

Sample Interview Questions with Suggested Ways of Answering

Q. Tell me about yourself.

A. This is the dreaded, classic, open-ended interview question and likely to be among the first. It's your chance to introduce your qualifications, good work habits, etc. Keep it mostly work and career related.

Q. Why do you want to leave your current job? (Why did you leave your last job?)

A. Be careful with this. Avoid trashing other employers and making statements like, "I need more money." Instead, make generic statements such as, "It's a career move."

Q. What are your strengths?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job.

Q. What are your weaknesses?

A. Everybody has weaknesses, but don't spend too much time on this one and keep it work related. Along with a minor weakness or two, try to point out a couple of weaknesses that the interviewer might see as strengths, such as sometimes being a little too meticulous about the quality of your work. (Avoid saying "I work too hard." It's a predictable, common answer.) For every weakness, offer a strength that compensates for it.

Q. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

A. Answer with positive, work-oriented adjectives, such as conscientious, hard-working, honest and courteous, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well.

Q. What do you know about our company?

A. To answer this one, research the company before you interview.

Q. Why do you want to work for us?

A. Same as above. Research the company before you interview. Avoid the predictable, such as, "Because it's a great company." Say why you think it's a great company.

Q. Why should I hire you?

A. Point out your positive attributes related to the job, and the good job you've done in the past. Include any compliments you've received from management.

Q. What past accomplishments gave you satisfaction?

A. Briefly describe one to three work projects that made you proud or earned you pats on the back, promotions, raises, etc. Focus more on achievement than reward.

Q. What makes you want to work hard?

A. Naturally, material rewards such as perks, salary and benefits come into play. But again, focus more on achievement and the satisfaction you derive from it.

Q. What type of work environment do you like best?

- A.** Tailor your answer to the job. For example, if in doing your job you're required to lock the lab doors and work alone, then indicate that you enjoy being a team player when needed, but also enjoy working independently. If you're required to attend regular project planning and status meetings, then indicate that you're a strong team player and like being part of a team.
- Q.** Why do you want this job?
- A.** To help you answer this and related questions, study the job ad in advance. But a job ad alone may not be enough, so it's okay to ask questions about the job while you're answering. Say what attracts you to the job. Avoid the obvious and meaningless, such as, "I need a job."
- Q.** How do you handle pressure and stress?
- A.** This is sort of a double whammy, because you're likely already stressed from the interview and the interviewer can see if you're handling it well or not. Everybody feels stress, but the degree varies. Saying that you whine to your shrink, kick your dog or slam down a fifth of Jack Daniels are not good answers. Exercising, relaxing with a good book, socializing with friends or turning stress into productive energy are more along the lines of the "correct" answers.
- Q.** Explain how you overcame a major obstacle.
- A.** The interviewer is likely looking for a particular example of your problem-solving skills and the pride you show for solving it.
- Q.** Where do you see yourself five (ten or fifteen) years from now?
- A.** Explain your career-advancement goals that are in line with the job for which you are interviewing. Your interviewer is likely more interested in how he, she or the company will benefit from you achieving your goals than what you'll get from it, but it goes hand in hand to a large degree. It's not a good idea to tell your potential new boss that you'll be going after his or her job, but it's okay to mention that you'd like to earn a senior or management position.
- Q.** What qualifies you for this job?
- A.** Tout your skills, experience, education and other qualifications, especially those that match the job description well. Avoid just regurgitating your resume. Explain why.
- Q.** Why did you choose your college major?
- A.** The interviewer is likely fishing to see if you are interested in your field of work or just doing a job to get paid. Explain why you like it. Besides your personal interests, include some rock-solid business reasons that show you have vision and business sense.