

## Common Behavioural-Based Interview Questions

Behavioural-based questions tend to have common themes. Below are some sample questions organized by skill set groupings.

### General

1. Tell me about yourself (Education, any relevant project, work or extracurriculars in just 2-3 minutes).
2. Why did you choose your field of study? Follow up: What are your 2 favourite courses in engineering?
3. What do you know about this company?
4. Why are you interested in this co-op opportunity/with this company? What do you hope to gain from this internship?
5. Please share an example of how your academic, extra-curricular, and/or professional experiences have prepared you for this opportunity.
6. What are your future goals?/ Where do you see yourself in 10-15 years?
7. What are your strengths and how can they support you in this role? / Tell me about your greatest strength, and a time when you applied it.
8. What is your major weakness and what are you doing about it?
9. How would your colleagues or superiors describe you?
10. Can you tell me about an accomplishment you are proud of, and how you achieved it?

### Can you tell us about a time when you applied your [...] skills?

Practice this question for the qualifications that are listed in the job posting. These skills-based questions can be as follows:

### Communication/Collaboration

- Describe a time that you were successful primarily because of your ability to communicate well.
- Tell me about a time you collaborated with someone with whom you really would rather have not cooperated.

### Improvement/Learning Agility

- Describe a time when you made a mistake in a working environment. What did you learn?
- Describe a time when you didn't initially have the knowledge or ability to complete a task, and how you overcame this.
- Describe a time you recommended a change that improved the process or operation.

### Detail Orientation

- Give me an example of a time where your attention to detail helped you avoid making a mistake.

### Problem Solving

- Tell me about a time when you experienced a challenge with a co-worker, classmate, or peer. What happened and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a challenge or conflict you faced, and how you handled it.
- What would you do if you had a deadline coming up but found that you did not have enough time to complete the project?

### Flexibility/Adaptability

- Tell me about a time when you had to stop working on one assignment and start working on another one. What did you do? How did that work out?

### **Decision Making**

- Tell me about one of the most difficult decisions you made in the last year. How did you come to make your decision?

### **Goal Setting**

- Give me an example of an important goal you set and how you accomplished it.

### **Creativity/Innovation**

- Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a work problem you had been dealing with for some time.
- Tell me about a time you were especially creative in solving a lingering problem.

### **Initiative**

- Tell me about a time when you pushed yourself to do more than was necessary so that you went above and beyond the requirements for a project.

### **Client Management**

- Give me an example of a time you helped develop or strengthen customer relationships in any of your client-facing experiences.

## **How to Answer Interview Questions Based On What the Employer is Looking for**

- **Try to use the STAR method as much as possible for all questions.** Describing a story signifies that you know the actions you took and displays your skills in a clear and easy to follow manner. You should try to use it for every question that the interviewer asks.
  - Explain the situation so that your interviewer understands the context of your example, they do not need to know every detail.
  - Next you will want to talk about the task, problem or challenge that you took responsibility for completing or the goal of your efforts.
  - Then you will want to describe the actions that you personally took to complete the task or reach the end goal. Highlight skills or character traits addressed in the question.
  - Finally, explain the positive outcomes or results of your actions or efforts. Here it is important to highlight quantifiable results.
- When asked to “**Tell me about yourself**”, it is important to talk about you in the present, past and future. What made you have this interest in the first place? How has this changed to who you are now and how will this position help you in the future. How this job will serve you in your future goals is important to keep in mind. Remember to use the present-past-future structure.
  - **Present:** Talk a little bit about what your current role is, the scope of it, and perhaps a big recent accomplishment.
  - **Past:** Tell the interviewer how you got there and/or mention previous experience that's relevant to the job and company you're applying for.
  - **Future:** Segue into what you're looking to do next and why you're interested in (and a great fit for it, too).

**Example:** “Absolutely! I am currently a 3rd year computer engineering student and have been spending this summer interning at a science exploratory organization. I've had a chance to put my coding skills to good use by helping revamp the organization’s website and system programming. Since the website launched two weeks ago,

*the time it takes patrons to get through the purchasing process of our research has decreased by 43% and scores on a popup satisfaction survey have gone up by nearly 20%. It's been particularly exciting to be immersed in this environment because I have gained lots of leadership skills as well as technical skills such as Java that is something I know a junior web developer would use. This internship experience has only reinforced my desire to merge my CS skills which is why I knew I had to apply as soon as I saw the junior web developer role here."*

- Questions such as "**Why do you want to work with us?**" You will need to have come prepared with research about the company and why you are interested.

**Example:** "*I am passionate about improving both the infrastructure and people's daily lives through engineering innovations like sustainability and inclusivity. The Ward and Burke Construction Ltd. is also focused on the development of a sustainable and inclusive community, and I would like to supplement my engineering education with industry experience, while simultaneously helping the Ward and Burke Construction to meet and exceed its initiatives.*"

- When asked about **what strengths you have**, try to select strengths that are related to the job posting and expand on them. Make sure you have at least a couple of attributes in mind that match the requirements of the position and can be considered unique. You will want to use the "Star" method:
  - Explain the situation so that your interviewer understands the context of your example, they do not need to know every detail.
  - Next you will want to talk about the task, problem or challenge that you took responsibility for completing or the goal of your efforts.
  - Then you will want to describe the actions that you personally took to complete the task or reach the end goal. Highlight skills or character traits addressed in the question.
  - Finally, explain the positive outcomes or results of your actions or efforts. Here it is important to highlight quantifiable results.

**Example:** "*My strongest attribute is my determination. I take on every challenge head-on and do what I need to accomplish my goals, even when the challenge is difficult. One time there was a disagreement between 2 of my colleagues on our lab project. I decided to listen to both sides as well as have my other teammates listen too. Everyone had a discussion about the pros and cons of each suggestion, and the 2 that were in disagreement were able to understand from the others perspective and find common ground and compromise. Every time I was given a new challenge at my previous job, whether it was leading my first team project or meeting a quick deadline, I always enjoyed stepping up and demonstrating my skill at that new task. You stated in the job listing that you are looking for someone who enjoys a challenge, and I know that is me.*"

- For a question such as "**Tell me about your biggest weakness.**" It is important to select a weakness that can easily be fixed and explained. Any weakness involving a technical program is okay, as long as you state how you will improve on this (through past classroom experience or academic/personal projects you gained more understanding, asking questions etc.) You must always state how you will improve on this weakness. Do not say things such as "perfectionist" or "you work too hard." This is redundant. Be honest and say:

**Example:** "*I am challenged when it comes to public speaking. However, through my experiences in school and through my academic projects, I have learned to become more comfortable speaking in front of large groups and show my understanding. This is something I know will be important in this role as there will be lots of group discussions and presentations.*"

- For any questions such as “**Where do you see yourself in five years?**” Talk about what you believe you will accomplish in this role in 2-3 years and then explain 5 years. You want to break down these questions. Hiring Managers want to see if your professional goals align with the job for which you’re interviewing. If the two don’t match, the hiring manager might doubt that you’ll be motivated to develop in your role or want to stay at this company for very long.

*Example:* “I’ve found that the most rewarding part of working in Aerospace Engineering has been when I get to be part of putting together new ideas and development in new research. In five years, I’d like to be in a position where I know more about my longer-term career aspirations as an engineer. I will have gotten experience working for a space agency and know more about the industry overall. I’ll have grown my technical skills and learned how to take feedback from colleagues and incorporate it. And the way your organization is set up, I’ll also have gotten the opportunity to design different kinds of deliverables—including aerospace manufacturing, aircraft redesign, and learn more about Hermetic connectors for different kinds of projects to see where I really feel at home before settling on a focus.”

### General Recommendations

- It is recommended to bring a notebook and to write **3** of your accomplishments (only keywords) and **3** questions to ask employers for the interviewer. It is expected that you ask questions at the end of an interview to show your curiosity and engagement. Knowing 3 major accomplishments you have will help you to remember to expand on them and make you more comfortable in the interview.
- Getting straight to the point is something to remember. Talk about the main points of the story, you do not need to include every detail. Avoid answering too broadly. Try using specific examples of how past work might prepare you for the new role.
- Employers want to know how you fit the job description, the requirements and the knowledge, skill and passion that you bring to the position. It is important to think about explaining and expanding on all your accomplishments and how these are tied to the position you are applying for. Use your resume points as a foundation to explain your experience, personal and academic projects and volunteer experiences.
- If you are feeling nervous, you may ask the interviewer to repeat/clarify the question. This will give you more time to think of an answer. It is also okay to take a pause for a moment to gather your thoughts and execute your ideas effectively. It is better to take the time than to be nervous and not get your answer across.
- Always try to cater your answer to fit the needs of the employer. If they are asking what your goals are, explain how your goals align with the job and requirements they are looking for in the job description.

*Example:* “I always wanted to work hands-on with communicative devices. I have a fascination with how we are able to make a difference in someone’s life based on creating software that can easily be used by a device to help people hear better. As a customer service representative at McDonald’s, I learned the importance of accommodating others when they were unable to communicate. I enjoyed when the customer was satisfied with the service, based on my ability to accommodate and help them to get their order across. Overall, customers were happy with my ability to help and I was rewarded employee of the month due to the passion of wanting to help others and use the tools needed to accomplish it. My school engineering background and customer service background has led me down the path to appreciate the science that goes into creating communicative devices, such that your company makes.”