

Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself

This is often one of the first questions an interviewer may ask because he/she wants to know about you as a person in relation to the job you are looking for. Make sure that you include only relevant personal and work related information. You must outline your experience (work, volunteer), knowledge (and education) and skills that qualify you for the position. You may also mention any interests or hobbies that are related. Give specific examples but do not give personal details such as your age, marital status, etc. Lastly, ensure that you also express interest in the industry or type of position you are being interviewed for.

TIP: You can use your SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS section of your resume as an outline for this answer.

2. Do you have previous work experience in this type of position?

Of course the interviewer wants to know how familiar you are with this kind of work. If you do have experience, ensure that you give specific examples of when, where and what you did in your previous position(s). If you don't have previous experience, emphasize your transferable skills and experience and state how your skills and experience will assist you in this type of work. You may include information about related work experience, volunteer/community work, training or self-education, skills and abilities. Use any technical terms that are used in the position that you are being interviewed for.

3. Why did you apply for this position?

This question is usually asked near the beginning of the interview. Be sure to mention your interest in the type of work and the company as well as how the position relates to your past work experience, education, interests or skills. Keep your answer brief and express your enthusiasm and commitment.

4. Why did you leave your last position?

People leave jobs for many reasons but there is no need to go into great detail when answering this question. State the reason clearly and concisely. Try to mention only favourable factors as to why you left. Even if your last job was undesirable, only mention the positive aspects.

5. How do you like to be managed?

To answer this question, you need to think about past work experiences and what worked best for you in the past. You may want to mention both your ability to take initiative and direction, as well as your ability to work with others. If you were a manager then change the question to “What is your management style?”

6. What equipment can you use?

It is important to demonstrate your ability to work with the basic equipment required on the job. Make sure that you are familiar with the technical vocabulary associated with equipment (including computer software) and explain when you used this equipment in the past. If you don't know a particular piece of equipment and it is absolutely required for the job, you can mention that you would be willing to take a course or learn it on your own time.

7. How would your last supervisor describe you?

Don't bring out your reference letters because the interviewer wants to know how you will answer this question. You can give examples of personal strengths, knowledge, attitude and job performance (three is usually enough). Be sure to give specific examples of how you displayed the traits that you described.

8. What are your strengths?

For this question, try to think of the strengths you have that may be needed in the position you are being interviewed for. These strengths can relate to personal or transferable skills, education or training, or experience. Make sure that you provide an example of how you displayed this strength. In this question, the interviewer may be testing your knowledge of yourself and your confidence.

9. What are your weaknesses?

For this question, don't discuss your innermost personal problems. Try to think of one or two weaknesses that are not considered to be essential to the job. Also try to think of weaknesses that may easily be remedied through further training, personal action, etc. When stating your weakness, you must also add what you are doing to improve it, or what you have done in the past to remedy it. If you really don't know what to say, you can state that you don't think you have any weaknesses that would affect your performance on the job.

10. What are your long-term plans?

Whatever you are planning to do in the future, make sure that you include the job you are applying for into your answer. It is good to have vision and direction in your life but your plans do not have to be set in stone. You may want to start with what you want to do now and how it relates to your future plans.

11. What do you know about this company?

Make sure you research the company before the interview! This research could be done on the internet, through business directories, at the library or by an on site visit. You don't need to go into great detail but you want to have a general idea of the service, products and perhaps the "Mission Statement" of the company.

12. Why should I hire you instead of someone else?

This question is usually asked towards the end of the interview. This is your chance to summarize the key strengths and experience you can offer a company. You can mention your strengths, skills, experience and knowledge that make you an outstanding candidate. Most importantly, express your interest in the company and the position.

13. Personal Questions: Are you married? How old are you? How is your health?

Often the interviewer may ask these questions out of curiosity rather than for discriminatory purposes. If you are not comfortable answering the question, that is okay. One way to respond is to ask "Is that a concern for this position?" The interviewer can then decide to tell you if it is a concern or he/she can withdraw the question.

14. What are your salary requirements?

It is best not to mention a particular salary at this time. If you quote an amount that is too low, the employer may hire you at a salary that is lower than he/she had expected. If you quote a salary that is too high, the employer might not consider you because he/she cannot afford you. One safe response can be "What is the normal range for this position?" Do your research and answer with a salary range rather than one amount. Once a job offer has been made, you can then sometimes negotiate salary, benefits, etc.

15. Do you have any questions? (Always answer "Yes, I do.")

This question is usually asked to bring the interview to a close. Your questions should be brief, to the point and focused on the company's needs, not on yours. After you have a job offer, you can ask questions about salary, medical benefits, etc. Prepare 2 or 3 questions about the company or the position. For example: "What do you like best about working for this company?" or "Who would I be working with?"

Overcoming Employers' Objections

Sometimes you may encounter objections during an interview. An objection is a concern of the employer that may or may not be valid. Try and determine from the sentence what the objection or concern is and then write a sample response.

1.	"We're looking for someone with more practical experience"
	<i>Concern:</i>
	<i>Your Response:</i>
2.	"You have a lot of experience. Why are you applying for this position?"
	<i>Concern:</i>
	<i>Your Response:</i>
3.	"Do you have _____ technical skills?"
	<i>Concern:</i>
	<i>Your Response:</i>