likely be dissatisfied with the job if you get it.

17. What do you enjoy about your current job?

Select the elements you enjoy that are common to *both* your current job and to the one for which you are applying. Add any points about the prospective job that would support your desire to join the new company.

18. Describe your work ethic.

Honesty is the best policy here, as you'll quickly be put to the test if you're hired. If you have nose-to-the-grindstone determination, you'll likely be unhappy working with people who don't share this work ethic.

19. Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?

If you have fired someone this is an opportunity to speak about your company loyalty as well as your concern for the well being of the individual employees. It's important to communicate that you value both, but know where your allegiance stands.

20. Describe your management style.

If positive, use examples of how your former staff members have described you. Or, describe the management style you strive to reflect. If you refer to a commonly known management style, be sure to describe *exactly what you mean* as definitions of common terms often differ from organization to organization.

QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS AND TEMPERAMENT:**21. Give me an example of a difficult situation or failure you encountered and tell me how you handled it?**

Describe the problem; how you analyzed it and then the steps you took to resolve it. Remember not to put down your former/current workplace, colleagues or boss in the process! You could use the S.T.A.R. (Situation, Task, Action, Result) formula from Rule #29 or the C.A.R. Challenge Action Results formula from Rule #21 of from *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To... My Career!*

22. How do you react to changes in the workplace? Give me an example.

Describe the change. As above, you could use the S.T.A.R. or C.A.R. formulas to respond.

23. What are some of the things that bother or upset you on the job and why?

Take the opportunity to highlight the things you value about working in general (e.g. punctuality, commitment, high standards, etc.) and briefly share your disappointment when they are not present.

24. How do you work under pressure?

If applicable, explain how pressure challenges you, stimulates your creativity, activates your ability to focus, etc. Give an example to support your claim.

25. How do you take direction?

It's usually in your best interest to explain that you are open to taking direction. It's also an opportunity to share an example of your positive working relationship with a former manager or supervisor.

QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE YOUR PROFESSIONALISM, COMMITMENT AND LOYALTY:**26. Did you ever have a group leader or boss you disliked? Why did you dislike him/her?**

Stay away from criticizing a former boss. Instead focus on what you like in a supervisor or boss (e.g. clear direction, regular reviews, or recognition of accomplishments). You could mention that in general you're disappointed when these are not present.

27. What were the best traits of your former manager or boss?

Again, focus on what you like in a supervisor or boss (e.g. clear direction, regular reviews, or recognition of accomplishments). This time mention how well you work when these are present.

28. What do you dislike about your present job?

It's important to stay away from criticisms of your workplace. Focus on what you like in general in your work environment and briefly mention your concern when these are not practised.

29. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

This is a good time to speak about what you've researched about the company's or industry's future direction and where you see a fit with your career goals. You may also want to inquire about any learning and development programs the company may offer.

30. Why do you want to leave your current job? Or, why did you leave your last employer?

Refer to positive reasons for your decision (e.g. seeking new challenges, your keen interest in the prospective employer's goals.) Remember not to be critical of your current or former employer, boss or colleagues.

OTHERS QUESTIONS:**31. What kind of salary are you seeking?**

To answer this question, it's important to have done your research. Many online job search companies provide salary guides that you can use as a reference; but remember there are several factors (e.g. your experience and location) that can influence your rate. It's preferable to give a salary range, as opposed to a specific figure. (See Rule #42 in *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To... My Career!*)

32. Are you willing to work overtime nights or weekends?

Make sure you have given this some thought beforehand. It's in your best interest to be honest, so that both you and the employer start off with the same expectations, should you be hired.

33. Would you be willing to relocate if required?

Give serious consideration to this beforehand, particularly if you have a family that would be directly affected by your decision. Like the response to the overtime question above, in the long run honesty is the best policy.

34. Do you have any questions for me?

Use the research you've conducted to prepare some questions to ask the interviewer. (E.g. Are there any specific projects that I would be asked to work on immediately? What's the size of the team I'll be assisting? Do you offer training and development support?)

INTERVIEW QUESTION FORMATS:

Interview questions may be asked in different styles. They could be **direct** (E.g. Why do you want to work for us?). They could be posed as **behavioural** questions where the interviewer asks you to describe how you acted in a particular circumstance. E.g. Give me an example of a time when you disagreed with your boss.) The interviewer may ask you **situational** questions where she or he describes a scenario to you and asks how you would respond. (E.g. You must get an urgent package to a client but the courier is late and you cannot leave the office due to another urgent matter. What would you do?)

Always remember to practise your interview answers with a mentor, friend or family member. You can also practise in front of a mirror. If possible record yourself to hear how you sound and (if using video) to pick up on unintentional non-verbal signals you may be sending.
PRACTICE DOES MAKE PERFECT!

