



50 MOST COMMON JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Interview questions and answers

Read up on the top 50 most common interview questions (and how to answer) for your next job interview

The objective of these interview questions is to give you an overview of some of the typical interview questions you can expect during your interview and to help you prepare and get into the right frame of mind.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

Interview Question 1: Tell me about yourself:

Here you need to keep your answer interesting and personable, giving a brief overview of your career history to date, why you chose your chosen career path, cover your academic background and wrap up with perhaps any professional / personal achievements. Your answer should be no longer than 3-4 minutes, and remember you want to set the scene and highlight initially your transferable skills to be elaborated at a later stage when talking through your C.V.

Interview Question 2: Can you give me three personal attributes?

Describe yourself – remember you need to sell your technical skills and also you as a person, team member: Are you hard working, upbeat, enjoy being kept busy and challenged, objective, natural team lead/team player, how effective are you at upward and downward management. Team Fit is very important as is the ability to stay calm under pressure, especially if working in a very busy, demanding environment such as in the funds industry.

Interview Question 3: Have you any weaknesses?

Think of a genuine one and always finish up with how you have overcome it / and are tackling it– if you genuinely feel you do not have a weakness, perhaps explain key arrears you feel you have greatly improved in throughout your career. Always turn a question like this around and focus on the positive, as opposed to the negative effect. 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.

Interview Question 4: What is your greatest strength?

Numerous answers are good, just stay positive. A few good examples: Your ability to prioritise, 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. This is your chance to sell!

Interview Question 5: What can you bring to our company?

This is a great question. It gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. This is your golden opportunity to finish off the interview in a positive enthusiastic way, drawing from all your previous answers you need to sum up how you feel you are best suited for this position and what you can bring to this team. E.g: client focus, ability to resolve problems, objectivity, resilience, technical skills, market knowledge, number of years' experience – Be sure to have three or four well-prepared points and examples.

Interview Question 6: 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. Also this is your chance to highlight how you have progressed naturally in your career, for example from TA Administrator to Senior TA Administrator, TA Supervisor, TA Manager etc. and how you got there.

Interview Question 7: What motivates/ challenges you?

Think of genuine examples, be it project work outside of your roles to date, gaining added responsibility, pressurised time frames to work within, difficult goals etc. Prepare past and present examples to back up your views

Interview Question 8: Describe yourself as a person?

Talk about your positive as well as negative qualities. You must justify each of your qualities with an example and say how these qualities have let you grow in your professional life. When you are talking about your negative points say that since humans are not perfect you are also not perfect. Focus on how you have learned from your mistakes and how you tend to overcome situations with your negative qualities.

Interview Question 9: What are your activities and interests outside of work?

Say something about your interest and how it can help you on the job you are applying for. Like football can teach you team work, or baking can teach you accuracy. If you are applying for a job that requires you to be fit, you may mention physical activities that you do like swimming or any other sport. This is also a good opportunity to let your personality show, remember people buy into people!

Interview Question 10: Have you ever considered starting your own business?

Talk about how you are happiest and do your best work in a company that is similar to the one you're applying at. Don't talk about how you'd love to be your own boss one day.

Interview Question 11: Why should we hire you?

Point out how your assets meet what the organisation needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison. Are you willing to put the interests of the organisation ahead of your own? This is a straight loyalty and dedication question. Do not worry about the deep ethical and philosophical implications. Just say yes.

Interview Question 12: How do you handle criticism?

You can say something like, *"I see criticism as an opportunity to improve my work."* Then give an example where you were criticised and you handled it in a positive way like, *"My manager once told me that the reports I gave him were unorganised so I tried to review my past reports and asked if he had any preferences. I followed my manager's suggestions and reconstructed my reports. My manager was happy with all the reports I handed him after that."*

Interview Question 13: What make you different?

What makes you stand out from the other applicants? Portray your USP (unique selling points) in a clear concise manner. Put a bit of thought into this as we all have great experience and skills.

Interview Question 14: 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, and Recognition.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPANY

Interview Question 15: What do you know about our company, what interests you about this role?

In such a competitive market, it is extremely important that you have your research done on the company you are meeting. Find out where they have been and where they are going. Relay the fact that you have read their websites, pick out key areas that were of interest to you in the website, your impression of their company through direct or indirect dealings, if you read recent articles they may have appeared in, new products/services they are launching etc.. Also tie in again why the role appeals to you.

Interview Question 16: Why do you want to work for this organisation?

This may take some thought and certainly, should be based on the research you have done on the organisation. Sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals and show lots of energy and enthusiasm.

Interview Question 17: Do you know anyone who works for us?

Be aware of the policy on relatives working for the organisation. 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.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POSITION

Interview Question 18: Do you feel you are ready to take on greater responsibilities?

Employers ask this especially if the position you are applying for is higher than your former position. This is for them to gauge if you are up for the challenge of the new position. Give a positive answer and show them you are the right person for this job. Highlight any additional duties/projects you took on in your current role.

Interview Question 19: 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. For example if it is a fund accounting role, you need to give a good technical overview of the funds & products you have experience with, especially those that are relevant to this role.

Interview Question 20: Can you give me four skills that you can bring to this team?

Have these prepared –Technical skills, market knowledge, competitor awareness (if applicable), organisational/communication/team working skills, prioritisation of workload / working under extreme pressure at times and to deadlines, dealing with demanding customers, empathising with clients, developing new and existing client relationships.

Interview Question 21: Describe your management style.

Try to avoid labels. The situational style is safe, because it says you will manage according to the situation, instead of one size fits all.

Interview Question 22: Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?

This is up to you. Be totally honest. Remember though if you are working in Funds for example, there will be always be an element of overtime, especially at month end so you need to acknowledge this or you will come across as unrealistic.

Interview Question 23: What have you learned from mistakes on the job?

Here you have to come up with something concrete, a real example, or you lack 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.

Interview Question 24: 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 exaggerate, just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. This is a key point.

What do co-workers say about you? This is another great chance to sell yourself without coming across as being over confident. Be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work. Jill Clark, a former colleague at Bank of ABC , always said I was the hardest worker she had ever known. It is as powerful as Jill having said it at the interview herself.

Interview Question 25:What is your strongest point?

If your job involves dealing with clients a lot, then the obvious one will be: Customer relationship management; problem solving / cross selling skills (different business solutions/services) If your current role entails a lot of Report writing/ Supervisory/Management responsibilities, then your strong points would be strong problem solving, analytical skills. Delegation/time management, motivational skills etc. Always align your strong points with what the position at hand requires. Back up with one of two strong examples.

Interview Question 26: What qualities do you look for in a boss?

Be generic and positive. Safe qualities are knowledgeable, a sense of humour, fair, loyal to subordinates, and leads by example All bosses think they have these traits.

Interview Question 27: How would you know you were successful on this job?

You can say something like, "When I have achieved all the goals that were set and I have given more than what is expected of me."

Interview Question 28: 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.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND / EXPERIENCE

Interview Question 29: Tell me about your career to date:

Keep it interesting and to the point, elaborate when necessary and back up key points with examples from your current/previous roles, this is crucial – highlighting important skills such as: time management, prioritisation, team building and client relationship management skills. For example if you are a financial adviser involved in a target driven environment it's important to talk through your networking, lead generation, business development skills, ability to close business, retain existing clients etc. The key point at this stage is to draw attention and highlight your transferable skills, strengthening your case all the time as to why you would be suitable for the position in question.

Interview Question 30: When were you most satisfied in your job?

Basically this is asking what motivates you. Certainly your motivations should align with what is on offer in the current role.

Interview Question 31: 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 organisation. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity or other forward-looking reasons.

Interview Question 32: Why is there a gap in your CV?

If you show any period of unemployment on your CV, prepare to explain honestly. Layoffs are a very common in this century, so do not say that you were a self-employed consultant if you were laid off and working on temp jobs. Temporary employment or an intense job search of several months are both fine. If you took time off to care for a sick family member, state this very briefly and do not dwell on it.

Interview Question 33: Are you applying for other jobs?

Be honest but do not spend a lot of time in this area. Stay focused on this job and why you are more interested in their company than any other. Anything else is a distraction.

Interview Question 34: What part of your current role do you find challenging

Discuss your learning curve so far, how you have gained added skills, e.g. dealing with clients, organisation skills, team working skills, time management skills, delegating to a team, co-ordinating and communicating to internal and external customers etc. Ensure that you have prepared one or two points which you can effectively back up with examples and case scenarios.

Interview Question 35: Have you ever been in a position of conflict/difference of opinion, if so explain?

If you are asked were you ever in a position of conflict, it is best to avoid using this word, as inevitably you can make your self more and more nervous and apprehensive if you phrase things wrongly. Instead, always start off this answer with the fact that you have been in a position of difference of opinion –(e.g. As it is the nature of the role, dealing with different opinions, clients queries/complaints, changing situations), explain the scenario in a short interesting way, bringing across your team playing / empathising skills, your flexible approach to changing situations and changing ideas and how you manage both internal and external client

relations. Did you need to sit down with the team or did you have to go to a team lead / manager / director / arrange a client meeting...

Interview Question 36: What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?

Again another chance to reinforce your positive traits - There are numerous good possibilities: Loyalty, Energy, Positive attitude, Leadership, Team player, Expertise, Initiative, Patience, Hard work, Creativity, Problem solve

Interview Question 37: 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.

Interview Question 38: What made you move from company A to Company B?

Very important question, why do you want to leave your current situation for this role, be prepared for this answer and put a lot of thought into this. e.g. the company profile has always interested you, your interest in some of their key services they provide, for example if you are a Fund Accountant and have only worked on mutual funds to date and this organisation specialise in Hedge Funds and this is the area you want to get into, Your understanding in how they are rated in the market, how you feel your skills will benefit the company and how this position will benefit you for the next stage of your career and that you are thinking long term.

Interview Question 39: 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. Also in the current financial services environment with lots of regulatory change, upskilling and completing further qualifications is very important so for example if you work in Banking, you decided to complete the QFA qualification as although it may not have been essential for your current role, you realised the market is changing and would give you an added advantage when looking for your next role.

Interview Question 40: Are there any areas you feel you need to improve on?

Be careful on how you answer this and ensure that you don't draw attention to a key weakness that you did not mention earlier on, best to follow on from your previous questions answered.

Interview Question 41: Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.

Pick a specific incident. Concentrate on your problem solving technique and not the dispute you settled, end on a positive note.

Interview Question 42: 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.

Interview Question 43: Can you describe how you work under pressure

Use this opportunity to discuss times when you have to make difficult decisions, prioritise work and perhaps delegate.

Interview Question 44: How would you describe a positive company culture in which to work?

Team Environment, dynamic busy team, challenging, room for progression, and recognition for team contribution, effective upward and downward management.

Interview Question 45: What are your salary expectations?

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 range.

Interview Question 46: 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 market is heading.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

Interview Question 47: 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...' Your CV suggests that you may be over-qualified or too experienced for this position. What's your opinion? Emphasise your interest in establishing a long-term association with the organisation, 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 well qualified, the employer will get a fast return on his investment. Say that a growing, energetic company can never have too much talent.

Interview Question 48: Where do you see yourself in five years?"

You have to keep this relative to the role you are interviewing for - stay focused and show how you are confident you will have progressed naturally in the Department to X level within 5 years.

Interview Question 49: Describe your career goals?

It is probably better to focus on the short to medium term goals rather than ten years down the line. I guess an immediate goal is to secure this job!!

Interview Question 50: Do you have any questions?

Have some very good questions prepared – Make a list of three or four questions you wish to find out more from them as a company E.g.: their company culture, long term career progression within the company, What type of projects will I be able to assist on? Are examples. Anything that shows you are already visualising yourself in the role.