**1. Tell me about yourself:**  
The most often asked question in interviews. You need to have a short statement prepared in your mind. Be careful that it does not sound rehearsed. **Limit it to work-related items** unless instructed otherwise. Talk about **things you have done and jobs** you have held that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Start with the item farthest back and work up to the present.

**2. Why did you leave your last job?**Stay positive regardless of the circumstances. **Never refer to a major problem with management and never speak ill of supervisors**, co-workers or the organization. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an  
**opportunity, a chance to do something special** or other forward-looking reasons.

**3. What experience do you have in this field?**  
Speak about specifics that relate to the position you are applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can.

**4. Do you consider yourself successful?**  
You should always answer yes and briefly explain why. A good explanation is that you have set goals, and you have met some and are on track to achieve the others.

**5. What do co-workers say about you?**Be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work. Jill Clark, a co-worker at Smith Company, always said I was the hardest workers she had ever known. It is as powerful as Jill having said it at the interview herself.

**6. What do you know about this organization?**This question is one reason to do some research on the organization before the interview. Find out where they have been and where they are going. What are the current issues and who are the major players?

**7. What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?**  
Try to include improvement activities that relate to the job. A wide variety of activities can be mentioned as positive self-improvement. Have some good ones handy to mention.

**8. Are you applying for other jobs?**  
Be honest but do not spend a lot of time in this area. Keep the focus on this job and what you can do for this organization. Anything else is a distraction.

**9. Why do you want to work for this organization?**  
This may take some thought and certainly, should be based on the research you have done on the organization. Sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals.

**10. Do you know anyone who works for us?**  
Be aware of the policy on relatives working for the organization. This can affect your answer even though they asked about friends not relatives. Be careful to mention a friend only if they are well thought of.

**11. What kind of salary do you need?**  
A loaded question. A nasty little game that you will probably lose if you answer first. So, do not answer it. Instead, say something like, That’s a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position? In most cases, the interviewer, taken off guard, will tell you. If not, say that it can depend on the details of the job. Then give a wide range.

**12. Are you a team player?**You are, of course, a team player. Be sure to have examples ready. Specifics that show you often perform for the good of the team rather than for yourself are good evidence of your team attitude. Do not brag, just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. This is a key point.

**13. How long would you expect to work for us if hired?**  
Specifics here are not good. Something like this should work: I’d like it to be a long time. Or As long as we both feel I’m doing a good job.

**14. Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?**This is serious. Do not make light of it or in any way seem like you like to fire people. At the same time, you will do it when it is the right thing to do. When it comes to the organization versus the individual who has created a harmful situation, you will protect the organization. Remember firing is not the same as layoff or reduction in force.

**15. What is your philosophy towards work?**  
The interviewer is not looking for a long or flowery dissertation here. Do you have strong feelings that the job gets done? Yes. That’s the type of answer that works best here. Short and positive, showing a benefit to the organization.

**16. If you had enough money to retire right now, would you?**Answer yes if you would. But since you need to work, this is the type of work you prefer. Do not say yes if you do not mean it.

**17. Have you ever been asked to leave a position?**If you have not, say no. If you have, be honest, brief and avoid saying negative things about the people or organization involved.

**18. Explain how you would be an asset to this organization**  
You should be anxious for this question. It gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. Give a little advance thought to this relationship.

**19. Why should we hire you?**Point out how your assets meet what the organization needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison.

**20. Tell me about a suggestion you have made**Have a good one ready. Be sure and use a suggestion that was accepted and was then considered successful. One related to the type of work applied for is a real plus.

**21. What irritates you about co-workers?**This is a trap question. Think real hard but fail to come up with anything that irritates you. A short statement that you seem to get along with folks is great.

**22. What is your greatest strength?**  
Numerous answers are good, just stay positive. A few good examples: Your ability to prioritize, Your problem-solving skills, Your ability to work under pressure, Your ability to focus on projects, Your professional expertise, Your leadership skills, Your positive attitude

**23. Tell me about your dream job.**  
Stay away from a specific job. You cannot win. If you say the job you are contending for is it, you strain credibility. If you say another job is it, you plant the suspicion that you will be dissatisfied with this position if hired. The best is to stay genetic and say something like: A job where I love the work, like the people, can contribute and can’t wait to get to work.

**24. Why do you think you would do well at this job?**Give several reasons and include skills, experience and interest.

**25. What are you looking for in a job?**See answer # 23

**26. What kind of person would you refuse to work with?**Do not be trivial. It would take disloyalty to the organization, violence or lawbreaking to get you to object. Minor objections will  
label you as a whiner.

**27. What is more important to you: the money or the work?**  
Money is always important, but the work is the most important. There is no better answer.

**28. What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?**  
There are numerous good possibilities: Loyalty, Energy, Positive attitude, Leadership, Team player, Expertise, Initiative, Patience, Hard work, Creativity, Problem solver

**29. Tell me about a problem you had with a supervisor**  
Biggest trap of all. This is a test to see if you will speak ill of your boss. If you fall for it and tell about a problem with a former boss, you may well below the interview right there. Stay positive and develop a poor memory about any trouble with a supervisor.

**30. What has disappointed you about a job?**  
Don’t get trivial or negative. Safe areas are few but can include: Not enough of a challenge. You were laid off in a reduction Company did not win a contract, which would have given you more responsibility.

**31. Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.**  
You may say that you thrive under certain types of pressure. Give an example that relates to the type of position applied for.

**32. Do your skills match this job or another job more closely?**  
Probably this one. Do not give fuel to the suspicion that you may want another job more than this one.

**33. What motivates you to do your best on the job?**  
This is a personal trait that only you can say, but good examples are: Challenge, Achievement, Recognition

**34. Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?**  
This is up to you. Be totally honest.

**35. How would you know you were successful on this job?**  
Several ways are good measures: You set high standards for yourself and meet them. Your outcomes are a success.Your boss tell you that you are successful

**36. Would you be willing to relocate if required?**You should be clear on this with your family prior to the interview if you think there is a chance it may come up. Do not say yes just to get the job if the real answer is no. This can create a lot of problems later on in your career. Be honest at this point and save yourself future grief.

**37. Are you willing to put the interests of the organization ahead ofyour own?**This is a straight loyalty and dedication question. Do not worry about the deep ethical and philosophical implications. Just say yes.

**38. Describe your management style.**Try to avoid labels. Some of the more common labels, like progressive, salesman or consensus, can have several meanings or descriptions depending on which management expert you listen to. The situational style is safe, because it says you will manage according to the situation, instead of one size fits all.

**39. What have you learned from mistakes on the job?**Here you have to come up with something or you strain credibility. Make it small, well intentioned mistake with a positive lesson learned. An example would be working too far ahead of colleagues on a project and thus throwing coordination off.

**40. Do you have any blind spots?**Trick question. If you know about blind spots, they are no longer blind spots. Do not reveal any personal areas of concern here. Let them do their own discovery on your bad points. Do not hand it to them.

**41. If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?**Be careful to mention traits that are needed and that you have.

**42. Do you think you are overqualified for this position?**Regardless of your qualifications, state that you are very well qualified for the position.

**43. How do you propose to compensate for your lack of experience?**First, if you have experience that the interviewer does not know about, bring that up: Then, point out (if true) that you are a hard working quick learner.

**44. What qualities do you look for in a boss?**  
Be generic and positive. Safe qualities are knowledgeable, a sense of humor, fair, loyal to subordinates and holder of high standards. All bosses think they have these traits.

**45. Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute betweenothers.**Pick a specific incident. Concentrate on your problem solving technique and not the dispute you settled.

**46. What position do you prefer on a team working on a project?**Be honest. If you are comfortable in different roles, point that out.

**47. Describe your work ethic.**Emphasize benefits to the organization. Things like, determination to get the job done and work hard but enjoy your work are good.

**48. What has been your biggest professional disappointment?**Be sure that you refer to something that was beyond your control. Show acceptance and no negative feelings.

**49. Tell me about the most fun you have had on the job.**  
Talk about having fun by accomplishing something for the organization.

**50. Do you have any questions for me?**Always have some questions prepared. Questions prepared where you will be an asset to the organization are good. How soon will I be able to be productive? and What type of projects will I be able to assist on? Are examples.

What is your greatest weakness?

* When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
* Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my organization skills.
* I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done correctly the first time.
* I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.

What is your greatest strength?

* When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
* I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter and I've earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.
* My time management skills are excellent and I'm organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work.
* I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations.

Describe a typical work week.

Interviewers expect a candidate for employment to discuss what they do while they are working in detail. Before you answer, consider the position you are applying for and how your current or past positions relate to it. The more you can connect your past experience with the job opening, the more successful you will be at answering the questions.

It should be obvious that it's not a good idea talk about non-work related activities that you do on company time, but, I've had applicants tell me how they are often late because they have to drive a child to school or like to take a long lunch break to work at the gym.

Keep your answers focused on work and show the interviewer that you're organized ("The first thing I do on Monday morning is check my voicemail and email, then I prioritize my activities for the week.") and efficient.

Do you take work home with you?

Do you take work home with you is a tricky question, be ready. The longer the answer, the bigger the hole you've dug.

**Best Answer**

When I need to, no problem. I realize the importance of meeting deadlines and getting work done on time.

How many hours do you normally work?

Be careful before you answer questions about how many hours a week you work. You don't want to be construed as a slacker or as someone who works too many hours. At some companies, the norm is a 40 hour week and everyone goes home on time. At others, everyone might work 50 or 60 hours a week.

However, working a lot of hours isn't necessarily a good thing - it could mean you're not productive enough to get the job done in a reasonable amount of time.

So, unless you're sure about the company culture and expectations, the safest answer is not to mention a certain number of hours. Rather, mention that you work as much as necessary to get the job done.

How would you describe the pace at which you work?

When you're asked to describe the pace at which you work, be careful how you respond. This is another question where faster isn't necessarily better. Most employers would rather hire employees who work at a steady pace. Someone who is too slow to get the job done in a reasonable time frame isn't going to be a good hire. Neither is a candidate who works frenetically all day.

Options for answering this question include saying that you work at a steady pace, but usually complete work in advance of the deadline. Discuss your ability to manage projects and get them done on, or ahead, of schedule. If you work at a job where you have set criteria (i.e. number of calls made or responsed to) that measures accomplishments, discuss how you have achieved or exceeded those goals.

How do you handle stress and pressure?

A typical interview question, asked to get a sense of how you handle on-the-job stress, is "How do you handle pressure?" Examples of good responses include:

* Stress is very important to me. With stress, I do the best possible job. The appropriate way to deal with stress is to make sure I have the correct balance between good stress and bad stress. I need good stress to stay motivated and productive.
* I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become stressful.
* I actually work better under pressure and I've found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment.
* From a personal perspective, I manage stress by visiting the gym every evening. It's a great stress reducer.
* Prioritizing my responsibilities so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job.
* If the people I am managing are contributing to my stress level, I discuss options for better handling difficult situations with them.

It's a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer. That way, they get a clear picture how well you can work in stressful situations.

What motivates you?

There isn't a right or wrong answer to interview questions about what motivates you. The interviewer is trying to understand the key to your being successful in the job he is interviewing for, and wants to make sure it's a good fit. Consider, in advance of interviewing, what actually does motivate you and come up with some specific examples to share during the interview.

Your response will vary based on your background and experiences, but, you will want to share your enthusiasm and what you like(d) best about your job. Here are some examples:

* I was responsible for several projects where I directed development teams and implemented repeatable processes. The teams achieved 100% on-time delivery of software products. I was motivated both by the challenge of finishing the projects ahead of schedule and by managing the teams that achieved our goals.
* I've always been motivated by the desire to do a good job at whatever position I'm in. I want to excel and to be successful in my job, both for my own personal satisfaction and for my employer.
* I have always wanted to ensure that my company's clients get the best customer service I can provide. I've always felt that it's important, both to me personally, and for the company and the clients, to provide a positive customer experience.
* I have spent my career in sales, typically in commission-based positions, and compensation has always been a strong factor in motivating me to be the top salesperson at my prior employers.

What are your salary expectations?

efore you start talking pay (and salary negotiations) with a prospective employer, you need to find out how much the job (and you) are worth. You will need to take the time to [research salaries](http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/salarywages/a/compensation.htm), so, you are prepared to get what you're worth and a job offer that's realistic and reasonable.

**Salary Negotiations**  
Once you know what you *should* be earning, how do you go about getting it? Start by being very patient. When interviewing for a new position, do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. If you're asked what your salary requirements are, say that they are open based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you'd like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary. Another option is to give the employer a salary range based upon the salary research you've done up front. Once you've received the offer you don't need to accept (or reject) it right away. A simple "I need to think it over" can get you an increase in the original offer.

And if you're ambivalent about the position a "no" can bring you a better offer too. I turned down a position I knew I didn't want, regardless of salary, and received three follow-up phone calls upping the compensation package. Be careful though, if you do definitely need that new job there's a risk that the employer may accept your declining the position and move on to the next candidate.

**Negotiating a Raise**  
If you are currently employed and want a raise, start by being prepared. Gather your salary survey information, recent performance appraisals that document the job you're doing, and any other relevant information. Be aware of company policy regarding compensation. Some employers are limited by budget constraints and can only give raises at certain times of the year, regardless of the circumstances. Have a clear idea of what you want. Determine the salary range you're looking for and justification for the increase and have both ready to review with your supervisor. Be flexible. Would you consider an extra couple of weeks vacation instead of a raise? I know someone who's regularly taken time-off instead of money and now has six vacation weeks a year... Then, ask your supervisor for a meeting to discuss salary. Present your request, supported by documentation, calmly and rationally. Don't ask for an immediate answer. Your boss is mostly likely going to have to discuss it with Human Resources and/or other company managers.

Despite your best efforts, there may simply not be enough money in the budget to increase your salary or compensation package offer. The company may also not want to create inequities by paying one person more than others in a similar position. In that case, you can at least know you tried. Plus, if this is a job you really think that you're going to love, consider whether the company culture, the benefits, and the job itself are worth it - regardless of the salary.

What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?

There is no right or wrong answer to questions like "What are the most difficult decisions to make?" or "Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it." These are [behavioral interview questions](http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/behavioral.htm) designed to discover how you handled certain situations. The logic behind these type of questions is that how you behaved in the past is a predictor of what you will do in the future.

Give concrete examples of difficult situations that actually happened at work. Then discuss what you did to solve the problem. Keep your answers positive ("Even though it was difficult when Jane Doe quit without notice, we were able to rearrange the department workload to cover the position until a replacement was hired.") and be specific. Itemize what you did and how you did it.

The best way to prepare for questions where you will need to recall events and actions, is to refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You can use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved a difficult situation.

Tell me about yourself.

You walk into the interview room, shake hands with your interviewer and sit down with your best interviewing smile on. Guess what their first question is? "Tell me about yourself."

Do you "wing it" and actually tell all manner of things about yourself? Will you spend the next 5 minutes rambling on about what an easy-going, loyal, dedicated, hard working employee you've been? If this is the case, you stand a good chance of having bored your interviewer to death thus creating a negative first impression.

Because it's such a common interview question, it's strange that more candidates don't spend the time to prepare for exactly how to answer it. Perhaps because the question seems so disarming and informal, we drop our guard and shift into ramble mode. Resist all temptation to do so.

Your interviewer is not looking for a 10-minute dissertation here. Instead, offer a razor sharp sentence or two that sets the stage for further discussion and sets you apart from your competitors.

**Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)**

Give them "your synopsis about you" answer, specifically your Unique Selling Proposition. Known as a personal branding or a value-added statement, the USP is a succinct, one-sentence description of who you are, your biggest strength and the major benefit that a company will derive from this strength. Here is an example of a Unique Selling Proposition: "I'm a seasoned Retail Manager strong in developing training programs and loss prevention techniques that have resulted in revenue savings of over $2.3Million for (employer's name) during the past 11 years."

What a difference you've made with this statement. Your interviewer is now sitting forward in her chair giving you her full attention. At this point, you might add the following sentence: "I'd like to discuss how I might be able to do something like that for you." The ball is now back in her court and you have the beginnings of a real discussion and not an interrogation process.

**Be Specific**

The key is that you must lead with your strongest benefit to the employer. Be specific and don't wander about with some laundry list of skills or talents. Be sure to put a monetary value on your work if at all possible and be ready with details when you're called upon. Give an estimated value to the $$ you've either helped to make or save for your employer.

**Be Prepared**

When you walk into an interview, remember to always expect the "tell me about yourself" question. Prepare ahead of time by developing your own personal branding statement that clearly tells who you are, your major strength and the clear benefit that your employer received. The advantages of this approach are that you'll quickly gain their attention and interest them in knowing more. You'll separate yourself from your competitors. You'll also have a higher chance of being positively remembered and hired.

What has been the greatest disappointment in your life?

our response to the question "What has been the greatest disappointment in your life?" will help the interviewer determine know how easily you are discouraged.

**Best Answer**

If possible, tell about a personal disappointment i.e. the early death of a parent, child, or school friend. Believe it or not, it is okay to have not had a "greatest" disappointment.

What are you passionate about?

When you're asked what you're passionate about during a job interview it's a good opportunity to share what is important in your life. It's also an opportunity to show your dedication and what's important to you.

Your response doesn't need to be work focused, but do be sure that what you share isn't something that could potential cut in to your working hours.

For example, you don't want to say that you're a mountain climber with the goal of climbing Mountain Everest or that you're getting ready for the Tour de France or looking to spend the winter skiing in Aspen.

**Sample Answers: What Are You Passionate About?**

* One of my greatest passions is helping others. When I was younger, I've enjoyed helping mom with household repairs. As I grew older, that habit grew and I desired to help others as well. I like helping people find solutions that meet their specific needs.
* I'm passionate about painting. I take an evening art class once a week and try to find time each weekend to paint. Painting is a good way for me to relax and even though I don't have much talent, I do it enjoy it.
* I lost my father to pancreatic cancer and ever since then, I have spent time volunteering to help raise awareness and funding for cancer research. I volunteer for PanCan, the advocacy group, and I'm part of their volunteer network. One of the things I'm passionate is to assist in finding a cure, however I can.
* I'm passionate about making a difference. When I'm involved with a project at work I want to do my best to achieve success. I feel the same way about what I do in my personal life.
* I'm an avid skier and I like to spend weekends and vacations on the ski slopes.

What are your pet peeves?

Your response to the question "What are your pet peeves?" will help the interviewer determine if you would be a good fit with the company culture.

**Best Answer**

I do not have a pet peeve. If something is bothering me, I step back, analyze "why" and find a good solution. If you asked my teenage daughter she would tell you my pet peeve is the volume on her radio!

What do people most often criticize about you?

The interview question "What Do People Most Often Criticize About You?" is asked to find out how sensitive to you are.

**Best Answers**

There's no on-going criticism. I'm open to personal and professional growth and welcome the opportunity to improve.

If humor is appropriate, this is a good time to use it. Example: I have a teenage daughter - few things I do are okay on her radar screen.

When was the last time you were angry? What happened?

When the interviewer asks "When Was The Last Time You Were Angry? What Happened?" he or she wants to know if you lose control. The real meaning of the word "angry", to an interviewer, is loss of control and it's important to know how you handle situations when you're angry.

**Best Answer**

Anger to me means loss of control. I do not lose control. When I get stressed, I step back, take a deep breath, thoughtfully think through the situation and then begin to formulate a plan of action.

If you could relive the last 10 years of your life, what would you do differently?3

When asking what you would do if you could relieve your life, the interviewer is looking for a flaw in your interview. Always remember, the goal for the first few interviews is to get the next interview. For the interviewer, it is to weed out as many applicants as possible. Here's where a personal answer could work.

**Personal Answer**

I lost my mother to Alzheimer's. I wish I'd known more about the disease to help me through that difficult time.

If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?

When the interviewer asks "If the people who know you were asked why you should be hired, what would they say?" he or she wants to know what your perception is of what others think about your qualifications and abilities.

**Best Answer**

I'm sure if you asked my friends that question they would say you should hire me because I have the skills outlined in the job description and I bring 10+ years of expertise to this position. Words they've used to describe me are: hard working, professional, trusted and a team player.

Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?

When the interviewer asks "Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?" he or she wants to know if you're a team player or would rather work on your own.

**Best Answers**

I am equally comfortable working as a member of a team and independently. In researching the LMN company, your mission statement and the job description, I could see similarities to my previous position where there were some assignments that required a great deal of independent work and research and others where the team effort was most effective. As I said, I'm comfortable with both.

In high school, I enjoyed playing soccer and performing with the marching band. Each required a different kind of team play, but the overall goal of learning to be a member of a group was invaluable. I continued to grow as team member while on my sorority's debate team and through my advanced marketing class where we had numerous team assignments. I'm very comfortably working on a team, but I can also work independently, as well.

Give some examples of teamwork.

A typical interview question to discover how well you would work with other people is "Give some examples of teamwork."

*Companies, for the most part, do not want "Lone-Rangers" - they are looking for employees who will adapt to the company culture and get along with others.*

**Sample Answers**

In high school, I enjoyed playing soccer and performing with the marching band. Each required a different kind of team play, but the overall goal of learning to be a member of a group was invaluable. I continued to grow as team member while on my sorority's debate team and through my advanced marketing class where we had numerous team assignments.

In my last postion, I was part of a software implementation team. We all worked together to plan and manage the implementation schedule, to provide customer training, and ensure a smooth transition for our customers. Our team always completed our projects ahead of schedule with very positive reviews from our clients.

What type of work environment do you prefer?

**Best Answer**

I can be flexible when it comes to my work environment. What is the environment in the Engineering department here at RRS, Inc? (Once they've described the work environment, include key phrases they've used when you describe your preferred work environment).

How do you evaluate success?

**Best Answer**

I evaluate success in different ways. At work, it is meeting the goals set by my supervisors and my fellow workers. It is my understanding, from talking to other employees, that the GGR company is recognized for not only rewarding success, but giving employees opportunity to grow as well. After work, I enjoy playing softball, so success on the field is catching the winning pop-up.

If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something how would you handle it?

*Contributed by Jeanne Moore*

The question "If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something, how would you handle this?" is asked to find out how you deal with a difficult situation.

**Best Answers**

An answer that works well is: "It depends on the situation and the personality of the supervisor." To elaborate, give examples:

My present supervisor does not like to have his authority questioned. He's fairly new on the job and almost all of the people he supervises have been on the job longer than he has. He's never bothered to learn the procedures, how things are done or how the computer system works. But if any of us tell him that how he wants something done won't work, he gets extremely angry. So, I never tell him he's wrong. Never. Whatever he tells me to do, I smile and say "okay." Then if I know a way to get it done that will work, I do it that way, give him the results he wants and never tell him I didn't do it the way he told me to. He got the results and is happy. I saved myself the stress of being yelled at and gave him what he wanted, so I'm happy.

My prior superviser was more easy-going and if I told her "you know, I think it might work better if I do what you asked in such and such a way," she say "okay, try it."

If I were a new hire on a job, I would probably not question a supervisor because I might think I didn't know enough. Except on the new job I'm going to. The director has admitted that she's new on the job and there are alot of things that a secretary does that she doesn't know how to do, so she will be depending on me to know how to keep the office running.

Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it.

There is no right or wrong answer to questions like "What are the most difficult decisions to make?" or "Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it." These are [behavioral interview questions](http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/interviews/a/behavioral.htm) designed to discover how you handled certain situations. The logic behind these type of questions is that how you behaved in the past is a predictor of what you will do in the future.

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The best way to prepare for questions where you will need to recall events and actions, is to refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You can use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved a difficult situation.

Describe a time when your workload was heavy and how you handled it.

A typical interview question to discover how you manage your work is "Describe a time when your workload was heavy and how you handled it."

**Sample Answers**

While at the HKL plant, we were faced with a sudden order increase for the j-ball bearing. It was for a new customer. I immediately sat down with the production supervisor, our materials/supply manager, and the union steward. We were able to lay out a workable plan that maximized hourly costs, guaranteed materials were available and, with only a slight adjustment, meet the production deadline. While it was challenging and involved long hours, the pay-off was a signed contract with a new customer.

When I was working on a software implementation team at ABC Company, we took over another company and had to transition many clients to a new product in a short amount of time. It took a lot of planning, time, hard work, and effort, but we were able to complete the project in a timely manner.

More job interview questions about your abilities.

**Job Interview Questions About Your Abilities and Sample Answers**

**Tell me about a time that you worked conveying technical information to a nontechnical audience.**   
*The Interviewer wants to know how you relate to people outside your area of expertise.*  
While I worked for Mr. Smith in the accounting department, I was selected to explain the financial section of the employee's paycheck to all new hires. After my first two sessions, I realized I needed to reframe my information so the new hires would have an accurate understanding of the impact of their decisions as it related to their pay. I worked with colleagues in human resources and marketing, and developed a training outline that was implemented at the other locations throughout the company.

**Tell me about a time that you worked with data, interpreting data, and presenting data.**   
*If you are in a non-technical profession, this question is designed to see if you are comfortable with information not directly related to your position.*  
While at the GHI corporation, one of my job assignments was to work with the IT department to prepare the annual meeting brochure complete with financial data, graphs and related SEC requirements. I became proficient at designing graphs that gave an accurate picture of the financial data, as well as editing the legal information into a more readable format.

**Why do you think you will be successful at this job?**  
*The interviewer is concerned as to whether you see this as a career move, or stop-gap employment.*  
As my resume reflects, I have been successful at each of my previous places of employment. My research of your company, the job description outlined, and the information we've exchanged today, lead me to believe I have the skills and experience for which you are looking; and I'm eager to be a contributing employee.

**Tell me about a time that you participated in a team, what was your role?**   
*Companies, for the most part, do not want "Lone-Rangers" - - they are looking for employees who will adapt to the company culture and get along with others.*   
In high school, I enjoyed playing soccer and performing with the marching band. Each required a different kind of team play, but the overall goal of learning to be a member of a group was invaluable. I continued to grow as team member while on my sorority's debate team and through my advanced marketing class where we had numerous team assignments.

More job interview questions about you.

### Job Interview Questions About Yourself and Sample Answers

When the questions are "personal", about you, it can be a very slippery slope. The answers below are guidelines so you can write out your answers long before you go to the interview. Then, when the question is asked, you can take the few seconds (expected by the interviewer) to think about the question and how you will frame your answer (which you already know).

**What would you do differently if you could start your working life over?**   
*The interviewer is looking for a detour that continues to be a professional block in your career.*  
Looking back over my career, I would have returned to school much earlier to complete my Masters degree. Even though I got my degree later than I had originally anticipated, I never lost sight of the goal.

**How do you balance life and work?**  
*The interviewer wonders if you've made arrangements for the days when your child is too sick to go to school and/or daycare or if you're "out of there" as soon as it's quitting time.*  
**Best Answer:** Being organized helps me balance my professional life and personal life. Consequently, I can be fully engaged while I'm at work. For those unexpected times, I have a good back-up system of child care for my children.

**What is your preferred way to communicate?**  
*This is a good opportunity to show you understand the importance of adjusting your preferences when necessary.*  
At home, I enjoy talking on the phone and emails. At work, I follow the established pattern. Each of my bosses, in the past, has had a preferred method I've followed their lead.

**Do you check voicemail and email when on vacation?**  
*The interviewer is wondering whether they will always be able to find you.*  
**Best Answer:** While on vacation, I can be reached for emergencies; however, I also know the people with whom I work are very capable of making good decisions while I'm away. I understand the importance of recharging my battery.

**What is your favorite book? How about your favorite movie?**  
*The interviewer wants to know whether you read to stay current and if you will you fit into the company culture.*  
**Best Answer (include your personal favorites):** I read many different kinds of books. My current "favorite" book is *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman. My favorite movie? *Miracle on Ice*.

**What historical figure do you admire and why?**  
*The interviewer wants to know whether you are well read and what characteristics you admire.*  
**Best Answer (include historical figures you personally admire):** Personally, I most admire Abigail Adams, John Adam's wife; professionally I admired the leadership style of Ronald Reagan.

**What did you do during this six month gap in employment?**  
*Everyone, at some point, will probably have a gap in employment. Do not "waste it".*  
**Best Answer:** For the first month, I worked on my "to do list" at home and accomplished a great deal. Then I began building a plan to reenter the workplace. While it took a little longer than I'd anticipated, I've learned a great deal about myself, am rested and looking forward to new challenges in the workplace.

**What led you to this point in your life?**  
*The interviewer wants to know if you are unhappy, frustrated, or lost?*  
My "road of life" has been interesting, sometimes challenging and always rewarding. The steps along the way that have led to this point in my life are, in some ways, very different than I had imagined; however, I like who I am today in part because of my past. An example is when the second company on my resume suddenly closed their doors during a down-turn in the economy. For a very brief time, the road ahead was unknown; however, I discovered I had previously untapped strengths such as perseverance.

# The 25 most difficult questions you'll be asked on a job interview

### 1. Tell me about yourself.

Since this is often the opening question in an interview, be extracareful that you don't run off at the mouth. Keep your answer to a minute or two at most. Cover four topics: early years, education, work history, and recent career experience. Emphasize this last subject. Remember that this is likely to be a warm-up question. Don't waste your best points on it.

### 2. What do you know about our organization?

You should be able to discuss products or services, revenues, reputation, image, goals, problems, management style, people, history and philosophy. But don't act as if you know everything about the place. Let your answer show that you have taken the time to do some research, but don't overwhelm the interviewer, and make it clear that you wish to learn more.

You might start your answer in this manner: "In my job search, I've investigated a number of companies.

Yours is one of the few that interests me, for these reasons..."

Give your answer a positive tone. Don't say, "Well, everyone tells me that you're in all sorts of trouble, and that's why I'm here", even if that is why you're there.

### 3. Why do you want to work for us?

The deadliest answer you can give is "Because I like people." What else would you like-animals?

Here, and throughout the interview, a good answer comes from having done your homework so that you can speak in terms of the company's needs. You might say that your research has shown that the company is doing things you would like to be involved with, and that it's doing them in ways that greatly interest you. For example, if the organization is known for strong management, your answer should mention that fact and show that you would like to be a part of that team. If the company places a great deal of emphasis on research and development, emphasize the fact that you want to create new things and that you know this is a place in which such activity is encouraged. If the organization stresses financial controls, your answer should mention a reverence for numbers.

If you feel that you have to concoct an answer to this question - if, for example, the company stresses research, and you feel that you should mention it even though it really doesn't interest you- then you probably should not be taking that interview, because you probably shouldn't be considering a job with that organization.

Your homework should include learning enough about the company to avoid approaching places where you wouldn't be able -or wouldn't want- to function. Since most of us are poor liars, it's difficult to con anyone in an interview. But even if you should succeed at it, your prize is a job you don't really want.

### 4. What can you do for us that someone else can't?

Here you have every right, and perhaps an obligation, to toot your own horn and be a bit egotistical. Talk about your record of getting things done, and mention specifics from your resume or list of career accomplishments. Say that your skills and interests, combined with this history of getting results, make you valuable. Mention your ability to set priorities, identify problems, and use your experience and energy to solve them.

### 5. What do you find most attractive about this position? What seems least attractive about it?

List three or four attractive factors of the job, and mention a single, minor, unattractive item.

### 6. Why should we hire you?

Create your answer by thinking in terms of your ability, your experience, and your energy. (See question 4.)

### 7. What do you look for in a job?

Keep your answer oriented to opportunities at this organization. Talk about your desire to perform and be recognized for your contributions. Make your answer oriented toward opportunity rather than personal security.

### 8. Please give me your defintion of [the position for which you are being interviewed].

Keep your answer brief and taskoriented. Think in in terms of responsibilities and accountability. Make sure that you really do understand what the position involves before you attempt an answer. If you are not certain. ask the interviewer; he or she may answer the question for you.

### 9. How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our firm?

Be realistic. Say that, while you would expect to meet pressing demands and pull your own weight from the first day, it might take six months to a year before you could expect to know the organization and its needs well enough to make a major contribution.

### 10. How long would you stay with us?

Say that you are interested in a career with the organization, but admit that you would have to continue to feel challenged to remain with any organization. Think in terms of, "As long as we both feel achievement-oriented."

### 11. Your resume suggests that you may be over-qualified or too experienced for this position. What's Your opinion?

Emphasize your interest in establishing a long-term association with the organization, and say that you assume that if you perform well in his job, new opportunities will open up for you. Mention that a strong company needs a strong staff. Observe that experienced executives are always at a premium. Suggest that since you are so wellqualified, the employer will get a fast return on his investment. Say that a growing, energetic company can never have too much talent.

### 12. What is your management style?

You should know enough about the company's style to know that your management style will complement it. Possible styles include: task oriented (I'll enjoy problem-solving identifying what's wrong, choosing a solution and implementing it"), results-oriented ("Every management decision I make is determined by how it will affect the bottom line"), or even paternalistic ("I'm committed to taking care of my subordinates and pointing them in the right direction").

A participative style is currently quite popular: an open-door method of managing in which you get things done by motivating people and delegating responsibility.

As you consider this question, think about whether your style will let you work hatppily and effectively within the organization.

### 13. Are you a good manager? Can you give me some examples? Do you feel that you have top managerial potential?

Keep your answer achievementand ask-oriented. Rely on examples from your career to buttress your argument. Stress your experience and your energy.

### 14. What do you look for when You hire people?

Think in terms of skills. initiative, and the adaptability to be able to work comfortably and effectively with others. Mention that you like to hire people who appear capable of moving up in the organization.

### 15. Have you ever had to fire people? What were the reasons, and how did you handle the situation?

Admit that the situation was not easy, but say that it worked out well, both for the company and, you think, for the individual. Show that, like anyone else, you don't enjoy unpleasant tasks but that you can resolve them efficiently and -in the case of firing someone- humanely.

### 16. What do you think is the most difficult thing about being a manager or executive?

Mention planning, execution, and cost-control. The most difficult task is to motivate and manage employess to get something planned and completed on time and within the budget.

### 17. What important trends do you see in our industry?

Be prepared with two or three trends that illustrate how well you understand your industry. You might consider technological challenges or opportunities, economic conditions, or even regulatory demands as you collect your thoughts about the direction in which your business is heading.

### 18. Why are you leaving (did you leave) your present (last) job?

Be brief, to the point, and as honest as you can without hurting yourself. Refer back to the planning phase of your job search. where you considered this topic as you set your reference statements. If you were laid off in an across-the-board cutback, say so; otherwise, indicate that the move was your decision, the result of your action. Do not mention personality conflicts.

The interviewer may spend some time probing you on this issue, particularly if it is clear that you were terminated. The "We agreed to disagree" approach may be useful. Remember hat your references are likely to be checked, so don't concoct a story for an interview.

### 19. How do you feel about leaving all your benefits to find a new job?

Mention that you are concerned, naturally, but not panicked. You are willing to accept some risk to find the right job for yourself. Don't suggest that security might interest you more than getting the job done successfully.

### 20. In your current (last) position, what features do (did) you like the most? The least?

Be careful and be positive. Describe more features that you liked than disliked. Don't cite personality problems. If you make your last job sound terrible, an interviewer may wonder why you remained there until now.

### 21. What do you think of your boss?

Be as positive as you can. A potential boss is likely to wonder if you might talk about him in similar terms at some point in the future.

### 22. Why aren't you earning more at your age?

Say that this is one reason that you are conducting this job search. Don't be defensive.

### 23. What do you feel this position should pay?

Salary is a delicate topic. We suggest that you defer tying yourself to a precise figure for as long as you can do so politely. You might say, "I understand that the range for this job is between $\_\_\_\_\_\_ and $\_\_\_\_\_\_. That seems appropriate for the job as I understand it." You might answer the question with a question: "Perhaps you can help me on this one. Can you tell me if there is a range for similar jobs in the organization?"

If you are asked the question during an initial screening interview, you might say that you feel you need to know more about the position's responsibilities before you could give a meaningful answer to that question. Here, too, either by asking the interviewer or search executive (if one is involved), or in research done as part of your homework, you can try to find out whether there is a salary grade attached to the job. If there is, and if you can live with it, say that the range seems right to you.

If the interviewer continues to probe, you might say, "You know that I'm making $\_\_\_\_\_\_ now. Like everyone else, I'd like to improve on that figure, but my major interest is with the job itself." Remember that the act of taking a new job does not, in and of itself, make you worth more money.

If a search firm is involved, your contact there may be able to help with the salary question. He or she may even be able to run interference for you. If, for instance, he tells you what the position pays, and you tell him that you are earning that amount now and would Like to do a bit better, he might go back to the employer and propose that you be offered an additional 10%.

If no price range is attached to the job, and the interviewer continues to press the subject, then you will have to restpond with a number. You cannot leave the impression that it does not really matter, that you'll accept whatever is offered. If you've been making $80,000 a year, you can't say that a $35,000 figure would be fine without sounding as if you've given up on yourself. (If you are making a radical career change, however, this kind of disparity may be more reasonable and understandable.)

Don't sell yourself short, but continue to stress the fact that the job itself is the most important thing in your mind. The interviewer may be trying to determine just how much you want the job. Don't leave the impression that money is the only thing that is important to you. Link questions of salary to the work itself.

But whenever possible, say as little as you can about salary until you reach the "final" stage of the interview process. At that point, you know that the company is genuinely interested in you and that it is likely to be flexible in salary negotiations.

### 24. What are your long-range goals?

Refer back to the planning phase of your job search. Don't answer, "I want the job you've advertised." Relate your goals to the company you are interviewing: 'in a firm like yours, I would like to..."

### 25. How successful do you you've been so far?

Say that, all-in-all, you're happy with the way your career has progressed so far. Given the normal ups and downs of life, you feel that you've done quite well and have no complaints.

Present a positive and confident picture of yourself, but don't overstate your case. An answer like, "Everything's wonderful! I can't think of a time when things were going better! I'm overjoyed!" is likely to make an interviewer wonder whether you're trying to fool him . . . or yourself. The most convincing confidence is usually quiet confidence.

1. **Describe a challenging work issue you had to face, and how you dealt with it?** Consider what would be the requirements of the ‘new’ job/organization and find something in your past that highlights a skill, experience or situation that might occur or be needed going forward. It is always a good idea to make lists in preparation for interviews: New job will need I can provide Proof/example For your proofs, list (for yourself) examples of when you used the skill, exhibited the characteristic or handled the problem. This will not only give you ’short stories’ to relate in an interview, it will also bolster your confidence and target your job search.
2. **If you were on a merry-go-round, what song would be playing? If you were going to be an animal on the merry-go-round, what would you be?”** Congratulations! You have found the unusual interviewer asking a rare question. Don’t feel stupid just feel like you have run into a very unusual situation. If you are interviewing for a creative position, then the question is most appropriate because the interviewer may be attempting to evaluate your creativity and your ability to deal with an offbeat question. have fun with it. Give the question your focused attention and go with your instincts. Be ready to say why you chose the tune you did. Perhaps tell a brief story that reminds you of merry go rounds in your own experience. Or if you are really clueless give a song that you have always liked, has real meaning for you or is important for whatever reason and attach it to the merry go round but refocus the question to he importance of the song and make it brief but interesting “words tell but stories sell.” As for the animal, give the animal that you want to be (even if you think the question is ridiculous and you really need this job) your total attention and focus. On the other hand, the person you are dealing with may not have a clue and just asked because he/she felt like it. We know one person who asks the question and feels it is meaningful. She is into Yoga and looks for the person to be thoughtful in response. We have never heard her say anyone was rejected because of the animal selected.
3. **How do you handle conflict?** On the job, there are many possible sources of conflict. Conflicts with: fellow employees management rules, procedures clients, customers demands of work vs. personal life, family The best way to approach a good answer is to look at if from the employers point of view—they want to be your first priority and they want you to solve problems (not bring them any). “I know everything cannot run smoothly at work all the time. When there is a conflict I usually try to determine the source of the problem and see if it can be solved. This might involve other members of the work team discussing the problem and offering possible solutions. I would then try to pick the solution which appears to have the best outcome and put it into action.” A natural follow-up to this would be: Tell me when you solved a conflict at work. So, have a brief example… a short story… to illustrate your approach. Even if not asked, you can offer your story! If it proves your point and accentuates a skill needed for the position, go with it.
4. **In what way do you think you can contribute to our company?** Preparing to answer this question requires a 2-step preparation: assessing your skills and researching the needs of the company. An integral part of skill assessment (looking at your own experience, education and talents) is to ’skill-match’. Considering the job opening, what are the skills needed? Make a list of the requisite skills (in priority order) and then list concrete examples of your possession of the skill. For example: a sales representative would need good interpersonal skills, the ability to deal with difficult people. For ‘proof’ of this skill, you could list experiences and examples of how you were successful in a difficult situation. These matched skills are your key selling points. Next, what appears to be the current problems at the organization, based upon your research? What are their needs that you can meet? In other words, given the specifics of the company, what value can you add? After these two steps, you are in a great position to come up with concrete examples of what you can offer the company. This question, by the way, is just another version of “Why should we hire you?”. In the interview, when asked this question, you could respond with: “In my experience in sales, I know having the ability to deal effectively with all types of people is not merely a positive element — it is an essential one. With your plans to expand into \_\_\_\_ market, a sales representative with a proven ability to meet with all types of people and to be able to assess and meet their immediate needs would be a great asset. In the past \_\_ years, I have increased sales \_\_… ..”
5. **Tell me a story.** Many interviewers like to hear ’stories’ or examples from your work life. So pick something that is more usual than not (not the day of a plant explosion and you saved 10 lives!) but a story that shows how you handle yourself, handle difficult people or situations. Can you think on your feet? Do you adhere to the rules? Consider the type of organization you are aiming at… each has its own culture. The World Wrestling Federation entertainment culture is different than the American Bible Society and also different from Amazon.com. Gear your stories to give the listener a feeling that you could fit in… you could do the job here.
6. **Tell me about a time when you tried and failed?** Has this ever happened to you? No one expects perfection actually, employers are more interested in your ability to cope, to learn from mistakes, and to deal with others who are less than perfect. If you have an example, certainly pick one that happened a while back, was not earth shattering in the results, and one which you learned and applied this knowledge recently. This is a version of ‘damning with faint praise’ by picking an incident that was minor in scope but, since you are so wise and are always willing to learn, has taught you a valuable lesson.
7. **Tell us about your analytical skills.** This should be easy if you have done a realistic skill inventory for yourself, listing what skills you do have and how you can offer proof of this skill (where you learned it, last used it). Working off your inventory, focus on various analytical skills and match them to the skills you feel are most important for the job you are considering. You can now give specific examples of skills you can offer. (Do not neglect skills obtained in extracurricular activities, such as volunteer work.)
8. **What are some of the things you find difficult to do?** The interviewer is looking to determine how well you know yourself, how you react to difficult situations/tasks and credibility. Look back over your work experience for examples of challenges… speaking in public at a meeting, disagreeing with a manager over an important issue, being asked to use a software program you have not had an opportunity to learn… These ’stories’ should illustrate a lesson learned, a problem overcome or a weakness being dealt with. “I always seem to need a day or two to prepare myself to give a presentation to department heads. When I know I have to give a report on my projects, I plan out all the details in advance and rehearse. One time, there was a problem with a supplier and I was asked to update senior management… immediately. The supply chain was crucial to the completion of an important project we had been working on for 5 months and decisions had to be made based on the information I had to prepare and present on a moment’s notice. I gathered the information and presented it simply and in detail. It was much easier than I thought without the hours of concern and practice. The facts spoke for themselves. Since I understood the situation, I was able to make it clear to management and get a rapid decision. I still prefer advance notice but I know I can deliver when asked to.”
9. **What are your short and long term goals?** No one can make goals for you. It comes down to where you are in your professional life and what you want to do. Most people have 5-6 careers in their working lifetime—some with 2 careers going at the same time (like us). The best advice is to be certain to relate your answers to the organization that interviews you. Do not make a point of having goals that cannot be realized there (”I want to work in Paris.” Organization is strictly domestic.) If you do your research into the organization, and into what you truly want to do in the future, you will be able to come up with reasonable responses. No one is going to come back to you in five years and chastise you for not meeting these goals! You will not be held to them… it is only an interview and they are interested in how you see yourself (and they want to see you in the job.)
10. **Where do you see yourself in five years?** This is the interviewer trying to see how you are in making long range plans and if you have goals that mesh with the organization’s. One way to answer this question is to look back on your accomplishments to date: “I started out in my profession as a junior clerk while I completed my college studies during the evenings. Once I had my degree, I applied for a transfer to a more advanced position, citing my on-the-job training. This has been my pattern for my career with my past 2 employers. I learn quickly on the job and am willing to take classes and workshops to augment my experience. I have been able to assume greater responsibilities and add more value to the organization. I do not think in terms of titles… I think more in terms of “How can I solve this problem? Since this has been my career style to date, I do not imagine it to change. In five years, I feel I will have continued to learn, to grow into a position of more responsibility and will have made a significant contribution to the organization.”
11. **What can you add to what we have already asked you that should make us want to hire you?** Think grocery shopping… all those brands in the soap aisle begging for your attention. Each one comes with its own key selling points. Remember the comics, Superman? On TV, he sold himself… stronger than a locomotive, faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. What are your key selling points? Plan this out ahead of time for the next interview… or include in a thank you letter for this past interview. Think a 1 minute infomercial about yourself. What are your core strengths? Is it communicating with children, being a mentor to other teachers, being able to keep topics current and interesting… . Think of what is needed to be successful in the job and how you specifically meet those needs—provide examples. Increased reading scores by using… Math scores jumped \_\_% due to my … Offer some proof from your past to support your claims. But it is your ability to assess the situation and analyze your potential contributions that will sell your candidacy. Do not think it too late — send a strong thank you and include in your request for the job the key reasons why you are the best candidate.
12. **What does “customer service” mean to you?** Think of yourself as a customer — what do you expect from salespeople … regardless of the circumstances and/or the problem. An example may be “Customer service is a two-piece reaction. First—respect; second — problem solving.” See if that makes sense and if you sound convincing when you do practice it. If you can give a brief story or two of what you have witnessed as extraordinary examples of customer service behavior. By using yourself as a focal point you will be able to enunciate clearly your understanding of customer service.
13. **What do you know about our company?** If you can relate your knowledge to the area that you would be involved in, it would show that already you have an active interest in the organization. For example, if you were interested in marketing, “I understand that you are one of the top 10 companies in sales to Europe but are currently interested in expanding your market into Asia. Competition is keen in that area but you have an advantage in that you product offers features that others do not, such as… ..” It is not only showing that you have done the research but also that you like/know what you have learned about the company and have applied it to how you can add value in the position.
14. **Why do you want to leave this job after only four months?** Well, why did you? What is the closest to the truth:
    1. Job was not as it was described to me
    2. Organization changed its focus/goals
    3. Organization could not effectively use my talents/skills
    4. Change in management… wanted to bring in own staff
    5. Downsizing, reorganization

All of these will probably prompt a follow-up question. Do not fabricate… but most interviewers have heard these stories before and really are not interested in all the gory details. (Note that this job need not be included on your resume since it was of such a short duration but may have to be included in a application form if it looks to account for all your time.) Circumstances also come to play… did you leave your other job to take this 4 month job? or did you ‘try’ it while already unemployed… hoping for the best? If you were recruited to change jobs, there is a lot of room for exaggeration in a sales pitch, and many employees have been misled. If you have held other jobs for substantial periods and you took the other job in good faith, stress your past performance. You are not a capricious person—job hopping. You have skills to offer and want to put them into good use.

1. **What do you wish to gain from our company?** Excellent question! Research is the answer (know everyone is tired of hearing this but we feel this is one great way for applicants to make a difference in their candidacy). Determine some of the key elements in the corporate structure, product base, employees/management team or recent history. What appeals to you about working at this company? Go with what you know. “In the past, I have had opportunities to work on new products being launched. I am very excited about your plans to start an entire new line of products. With my prior experience I know I can provide insights and make contributions immediately and I will also learn so much from the excellent team you have in place. Having done single products, I would love to be in on the give-and-take meetings planning the new line… there is much I can offer but also much for me to learn.” Finding something specific… the opportunity to use a new technology, a new skill, to work with ‘experts on their team”… are ways for you to find job satisfaction, which is another way of asking this question
2. **What do you think the employee’s responsibilities are to the company?** As an employee you have several responsibilities to your employer. They are as follows: to perform a good day’s work to be loyal to act as part of the team to value the relationship to earn the employer’s trust to grow with a passion for the product/service.
3. **Why do you want to change jobs?** When asked on an application, “If presently employed, why do you wish to change positions”, what do you put down. The reason I am changing positions because the company I am applying at is known nationwide I want to work for a company with their background and one that I can retire from. This same question is sometimes asked on interviews as well so it is important to have a good answer. Additionally, if you decide to leave your current employer, it is also wise to have consensus as to the reasons that you are leaving. It already sounds like you have positive reasons for wanting to work for the national company—go with that. Use your research to put forth several points about the company that you feel will be a great match (for the company) and suit your particular skills and experiences. Emphasize the fact that this opportunity to work for them is ‘just what you have been looking for’ because… .and then go into several ways you can add value to the organization. Remember, when asked why you left, do not downgrade in any way your prior/current employer… leave the interviewer with the feeling that you have only been associated with winners! Do not go into the ‘I can retire from this job’ aspect; it can have negative connotations. Present yourself as a vital, enthusiastic employee that can offer experience to their organization… for many years to come. Note: If appropriate, point out that you are not just ‘looking around’ but are sincerely interested in working for this particular company and that you are not a ‘job-hopper’ but are interested in a long-term career move.
4. **What motivates you?** Other than looking into your past experiences… .times when you were motivated and times when you were not… no one but you has this answer. Find concrete examples when you had to pull it all together and get motivated to get the job done; what does it for you?
5. **What things make a good team member?** Consider first the situational context of the question. What is the team environment of the organization that you are interviewing—do they have a strong, organized team-based work environment or is it based on informal authority and fluctuating teams? Ideally, you should have had an opportunity to research and ask some questions about the organization to determine how they operate (and if indeed you want to work in that environment.) Model your responses to the organization. Obviously, you are describing yourself = good team member. My ideas of what makes a good team member may be very different from yours—and from the organization. Also depends on where you are in the team—new member, leader, support. How do you see yourself? How do you make yourself fit into a new team? How do you elicit cooperation from other team members? What do you think the organization’s biggest problem is relative to teams and team-building? And, what solution could you provide?
6. **Why do you feel we should hire you for this position?** Before you submit a resume or draft a cover letter and certainly before you go to an interview you should do 2 things: Research the job and the organization. What do they need? What are the requirements for the position? What role does this job play in the overall goals of the organization? Research yourself. What skills and experiences and interests can you offer? How will you add value to the organization? How can you prove that you have the required skills and experience needed for the job? Do a skill matching exercise: The organization/job needs ..(skill/experience) and I have it because I did … .. The organization needs… .. and i can provide… .. Be certain to have specific examples of how you have added value in the past and be enthusiastic on how you can add value to this organization. Do not forget… the organization is looking to solve a problem and you are selling yourself as a solution.
7. **Why do you want to change jobs?** When asked on an application, “If presently employed, why do you wish to change positions”, what do you put down. The reason I am changing positions because the company I am applying at is known nationwide I want to work for a company with their background and one that I can retire from. This same question is sometimes asked on interviews as well so it is important to have a good answer. Additionally, if you decide to leave your current employer, it is also wise to have consensus as to the reasons that you are leaving. It already sounds like you have positive reasons for wanting to work for the national company—go with that. Use your research to put forth several points about the company that you feel will be a great match (for the company) and suit your particular skills and experiences. Emphasize the fact that this opportunity to work for them is ‘just what you have been looking for’ because… .and then go into several ways you can add value to the organization. Remember, when asked why you left, do not downgrade in any way your prior/current employer… leave the interviewer with the feeling that you have only been associated with winners! Do not go into the ‘I can retire from this job’ aspect; it can have negative connotations. Present yourself as a vital, enthusiastic employee that can offer experience to their organization… for many years to come. Note: If appropriate, point out that you are not just ‘looking around’ but are sincerely interested in working for this particular company and that you are not a ‘job-hopper’ but are interested in a long-term career move.
8. **I will need to take a step back in salary. I don’t know how to handle the question ” What is your current salary”?** If you have proceeded along interviews to the point when an offer is going to be made, that is the proper time to discuss salary. Otherwise, if pressed to disclose salary, talk in term of ranges… and a compensation package. “Present compensation package is high five figures” gives a lot of leeway yet is not in error. It is rare but some employers ask for W-2 forms or last salary stub to verify salary. You do not want to get caught in a lie (credibility is very important) so being up-front about willing to take a step back in order to invest in a new career can be impressive to an employer. Sharpen your sales skills… point out all the reasons why you are suited for the job, why you are making the move to a new career and why you want to work there. Compensation is a necessity but not your prime motivator.
9. **What do you expect your starting salary to be?** Discussions of salaries and compensation should not be held until an offer is made. With that said, let’s look into the real world when this is not the case most of the time. Employers are shopping, trying to guess your price tag. This is one of those screening questions used to either screen in or screen out… so a response is important. Have you done your homework? What is the price for this job in the marketplace? Have you checked out classified ads or online ads for similar positions? Are you within the range, given your level of experience? Pegging yourself mentally to the right price is the first step. Second step is sharing this information correctly. Do you have enough information about this new job to determine your salary? If not… state it and ask for the information that is needed. “Before I can discuss salary, I would like to know the reporting requirements and how many people I would be supervising. In addition, what are the skill levels and experience of my staff?” You can also ask “What are others in similar positions being paid?” When you can no longer stall or seek additional information… “Based on what you have told me and exclusive of other compensation elements I feel that the position would warrant a salary range of $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” Name a range such as $40,000 to $45,000 to give both sides some wiggle room and allow for some give-and-take when benefits and other compensation is considered. If you know what you are willing to accept as salary and what the market pays, using a salary range should permit you to be negotiable.
10. **What can you add to what we have already asked you that should make us want to hire you?** Think grocery shopping… all those brands in the soap aisle begging for your attention. Each one comes with its own key selling points. Remember the comics, Superman? On TV, he sold himself… stronger than a locomotive, faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. What are your key selling points? Plan this out ahead of time for the next interview… or include in a thank you letter for this past interview. Think a 1 minute infomercial about yourself. What are your core strengths? Is it communicating with children, being a mentor to other teachers, being able to keep topics current and interesting… . Think of what is needed to be successful in the job and how you specifically meet those needs—provide examples. Increased reading scores by using… Math scores jumped \_\_% due to my … Offer some proof from your past to support your claims. But it is your ability to assess the situation and analyze your potential contributions that will sell your candidacy. Do not think it too late — send a strong thank you and include in your request for the job the key reasons why you are the best candidate.
11. **10 Steps to a Successful Interview**
    1. Arrive on time.
    2. Introduce yourself in a courteous manner.
    3. Read company materials while you wait.
    4. Have a firm handshake.
    5. Listen.
    6. Use body language to show interest.
    7. Smile, nod, give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer.
    8. Ask about the next step in the process.
    9. Thank the interviewer.
    10. Write a thank-you letter to anyone you have spoken to.
12. **Key people in the organization** Major products or services Size in terms of sales and employees Locations other than your community Organizational structure of the company Major competitors View of the company by clients, suppliers, and competition Latest news reports on the company or on local or national news that affects the company.