

Typical interview questions

Not every interviewer will ask you every one of these questions. However, if you are prepared to address these questions, you will leave the impression that you were prepared for your job interview, even if additional questions take you by surprise.

Typical interview questions:

- What are your long-range goals and objectives?
- **Tell me about yourself**
- What are your short-range goals and objectives?
- **Why should we hire you?**
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- **What are your strengths/weaknesses?**
- **How do you think a friend who knows you well would describe you?**
- Describe a situation in which you had to work with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation? Is there anything you would have done differently in hindsight?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? Describe a situation in which you did so.
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- Was there an occasion when you disagreed with a supervisor's decision or company policy? Describe how you handled the situation.
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- Describe a situation in which you worked as part of a team. What role did you take on? What went well and what didn't?
- In what part-time or summer jobs have you been most interested? Why?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
- What two or three things would be most important to you in your job?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
- Are you willing to travel?



What the interview is looking for:

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.

You: Remember, this is a job interview, not a psychological or personal interview. The interviewer is interested in the information about you that relates to your qualifications for employment, such as education, work experiences and extracurricular activities.

Interviewer: What do you expect to be doing five years from now? Ten years from now?

You: The interviewer is looking for evidence of career goals and ambitions rather than minutely specific descriptions. The interviewer wants to see your thought process and the criteria that are important to you.

Interviewer: Why should I hire you?

You: Stress what you have to offer the employer, not how nice it would be to work there or what you want from the employer.

Interviewer: What are your ideas about salary?

You: Research salaries in your field before your interviews so that you know the current salary range for the type of position you are seeking.

Interviewer: Why do you want to work for our company/organization?

You: Not having an answer is a good way to get crossed off the candidate list, and is a common pet peeve of interviewers. Research the employer before your interview; attempt to find out about the organization's products, locations, clients, philosophy, goals, previous growth record and growth plans, how they value employees and customers, etc.

Typical interview format

Because each interviewer is different, there are many types of interviews. Some interviewers are skilled at interviewing; others are not. Some are talkative; others let you do most of the talking. Most interviews, however, will range from open-ended, in which the interviewer asks questions and lets you do most of the talking, to the highly structured, in which the interviewer asks many specific questions following a planned format. Many interviews will fall between these extremes; you should be prepared for any style. The following are four basic stages that can occur in a typical interview:



Typical stages of the interview

- 1. Introductory stage:** The interviewer will establish rapport and create a relaxed, though businesslike, atmosphere. This is where the interviewer gets the very important first impression of you.
- 2. Review of your background and interests:** This usually takes the form of "what," "why," "where," and "when" types of questions. Focus on what you are like, and what you have accomplished, your academic and work background, and your goals. One of the interviewer's objectives is to see if your qualifications match your declared work interests. Give concise but thorough responses to questions.
- 3. Matching begins:** Assuming you have the necessary qualifications, the interviewer will begin the process of determining whether the employer's job opening(s) match your interests and qualifications. If there seems to be a match, the interviewer will probably explain job details to see how interested you are in the position.
- 4. Conclusion:** In this stage, the interviewer should explain what the next steps are in the hiring process. Be sure you understand them. Promptly provide any additional information requested. There should be ample opportunity for you at this point to ask any questions you have.

Interview attire

What your clothes say about you

- In an interview your attire plays a supporting role.
- Your conduct, your interpersonal skills and your ability to articulate intelligent and well thought out responses to questions are the most important elements.
- Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry in which you are trying to become employed.
- Be aware that in some industries, customer contact and image presented to the customer is critical. In such industries, your attire will be judged more critically.
- Your attire should be noticed as being appropriate and well-fitting, but it should not take center stage.
- Dressing nicely and appropriately is a compliment to the person you meet, so if in doubt, err on the side of dressing better than you might need to.
- Even if you are aware that employees of an organization dress casually on the job, dress up for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer.
- Never confuse an interview or business function with a social event. Don't dress for a party or a date.

Interview attire guidelines for men and women

- **Suit:** A two piece matched suit is always the best and safest choice.
- **But what if the job is in a non-suit-wearing work environment:**

Even if you would or could wear jeans on the job, or the work environment is outdoors and very non-suit, wearing a suit to the interview shows you take the interview seriously as a professional meeting. Dressing well is a compliment to the person(s) with whom you meet.

- **Conservative colors / fabric:**

Navy, dark gray (and black for women) — are safe.

Other color trends may come and go; avoid the extremes.

Solids or very subtle weave patterns or plaids (the kind that look solid across a room) are safest.

Wool, wool blends, or good quality micro fiber for women only, are generally the best fabrics in all seasons. Avoid acetate / rayon blends.

- **Details:**

Everything should be clean and well pressed. Carefully inspect clothes for tags, dangling threads, etc

Job Interview DOs

- Do** Dress appropriately for the industry; err on the side of being conservative to show you take the interview seriously. Your personal grooming and cleanliness should be impeccable.
- Do** Know the exact time and location of your interview; know how long it takes to get there, park, find a rest room to freshen up, etc.
- Do** Arrive early; 10 minutes prior to the interview start time.
- Do** Treat other people you encounter with courtesy and respect. Their opinions of you might be solicited during hiring decisions.
- Do** Offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, and have a friendly expression when you are greeted by your interviewer.
- Do** Listen to be sure you understand your interviewer's name and the correct pronunciation.
- Do** Even when your interviewer gives you a first and last name, address your interviewer by title (Ms., Mr., Dr.) and last name, until invited to do otherwise.
- Do** Maintain good eye contact during the interview.
- Do** Sit still in your seat; avoid fidgeting and slouching.
- Do** Respond to questions and back up your statements about yourself with specific examples whenever possible.
- Do** Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question.
- Do** Be thorough in your responses, while being concise in your wording.
- Do** Be honest and be yourself. Dishonesty gets discovered and is grounds for withdrawing job offers and for firing. You want a good match between yourself and your employer. If you get hired by acting like someone other than yourself, you and your employer will both be unhappy.
- Do** Treat the interview seriously and as though you are truly interested in the employer and the opportunity presented.
- Do** Exhibit a positive attitude. The interviewer is evaluating you as a potential co-worker. Behave like someone you would want to work with.
- Do** Have intelligent questions prepared to ask the interviewer. Having done your research about the employer in advance, ask questions which you did not find answered in your research.
- Do** Evaluate the interviewer and the organization s/he represents. An interview is a two-way street. Conduct yourself cordially and respectfully, while thinking critically about the way you are treated and the values and priorities of the organization.
- Do** Make sure you understand the employer's next step in the hiring process; know when and from whom you should expect to hear next. Know what action you are expected to take next, if any.
- Do** When the interviewer concludes the interview, offer a firm handshake and make eye contact. Depart gracefully.
- Do** After the interview, make notes right away so you don't forget critical details.
- Do** Write a thank-you letter to your interviewer promptly.

Job Interview DON'Ts



Don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your decisions and your actions.

Don't make negative comments about previous employers or professors (or others).

Don't falsify application materials or answers to interview questions.

Don't treat the interview casually, as if you are just shopping around or doing the interview for practice. This is an insult to the interviewer and to the organization.

Don't give the impression that you are only interested in an organization because of its geographic location.

Don't give the impression you are only interested in salary; don't ask about salary and benefits issues until the subject is brought up by your interviewer.

Don't act as though you would take any job or are desperate for employment.

Don't make the interviewer guess what type of work you are interested in; it is not the interviewer's job to act as a career advisor to you.

Don't be unprepared for typical interview questions. You may not be asked all of them in every interview, but being unprepared looks foolish.

A job search can be hard work and involve frustrations; **don't** exhibit frustrations or a negative attitude in an interview.

Don't go to extremes with your posture; don't slouch, and don't sit rigidly on the edge of your chair.

Don't assume that a female interviewer is "Mrs." or "Miss." Address her as "Ms." unless told otherwise. Her marital status is irrelevant to the purpose of the interview.

Don't chew gum or smell like smoke.

Don't allow your cell phone to sound during the interview. (If it does, apologize quickly and ignore it.) Don't take a cell phone call.

Don't take your parents, your pet (an assistance animal is not a pet in this circumstance), spouse, fiancé, friends or enemies to an interview. If you are not grown up and independent enough to attend an interview alone, you're insufficiently grown up and independent for a job. (They can certainly visit your new city, at their own expense, but cannot attend your interview.)