



# JOB INTERVIEW

An advance preparation  
for a **smart** job seeker.



Happy English

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## Smart Answers to Common Job Interview Questions

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- ↻ What Can You Contribute to the Company?



Behavioral Questions

More Interview Tips





# Tips for Answering Interview Questions

- **Research the Job and the Company.** Take the time to research the company and the position you are interviewing for in advance. The more you know, the better equipped you'll be to respond to interview questions.
- **Practice Makes Perfect.** The more practice you have at interviewing, the more comfortable you'll be during a job interview. Practice (ask a friend or family member to help) answering common interview questions to get an idea of how to respond.
- **Know the Facts.** This sounds like a no-brainer, but I've interviewed candidates who couldn't remember when they worked where. Be sure you know your work history, and bring an extra copy of your resume to refer to if you're nervous and need a reminder.
- **Try to Stay Calm.** Interviewing can be nerve wracking whether it's your first interview or you have interviewed many times in the past. Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview, take a deep breath before you go into the interview, and do your best to stay calm.
- **Take Your Time.** Don't rush to get out a response to an interview question. Briefly think about your response before you answer. Taking the time to compose your thoughts so you can respond effectively is better than jumping the gun and saying something you wish you hadn't after the fact.



# Tips for Answering Interview Questions

- **Give Examples.** When you respond to interview questions give examples of how you handled related situations. The more specific you are, the more the hiring manager will see that you have the skills to do the job. Here's more on behavioral interviews and how to respond to behavioral interview questions.
- **Share Your Accomplishments.** Don't be shy about what you have accomplished in your career. Share examples of your accomplishments that are related to the job you are interviewing for to reinforce the fact that you're capable and qualified
- **Make a Match.** As you answer interview questions, try to stay focused on the job and how you are a fit for it. Do your best to match your abilities to the job description when responding.
- **Don't Ramble.** Your response to interview questions should be direct and to the point. Don't ramble and get off topic.
- **Ask for Clarification.** Not sure what the interviewer is asking? It's fine to ask for clarification if you're not sure what is being asked.



# Tips for Answering Interview Questions

- **Be Direct.** When you're asked about why you left (or are leaving your job) try to keep it positive. Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.
- **Keep it Professional.** Your responses should be focused on your professional skills and abilities. There is no need to tell the interviewer all about your personal life, your interests, your family, or your hobbies. Most importantly, don't bring up any work-related issues you might have like having to arrange child care or transportation if you get the job.
- **Have Questions Ready to Ask.** The last question you'll probably be asked during a job interview is whether you have questions. Be prepared and have a list of questions ready to ask the interviewer.
- **Take Advantage of One More Chance to Answer.** Don't forget to thank the interviewer and to take the time to follow up with a personal thank you note. If there are any questions you wish you had answered differently or more thoroughly, use your thank you letter to explain.

# Top 10 Interview Questions and Best Answers

## QUESTION 1



### 1. What is your greatest strength?

"What is your greatest strength?" may seem like one of the easier interview questions you'll be asked, but it is also one of the most important. The interviewer wants to know if your strengths align with the needs of the company and the qualifications for the particular job. Asking this question helps the employer decide whether or not you are the strongest applicant for the position.

This is one of the questions that employers almost always ask. When you are asked about your greatest strengths, it's important to discuss the attributes that will qualify you for the specific job and set you apart from the other candidates.

The best way to respond is to describe the skills and experience that directly correlate with the job you are applying for. Be prepared to answer by making a list of the qualifications mentioned in the job posting. Then, make a list of your skills that match those listed. This list can include education or training, soft skills, hard skills, or past work experiences. Narrow your list of skills down to 3 - 5 particularly strong skills.

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

- **I have an extremely strong work ethic. When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule. Last year, I even earned a bonus for completing my three most recent reports one week ahead of time.**
- **I have strong extremely strong writing skills. Having worked as a copy editor for five years, I have a strong attention to detail when it comes to my writing. I have also written for a variety of publications, so I know how to shape my writing style to fit the task and audience. As a marketing assistant, I will be able to effectively write and edit press releases, and update web content with accuracy and ease.**
- **I am a skilled salesman with over ten years of experience. I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter and I've earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.**
- **I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations. With five years of experience as a customer service associate, I have learned to effectively understand and resolve customer issues. On a related note, I also have strong communication skills, which helps me work well with customers, team members, and executives. I am known for being an effective team member with a talent for giving presentations.**



## QUESTION 2

### 2. What is your greatest weakness?



Another typical question interviewers will ask is about your weaknesses. Do your best to frame your answers around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee.

Even though the question is about weaknesses, your answer should always be framed around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee.

#### Discuss Non-Essential Skills

One approach to answering this question is to analyze the key skills and strengths required for the position you are interviewing for and then come up with an honest shortcoming which is not essential for success in that job.

For example, if you are applying for a nursing job, you might share that you are not particularly adept at conducting group presentations. In this case it will be critical to underscore your strength in one-on-one communication with patients, while providing an example of your difficulty with presentations to large groups.

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

- **When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.**
- **Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my organization skills.**
- **I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done correctly the first time.**
- **I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.**
- **Sometimes, I spend more time than necessary on a task, or take on tasks personally that could easily be delegated to someone else. Although I've never missed a deadline, it is still an effort for me to know when to move on to the next task, and to be confident when assigning others work.**
- **I had difficulty with calculus during college, but I persevered with tutoring assistance and extra effort and completed 2 levels with a B minus average.**
- **I used to like to work on one project to its completion before starting on another, but I've learned to work on many projects at the same time, and I think it allows me to be more creative and effective in each one.**
- **I've learned to make my perfectionism work to my advantage. I have become proficient at meeting deadlines, and with my attention to detail, I know my work is accurate.**
- **As an undergrad, I used to leave assignments until the last minute, but with the workload of graduate school, I learned to schedule my time very effectively.**

## QUESTION 3

### 3. Tell me about yourself.

Here's how to answer questions about you without giving out too much

– or too little – personal information. Start by sharing some of your personal interests which don't relate directly to work.

Interviewers will sometimes start an interview with an open-ended question like "Tell me about yourself." It's a way to break the ice and make you feel more comfortable during the interview process. It's also a way for the hiring manager to get insight into your personality to help determine if you're a good fit for the job.

Sharing too much or too little information isn't a good idea. The interviewer doesn't want to know everything about you, but disclosing too little can make him or her wonder why you aren't more open.

Although it might be tempting to share a list of your most compelling qualifications for the job at hand, a more low-key approach will probably help you to develop a personal rapport with your interviewer.

Try starting out by sharing some personal interests which don't relate directly to your work. Examples might include a hobby which you are passionate about like quilting, astronomy, chess, choral singing, golf, skiing, tennis, or antiquing.

Interests like long distance running or yoga which help to represent your healthy, energetic side are worth mentioning.

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

**Prepare a script that includes the information you want to convey. Begin by talking about past experiences and proven success:**

**"I have been in the customer service industry for the past five years. My most recent experience has been handling incoming calls in the high tech industry. One reason I particularly enjoy this business, and the challenges that go along with it, is the opportunity to connect with people. In my last job, I formed some significant customer relationships resulting in a 30 percent increase in sales in a matter of months."**

**Next, mention your strengths and abilities:**

**"My real strength is my attention to detail. I pride myself on my reputation for following through and meeting deadlines. When I commit to doing something, I make sure it gets done, and on time."**

**Conclude with a statement about your current situation:**

**"What I am looking for now is a company that values customer relations, where I can join a strong team and have a positive impact on customer retention and sales."**

## QUESTION 4

### **4. Why should we hire you?**

#### **Are you the best candidate for the job?**

**Be prepared to say why. Make your response a concise sales pitch that explains what you have to offer the employer, and why you should get the job.**

**The first step to preparing for this type of question is to go into the interview with a clear understanding of what you have to offer.**

**Prepare a list of 8-10 assets which would enable you to excel in the job if it is offered.**

**Review the job description and itemize a list of your skills, accomplishments, areas of knowledge, experiences and/or personal qualities which would help you to meet the qualifications for this particular job. Be ready to supply examples from your work, volunteer, or academic history that prove that you have added value by applying those assets in the past.**

**Your asset list will help you to answer questions about your strengths throughout the interview. In addition, when you are asked at the end of the meeting if you have anything to add, you will be ready to furnish any qualities which haven't been explored up to that point.**

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

Start your closing statement with a summary of some of the key strengths which you have already shared, and then add any items from your list that haven't been covered. Here's an example of an effective answer a candidate could give for a public relations position:

**"You have done a very thorough job of getting at my strengths. We have discussed my writing, presentation, and computer skills, but I haven't had the opportunity to tell you about my persuasive abilities. I was able to convince seven local businesses to sponsor the charity run which I organized for my fraternity, and I successfully placed several stories in the local media about a client during my public relations internship."**

### **Summarize Your Qualifications**

In the unlikely scenario where your interviewer has touched on all the assets on your list, then take the opportunity to thank them, mention your strong interest in the job and summarize your most compelling qualifications.

For example, you might say:

**"I think that you have been incredibly thorough and we have discussed my key strengths like my writing, presentation, computer and persuasive skills."**

**I would just like to assure you that I am very excited by the opportunity here. I am extremely motivated to pursue this job and will devote maximum energy to succeeding if I am hired."**

## QUESTION 5

### 5. What are your salary expectations?

**What are you looking for in terms of salary? It seems like a simple question, but your answer can knock you out of content for the job if you overprice yourself. Here's the best way to answer questions about salary.**

**You want to aim high, but what if you put yourself out of salary range? On the other hand, if your target compensation is too low, you leave the employer room to go even lower and you could end up miserable.**

**Worse, you don't want to decide before you even know what the job is, as you do when asked to disclose a salary on an application.**

**While there may be no right answer, there is a way to think about the question and get what you want. Here's how.**



## **S**AMPLE ANSWER



**As difficult as it may be to answer the question, it's more difficult not to - especially on an electronic job application. Try and skip the question and you can't move on to the next page, and the field only accepts a number. That is when the exact number is important.**

**If you are in an interview, you could try to skirt around the question with a broad answer, such as: "My salary expectations are in line with my experience and qualifications." Or "If this is the right job for me, I am sure we can come to an agreement on salary." But the recruiter or interviewer will likely be looking for a number, so come prepared with a target salary figure or at least a range in mind.**



## QUESTION 6

### 6. Why are you leaving or have left your job?

When asked about why you are moving on, stick with the facts, be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.

One of the questions that is typically asked in an interview is "Why are you leaving your job?" or "Why did you leave your previous job?" if you have already moved on. If you were fired from your job, use these answers to respond.

If you left of your own accord, review these suggestions on how best to answer and tailor your response to meet your particular situation.

Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

- **I found myself bored with the work and looking for more challenges. I am an excellent employee and I didn't want my unhappiness to have any impact on the job I was doing for my employer.**
- **There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.**
- **I'm looking for a bigger challenge and to grow my career and I couldn't job hunt part time while working. It didn't seem ethical to use my former employer's time**
- **I was laid-off from my last position when our department was eliminated due to corporate restructuring.**
- **I'm relocating to this area due to family circumstances and left my previous position in order to make the move.**
- **I've decided that is not the direction I want to go in my career and my current employer has no opportunities in the direction I'd like to head.**
- **After several years in my last position, I'm looking for an company where I can contribute and grow in a team-oriented environment.**
- **I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my technical skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in the past.**
- **I recently received my degree and I want to utilize my educational background in my next position.**
- **I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.**

## QUESTION 7

### 7. Why do you want this job?

**This question gives you an opportunity to show the interviewer what you know about the job and the company. Be specific about what makes you a good fit for this role, and mention aspects of the company and position that appeal to you.**

**Interviewers will be listening for a response that shows you've done research on the company. Your answer should also emphasize what you can contribute - what will you bring to the position? Be specific about what makes you a good fit for this role, and mention aspects of the company and position that appeal to you.**

**Even if it's true, do not mention salary, hours, or commute as the primary reasons you want the job.**

## **S**AMPLE ANSWER

- **This is not only a fine opportunity, but this company is a place where my qualifications can make a difference. As a finance executive well versed in the new stock options law, I see this position as made to order. It contains the challenge to keep me on my toes. That's the kind of job I like to anticipate every morning.**
- **I want this job because it seems tailored to my competencies, which include sales and marketing. As I said earlier, in a previous position I created an annual growth rate of 22% in a flat industry. Additionally, the team I would work with looks terrific.**
- **I well understand that this is a company on the way up. Your web site says the launch of several new products is imminent. I want be a part of this business as it grows.**
- **Having worked through a college business major building decks and porches for neighbors, this entry-level job for the area's most respected home builder has my name on it.**
- **As a dedicated technician, I like doing essential research. Being part of a breakthrough team is an experience I'd love to repeat.**
- **This job is a good fit for what I've been interested in throughout my career. It offers a nice mix of short- and long-term activities. My short-term achievements keep me cranked up and the long-term accomplishments make me feel like a billion bucks.**
- **I want this job selling theater tickets because I'd be good at it. I'm good at speaking to people and handling cash. I would like a job with regular hours and I'm always on time.**