

10 personal interview questions with sample answers

Before your interview, it's common to prepare for professional questions that inquire about your qualifications and skills in a specific field. Employers will also likely ask some personal questions that are more generic in nature. These are geared toward your personality, your work style, how you handle stress and other questions about your character. These questions are just as important as those about your skills because they help reveal your personality, as well as how well you'll assimilate into a company culture. Here are 10 examples of these types of personal questions, as well as some tips on how to effectively answer them:

1. Tell me about yourself.

This is where you give what's known as your "[elevator pitch](#)." In other words, it's a quick summarization of you. This is a great place to list two to three accomplishments that you want the interviewer to know about. Finish your answer with how those experiences positioned you for this particular role. Be sure to touch on your education and work history in addition to one other relevant item. **Example:** *"I recently graduated from university, where I studied advertising. While in school, I completed three internships and made the Dean's List every semester. Other than my internships, I've worked as a waitress while finishing my degree."*

2. What are some of your strengths and weaknesses?

The key here is to provide relevant strengths and irrelevant weaknesses. Try listing three strengths and two weaknesses. These questions are what influence the interviewer's decision to hire, so try to come up with unique answers that are relevant to the industry. There are two ways to effectively address weaknesses:

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| • | Give a weakness that is unrelated to how well you will perform the job. | |
| • | Use humor, and say something like "eating French fries." This will break any tension, create a lasting impression and likely catch the interviewer off guard. | |

3. Can you describe yourself in three to five words?

Try to relate this answer back to the job description. Contrary to what you might think, providing a word that recognizes a flaw (as long as it's not too big) will show the interviewer that you recognize the areas you need to work on. **Example:** *"If I*

could describe myself in three to five words, I would say that I am loyal, passionate, funny and cautious."

4. Why did you leave your last job?

The key here is to avoid any negative language when referring to your current or previous employer. Instead, cite reasons like looking for better opportunities or wanting to grow professionally. Deliver it in a way that highlights why the job you're applying for is a better fit for you. If you were let go from your last position, a simple answer is totally fine. Just say, *"Unfortunately, I was let go,"* and leave it at that. **Example:** *"I would love to gain more experience in this industry, and I know I can get that here."* **Related:** [5 Tips for Staying Positive](#)

[During an Interview](#)

Video: How to Prepare for These Common Interview Questions | Mock Job Interview

Averie Bishop will go over tips for 3 common interview questions that you should be prepared to be asked.

5. What kind of compensation are you looking for?

Money can be an uncomfortable subject, but there are ways to handle this question gracefully. You can try turning the question back around to the interviewer, and ask them what they're expecting to pay someone in the position. However, always do your research beforehand, and find out what people are making in this position. Once you have a range in mind, always state the higher number based on your skills and experience, but be sure to communicate that you are flexible. You want to make it clear to the interviewer that you want the job, and that you're willing to negotiate. **Example:** *"I would*

like to earn in the range of \$45,000 to \$55,000 annually. I realize it's an [entry-level position](#) but that is my ideal scenario given my skills and experience."

6. Do you work better alone or as part of a team?

Depending on the industry and company values, they could be looking for a specific answer. However, the ability to collaborate and compromise are always desirable traits in an employee. If you're unsure, say that you prefer a mixture of the two. **Example:** *"I love collaborating with others, but at times I find it necessary to step away and brainstorm things on my own."*

7. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Much like the ability to collaborate, ambition is almost always a good quality. Take this time to emphasize your ability to look and dream ahead. Try incorporating that you'd like to have more responsibilities in a company that values you, your skills and your input. **Example:** *"In five years, I hope to be established as an [art director](#) at an advertising agency that values my skills while also continuing my development. Hopefully, I'll have opportunities to take the lead on some creative projects."*

8. If you were an animal, which one would you want to be?

While this question seems inconsequential, it demonstrates your ability to think on your feet. There's no wrong answer here. The employer is looking for creativity and relevance so choose a response that represents your strengths and personality. **Example:** *"If I were an animal, I would probably be a deer— loyal and kind, and cautious. And a little confused by bright lights."* **Related:** [How to Appear Confident in an Interview](#)

9. How do you handle stressful situations?

You want to highlight your ability to face stressful situations in a manner that is both productive and positive. Try mentioning some of your stress-relieving tactics, and then provide an anecdote about a time that you effectively handled a particularly stressful situation. **Example:** *"When I'm stressed, I like to close my eyes and take some deep breaths. Then I make a list of things I need to accomplish and organize them by order of importance. From there, I work through the issue one task at a time."*

10. Do you have any questions for me?

This question typically ends an interview so be prepared with 2-3 questions you will ask. Though it may seem inconsequential, there is a right and wrong way to respond. Additionally, this is a wonderful time for you to decide if this position is a good fit for you. Do they meet your professional standards? Focus on the company and how you can grow there. For example, avoid asking questions about salary or benefits at this time as they will be answered through the human resources department if you are offered the job. It's appropriate to ask about growth opportunities for employees, new products or services, computer technology you will be using, team or corporate structure. Another tactic is to ask the interviewer about their experience at the company to gauge how happy they are. **Examples:** *"When did*

you start with the company?" "How did you work up the ranks?" "What do you enjoy the most about working here?"