

GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SAMPLE ANSWERS

Traditional Interview Questions

An interviewer will generally ask traditional questions to get a sense of who you are as a person, and whether you are the right fit for their organisation. Quite often, they use these questions to explore your personal and professional motivations, and find out a little about your attitudes and aptitude.

1. What can you tell me about yourself?

This is a common opening question, partly because the interviewers want to know more about you, and how you react on the spot. You should keep your answer to 2 minutes and cover key points from your education, work experience and interest in the field.

2. What is your key strength?

A long list of adjectives, such as 'hard-working', 'responsible' and 'bubbly' is not what an interviewer is looking for. Think about your greatest strength and give an example, or explain your reasoning. For example:

'I think my greatest strength is my flexibility. I have learned to work in conditions that change on a daily basis, and throughout the day. I have also learned to recognise that some things require individual attention, whilst others need a team approach. I think that my flexibility has developed through working in lots of different job roles, especially most recently in a busy hospital where I have had to quickly change my priorities depending on the demands of the ward'

3. What are your weaknesses?

An interviewer wants you to acknowledge that you have weaknesses, and are taking practical steps to address them. Take time to consider a professional and relevant answer to this question. A good answer to this question would be:

'I used to find it difficult to work on several projects simultaneously, and preferred to finish one task before starting another. However, I went on a time management course recently, and I have learned to prioritise and manage my time more effectively. This has made it easier to multi-task'

4. Why should I consider hiring you?

This is an opportunity for you to give a sales pitch showing why you are suited to the role, and any additional skills that you can bring. If you feel that you are not fully qualified, then here is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate how willing you are to learn. An example:

'I have considerable hands-on experience working alongside members of the public in both employed and voluntary positions, and have demonstrated I am capable at building rapport and positive relationships with people. I have been commended on my warm nature, which I feel will be really valuable for this role...'

5. Where do you want to be in five years' time?

This is your chance to show the interviewer that you are wishing to remain in the company, and are professionally determined. Talk enthusiastically about realistic short-term and long-term targets, basing your answers on the employer, the industry, and your skills and experiences.

Outline the various steps to your ideal job, but only in relation to the position that you're applying for and the company's career development offering. An example is:

'Within five years' time, I would hope that I was still working here at X, and still making a great contribution. In the short term, I would like to have successfully led a major project of my own, and within five years, I would love to be managing my own team'

6. Why do you want to work here?

Interviewers want to know that you have researched the company, and can demonstrate their core values with passion. In your answer, you could draw upon what you enjoy in your personal, professional and academic life and how these relate to the organisation. It is also recommended to highlight key parts of the advertisement that enticed you in your application.

7. Why are you leaving your present position?

In this question, an interviewer is looking for warning signs that you are not a suitable candidate. In this question, you need to make it clear that you are a strong performer, enjoy your present position but are looking for new challenges and opportunities. It is vital that you are not negative about your present employer, even if you have had a bad experience.

A typical response to this question:

'Although I enjoy my present position, and really like working alongside my team, I feel ready for a new challenge. I have become aware that in my present workplace, there are limited opportunities for me to continue my professional development'

8. What are your salary expectations?

A large number of interviewees are very troubled by this question because they do not feel confident talking about salary. If you have researched the role, and the salary is published, use this as a guideline for your conversation. Remember that it is acceptable to discuss salary expectations as a range rather than a definite number. A typical answer could be:

'I am looking for a starting salary somewhere between £25,000 and £30,000'

9. Have you applied anywhere other than here?

This could be a yes or a no answer, but if you are applying for other jobs, explain why. A typical answer might be:

'I did apply for other positions initially, as I recognised that I may not be offered this role. I do have other interviews lined up, but I do want this job, as the company matches my values, and the role matches my skills and background. If I was offered this position, I would be withdrawing my other applications.'

10. Is there anything that you would like to ask me?

Every interviewer will give you an opportunity to ask questions at the end, so always try to have at least one prepared. It shows that you have researched the company, and are interested in the position. Here are some insightful questions you may want to ask:

- a) What types of training opportunities do you offer?

This is a classic question to highlight that you are keen to advance your professional development and skills inside the role

- b) Can you tell me how this role relates to the overall structure of the organisation

In this question, you are showing you are keen to know where you sit in the organisation. It indicates that you are keen on team-work and looks as though you wish to know how your contribution affects the rest of the organisation

c) In what way is performance measured and reviewed?

This flags up your appreciation of meeting targets and expectations within the role. In asking this, you will be seen as someone who values performance, commitment to the role, is reliable and returns results.

Relevant websites

- <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tool> - interactive practice interview
- <http://www.interview-skills.co.uk/free-information/the-successful-interview-guide> - full career guide including CVs, cover letters and interviews
- <http://www.jobsite.co.uk/bemyinterviewer/> - interactive practice interview
- <http://myinterviewsimulator.com/> - interview simulator

Related documents

- [Guide to Interviews](#)
- [Sample Interview Questions](#)
- [General Interview Questions and Sample Answers](#)
- [Competency Based Interview Questions and Sample Answers \(Using Situation, Task, Action, Response \(STAR\)\)](#)