



Advice on 20 Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself

The most often asked question in interviews. You need to have a short statement prepared in your mind. Be careful that it does not sound rehearsed. Limit to work-related items unless instructed otherwise. Talk about things you have done and jobs you have held that relate to the positions you are interviewing for.

2. What do co-workers say about you?

Be prepared with a quote or two from a co work or supervisor. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work well. Eg. "John Jones, my Manager at Company X always said I had the best time management skills he had seen." This statement is as powerful as if John had said it himself.

3. Why did you leave your last job?

Stay positive irrespective of the circumstances. Never refer to a major problem with management and never speak ill of supervisors, co-workers, or the organisation. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to do something different, or other positive reasons.

4. What do you know about this organisation?

This question is one reason to do some research on the organisation before the interview. Find out where they have been and where they are going. What are the current issues and who are the major players. The Internet is an excellent tool for this.

5. Are you applying for other jobs?

Be honest. It is good to let potential employers know you have other opportunities without giving too much detail. Keep the focus on this job and what you can do for this organisation.

6. Why do you want to work for this organisation?

This may take some thought and certainly should be based on the research you have done on the organisation. Sincerity is extremely important here. Relate it to your long-term career goals.

7. What are your salary expectations?

This is a loaded question. Do not answer it. Instead say something like, “That’s a tough question – can you tell me the range for this position” OR “In my last position I was on a total package of \$X” OR “It would very much depend on the details and duties of the job”, then give a broad range.

8. Are you a team player?

Your answer should be a confident ‘YES’ with examples ready to support. Specifics that show you often perform for the good of the team rather than for yourself are good evidence of your team attitude. Do not boast, but be positive and direct. This is a key question.

9. Explain how you would be an asset to this department?

Expect this question. It gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to this position. Give a little advanced thought to this relationship and listen to clues from your agency or potential employer about what they might be looking for.

10. Tell me about your dream job?

Stay away from stating a specific job or industry. If you say the job you are applying for is your dream job, you won’t sound sincere. If you say you have another job in mind for your dream job you will come across as ‘settling’ for this position and that you may become dissatisfied quickly. Keep your response general such as “a job where I love the work and the people, where I feel like I’m really contributing and can’t wait to come to work each day.”

11. What are your greatest strengths?

There are many answers for this question that are good, just be sure to stay positive. A few good examples are: ability to prioritise, problem-solving skills, and ability to work well under pressure, ability to focus on projects/tasks, professionalism, leadership skills, and positive attitude.

12. What is more important to you - the money or the work?

Money is always important, but the quality of the work should be more important. If you are doing something that you hate no amount of money can make you truly content.

13. Tell me about a problem you have had with a supervisor

This is another trick question. This is often to see if you speak ill of your supervisors. Unless you have a carefully chosen example of a time where you and a supervisor had a mild difference of opinion that was resolved in such a way that your two opinions combined to form a positive outcome, it is best to stay positive and be unable to remember any trouble with a supervisor.

14. What motivates you to do your best on the job?

This is a personal trait, but some good examples are: A challenge, achievement, recognition, and respect.

15. What would your previous employer say is your strongest point?

Again, be honest and positive. Some examples are: Loyalty, energy, positive attitude, leadership, team player, initiative, patience, and creativity.

16. What position do you prefer on a team project?

Be honest. If you are comfortable in different roles, point that out. You may prefer to work as a team leader than as an administrator.

17. Describe your management style?

Try to avoid labels such as progressive, salesperson or consensus. The situation or consultative style is safe; it says you will manage according to the situation.

18. Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?

This one is completely up to you. Be honest and don't commit to something that you will not be prepared to do in the future.

19. Tell me about your ability to work under pressure?

You may say that you thrive under pressure. Give an example that relates to the type of position you have applied for.

20. Do you have any questions for me?

Always have some questions prepared. Questions involving areas where you will be an asset to the organisation are good.

