



Common Job Interview Questions

Top 10 Job Interview Questions... and how to answer them

It's important to be prepared when interviewing for a position. In our list of Top 10 Common Job Interview Questions below, we'll take you step by step through each question and give tips on how to craft a winning response. Learn from the experts at Lab Support on how to master the art of the interview and land the job you want.

How would you describe yourself?

This is not about your personal life – it's about your work experience and career. This is your chance to highlight your qualifications, good work habits, attributes, and achievements that make you a valuable employee.

What are your strengths?

These are attributes that help qualify you for the job. Identify five strengths that you feel are most in line with the job that you're interviewing for and give a brief example of how you successfully applied each particular strength in a work situation. Example: My time management skills are excellent, which allows me to successfully juggle multiple projects and meet deadlines ahead of schedule.

What are your weaknesses?

Everybody has weaknesses, but keep your answer work-related. When pointing out weaknesses stay away from personal behaviors and instead focus on professional attributes. Point out a few that the interviewer might see as strengths, such as sometimes being too meticulous about the quality of your work. For every weakness, offer a strength that compensates for it. Example: I've learned to make my perfectionism work to my advantage – I am excellent at meeting deadlines, and with my attention to detail I know my work is correct.

How do you handle pressure and stress?

Everyone feels stress; the only difference is in the degree. Give examples of how you have effectively handled stress at work. Example: I start by prioritising my responsibilities, so I get a clear idea of what needs to be done and when, which helps me manage pressure on the job.

Where do you see yourself five (or ten) years from now?

Don't mention goals that you know are most likely not attainable. Instead, emphasise your interest in thoroughly mastering the job that you are applying for. If it seems like you are rushing past the first job, employers might question how motivated you are to carry out those initial duties.

Why should we hire you?

Emphasise your positive attributes related to the job. This is your chance to highlight your organisational skills, positive attitude, and confidence – qualities that make you an ideal candidate for the job. Reiterate some of the key functions of the job, and describe how your qualifications and their requirements match. Example: With five years' experience working in the biochemistry industry, and my proven record of field research and contribution, I could make a big difference at your company. I'm confident that I would be a great addition to your team.

Describe a difficult work situation and how you positively handled it.

The interviewer is most likely looking for an example of your problem-solving skills and the confidence you showed when using them. Emphasise the skills you used to handle a problem, such as organisational and interactive skills, resolution, or mediation. Provide an example of a problematic situation that actually occurred at work, and then discuss what you did to solve it. Keep your answers positive and be specific. The logic behind these kinds of questions is that how you performed in the past is a predictor of what you will do in the future. Example: Even though it was difficult when Jane Doe quit without notice, we were able to rearrange the department workload to cover the position until a replacement was hired.

Why are you leaving, or why did you leave, your job?

Don't start your conversation by criticising an employer or making inappropriate statements, such as "I need more money." Instead, make a generic statement, such as "It's a career move." It is, however, fitting to discuss company issues, such as the fact that the company is being bought or shut down. If this is the case, a safe answer is that you feel you can no longer be part of the company because of the extensive changes occurring.

Example: I am seeking a position with a stable company that has room for growth and opportunity for advancement.

Why do you want to work here?

The best way to answer this question is to get acquainted with the company. Take time researching the company (the About Us section of the employer's website is a good place to start), so that you can talk about the benefits of working for this employer. If you have a connection at the company, ask them if you can get some insight on what the company is looking for in an ideal employee.

What challenges are you looking for in your next position?

The answers employers are looking for reflect how you would effectively use your skills and experience when challenges present themselves, if you were hired for the job. You can also comment that you enjoy challenges and have the ability to successfully meet them. You can further describe specific examples of challenges you have met and goals that you have achieved.

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