



# Interview Questions

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*"The Ultimate Job-Seekers Resource"*

'Interview Questions' is one in an original series of Fact-Sheets produced by CV Master Careers. Available to download for free at: <http://www.cvmaster.co.uk/career-downloads/>

We have provided the following interview questions to help you prepare for any interview that you might be facing. The questions provided are suitable for use in any interview situation where you may be asked about yourself. You can run through the list and practice, with friends and family.

Just by rehearsing interview questions, you will become more familiar with your own qualifications and will be well prepared to demonstrate how you can benefit an employer. We have provided the following examples together with suggestions on how they can be answered. Think about how **you** would answer each of these, in an interview setting.

## Commonly Asked Interview Questions

- **"Can you tell me all about yourself?"**

The interviewer is trying to gain a picture of you and your experience. Make sure that your answers are initially short; you can always expand further if necessary. Being able to read body language is an advantage in this situation. However, always try to be conscious of the interviewer's time.

They may be asking you about your education, professional achievements, personality, goals and aspirations. When explaining your experience, try to relate it to the job on offer. It is more important to show that you understand what will be expected of you than to brag about your achievements, unless relevant. Always try to show the interviewer the contributions you could make to the company. Give them a reason to hire YOU.

- **"Why do you want to work here?"**

It is important to answer with enthusiasm and in a thoughtful manner. It is your chance to demonstrate your interest in the company, to the interviewer. Relay what you have learned about the job, the company, and the industry as a whole through your own research. Explain exactly what it is that you like about the job. Talk about how your professional skills will benefit the business.

- **"What is it that interests you about our company?"**

Your answer should never be simply "money" as this will make it appear you have no enthusiasm for the job, but are merely being forced into it by financial pressures. Try to identify what it is that excites you about the job. Enthusiasm is an important attribute.

- **"Why did you leave your last job?"**

The interviewer is trying to see how you will fit into the current team. Be honest but also be constructive. The fact that you are looking to change your situation is an encouraging one and you should recognise it as such.

The interviewer may also be trying to find out if you had any problems on your last job. If you did not have any problems, simply give state your reasons for leaving. This could include; "I relocated away from the job", "I was made redundant", "It was a temporary job", "There was no possibility of advancement" or "I wanted a job better suited to my skills".

If you did have difficulties in your last job, be honest. Show that you can accept responsibility and learn from your mistakes. Never describe any employer in negative terms. Demonstrate that whatever difficulties you have faced have been a learning experience. Show that you are committed to your own personal development. If you have taken any steps to correct any issues you faced, describe them. There are many courses, which can help you to overcome any issues you have.

- **"What are your best skills and/or qualities?"**

If you have sufficiently researched the company, you should be able to envisage what skills they will require and value. Before the interview you should prepare some answers so that you can list them, giving examples where you have demonstrated each of these skills. This is not the time to be shy. Practice if you find talking about yourself difficult.

- **"What is your biggest weakness?"**

This question can sometimes be used to catch-out a candidate; don't let it happen to you. Be positive. Try to turn a weakness into a positive strength. For example, you might say: "My work is important to me and I find I spend a lot of time thinking about it" or "Sometimes I work late to make sure the job is done well".

- **"Do you prefer to work individually or as part of a team?"**

Be honest, if you really can't stand working with others then some jobs will not be for you. In most cases, it is important to show that you are equally capable of working well in both situations. Give recent examples to demonstrate. You can draw on other relevant experience such as sports teams or associations.

- **"What are your ambitions?"**

If appropriate, share your goals with the interviewer. It may be important to see if they are happy to support you in your future plans. If you plan to study, be prepared to discuss the merits of your course to your employer. Many companies will be happy to provide training if it will benefit them.

The interviewer wants to know if your plans are compatible with the company's goals. Let them know that you are ambitious enough to have given some consideration to your future. If appropriate, talk about your desire to learn more skills, and develop the ones you have. Be specific about how you intend to meet the goals you have set for yourself.

- **"Where do you see yourself in five years?"**

In order to make sure that you are fully prepared, it may be wise to think about your career goals for the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years.

Avoid replying to this question with "Doing your job" or anything similar, this will make you appear aggressive. Give a flavour of where you plan to be in the future.

- **"Do you have any hobbies?" or "Do you play any sports?"**

The interviewer is looking for evidence of your skills outside of your professional experience. For example, hobbies such as Chess or Bridge demonstrate analytical skills.

Also, the interviewer might simply be curious to see whether you have a balanced life outside of work. Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier and more productive. It is also more likely that you have more developed social skills if you participate in activities outside work.

Individual sports show determination and stamina, whilst playing team sports indicates that you possess team-working skills. The interviewer may also be trying to assess the risk to the company of your pastimes. If you take part in particularly dangerous sporting activities they will be worried about time off work caused by injuries. It may be wise to keep such activities under wraps, judge the situation.

- **"What sort of salary are you expecting?"**

Some people find answering this type of question difficult. You can deflect the question by saying something like: "What are you planning to pay the successful candidate?" Let the employer make the first offer. If you are used to negotiating this is your opportunity to tell the company what you are looking for. Research will help you to understand the typical salaries offered by the company. If you are a skilled negotiator you could use this as an opportunity to increase your

salary. Check other job adverts to see what comparable jobs are paying in your region. This information can help you negotiate your salary once the employer has made you an offer.

- **"Is there anything I have forgotten to ask?" or "Is there anything else you would like to tell me?"**

Use this as an opportunity to summarise your good characteristics and attributes and how they may be used to benefit the company. Convince the interviewer that you understand the job requirements and that you can succeed in the post. Try to leave a lasting (good) impression on the interviewer.

### **Here are some more Job Interview questions that you can rehearse.**

They are arranged by subject, in roughly the order they should appear on your CV. Also included are some questions you may be asked to help demonstrate the skills you have. There are also some miscellaneous questions, which may well crop up, so be prepared!

#### **Your Education & Qualifications**

- How do you think your education has prepared you for this position?
- What were your favourite subjects/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your Degree or College course?
- Do you plan to continue your education?
- What qualifications can offer us that another candidate cannot?
- What qualifications do you have that are relevant to this position?

#### **Your Skills & Competencies**

- What new skills or competencies have you developed recently?
- What skills do you have which are relevant to this post?
- What skills do you think are important for this job?
- What skills would you most like to acquire/develop?
- What specific skills acquired or used in previous jobs relate to this position?

#### **Your Career Goals**

- What are your future plans?
- How will you achieve success?
- How will you judge yourself to be successful?
- What type of position are you interested in?
- How will this job fit in your career plans?

- What do you expect from this job?
- What would you ultimately like to do?

### **Your Work Experience**

- What type of duties have you previously had to perform?
- What have you learned from your past employment?
- What were your biggest responsibilities?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?
- How have your previous jobs prepared you for this position?
- Have you been responsible for the supervision of others?
- Have you ever been responsible for the training of others?
- Have you ever been required to administer disciplinary action?

*N.B. If this is to be your first job then say so and try to relate the question to other activities you have undertaken, such as projects or organising a trip, caring for a child, etc...*

### **Miscellaneous**

- What has been your greatest accomplishment?
- What has been your biggest failure?
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What have you been doing since your last job?
- What qualities do you find important in a colleague?
- Are you prepared to travel?
- What hours can you work?
- When could you start?
- Whom may we contact for references?

### **Demonstrative**

- Give an example of a time you have had to think on your feet
- Give me an example from a previous job where you have shown initiative.
- Describe an occasion when you have used your negotiation skills to resolve a problem.
- Describe a time when you have had to use your communication skills.
- Give me an example of a time you have had to motivate others.
- Describe a time when you have had to motivate yourself.