

# Thursday: Mock Interviews

## Mock Interview

A mock interview is a practice interview or a simulation of an actual job interview for you in preparation for the job market and should be treated as such. It provides you with the opportunity to practice for an interview and receive feedback on how to improve your interviewing abilities.

## Importance

1. Helps you in having a fair idea about the sort of situation you will experience at actual interviews, and prepares you on how to handle them.
2. Reduces your anxiety about the interview process by training you for the typical interview questions so that you can learn how to answer difficult questions.
3. Helps the you in preparing for all parts of the interviewing process that is the general, behavioural and technical.
4. Helps you to pick up on habits that might harm your chances of impressing an employer.

## Preparing for the Mock Interview

You will gain maximum benefit from your mock interview if you are well prepare. Therefore before attending a mock interview make the following preparations.

1. Read through the mock interview answers to each question (both general and behavioral) so that you may know what to expect in your group and one on one mock interviews.
2. Read through instructions on how to answer technical interview questions.

## How to conduct yourself during an Interview

For every job interview there a few simple guidelines which should be followed and they include:

1. Arrive on time. It is paramount you arrive for a job interview on time. You should estimate how long the journey is going to take and add on at least half an hour (maybe even an hour). If you arrive early you can grab a coffee or go for a walk, but don't arrive late.
2. Dress appropriately. The way you dress for an interview is very important; it says a lot about your status and your expectations. You do not have to attend all job interviews in a suit or a shirt and tie, although some businesses do expect this, but you do have to present yourself well.
3. Ensure your body language is positive and look interested. Do not slouch in the chair or become over friendly with the interviewer
4. Don't eat anything smelly (such as garlic or having a cigarette) before the interview, and do not enter the interview room chewing gum.
5. Speak clearly and confidently. Try to realise when you have said enough to answer the question and then say no more, answer questions clearly and don't ramble. If you talk too much you could put off your interviewer, but at the same time, if you say too little, you may not endear yourself to the interviewer enough.
6. Keep eye contact to show you are engaged with the interviewer(s). Always try to keep natural eye contact with the person you are talking to. If there are a few people holding the interview you should

make eye contact with each one, even if it is only for a few seconds at a time. Looking around the room at doors, windows or other furniture will not create a good impression. Eye contact instills confidence and trust, and develops a relationship.

7. Always ask questions at the end of the interview. Usually, at the end of a job interview you are asked if you have any questions. It is necessary to ask a few questions at this time to display your interest in the position. The best type of questions focus on the business and the position you have applied for, not the salary being offered or benefits and holiday entitlement. Ask about the software the company uses, the scope for growth inside of the organization, the managerial structure, the initial and subsequent training, the plans for the future, how the company will grow, etc.

## Process

Mock interviews occur during the first two weeks of the final module of Moringa Core, and are broken into two phases. During this time a Technical Mentor and the Professional Development Mentor will ask you interview questions and then give you feedback on your performance.

### Phase 1

The 2nd phase will happen on the 1st week of the project period as follows:

1. Mock interviews will happen from Monday to Friday
2. You will be interviewed by a Technical Mentor and the Professional Development Mentor
3. Each interview will take a maximum of thirty minutes
4. General, behavioural and technical interview questions will be asked
5. Feedback from the Technical Mentor and the Professional Development Mentor will be given.
6. You are to work on the feedback in preparation for the next mock interview

### Phase 2

The 2nd phase will happen on the 2nd week of the project period as follows. Only job seeking students will go through this phase:

1. Interviews will happen from Monday to Friday
2. You will be interviewed on the basis of a job you apply for [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p12bltl_xf9oMKmDKqU_RcEmOqfhkbQ7hvmOHqN7GLQ/edit?usp=sharing)  
([https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p12bltl\\_xf9oMKmDKqU\\_RcEmOqfhkbQ7hvmOHqN7GLQ/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p12bltl_xf9oMKmDKqU_RcEmOqfhkbQ7hvmOHqN7GLQ/edit?usp=sharing))
3. Students should come dressed as they would for a job interview on the day of the interview
4. This will be a full interview, with general, behavioural questions, and technical questions

## Categories of Interview Questions

### Example General Questions

1. Tell me about yourself
2. State three adjectives that best describe you
3. What do you know about the company?

4. What do you find interesting about this job?
5. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
6. What is your greatest achievement?
7. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
8. Given a tight deadline, how would you handle the pressure?
9. How would you handle a case of criticism?
10. How much are you looking to get paid?
11. Why should we hire you over someone else?
  1. What makes you the best candidate for the job?
12. Do you have any questions for us?

## Example Behavioural Questions

1. Give me an example of the project or initiative that you started on your own. It does not have to be business-oriented.
  1. What prompted you to get started?
2. Tell me about a time you had to work on several projects at once. How did you handle the projects?
3. Can you give an example of a time when you didn't agree with other programmers.
  1. How did you resolve that conflict?
4. Tell me about when you had to deal with conflict within your team?
  1. How was the conflict solved?
  2. How would you deal with it now?
5. What was the most difficult decision you've ever had to make at work?
  1. How did you arrive at your decision?
  2. What was the result?
6. Tell me about the most difficult situation you have had when leading a team. What happened and how did you handle it?
  1. Were you successful? What was the most important thing you did?
  2. What did you learn?

## Example Technical Questions

The questions can be found [here](#)

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lwuCGW2FVG0mouPLCU76tHQ8QvexqiNvlu5NmQKhKt0/edit?ts=58d26476>).

## Answering Interview Questions

### General Interview Questions

“Tell me about yourself”

This seems like such a simple question, but it can really make you sweat especially in an interview. This is not an invitation to recite your entire life story or your CV. Instead, it's your first and best chance to pitch the hiring manager on who you are and why you're the right one for the job. Use your personal narrative to answer this question, tailoring to the job you're applying for and person you're talking to.

- So, first start with the present, where you are right now.
- Then, segue into the past. If you have had an employment history, talk a little bit about the experiences you've had and the skills you gained at previous positions. Also, Just because you didn't get paid for something doesn't mean that it doesn't count as experience. Responsibilities volunteering and side jobs count! You can apply the skills you learned doing those tasks to any position.
- Aim to focus on skills that are relevant to the job you are interviewing for.
- Finally, finish with the future, why you are really excited for this particular opportunity.

### Example

Use your personal narrative.

## “What do you know about our company?”

This question is asked to gauge your real interest in the job and the employer. Make a point of researching the potential employer, including:

- What they do
- Products or services
- Major partnerships
- Size of the company
- Major competitors and how they compare with those competitors
- Plans for growth or expansion
- Company culture
- Work environment
- Values, mission, and vision

Your answer should highlight why you are a good fit for the position in context of the information you have about the company. Your potential employer wants to see that you are aware of the nature and strengths of the business and how you can contribute.

You can also weave this information into your answers to other questions they ask to show that you've researched the organization and are genuinely interested in the role.

### Example

I see that your company has been in business for fifteen years now, with an excellent reputation for creating Mobile Apps and payment systems for major companies in Africa. Your clients range from the common man to major companies and banks. I am very interested to learn about the Mobile Apps that you create to support payments systems for different clients and I am particularly attracted to the vision of your company. I appreciate that the business has focused on meeting customers needs in a friendly

and innovative way. Your approach is admirable, and I believe my orientation to customer service plus my software engineering skills will allow me to build products for [company name] that are high-quality and user-focused.

## “What do you find interesting about this job?”

When asked this question, the interviewer wants to know why you decided to apply specifically for this job, and why the position fits you and your career plans. Here are a few tips on how you can answer this question:

- Be specific: make sure that your answers are to the point and not ambiguous. Mention specific job qualities and career advantages that you find in this role that interest you.
- Be truthful: simply put, if you like a job you will excel at it. If you are working somewhere just for the money, there are chances that you will not like the job and will leave quickly.
- Be real: show your true excitement over the problems you will be solving, and how you and the organization will grow through your contributions.

### Example

I'm really excited about this role because of the opportunity to work in such a solid team environment. I always wanted to work with hard-working, professional, experienced people. I love contributing to the team effort, bringing out the best in myself and in my teammates for fulfilling our work goals and reaching top results.

I trust that I can perform well by applying sound principles of teamwork. I appreciate receiving timely and consistent feedback designed to improve not only my performance as well but the team's performance as well. I consult with people, try my best and treat everyone positively and equally.

I also love the agriculture sector - in my last job, I worked in agriculture and decided to become a software engineer to solve problems faced by people like myself.

## “What do you consider to be your weaknesses?”

When the interviewer asks you this question, they are trying to see how well you respond to a question that is intentionally meant to throw you off. When you prepare for this question, you will want to pick a weakness that is a strength in disguise, or one that presents a current strength as a recovered weakness. The answer to this question has two parts. First is the confession to the problem. The last part is the recovery: how did you minimize the weakness, and how are you working to improve on it.

### Example

I do not like confrontation, and in the past found myself at times compromising what I wanted or needed in order to keep the peace. This was a real problem, especially in team situations or when I was supposed to be leading a group because there are times when you need to tell people things they might not necessarily want to hear. Since then I've realized this is a weakness of mine and I've worked very hard to overcome it. Now instead of avoiding those situations, I take it as an opportunity to practice being

more assertive without coming across as difficult. I take the time to listen to each side of the situation and make sure that if I have any comments or criticisms that they are constructive and that the solutions I offer are actual solutions and not just “peace patches” (which in this case means opting for peace for the sake of keeping the peace but the truth is that the situation has not been solved. You choose to maintain peace by sweeping everything under the rug).

## “What is your greatest achievement?”

Choose an achievement that is related to the position and is fairly recent. Review the job description. What skills are listed as necessary for the job? This will guide you to the most relevant answer for this employment interview question. Reflect upon achievements that demonstrated the required skill. Describe your accomplishment and highlight the job-related skills you used. Point out how the results of your accomplishment.

### Examples

Recently I was asked to implement a new system to reduce our debtors days. I analyzed the problems with the current system, got input from all the stakeholders, and developed a faster way of getting the accounts out and monitoring follow up. Our debtors days reduced significantly and we are currently on target for collections.

I was part of the rowing team that recently won the championships. It was a particularly satisfying win as we had trained very hard, requiring a lot of discipline and perseverance, to come up from the bottom of the league. We also really had to work together as a team and keep each other motivated.

## “Where do you see yourself in 5 years?”

The interviewer wants to understand more about your career goals and [how this position would fit \(http://biginterview.com/blog/2012/01/what-employers-want-job-interview.html\)](http://biginterview.com/blog/2012/01/what-employers-want-job-interview.html) into your grand plan. They care about your career goals because they want to hire someone who is motivated, proactive, and likely to stick around and work hard if hired. To answer this question:

- Keep your answer fairly general and truthful, but broad enough that it doesn't raise doubts about whether you would be a good fit for this position at this organization.
- Stress your interest in a long-term career at the company because the interviewer wants to know that you're ready to settle in and grow with the firm.
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job as an exciting next step for you. Most importantly, make it clear that you are motivated to take on this opportunity right now.

### Example

I am driven to be the best at what I do and I want to work somewhere where I'll have opportunities to develop my skills, take on interesting projects, and work with people I can really learn from. Most importantly, I want to work for an organization where I can build a career.

## “Given a tight deadline how would you handle the pressure?”

Pressure and stress are unavoidable aspects of the world we live in. The interviewer will be looking to identify that you recognise that pressure and stress are facts of life, that you understand the effect pressure and stress has on you and that you are sufficiently robust to be able to take them in your stride.

The key to formulating your answer to this question is to:

- Seize this as an opportunity to talk about a situation or an occasion where you were under pressure and you how rose to the challenge.
- Avoid conveying the impression that the fact you were under pressure was in any way your own fault or due to your own personal failings. Place the 'blame' firmly on external factors outside of your control.

### Example

From a personal perspective, I manage stress by prioritizing my responsibilities so that I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when it needs to be done. This has helped me effectively manage pressure when working on projects. For example, there was a time I not only had my own personal projects to work on but a group project as well that we were working on with a few friends for a client and they were all due in a week's time and on the same day. When faced with such a situation I usually prioritize my tasks by working on the easier projects first then narrowing down to the most challenging projects that need more time. And in this case that is what I did and I was able to complete all projects and deliver quality work..

## "How would you handle a case of criticism?"

Interviewers might be interested to hear about some mistakes you have done in your experience as a developer, but what they are really asking is how you respond in stressful situations and whether you can take correction with a good attitude. They are wondering if you are able to work well under a variety of management styles or if criticism will make you feel angry or undervalued.

When you answer this question, you want to emphasize your ability to handle criticism. This is your opportunity to showcase how you are willing to humbly make improvements in projects or professionalism when required.

- Talk about how you listened and made changes when a someone critiqued your work.
- Explain a situation where you improved your performance after receiving constructive criticism.
- Emphasize that you enjoy doing quality work and have learned to value the input of experienced leaders.
- Mention why you are flexible and professional when working with others with whom you may at times disagree.

### Example

During my stay at Moringa School I received input from my Technical Mentor that helped me to see how my work could be improved. Once I was asked to revise a project that I had spent a lot of time on, but after listening carefully to the critique, I saw how I could make changes that would strengthen the finished product. Through fixing those critiques, my project was much higher quality and I became a much

stronger engineer in the process. I am eager to learn from people with different views and experiences, and appreciate constructive feedback.

## “How much are you looking to get paid?”

Depending on your answer, you can price yourself out of a job offer by saying a number that is too high, or you can get less than the company can afford to pay you by saying a number that is lower than their budget for the position (companies always create budgets of what they can pay for each position they hire for).

This is one of the trickiest questions to answer since it's so easy to give a self-defeating response. The key to answering this question well is to prepare in advance by researching salaries at the company, and in similar positions in the same industry. Here are some strategies to try when asked how much you expect to get paid.

By providing a number, two big things can go wrong:

- You say a number that is too high for the company's budget, and they remove you as a candidate for the position because you are too expensive.
- You say a number that is lower than their budget for the position, and you end up not making as much money because you have told them that you are willing to work for less.

Instead, say:

- “I am very interested in this opportunity, and am excited to contribute to [company name]. Given my skills and experience, I believe my salary should be competitive to market rates. What is your budgeted range for this position, and what do you think is fair based off other people in the organization in this position?”

Other important tactics:

- Do your research. Not only should you know the average salary for your industry, but it's also wise to know geographical information as well. Salaries can vary widely based on the cost of living in the area, as well as the number of qualified applicants nearby.
- Play it coy. Avoid saying a number first. You can say something like, “I would love to know more about the position and its responsibilities before thinking about salary.”
- Keep your cost-of-living needs in mind. It can feel game-like to negotiate a strategy, but it's important to keep your financial needs front and center. Will the salary you request cover your expenses? If not, how will you make up the difference? Weigh your needs against the research you've done about salary and if the two numbers aren't as close to each other, it could be a sign that the role isn't a good match.
- Get information from the interviewer. Use this question as an opportunity to flip the tables on the interviewer, and find out what the salary range is for the position. You can ask
  - “What is the range you have in mind for the position?”
  - “What are some non-salaried benefits available?”



- If you have to answer, provide a range, rather than an actual number.

## “Why should we hire you and not anybody else?/ What makes you the best candidate for the job?”

When a hiring manager asks you this question she or he is really asking, “What makes you the best fit for this position?”

Your answer to this question should be a concise “sales pitch” that explains what you have to offer the employer. Remember that employers hire workers to solve a problem, whether it's boosting sales or streamlining processes or building a brand. Your goal when making your pitch is to show that you're the best person to solve that problem. The better you do that, the better your chances of landing the job.

- You want your answer to be brief no more than a minute or two long.
- Begin by explaining what you believe the employer is looking for, and how you fulfill that need.
- The interviewer wants to know how you stand out among the other applicants. Therefore, focus on one or two qualities you possess that are different from what other interviewees might offer, or are more difficult to find in candidates generally.

### Example

You describe in the job listing that you are looking for a junior developer who is hardworking and has a quick learning ability. Having served as a tutor an intern at Craft Silicon, I have developed my ability to be extremely hardworking and handle pressure. My experience as an intern has taught me strategies for working in a professional environment for example team work, time management and flexibility.

## “Do you have any questions for us?”

### !!!ALWAYS HAVE QUESTIONS TO ASK TO THE INTERVIEWER!!!

Your answer to this question should **always** be yes. It shows that you're engaged and interested in the position, and you are seriously considering the role.

You will have to use your judgment about the number of questions you ask and when to ask them. Think of this as a [conversation](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/interview-as-a-conversation) [\\_\(https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/interview-as-a-conversation\)\\_](https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/interview-as-a-conversation). There will be an appropriate time to ask certain types of questions, like those about benefits and vacation. Don't ask about those questions upfront, they make it sound like you're just looking for an easy paycheck. Instead, concentrate on questions about the job's responsibilities and how you fit the position until you get the actual offer.

When you begin to think of the interview as a two way process, you will see it is important for you to find out as much as possible about the company. Questions will give you the opportunity to find out if this is a good place for you to work before you say yes.

## Examples

What are the first three projects that I would be working on?

What does a typical day look like?

What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?

What are the skills and experiences you're looking for in an ideal candidate?

What attributes does someone need to have in order to be really successful in this position?

## Behavioural Interview Questions

Behavioral interview questions are based on the fact that looking at a candidate's past behaviour is the best way to predict their future performance.

The golden rule when you're answering behavioural interview questions is to adhere to what's called the CAR principle: Context, Action, Result.

- **Context** is about describing a situation and setting the scene for a relevant example. The key here is to choose your example well, one that clearly demonstrates the quality or skill the employer is asking about.
- **Action** is about explaining what action you took. Be really specific rather than making vague statements and outline your steps and rationale.
- **Result** is about detailing the outcome of your action. Offer specific facts relating to the result. For instance, quote figures and statistics that back up your declaration.

## "What has been the most stressful situation you have ever found yourself in? How did you handle it?"

The best way to answer this question is to give an example of how you have handled stress in a most recent situation. That way, the interviewer can get a clear picture of how well you work in stressful situations. Tailor your answer to be related to either programming or coding. Avoid mentioning a time when you put yourself in a needlessly stressful situation. For example, do not share a story about a time when you were stressed because you procrastinated and had to finish a project quickly. Focus on a time when you were given a difficult task or multiple assignments, and you rose to the occasion.

### Example

Pressure is very important to me. Good pressure, such as having a lot of assignments to work on, or an upcoming deadline, helps me to stay motivated and productive. Of course, there are times when too much pressure can lead to stress. Through my experience, I have learned how to balance multiple projects and meeting deadlines, which prevents me from feeling stressed often. For example, I once had three large projects due in the same week, which was a lot of pressure. However, because I created a schedule that detailed how I would break down each project into small assignments, I completed all three projects ahead of time and avoided unnecessary stress.

## “Give me an example of the project or initiative that you started on your own. It can be a non-business project. What prompted you to get started?”

By asking this question, the interviewer wants to find out whether you are capable of coming up with new ideas and thinking creatively in order to solve problems. You can take your example from your work experience, a group project or a skills related extracurricular activity.

It is important to remember that in this case you are essentially telling a story and your answer needs to have a well considered structure. Make sure to cover the following when answering this prompt:

- Where you were at the time
- What the issue or problem was
- How this issue/problem had a negative impact on the business, employees, customers etc
- What you suggested/implemented as a solution to the problem
- How this had a positive impact on the business, people, etc

### Example

In a college technical festival, there was a problem with the Learn network of the college where the server was not functioning well. This network was going to be used to host various gaming events in the college fest. I took an initiative and got a few of my friends with me and replaced the complete connection network with another server. We successfully managed to shift to a new server in less than an hour and the events were conducted successfully.

## “Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical skills. What was your role?”

The trick to this question is to not just talk about your overall experience and training that led to your having strong analytical abilities, but to give an example of a specific situation where your analytical abilities came into application. The strongest examples are those that describe a situation related to the work done in the company you have applied to, since your answer to this question shows that you can solve the problems that they are facing.

If you are asked this question, it is because analytical ability is valued highly in the company you are applying to. Once you have decided which situation to answer with, don't just state it. Give an idea of the significance of the situation and don't miss important details. When the situation has been fully described. Whatever you did will have a full context. After explaining the actions you took, then you can move on to the consequences, and why you think you got the result you did.

### Example

During my University Programming course, we were assigned a group project to do marketing research for a local tech companies. After we collected all of the data, we had to analyze the data in a meaningful

way for the business and report the results. It turned out that I had the strongest analytical abilities in the group, so I led the rest of the group in analyzing the data. Because of my analytical skills, we found that a local tech company had been targeting the wrong market all along. We set up a meeting with the CEO of the tech company and were able to show the owner our findings and the market segment that the business should be targeting.

## “Tell me about a time you had to work on several projects at once. How did you handle the projects?”

By asking this question the interviewer wants to see that you are going to be able to cope with working on multiple projects at the same time. There's only one correct answer to this question and it's a resounding 'Yes'!. Then go on and backup your 'Yes' with some evidence, preferably an example.

### Example

Yes. I've had plenty of experience handling a very full workload and dealing with numerous different projects simultaneously. When starting out in my current job at Craft Silicon, I came in to a situation where the team was behind schedule on a number of projects and also had several new projects which needed to be started. I certainly had my hands very full indeed; it was quite a juggling act! I persuaded the CTO to allocate sufficient resources so we could complete the overdue projects without suffering further financial penalties and I simultaneously got us going on the new range of projects as quickly as possible so as to not disappoint the clients. I understand the importance of adhering to deadlines, so if I saw that I absolutely could not accomplish the task in time, I would ask for an extension.

### Example 2

At Moringa School we usually had a lot of projects to work on weekly and at the same time finish up class work by the end of the week. Even if my tasks at times seemed unachievable, I would buckle down and figure out the best approach to completing the tasks. I would start by organizing the tasks from most important to least, and then I would begin working on the most important task. I would maintain a positive outlook and utilize my organizational skills to develop a plan of action.

## “Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?”

The interviewer is interested in knowing how you are able to perform in a workplace where you are not the one who is 'making the calls'. The typical workplace environment involves a tiered structure where there are those who make the decisions and those who perform the work. An entry level position most often assumes the role of the latter.

### Example

I am a performer of tasks. As a new employee, I understand that many of my duties will be directed by those above me. These will undoubtedly involve changes, and as long as I understand how the changes are related to the betterment of the company I am fully 'on board'.

I once worked for a corporation where one of my duties was to prepare the annual report. As a result of input from the overseeing board and members, the format for that report was changed significantly. Although this meant that I had to relearn the report-writing process, with my understanding that this change would mean that the report was more accessible and easy to read, I had no problem with the demands of that change.

## Example 2

I am a performer of tasks. As a new employee, I understand that many of my duties will be directed by those above me. These will undoubtedly involve changes, and as long as I understand how the changes are related to the betterment of the company I am fully 'on board'. At Moringa School we worked on a group project during the project period. We were to present this project as a group every Friday of the week for one month. During the group presentation we would talk about the project and what we had worked on so far, feedback was given by our instructors and we had to make a lot of changes and add a lot of things before the next presentation which was in just a week's time. This meant that we had to make a lot of changes with every feedback session but at the end of the one month we had the best projects to present on career day to potential employers.

**“Have you ever worked in a team? If yes, give an example of a situation where you had to compromise on decision making.”**

By asking this question the interviewer wants to know if you're a team player and capable of resolving minor issues that may arise. Workplace conflicts may happen every now and then and that's okay. The key is handling them correctly and showing the interviewer you can move forward. Answer this question in a way that show you can overcome small conflicts without involving your boss or interrupting the flow of the workplace. Your answer should reflect your professionalism and your ability to maintain your temper.

## Example

Last year I attended a coding bootcamp and one of the requirements for graduation was to build a group project. We had to decide on what to build and the my fellow group members chose to build something simple. I on the other hand wanted to build something complex so that our group will have something unique and better than the other groups. My idea of building something complex was not welcomed by the rest of the group member either way we had to decide on one project. I requested that we sit and discuss each project idea, its advantages and disadvantages in terms of time taken to build the project and the project functionality. We finally agreed on building a simple application rather than a complex one that would take up a lot of time and resources since at the end of the day our goal was to have a completed and functional application in order to graduate.

**“Tell me about when you had to deal with conflict within your team. How was the conflict solved? How would you deal with it now?”**

Conflict questions are common because everybody wants to hire a good team player therefore the interviewer wants to [get a sense of how you will respond](http://biginterview.com/blog/2012/01/what-employers-want-job-interview.html) [.\(http://biginterview.com/blog/2012/01/what-employers-want-job-interview.html\)](http://biginterview.com/blog/2012/01/what-employers-want-job-interview.html) to conflict.

Answer this question by briefly describing the context in which the conflict but do not get too caught up in unnecessary details.

Lastly, talk about the key actions that you took. In the case of a conflict story, the focus should be on how you resolved the disagreement in a professional and productive way.

### Example

I was managing the creation of an application in school and we were on a very tight deadline because the presentation day was a day away. I was in charge of delivering on time and I had to manage all team members. The developer who was building the front end part of the application was very talented but unfortunately missed a deadline that I had assigned. When I approached him about it, he blew up at me. I was taken aback by his response, but I remained calm. I acknowledged that the deadline was hours away and explained again the reasoning and the importance of ready in time for the presentation. He relaxed a little when he saw that I wasn't attacking him. He told me about all of his other class projects and how overwhelmed he was. I asked him if there was any way that I could help him come up with a solution. Eventually, we agreed that it would help if I would him in completing the front end part since I was conversant with that area also. This helped take some of the pressure off of him.

**“Think about a situation when you had to make the most difficult decision you’ve ever had to make at work. How did you arrive at your decision? What was the result?”**

When an interviewer asks this question, she or he wants to know how you'd handle challenging and stressful situations and how strong your critical thinking skills.

Approach this question by describing how you effectively approached the challenge, how you weighed the options and how you reached your decision.

Whatever example you use, make sure it highlights a strength you would bring to the role.

### Example

In my previous position, I was in charge of selecting vendors to print our promotional materials. We have a long time vendor we have been working with for over a decade. However, for one of our biggest print jobs of the year, another vendor came in with a lower bid.” I did not want to take the work away from a vendor with whom we did so much business with, but I couldn't justify picking them out of loyalty if someone else was doing the same job for less money. So I told the old vendor frankly about the other bid to hear what they had to say, and I also solicited references from the new vendor to see if their work matched that of what we had been getting.”Our long-time vendor was able to bring down their bid. They actually did the job for less than the new vendor would have, so we ended up saving some money.”

**“Tell me about the most difficult situation you have had when leading a team. What happened and how did you handle it? Were you successful? What was the most important thing you did?”**

This question helps the interviewer to find out if you have true leadership potential. Briefly describe the project or situation giving just enough history and/or background to provide context. Talk about the key actions that you took. When telling a leadership story, make sure that you convey specifically how you stepped up as a leader. What actions did you take and why? How did your actions demonstrate leadership? Finally, Wrap up your example by describing the positive outcome(s) of your action.

### Example

When I was a student at Moringa School we had to go through a period whereby we built projects in groups for presentation during career day. We were a team of five and two of our team members laptop's got stolen on their way home from school, therefore, they did not attend school for two days. The team of three that remained had to absorb the duties of the two were absent. As a result, people were overworked and morale suffered. At the same time, more mistakes were being made because attention was so scattered. As the team leader, it was my job to get performance back on track. I scheduled a meeting with the full team to discuss strategies. I communicated my appreciation for all of their hard work during a challenging time for the company and asked for their assistance in identifying ways for us all to be more efficient –including me! I then made it clear that this was a brainstorming meeting to come up with options that no idea was stupid and that it was a safe environment for making suggestions. We spent an hour capturing ideas on a white board, then voted on the five with the most potential. I then assigned each person to do more research on how we might implement one of the ideas. First of all, the team responded very positively to this approach. They loved the idea of being empowered to help find a solution. Instead of complaining, they channeled their energy in a more productive way once they knew that they would be heard. Right off the bat, we came up with two ideas that could be implemented quickly and save us a lot of time. One idea was to eliminate daily group meetings to weekly stand-ups. This freed up 6 hours each week spent on discussing issues to do with the project. The other idea was to set time aside and work together after school in the evening for an hour or two. We also decided to incorporate brainstorming and idea evaluation into our weekly standups. We became more efficient and the morale increased.

## Technical Interview Questions

A good technical interview should be a conversation. It should not be a test of knowledge. A technical interview is best used when it evaluates how a candidate thinks and works, not what they know. The candidate's resume and the non-whiteboard part of the interview should be sufficient to determine if they have experience with the required languages, frameworks, and concepts. As an interviewee, if you're asked to whiteboard, that's great news – the interviewer knows you have the skills to work through a difficult question, and wants to see how you do so.

During the technical mock interview session, you will be asked to

1. Solve coding and pseudo-coding problems in front of the Technical Mentor and the Professional Development Mentor.
2. Answer a technical question out loud
3. Whiteboard a solution to a coding problem - that is, sketching out a visual or pseudo-code solution to a problem, and talking out loud about your thought process as you go.

## Whiteboarding

Some interviews will involve answering technical questions out loud, or "whiteboarding" a solution to a coding problem. This means that you will be sketching out a visual and/or pseudo-code solution to a problem, and talking out loud about your thought process as you go. This is one of the most common interview formats, and where you should spend a good amount of extra time preparing.

When answering these types of questions, make sure that you:

1. Ask clarifying questions. Often, your interviewer will intentionally be vague about something or leave out information. Don't be shy about asking for clarification or more information.
2. Talk out loud. Even when you have no idea where to go, do not just stand there silently. The interviewer wants to hear your thought process, even if it is just you coming up with ideas and then saying why they will not work or are wrong. You should strive to talk constantly.
3. Admit when you do not know something. If you try to talk your way through a question that you actually do not have an answer to, you will most likely still not get the answer. Just say "I do not know." However, if you can, keep going: "I do not know, but here is how I might figure it out." Then, go forward with the interviewer. How would you go about finding out? What terms would you search for? Where have you seen similar behavior? Keep communicating and showing how you think.
4. Use the programming language you're most familiar with. It doesn't matter if the interviewer is unfamiliar with that language. They can probably figure it out. They can consult colleagues after with any questions.

So, what are some good practices for whiteboarding?

First, have the interviewer repeat the question. Listen carefully and write down a list of specs on the whiteboard.

Again, you're showing how you work. Working from a list of specs demonstrates your habits as a good, professional developer. Once the specs are listed, read them back and start looking for keywords and easy requirements that will help you answer the question.

- Are you writing a function? Get the word function and some curly braces up on the board.
- Does the function accept any kind of argument? Put any arguments in the function's parentheses.
- Does the function return a value? Put a return statement at the end of the function.



The purpose of all this setup is to give ourselves a familiar work space. It also gets some information on the board and can get you thinking.

Are you stuck, or do you need to test your algorithm? One approach is to draw a box on the whiteboard and list your variables with their initial values. This box represents machine memory during the process. Next, pass some test values into your function and talk through the behavior with the interviewer while changing the values within the box. This live testing is another way to get you thinking and unstuck.

## Open-Ended Technical Questions

Technical questions that may not require you to code at all are often open-ended discussion questions, which are designed to give you a chance to showcase your knowledge. It is important to take advantage of these opportunities, as you have the freedom to highlight your strongest area of knowledge.

Here are some sample interview questions:

- What is the difference between POST request and a GET request?
- What is Git and why would you use it?
- What happens when a user logs into a website?
- What is a class?
- What is an object?
- What is unit testing?
- What happens when a user types in a URL?
- What is a foreign key?
- What is REST?
- Show me some code you wrote that you're especially proud of.
- Talk about a time that you solved a difficult coding problem.
- What is an array?
- Explain MVC.
- What is a join table in SQL?
- What is floating in CSS?
- What are media queries and how do you use them?
- You've been working on a site for a couple months here at our company. You come in one day and the site is down. What do you do?