

Interview Strategies: Answering the 16 Toughest Questions

As you prepare for your interview, you may be considering which questions the employer is going to ask you. While there's no way to know for sure what topics will be covered, there are several popular interview questions you can expect to be asked.

Here's how to answer the 16 most common interview questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How would you describe yourself?
3. What makes you unique?
4. Why do you want to work here?
5. What interests you about this role?
6. What motivates you?
7. What are you passionate about?
8. Why are you leaving your current job?
9. What are your greatest strengths?
10. What are your greatest weaknesses?
11. What are your goals for the future?
12. Where do you see yourself in five years?
13. Can you tell me about a difficult work situation and how you overcame it?
14. What is your salary range expectation?
15. Why should we hire you?
16. Do you have any questions?

Every interviewer is different and their questions may vary. By preparing your answers to these common interview questions, you can develop compelling talking points to make a great impression during your next job interview.

Common interview questions (with example answers)

1. Tell me about yourself.

Your interviewers will likely start out with a question about yourself and your background to get to know you. Start out by giving them an overview about your current position or activities, then provide the most important and relevant highlights from your background that make you most qualified for the role. If you'd like, it is generally acceptable to include some light personal details about things like your pets, hobbies or family. Doing so can help you be more memorable and personable to the interviewer.

Example: *Currently, I serve as the assistant to three of the company's five executive team members, including the CEO. During my time at the organization, I have been recognized for my time management skills, writing abilities and commitment to excellence.*

From my 12 years of experience as an executive assistant, I've developed the ability to anticipate roadblocks and create effective alternative plans. My greatest value to any executive is my ability to work independently, freeing up their time to focus on the needs of the business.

It's clear that you're looking for someone who understands the nuances of managing a CEO's busy day and can proactively tackle issues. As someone with a sharp eye for detail and a drive to organize, I thrive on making sure every day has a clear plan and every plan is clearly communicated."

For more on answering this question, visit [Interview Question: "Tell Me About Yourself."](#)

2. How would you describe yourself?

When an interviewer asks you to talk about yourself, they're looking for information about how your qualities and characteristics align with the skills they believe are required to succeed in the role. If possible, include quantifiable results to demonstrate how you use your best attributes to drive success.

Example: *"I am a vigilant and proactive Security Officer working to ensure safe, secure, and orderly environments. I'm also a lifelong learner, always seeking out the latest security equipment and techniques to patrol buildings.*

Lastly, I am thorough, documenting all incidents and actively making suggestions to management about security improvements and changes."

3. What makes you unique?

Employers often ask this question to identify why you might be more qualified than other candidates they're interviewing. To answer, focus on why hiring you would benefit the employer. Since you don't know the other applicants, it can be challenging to think about your answer in relation to them. Addressing why your background makes you a good fit will let employers know why your traits and qualifications make you well prepared.

Example: *"What makes me unique is that I have four years of experience in the retail industry. Because I've had first-hand experience fielding shoppers' questions, feedback and complaints, I know what customers want. I know what it takes to create a positive consumer experience through marketing."*

4. Why do you want to work here?

Interviewers often ask this question as a way to determine whether or not you took time to research the company and to learn why you see yourself as a good fit. The best way to prepare for this question is to do your homework and learn about the products, services, mission, history and culture of the workplace. In your answer, mention the aspects of the company that appeal to you and align with your career goals. Explain why you're looking for these things in an employer.

Example: *“The company’s mission to help graduates pay off their university debts speaks to me. I’ve been in that situation, and I’d love the opportunity to work with a company that’s making a difference. Finding a company with a positive work environment and values that align with my own has remained a priority throughout my job search, and [insert company name] ranks at the top of the list.”*

5. What interests you about this role?

Like the previous question, hiring managers often include this question to make sure you understand the role, and to give you the opportunity to highlight your relevant skills. In addition to thoroughly reading the job description, it can be helpful to compare the role requirements against your skills and experience. Choose a few things you particularly enjoy or excel at, and focus on those in your answer.

Example: *“I’ve been passionate about user experience design for most of my professional career. I was excited to see that [insert company name] uses Adobe products because I’m well-versed in the entire suite. Also, I’m a huge advocate for applying agile workflows to design. I think it’s the most effective way to tackle large projects. I was able to successfully build and launch an agile process in my previous role as UX manager, and we saw considerable improvements in project speed.”*

6. What motivates you?

Employers ask this question to gauge your level of self-awareness and ensure your sources of motivation align with the role. To answer, be as specific as possible, provide real-life examples and tie your answer back to the job role.

Example: *“Making a true difference in the lives of my patients and their families motivates me to strive for excellence in everything I do. I look forward to seeing my patient’s reaction when we get a positive outcome that will change their lives forever. That’s why I became a nurse, and why I’m pursuing a position in pediatrics.”*

7. What are you passionate about?

Much like the previous question about motivation, employers might ask what you are passionate about to better understand what drives you and what you care most deeply about. This can both help them understand whether you are a good fit for the role and if it fits into your larger goals. To answer, choose something you are genuinely passionate about, explain why you’re passionate about it, give examples of how you’ve pursued this passion and relate it back to the job.

Example: *“As an experienced, service-oriented professional with more than a decade of experience working in boutique salons, I thrive on creating a welcoming environment for all clients and providing the highest quality skincare services. My specialized training, along with my interpersonal skills, has helped me become adept at developing long-term, trusted relationships that help to build a loyal client base. These relationships are the reason I’m excited to go to work every day.”*

8. Why are you leaving your current job?

There are many reasons for leaving a job. Prepare a thoughtful answer that will give your interviewer confidence that you're being deliberate about this job change. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of your current or previous role, focus on the future and what you hope to gain in your next position.

Example: *"I'm looking for an opportunity that gives me the ability to build closer, long-term relationships with clients. In my current role, the sales cycle is so short that I don't spend as much time building a relationship with my customers as I'd like. Relationship-building is one of the reasons I chose a career in sales, and I look forward to working with a company where that's a top priority."*

9. What are your greatest strengths?

This question gives you an opportunity to talk about both your technical and soft skills. To answer, share qualities and personal attributes and then relate them back to the role for which you're interviewing.

Example: *"I'm a natural problem-solver. I find it rewarding to dig deep and uncover solutions to challenges—it's like solving a puzzle. It's something I've always excelled at, and something I enjoy. Much of product development is about finding innovative solutions to challenging issues, which is what drew me to this career path in the first place."*

For more on answering this question, visit [Interview Question: "What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?"](#)

10. What are your greatest weaknesses?

It can feel awkward to discuss your weaknesses in an environment where you're expected to focus on your accomplishments. However, when answered correctly, sharing your weaknesses can show that you are self-aware and want to continuously get better at your job—traits that are extremely attractive to many employers. Remember to start with the weakness and then discuss the measures you've taken to improve. This way, you're finishing your answer on a positive note.

Example: *"I sometimes have trouble saying 'no' and end up overwhelmed by my workload. Earlier in my career, I would take on so many projects that I'd work evenings and weekends. It was stressful. I realized this was counterproductive, so I started using workload management tools and setting better expectations for myself and my teammates."*

11. What are your goals for the future?

Often hiring managers ask about your future goals to determine whether or not you're looking to stay with the company long-term. Additionally, this question is used to gauge your ambition, expectations for your career and your ability to plan ahead. The best way to handle this question

is to determine your current career trajectory and how this role plays into helping you reach your ultimate goals.

Example: *“I would like to continue developing my marketing expertise as well as my leadership skills over the next several years. One of the reasons I’m interested in working for a fast-growing startup company is that I’ll have the ability to wear many hats and collaborate with many different departments. I believe this experience will serve me well in achieving my ultimate goal of someday leading a marketing department.”*

12. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Understanding how you imagine your life in the future can help employers understand whether the trajectory of the role and company fits in with your personal development goals. To answer, provide general ideas about the skills you want to develop, the types of roles you see yourself in and things you would like to have accomplished.

Example: *“In five years, I’d like to be an industry expert in my field, able to train and mentor students and entry-level designers alike. I would also like to gain specialized experience in user experience to be a well-rounded contributor working with design and marketing teams on large-scale projects that make a difference both in the company and the global community.”*

13. Can you tell me about a difficult work situation and how you overcame it?

This question is often used to assess how well you perform under pressure as well as your problem-solving abilities. Keep in mind stories are more memorable than facts and figures, so strive to “show” instead of “tell.” This is also an excellent opportunity to show your human side and how you’re willing to go the extra mile without being asked.

Example: *“It was the first day of my boss’s two-week holiday and our agency’s highest-paying client threatened to leave because he didn’t feel he was getting the personalized service he was promised. I spent my lunch hour on the phone with him, talking through his concerns. We even brainstormed ideas for his next campaign. He was so grateful for the personal attention that he signed another six-month contract before my boss even returned from her trip.”*

14. What is your salary range expectation?

Interviewers ask this question to make sure your expectations are in line with the amount they’ve budgeted for the role. If you give a salary range exceedingly lower or higher than the market value of the position, it gives the impression that you don’t know your worth. Research the typical compensation range for the role on [Indeed Salaries](#), and tend toward the higher side of your range. Be sure to let the hiring manager know if you’re flexible with your rate.

Example: *“My salary expectation is between Rs.XX,XXX and Rs.XX,XXX, which is the average salary for a candidate with my level of experience in this city. However, I am flexible.”*

15. Why should we hire you?

While this question may seem like an intimidation tactic, interviewers generally bring this up to offer you another opportunity to explain why you're the best candidate. Your answer should address the skills and experience you offer and why you're a good culture fit.

Example: *"I have a passion for application development that's grown stronger over the course of my five-year career. The company's mission aligns with my personal values and, from my limited time in the office, I can already tell this is the sort of positive culture that I would thrive in. I want to work for a company that has the potential to reshape the industry, and I believe you're doing just that."*

16. Do you have any questions?

This might be one of the most important questions asked during the interview process because it allows you to explore any subject that hasn't been addressed and shows the interviewer you're excited about the role. By this point, you'll likely have already covered most of the basics about the position and the company, so take time to ask the interviewer questions about their own experiences with the company and gain tips on how you can succeed if you're hired.

Example: *"What do you love about working for this company?" "What would success look like in this role?" "What are some of the challenges people typically face in this position?"*

Much like preparing for a test in school, the best way to succeed in your interview is to study and practice. Do research on the company and the job, and practice your talking points until you feel confident about your answers. The more you prepare, the more likely you are to leave a lasting impression and outperform other candidates.