

Be Ready to Answer the Top 10 Interview Questions

Your best weapon to mastering the job interview is to practice, practice, practice your answers to the most commonly asked questions by employers. The most certain way to sabotage your chances to win over a potential employer is to try and wing the interview. Your answers can appear aimless and without direction, making you look unprepared or worse, unqualified.

Don't risk the future of your career by flying by the seat of your pants. Prepare yourself by developing answers to the most commonly asked questions:

Tell Me a Little Something About Yourself. This is probably one of the most dreaded questions of all time. We quiver and sweat in our seats wondering what the employer really wants to know. Hey, relax! For starters, this is a great opportunity for you to sell yourself to the employer. Talk about your key accomplishments and strengths and how these factors will benefit the employer in the desired position. Write down ahead of time what you plan to say; perfect it; then practice it every chance you get.

Why Do You Want to Leave Your Current Job? This question is basically a wolf in sheep's clothing. It appears harmless enough, but it can damage your potential in a heartbeat if you're not careful. By all means, keep your answers to this question as positive as possible. Above all, do not dwell on how much you hate your current boss! The interviewer wants to hire a team player to the position, not a negative and vindictive hater.

Are You Still Employed and If Not, Why Not? If you are, great, but if you aren't, you can still use your answer to this question to shine a light on your positive features. For example, if you were laid off or terminated, focus less on the actual termination and more on what you learned from the whole process. You'll look mature and wise in the employer's eyes!

Do You Have Any Budgeting Experience? If you haven't, be honest; but you can answer in a way that shows that you have had some exposure to adhering to a budget—on a project, for example. If you do have budgeting experience, discuss your fiscal responsibility.

Have You Ever Managed Anyone? This question is most important to those who are seeking a supervisory type of position. If you have managerial experience, elaborate on how many people you have supervised and what their positions were in the spectrum of the organizational chart. However, if you haven't had direct managerial practice, talk up how much you were a part of the decision process of a team project, or how you organized volunteers for a fundraiser.

What Are Your Strengths as an Employee? To adequately answer this question, you need to be aware of the strengths you possess in the following areas: personality, experience, and skills. Once that information is known, match your strengths to the requirements of the position for which you are interviewing.

What Are Your Weaknesses? Obviously, no one likes to admit that they have any weaknesses, especially in front of a potential employer. So what do you do? You can provide ONE trait about yourself that is the least important to the position. Refrain from canned responses such as you are a perfectionist or a workaholic.

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Discuss How You Make Important Decisions. If you are interviewing for a supervisory role, you definitely want to come across as someone who is able to ask for input from others, yet is comfortable making the final decisions. Also, consider the type of position and company. For example, is it a budgetary role at a financial institution? In that case, you probably will want to emphasize that you exercise great care and caution when making big decisions.

Where Do You Want to Be Five Years From Now? Suffice it to say, do not answer this question with, “Retired.” Keep your answers positive and simple, with just a tinge of ambition. Think along the lines of a “motivated” versus “rat race” mentality.

What Have Been the Biggest Accomplishments of Your Career so Far? Focus on accomplishments that directly relate to the open position. Discuss the challenge you were presented with, your actions, and the end result. Did you streamline processes? Devise a way to increase customer satisfaction? Were you recognized by management for your efforts? The way you answer this question will distinguish you from other applicants since your answer will require you to go beyond the basic job responsibilities.

A FINAL NOTE

As you can see, the interview is more than just showing up on time in the right clothes. It is your best and only opportunity to convince an employer that he or she should hire you. If you were selected for an interview, consider yourself lucky because you are halfway to the finish line. Make sure you are prepared with relevant and well-thought-out answers to bring in a home run interview.

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