

Typical Interview questions

These examples can give you some idea of the type of question you may face in an interview. Start thinking about how you would approach your answers and importantly what evidence you have to support your answers. Remember that you should obviously have in mind the particular needs of the job and employer you are applying to!

Questions you may be asked:

'Why do you want this job?'

Do say: It's the natural next step, and explain why you want to join the firm. Show off your knowledge and make all that research you have done worthwhile.
Don't say: It's time to settle down and this looks like a good option.

'Where does it fit in with your career plans?'

Do talk about: steady progression, and cementing your experience.
Don't say: you really want the manager's job. If you are ambitious it is probably obvious.

'What are your strengths?'

Do talk about: things which are clearly and directly related to the job.
Don't say: you're a great team player if you are applying to be a lighthouse keeper or a night watchman. Similarly don't talk about how well you work on your own if the job requires strong teamwork.

'What are your weaknesses?'

Do mention: weaknesses that could be interpreted as strengths - perhaps you have a tendency to work 'too hard'.
Don't talk about: anything too damning, and remember to tell the interviewer how you have countered any weaknesses.

'What's been your biggest success at work?'

Do talk about: your own achievements rather than how you helped somebody else to achieve.
Don't talk about: achievements outside work unless they are relevant. The ingenious system you designed for cataloguing your family photographs is probably only relevant if you want to be an archivist or freelance photographer.

'What is the biggest mistake you ever made?'

Do say: something fairly innocuous and stress what you've learned from the experience or how you turned the situation around.
Don't: claim you never make mistakes, but nor should you mention anything too serious such as losing the firm's most important client, setting fire to the factory, sleeping with the chairman's wife/husband.

'What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced?'

Do say: something relevant to the job. This does not mean it has to be work related. For example, if you are looking for a move into management, strong management skills can be displayed in various situations outside work: sport, voluntary work and so on. Explain how you faced up to the challenge and came good.
Don't mention: failures - you've already talked about weaknesses and mistakes.

'How do you cope with difficult colleagues?'

Do say: it's impossible to get on with everyone, but you don't let it get in the way of your work.
Don't say: by avoiding them wherever possible.

'You've changed jobs three times in the past five years, why should I think you are more serious about this one?'

Do explain: how all your moves have been the obvious response to great opportunities that came your way.
Don't say: you just kept getting bored.

'We're looking for someone with more experience than you, so why should we give you the job?'

Do say: it's quality, not quantity that counts. Find some examples to show how well you cope with being thrown in at the deep end and how quickly you adapt and learn.
Don't try: to convince the interviewer that enthusiasm is more important than experience.

'What do you do outside work?'

Do mention: things that suggest you are interesting, energetic and well-rounded. Watching TV all evening won't give you a leg-up, but playing sport, or taking part in a local activity groups could tip the balance in your favour if there are two equally-qualified candidates.
Don't say: you're an opera buff if you aren't. At least be prepared for the follow up question - for all you know the recruiter might fancy him/herself as a bit of a Pavarotti.

'What's your current salary?'

Do: talk about your current salary package including any perks such as car, pension, interest-free loans, and any bonuses you are expecting.
Don't say: you are earning far more than you are - it's easy for recruiters to check.

'How much do you know about our business?'

Do: show off a bit more of that research you have been doing. Good things to mention are any new products you know about and trends and challenges in the market.
Don't: be tempted to make anything up - or guess. It's better to say less and be right.

'Why are you leaving your current company?'

Do say: it fits in with your career plans; it's time for you to take on a new challenge.
Don't say: you don't get on with your current manager, or that a round of redundancies is in the offing and you are next for the chop.

'What other jobs are you applying for?'

Do mention: jobs in a similar field - or the interviewer won't take you seriously.

Some other questions you may encounter:

Why do you want to work for us?

What aspect of our business most interests you and why?

What do you know about us?

Why should we recruit you?

Tell me about a time when you demonstrated initiative/leadership/problem solving?

Tell me about a team you were in which failed?

What is your greatest achievement to date and why?

Which aspect of the job would you find most difficult?

Where does this position fit into your career plans?

Give me an example of a situation where you had to handle pressure?

What do you think are the major challenges facing the industry?

Tell me about yourself?

Questions you could ask:

All Candidates, could ask at the beginning of the interview so you can structure your responses to the interviewers questions:

"Why has the position become vacant?"

"What do you see as the main challenges of the role?"

"What qualities / skills are you looking for?"

"What is the caliber of candidates you have interviewed to date?"

"What are the career opportunities available by taking this position?"

"What are the 3/5/10 year development growth plans for the Department / Company?"

"What's the makeup of the team as far as experience?"

"What does this company value the most and how do you think my work for you will further these values?"

"What kinds of processes are in place to help me support the activities of the other department members?"

"What do qualities do you think I can bring to you to add value to the role / Department?"

"What's the most important thing I can do to help within the first 90 days of my employment?"

"When key people leave the company, why do they leave and where do they usually go?"

Towards the end of the interview some questions you could ask to judge the success of the interview and close the interviewer down for a response:

"How do you rate my skills / abilities for the role?"

"Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to perform this job?"

"Where do you see my strengths and weaknesses for the role?"

be careful here as this question could be turned on you, but equally you can use it to go over any mis-understanding or re-emphasise a skill or experience you have.

"Where do I rank in relation to the other candidates?"

"Do you have any concerns that I need to clear up in order to be the top candidate?"

"When you invite candidates back for second round interview?"

"Will you be asking me back for a second interview?"

Management level questions here the idea is to ask strategic / planning type questions to help answer create an understanding of the challenge.

"Of the main priorities and expectations attached to this role, which ones are well understood and measurable, and which are not?"

"If the CEO/MD/Departmental Manager/you were to name the three most important priorities for this role/the successful candidate to achieve in the first six months, what would they be, and how would they be measured?"

"What are the priorities and challenges as regards areas for change and improvement facing the department/organisation/team within/connecting/relating to the role?"

"If someone were to come into this role and begin to make a significant impact on culture and morale, what sort of changes would people/you/the management/the board/the CEO want to see most, and how would this be measured?"

"It's normal that most roles are operating considerably below their potential to contribute to strategic change/organisational performance and improvement; what are the expectations in terms of broadening the scope of this role?"

"How might this role positively impact on/contribute to customer relations/organisational development/culture/staff morale/training and development/legislative anticipation/market development/sales development/business retention in ways that it's not done so far?"

"Where do think there might be opportunities for this role to connect with/cooperate with other functions, and what's stopped that happening in the past?"

"What are the vulnerabilities in processes/people/business retention/grow/ technology, ITC systems within the organisation/department that need to be attended to?"

Questions not to ask until invited to talk about salary/benefits package and keep it low key.

- What is the salary for the position
- What other benefits do you offer
- What are the contracted hours
- What holiday entitlement is available for the position
- When are salaries reviewed
- What are the training opportunities for the position