

Common Interview Questions

Interviews can be a daunting experience but you can help alleviate your nerves by preparing answers to popular questions in advance.

Here we take a look at different types of interview questions and the best way to answer those, giving you the best possible chance of being offered the job.

Interview questions fall into these four main categories:

- Questions about you
- Questions about your work experience and knowledge
- Questions about why you want this job
- Competency-based questions

Preparing for each different type of interview question will give you the best chance of getting your dream job;

Interview questions about you

- **What?** These are usually the opening questions
- **Why?** These questions are designed to find out a bit more about you: your personality, your experience and your knowledge

Q. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

This is a common first interview question and is designed to get you talking. Firstly, relax!

You should practice doing this without waffling. Start with an opening statement, describe your current job, some career highlights and details of your education, and include something about you as a person. If you have no work experience then talk about what you did at school, or a club that you're a member of.

Tip: End by asking the interviewer if they would like you to explain anything else as it nicely wraps up your answer.

Q. Where do you want to be in five years time?

The interviewer wants to know that if they hire you, you plan to stay with the company long term. Although you want to show ambition, your answer must be realistic.

Tip: Describe how you want to make a contribution to this company as you develop experience. You can emphasis specific goals you would like to achieve such as to lead a major project or help the company to make money.

Q. What are your strengths?

The interviewer wants to know what your key strengths are in relation to this particular job. Make sure you choose examples that are relevant to this job but also examples that set you apart from other applicants. Try to have 3 strengths available.

Tip: For most jobs you will want to include an example of working well as part of a team as most companies are after people who fit in well with others.



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Interview questions about your work experience and knowledge

- **What?** This is where the interview gets a bit more in depth, as the interviewer tries to find out more about you. These questions usually form the main part of the first interview.
- **Why?** These are designed to dig a little deeper and find out if you have the skills needed to actually do the job.

Q. Tell me about your current job?

They want to know about your job and how it has prepared you for the position you are being interviewed for. Are you motivated to move to this job or are you moving away from a job you dislike? Make sure the examples that you share are all relevant to the job you are applying for.

Tip: You want to make sure that your examples are positive and end with what attracts you to this job.

Q. What do you dislike about your job?

They want to make sure that you are not someone who complains too much. You need to come across as someone who remains positive even when dealing with things they dislike.

Start by highlighting the positives and explain how you have worked around your dislikes.

Tip: Don't mention problems with people and ensure you come across as someone who is upbeat and positive.

Q. Why do you want to leave your current job?

The interviewer is looking for any disparities in your answer. They want to make sure that you're not

going to cause them problems later on down the line. You should make it clear that you're a strong performer in your current role and are now looking for a new opportunity.

Tip: Avoid any negative comments about your company, Manager or any of the people you work with. This will only make you look unprofessional.

Interview questions about why you want this job

- **What?** Great, so they must like you to be asking you these questions. They want to know if you like them.
- **Why?** These questions are designed to see if you're serious about this job; there's nothing worse to an employer than having to re-advertise a job because the person they offered it to has changed their mind.

Q. Are you applying for any other jobs?

This could be a yes or no answer, but the interviewer wants you to elaborate. They know that you're likely to be applying for a number of jobs, what they want is reassurance that this is the job you want.

You can say that you are realistic and you may not get this job, hence applying for others. Emphasis that you're looking in this particular area, and that your job search is focused on this.

Tip: You could mention that other companies are interested and you have other interviews lined up, but you want this job because it's a great match for your skills and background.

Q. Why do you want to work for us?

They are seeking assurance that you want to work



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for this company in this job. They want to know you are genuinely interested in the company and the opportunities this job provides.

You need to demonstrate that you understand what makes this company different from its competitors – show that you have done some research. Think about what really appeals to you about this job and company and how you can stand out from the other people who are applying.

Tip: Make your passion and interest in this job clear.

Q. Would you accept if you received an offer?

The interviewer wants to know that you will say 'yes' if you are offered the job. It's frustrating and costly to have to re-advertise a job. If this role involves a drop in salary they want to be sure you have considered the decision fully.

Tip: The most important thing is to avoid any sign of hesitation in your words, voice or body language. Stress your enthusiasm for the job.

Competency-based interview questions

- **What?** Often used in second interviews, they want you to explain how you'd handle different work situations, using examples from your past experience.
- **How do I prepare?**
Firstly, you need to research all the likely questions around the competencies related to the job you are applying for.
Secondly, you'll need to sift through your employment and personal history to find examples that show you've got the relevant skills and abilities.

Q. Describe a situation in which you led a team

Outline the situation, your role and the task of the group overall. Describe any problems which arose and how they were tackled. Say what the result was and what you learned from it.

Q. What is your greatest achievement?

Organising a sport or fund-raising event, taking part in a race, or learning and using a new language or musical instrument are good examples.

Q. How do you cope in adversity?

The wording of this question cunningly opens up a whole raft of conversations. Whether you choose to talk about a disappointment, a disagreement, or a decision that didn't go your way, employers will be looking at your coping mechanisms and at how robust you are. Did you learn from it, dust yourself down and go on to build on the experience?

Your Consultant at Optima is available at any time to provide you with additional advice and coaching before your interview.

