

Himanshu Kumar

Top Voice



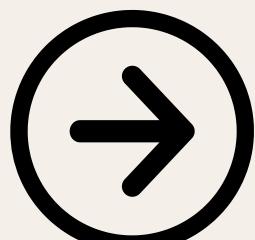
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REMOTE

JOB

INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



1. Have You Worked Remotely in the Past?

How to Answer

You can keep your response relatively simple. If you have experience working remotely in the past, be prepared to detail when, where, and how you were able to succeed in that role. If you haven't technically worked remotely before, that probably won't be a dealbreaker these days, but you should have a comparable experience ready to share—like writing papers in your dorm room or organizing a fundraiser via Facebook.

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You Might Say:

“Yes, for the past six months, I’ve been working from home in my role as a customer service representative at Cloudy Inc. It was a bit of an adjustment at first, but I quickly adapted and have increased my call volume and customer satisfaction rate since transitioning to a remote setup. I’ve found that it’s actually easier for me to stay focused and organized when I’m working from home.”

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2. What Types of Remote/Distributed Team Tools and Software Have You Used and How Did You Use Them?

How to Answer:

In addition to listing the types of technologies you're familiar with, you should also be prepared to explain how and why your team used them. "Be prepared to describe a variety of practices to make remote work effective," Leech says. Prior to your interview, revisit the job posting or ask the recruiter which tools your prospective team uses so that you can frame your response with those technologies in mind. And know that you probably won't have experience with every single platform any given employer uses. That's OK! Just be sure to mention how quickly you've learned new tools in the past.

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You Might Say:

"In my previous remote role, our team used Zoom for weekly meetings and impromptu one-on-ones. We were also expected to be available on Slack throughout the day for quick questions or updates and often worked in shared docs and spreadsheets on Google Drive. I know your team uses Airtable, which I'm not as familiar with, but I spent some time working with a demo the other day, and I think it's something I can familiarize myself with rather quickly."

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3. What Is Your Approach to Maintaining Effective Communication and Collaboration With a Distributed Team?

How to Answer:

According to Jones, the key here is to have a detailed, thoughtful answer (complete with specific examples) prepared. That should be fairly easy for people who've worked remotely in the past, but if you haven't, don't sweat it. "Sometimes people get tripped up when they are asked a question about a situation they've never been in—and remote work is new to a lot of folks," Jones says. "If this happens, communicate what you would do if you encountered XYZ situation in a remote role; sometimes the thought process is more valuable than the actual answer."

You might even follow your answer up with a question about how the hiring manager's team handles distributed communication and collaboration to show that you're truly interested in understanding the dynamics of your prospective team.

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You Might Say:

"I think a varied approach to communication is ideal, as the best method of communication depends on the scope of the question or project you're working on. To start, I think having regular team meetings over video is a great way to stay connected and keep everyone on the same page. I also like to schedule regular, standing check-ins with my manager. I'll save up all of my non-urgent questions and updates for our one-on-ones when I know I'll have their full attention. I'm also diligent about checking Slack and email. I think Slack is a great way to handle quick, simple questions or to share brief updates. Lastly, I like to check in with everyone on my team to ask what the best way to get in touch with them would be if I need to speak with them as soon as possible. So, for example, if I know that my boss prefers that I text them when something unexpected comes up, I'll know not to waste my time waiting for them to respond to an email. How does the marketing team here tend to communicate and collaborate?"

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4. How Do You Manage Your Time and Stay Organized?

How to Answer:

Don't be afraid to talk about all the tools and strategies you use to keep track of what you need to do, decide what takes precedence, plan how and when you'll get it done, and follow through. That might mean calling out specific apps you live by or talking about your color coding system for prioritizing to-do items in your planner.

Taparia also recommends explaining that you'd want to understand how their team works. "Talk about how you'd make sure you're prioritizing your work according to team goals," Taparia says. "Are you checking in with your managers regularly to ensure you're working on what's most important?"

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You Might Say:

"I keep a running daily and weekly to-do list in my notes app and rely heavily on my calendar for meeting and deadline reminders. I usually prioritize my tasks based on due dates and level of importance, and check in with my team every morning to make sure we're on the same page, as priorities can always shift. I also like to share calendars with my team, so we always have an idea of when everyone is or isn't available."

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5. How Do You Keep Yourself Motivated and Engaged When Working From Home?

How to Answer:

Answer honestly! Do you love the Pomodoro Technique? Do you prefer to be in constant communication with your coworkers via Slack? Is the relative solitude of remote work a natural fit for your work style because it allows you to get into deep focus? Great! Now you just need to explain how and why.

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You Might Say:

“I’m very comfortable working independently, but I do love collaboration. So I like to work on teams that are in regular contact over chat or email. I also really look forward to weekly team meetings or Zoom calls with my manager—it’s always nice to have some human interaction after hours of staring at words on a screen. These regular check-ins help boost my energy when I’m drafting copy for clients, as it gives me something to look forward to, gives my day structure, and helps keep me on track. When I was a full-time freelancer, I loved scheduling work sessions with accountability buddies. I found that sometimes just having someone with me on a video call, even if we were both working silently, really helped me fly through my work. So I’d also look forward to seeing if anyone else would be up to scheduling some regular pockets of quiet joint work time.”

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6. What's the Key to Making Sure a Project Is Successful When Working Remotely?

How to Answer:

Taparia recommends demonstrating that you understand the importance of asking questions up front, making sure you have a precise understanding of the work, managing expectations around timelines, and ensuring work is going in the right direction. “Even better if you can explain that you’re willing first to seek answers...on your own before asking others,” he says. Including an example of a real project you’ve worked on remotely in the past (if relevant) may also help to strengthen your answer.

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You Might Say:

“This will, of course, depend on the team and type of project, but I’ve found that getting on the same page from the start is really important. So I like to meet with my team to talk through our goals, timelines, and work distribution before we begin working on a new project. From there, I schedule regular check-ins to keep everyone on the same page. It’s also helpful to work in collaborative shared documents or spreadsheets where possible so that everyone involved can see the progress and hopefully catch potential issues sooner than if we were working totally independently.”

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7. Tell Me About a Time When You Had to Adapt to Change.

How to Answer:

This is a great example of a situational or behavioral interview question, which should be a signal to you that the hiring manager wants you to share a story from your past work experience. It's a chance to see how you actually behaved to give them a sense of how you'd function in the job you're being considered for.

You'll first want to think of an example that demonstrates your ability to adapt to change—whether it was in a remote job or not. Then use the STAR method to organize your response. You can get detailed advice on how best to use it here, but here's a quick overview to get you started: First, explain the situation you want to use to answer the question, then describe the task you needed to complete in that situation. Next, discuss the action you took to complete said task, and finally, explain the result of that action. Easy enough, right?

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You Might Say:

"In my previous role, my manager had to take an unplanned medical leave and was suddenly unavailable. Our team was in the middle of creating a pitch for a prospective new client and moving the presentation date wasn't an option. As the most senior person in our department, I knew I'd need to step in and keep everyone on track, but I'd never managed a team before. I started by scheduling a meeting to get everyone on the same page and identify what had been completed, what needed still needed to be done, and which tasks my manager had been handling. I then met with another senior coworker to discuss how we should divide up the work among the group and how best to keep everyone on track. We shared our plan with the vice president, who oversaw several departments including ours, and asked for input on what else she thought we should be doing to make sure nothing slipped through the cracks. Our team was able to pull together and get the presentation ready in time and we even landed the client!"

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8. Tell Me About a Time When You Had a Conflict With a Coworker.

How to Answer:

“Candidates should demonstrate an awareness of how caustic conflict can become if unresolved in a remote environment,” Leech says. Talking things out in person tends to be the most straightforward way to resolve issues, so when you can’t do that in a timely manner, conflicts can simmer.

This is another excellent example of a situational interview question and the perfect opportunity to use the STAR method. Leech advises including a detailed example of how you’ve resolved a conflict in the past. “If you weren’t able to resolve things, share what you should have done instead, as it demonstrates an ability and desire to learn from your mistakes,” she says. Discussing what you learned can be incredibly valuable, so if you don’t have a glowing success story, it’s OK to share an example of a time things didn’t work out the way you’d hoped. That said, avoid sharing stories about huge blowups. As interesting and relevant as those examples may be, the goal is to keep the focus on your conflict resolution skills.

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You Might Say:

“I used to work with a sales engineer who would consistently no-show on client calls because he was always double-booked. I was understanding the first couple of times, but once I realized it was a pattern, I grew concerned about how it would affect my customer relationships, so I invited him out for coffee. I started by asking him questions about his job and what he likes about it and how I might support him. He admitted that he felt pulled in too many different directions and felt that his manager had him assigned to too many accounts. I used that as an opportunity to mention that I was a little worried about his scheduling issues and explained how difficult it was to find times that worked for everyone. He said he understood and asked if I would help him get some of my accounts assigned to another sales engineer. With his permission, I went to his manager to make the request and was able to get a new, less stressed-out SE without burning any bridges.”

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9. Tell Me About a Time When You Weren't Sure How To Do Something. How Did You Go About Seeking Out Information?

How to Answer:

It's the STAR method to the rescue again! Working remotely means that sometimes you're going to feel a bit...remote. So when you run into roadblocks, you'll need to be resourceful. Can you think of a time when you needed to be proactive about researching how to do something? Or a time when you had to teach yourself a new skill? Being prepared with specific examples of your ability to figure things out on your own or pull in the right resources when needed will show the interviewer you'll be able to do the same in this role and give you a leg up.

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You Might Say:

"As the sole human resources manager in a relatively small company, I'm used to getting asked questions that I don't always know the answers to. The sudden shift to working from home due to the pandemic amplified this, as I was suddenly responsible for a totally remote workforce of fifty people. The questions I got ran the gamut from whether the company would subsidize the cost of Wi-Fi to how to apply for supplemental unemployment in case someone's hours were reduced. Our company's leadership team was looking to me to help make this transition as smooth as possible, but they weren't even sure what that would look like. So I reached out to our company's employment lawyer and a couple of HR managers in my network to ask what they were doing. I also spent several hours familiarizing myself with our state's unemployment website and put together a list of questions for leadership to consider. Ultimately, I was able to build a frequently asked questions page on our company intranet, which ended up being an incredibly helpful resource for worried employees."

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10. Do You Have Any Questions for Me?

How to Answer:

The answer to this question should always be yes. In addition to having a list of questions about the company, the role itself, and next steps in the interview process, you should also be prepared to ask questions that are specifically related to working from home, as this will demonstrate that you understand the nature of remote work.

If the company has recently transitioned to a remote model, you might ask about how the transition is going, what tools they're using to keep the team together, and how going remote has affected the company culture. If they've been a distributed organization for a while, you can ask what they consider the key to a successful remote workforce to be, what types of employee activities they do to maintain company culture, or what traits they look for in a remote worker.

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As with every interview ever, it's essential to show up well-prepared. But when it comes to interviews for remote roles, it's even more important, as people who work from home need to be especially proactive, organized, and communicative.

"Employers are going to be evaluating you based on your behavior," Leech says. "Do you show up on time? This signals reliability. Do you answer challenging questions clearly and forthrightly, and disclose your flaws? This signals honesty. Do you help facilitate a successful interview through attention to the allotted time and by bringing prepared questions? This signals initiative." Finding ways to demonstrate these traits throughout the interview process "will make you a significantly stronger candidate," Leech says. So spend some time reflecting on how you'd like to answer these questions, then ask a friend to join you on a video chat to practice your responses.

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