PythonLife

Top 30 Common Job Interview Questions and Answers Samples

Practice and get comfortable with these common job questions and answer samples before our interview and we'll feel more confident, while giving much better answers.

We recommend spending some time getting comfortable with what we might be asked, what hiring managers are really looking for in our responses, and what it takes to show that we're the right man or woman for the job.

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

To answer, walk them through our background, starting at how we began our career or our current line of work.

Take them through key accomplishments, key career moves we've made, and end by sharing what we're looking to do next in our career and why we're job hunting.

Good answer sample:

 "I started my career in Marketing after graduating with a Business degree in 2011. I've spent my entire career at Google, receiving 3 promotions and 4 awards for outstanding performance. I'm looking to join a smaller company now, and take on more leadership and project management."

2. How did you hear about the position?

This is one of the simplest question and answer scenarios in any interview, but that doesn't mean it can't ruin our chances at the job if we answer incorrectly.

Good answer sample:

"I saw the job posted on a website, and the position seemed interesting so I wanted to learn more"

"I found the position while looking for jobs online"

"Your company was recommended to me by somebody I worked with in a previous job and had heard good things about your organization"

"I heard about it from a friend"

3. What do you know about our company?

Our primary goal is to show we've done our research or knew about their company before applying. If we do this, we'll be fine.

If we don't seem like we know anything about them, we'll come across as desperate – somebody who will take any job they can find. And that's going to make we unattractive to any good employers out there.

Good answer sample:

"From what I read, your company is one of the leaders in providing security software to other businesses. I read the list of clients on your website. Do you mostly serve Fortune 500 clients? I saw a couple big Fortune 500 companies mentioned on the list, including ... and ... ."

"You're one of the largest investment banks in the US. Your headquarters is in Raleigh, NC, and you have 25,000 employees worldwide based on what I read on your website."

4. Why did you apply for this position?

We need to sound like we want the RIGHT job and that we're being picky. Companies want the best performers, and the best performers are picky in their job hunt.
Stay away from negatives and complaints too. Do not bad-mouth our current company or boss. Focus on the positives of the company we're interviewing with.

Good answer sample:

"I've heard great things about the work environment here from a few colleagues. And when I saw this job posting, it seemed to match my skills very closely. For example, I saw on the job description that you need somebody who's an expert in mySQL programming.

This is what I focused on in both of my previous positions, and was even the focus of my academic work before graduating university. I consider myself an expert in mySQL and it's a skill I hope to continue specializing in."

"Since beginning my career, I've wanted to work for a larger organization in this industry, and I know you're one of the leaders in this space.

I'm very interested in your services, especially the mobile applications you're building recently, so I'd be excited to come here and grow my skills with an organization like yours."

5. Why should we hire you?

Try to talk about them and how we'll help them. What will be better for them if they hire us? What will we improve for them?

And show we've done our research. Make it clear that we know what this position involves, and we're ready to perform the tasks.

Good answer sample:

"I read on the job description that you're looking for someone with experience in software programming. I've done that for 3 years and can immediately help you accomplish software programming".

6. Why are you looking to leave your current company?

If we chose to leave on our own terms, stay positive and focus on what we wanted to gain from the decision, rather than bad-mouthing or focusing on negatives we wanted to avoid.

Good answer sample:

"I was hired for a project management role, but over time that changed and I was no longer being given the opportunity to do the work I was interested in.

I left to pursue an opportunity that I felt was more aligned with what I've chosen to focus on in my career."

7. What are your greatest professional strengths?

Answer it well and it's one of the best ways we can show off our skills and show that we stand out among other candidates.

Choose 1 to 3 attributes we want to mention (depending on whether the question asks for one strength or multiple) and cap it there.

We'll want to think strategically about what skills will position us as qualified for the job and a good fit for the company.

Does the position require client interaction? Communication and relationship building makes sense.

Or if the environment is fast paced and constantly evolving our ability to multitask, adapt, and learn quickly would be good to highlight.

Good answer sample:

"I think some of my greatest strengths are my communication skills and willingness to take initiative.

During my last internship, when I was helping to manage several social media accounts, I made sure that everyone on the team was on the same page and knew what our messaging strategy was by taking the initiative to send out a weekly email to keep the team up to date and to seek feedback.

This ended up being so helpful that the weekly social media update was incorporated into a full time staff member's responsibilities."

8. Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work, and how you dealt with it.

Focus on a specific work-related challenge and talk about how we overcame obstacles, used it as a learning experience, used the resources around us (including people/colleagues if applicable), and ended up with a positive result!
That's how to answer this interview question. Keep it work related, not personal.

Good answer sample:

"In my last job, we were facing a tough deadline and my boss was out for the day. Our client was expecting a project to be delivered by 5PM, but we were far behind schedule.

I took the lead on the project, delegated tasks to the four other team members in a way that I thought would utilize everyone's strengths best.

And then I re-organized my own personal tasks so I could dedicate my entire day to contributing to this project as well.

The project was a success and we delivered the work on-time. I went on to lead more projects after that, and used what I learned to be a better project manager."

9. How much money are you looking to earn?

Unfortunately this question is left off of many lists of job interview questions and answers examples.

But it's extremely important and the wrong answer here can cost us thousands of dollars in the negotiation later on.

Stand our ground and tell them we don't have a number in mind yet, or aren't sure.
Good answer sample:

 "Right now I'm focused on finding a job that's the right fit for my career.

Once I've done that, I'm willing to consider an offer you feel is fair, but I do not have a specific number in mind yet, and my priority is to find a position that's a great fit for me."

10. Why do you want to work here?

This is very similar to the question: *"Why did you apply for this position?"*

Show them that we know what that their job involves (at least as much as we could learn from the job description and company website), and that we're excited to be interviewing for this position.

Good answer sample:

 "I've been actively searching for jobs since graduating with my Nursing degree. I'm interested in intensive care and emergency medicine and I've seen your hospital mentioned as having one of the best ER's in the region.

I thought the job description matched up well with my background, and saw some of my personal strengths mentioned, like multitasking and being able to thrive in a fast paced environment, so I'd love to begin my career here."

11. What is your dream job?

Career counselors like to think about good jobs as the intersection of our skills, interests, and values.

That's a good way for us to approach it as well. Talking about our skills will give us an

opportunity to sell them a bit—after all, it's an interview.

Our interests will show our investment, and our values can help illustrate our fit with the company.

Good answer sample:

"I've thought about this before, and I know I would want to keep honing my skills in ... as well as learn more about... ."

"In terms of job content, I'm interested in work that involves ... and ... . I've been curious about things like this ever since ..., so I would definitely want that to be part of my dream job."

"Based on my skills and interests, in my dream job, I would want to ... as related to ..., ideally in a company where I could ... and .... These are both really important to me, and I'm excited to see that they seem to be equally important to this company."

12. Why did you leave your last job?

If we chose to leave on our own terms, stay positive and focus on what we wanted to gain from the decision, rather than bad-mouthing or focusing on negatives we wanted to avoid.

Good answer sample:

"I left for an opportunity to advance my career."

"My department brought in a new manager and I felt it was the right time to leave."

"I was hired for a certain role, but over time that changed and I was no longer being given the opportunity to do the work I was interested in."

"I didn't feel there was an opportunity to grow or advance further in that role so I decided a change would best for my career."

"I had been with the organization for a number of years and wanted to experience a new environment to continue growing."

13. What other companies are you interviewing with?

Hiring managers are curious about what other companies we're interviewing with for a few reasons.

They might want to scope out the competition, see how serious we are about the industry, or even gauge their likelihood of landing such a star candidate.

Good answer sample:

If we're Interviewing for Competitors:

"I do have a couple of interviews coming up soon with ... for senior marketing positions.

But I can tell you that, based on what I know, this position has exactly the kinds of challenges I'm looking for in my next role."

If we're Interviewing in Other Industries:

"I'm interviewing with a few companies for a range of positions, but they all come down to delivering an excellent customer experience.
I wanted to keep an open mind about how to best achieve that goal, but so far it seems that this role will really allow me to focus all of my energy on customer experience and retention, which I find very appealing."

If we're Not Interviewing Anywhere Else:

"I'm still pretty early in my job search. I've applied to a number of opportunities that will allow me to use my skills in data visualization to help educate clients, but this position is most exciting to me.

In fact, I think this position is a particularly good fit for my skill set because I can leverage my significant experience working with complicated data sets."

14. What is your greatest weakness?

We never want to say we struggle working with others, or we're bad at resolving disagreements, or taking direction from a manager, etc. Those things will get us rejected in the interview.

So pick a specific skill, but pick something that won't severely impact our ability to do this job.

Good answer sample:

"I'm not particularly strong in social media marketing. For the first few years of my career, I focused entirely on email marketing.

That's still what I specialize in, which is why I applied for your Email Marketing Manager job.

But I've realized it's also helpful to understand the principles of social media marketing because some of the strategies that work there also work well in email.
So I've started spending a couple hours a week of my own time studying and learning this new area, and it's helped me a lot."

15. What type of work environment do you prefer? Ideally

one that's similar to the environment of the company we're applying to. Be specific.

Although most places have a section on their sites devoted to explaining culture, they tend to be filled with phrases like *"dedicated to customer satisfaction"* and *"we encourage our employees to grow."* That tells us a whole lot of nothing.

16. What's a time you disagreed with a decision that was made at work?

Brainstorm a few more questions that could potentially come up based on the position we're applying for and our particular situation.

For example, say we tell that story about standing up to the director of marketing when asked to talk about conflict with a previous supervisor.

We eloquently move through the story about how we shared our hesitation about the new marketing campaign to no avail, but once the initial numbers came in, it was clear that we were right.

We triumphantly showed the performance to the director, and she agreed to scrap the campaign.

Good answer sample:

"I learned early on in my professional career that it's fine to disagree if you can back up your hunches with data."

"In short, it's not that I'm an amazing multitasker; I just set and review my priorities frequently."

17. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Pick a work-related goal of where we'd like to be five years from now, and make sure it's

slightly challenging or ambitious-sounding.

And make sure to share a goal that is related to the type of job we're interviewing for.

We want to sound like the experience we'll gain in this job fits our long-term goals.

Good answer sample:

"I'm glad you asked. In five years I see myself taking on more responsibilities, either through management or higher level individual contributions.

I am not sure which path will make sense to pursue, but I know my goal right now is to build a strong foundation and gain valuable experience so that I'll have a successful future in this industry."

18. Can you explain why you changed career paths?

Have a target audience, and speak directly to it. It's super important for any job seeker.

We're not going to be able to just list out our job history and expect a financial services hiring manager to instantly deduce what we have to offer.

Instead, we will need to angle all of our messaging in a way that makes it obvious what we're trying to achieve, and why we're heading in that direction.

A good rule of thumb is that, if we're worried how a certain position or experience is going to be perceived on our resume, there's a good chance that someone is going to make the exact conclusion we don't want them to make.

That said, we should plan to go on the offense and manage the message.

For instance, say the moves we've made along the way make we look, at least on paper, like a bit of a job hopper.

It's best to add a quick statement in each section of our resume that briefly explains the jump.

Think through how we're going to present our choices and career path to a potential employer, present them briefly and confidently, and then refocus the discussion on our commitment to this role and what we can walk through that company's doors and deliver.

Good answer sample:

"Following a family relocation to Dallas…" (makes the job switch obvious) or *"After a significant corporate restructure…"* (makes it clear that our job was axed).

19. Tell Me About a Time You Failed

This is a common interview question that employers ask to see if we're able to learn from mistakes and bounce back when things don't go our way.

Ideally, talk about how we used that lesson to get a different outcome next time we were presented with a similar challenge (e.g. how we turned a past failure into a future success).

Good answer sample:

"In my most recent position, I had recently been promoted to Supervisor, and was managing the department on my own right before the department closed.

An employee was acting out and I confronted him in front of everybody. It made the situation worse and caused a lot of distraction for every employee on the floor.
I failed to lead properly in this situation, and spoke to my manager the next day to discuss what I could have done differently.

We both agreed that I should have handled this in-private with the employee, by asking them to step inside my office with me.

If I had done this instead of reacting the way I did, the situation would have turned out much better.

From that point onward, I am always conscious of whether a discussion with a team member should occur in public or behind closed doors, and it made me a better leader."

20. How would our boss and co-workers describe you?

This is our chance to use the words of others to talk about our own positive traits.

Good answer sample:

"Actually, in my most recent performance review in May, my direct supervisor described me as someone who takes initiative and doesn't shy away from hard problems.

My role involves a lot of on-site implementation, and when things go wrong, it's usually up to me to fix it.

Rather than punting the problem back to the team, I always try to do what I can first. I know she appreciates that about me."

"One thing I've noticed is that I'm always the one people turn to for recommendations on how to handle a new event or program—the latest fundraiser that I just told you about would be one.

I have a lot of institutional knowledge, which helps, but I think the reason people come to me is because I work through what a new program might look like very methodically.

If you were to ask my colleagues, I'm confident they'd describe me as logical, organized, and meticulous."

"I don't want to speak for anyone else, but I'm pretty confident my colleagues would describe me as thoughtful I'm the one in the office who remembers everyone's birthdays—and hard-working, since I never leave my office until it's been dark out for a couple of hours.

My boss in particular would say I'm very knowledgeable about audience development it's why I kept taking on more and more responsibilities in that domain."

21. How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?

A great approach is to talk through our go-to stress-reduction tactics (making the world's greatest to-do list, stopping to take 10 deep breaths), and then share an example of a stressful situation you navigated with ease.

The thing people assume about these questions is that they're all about the story. And it's a critical component.

But even if our story isn't exactly what the interview question asked for, if it's framed well and we go the extra mile to tell the interviewer what he or she should take away from it, we'll actually end up making a stronger impression.

So, don't stress too much about having the perfect stories lined up or the exact relevant experience. Instead, focus on the messages we're trying to communicate to the hiring manager, and back them up with the stories that we have.

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

Seemingly random personality-test type questions like these come up in interviews generally because hiring managers want to see how we can think on our feet.

There's no wrong answer here, but we'll immediately gain bonus points if our answer helps we share our strengths or personality or connect with the hiring manager.

Since this question almost never have a *"right"* answer, the key to responding well is mostly

about answering enthusiastically and coherently - not what the content of our answer is.

If being funny comes naturally to us, this is a great outlet to use some SFW humor. (If it doesn't, now's probably not a good time to start working on it.)

Once we've shown that we're game and excited to tackle new problems, we've won half the battle.

Come up with a stalling tactic to buy ourself some thinking time, such as saying, *"Now, that is a great question. I think I would have to say… "*

23. What do you think we could do better or differently?

No matter what role we're interviewing for (engineering, sales, marketing) we should always use the product before our first interview (and ideally, a few times).

If hired, our goal will be to create value for the people who use that product, and being a user ourself is the first step.
Doing this will also help us determine whether we can be passionate about the company and product as well as convey that passion to our interviewer.

Now that we're familiar with the product, be ready with ideas for how we'd like to improve it in our role.

What new features would we be most excited to build?
How would we engage users (or re-engage existing ones)?
How could the company increase conversions?
How could customer service be improved?

When we're interviewing with a start-up, our goal is to ensure that the job is a great fit for us, and to convey that to our interviewer as well.

When we do, we'll be in a better position to negotiate our offer and get started once we accept it—full of ideas on ways to hit the ground running.

24. Are you planning on having children?

Any questions related to our family status are technically illegal, but employers often ask them to get a read on our future commitment to the job and company.

Tailor our answer to speak to that concern, gracefully avoid the illegal part of the question, and turn the conversation back to our job-related strengths.

This answer sample assures the interviewer that we're committed to our professional growth, but doesn't promise them anything in terms of our future—and lets us steer the conversation back to a job-related topic.

Good answer sample:

"You know, I'm not quite there yet. But I am very interested in the career paths at your company. Can you tell me more about that?"

25. What do you like to do outside of work?

If someone asks about our hobbies outside of work, it's totally OK to open up and share what really makes we tick.
(Do keep it semi-professional, though: Saying we like to have a few beers at the local hot spot on Saturday night is fine. Telling them that Monday is usually a rough day for us because we're always hungover is not.)

It goes without saying that we should find out everything we can about our potential place of employment ahead of time.
Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the company's website and blog all provide us with information that will help we go to a job interview confident and prepared.

Before we go, try to find out who we'll be meeting with, whether it's an HR representative, our would-be boss, or the CEO.

Why? our interview answers and conversation topics should vary based on the person we're speaking with, and by knowing who we'll be talking to, we can spend time thinking through how we might connect with each of these people.

26. What are your salary requirements?

Unfortunately this question is left off of many lists of job interview questions and answers samples.

But it's extremely important, and the wrong answer here can cost us thousands of dollars in the negotiation later on.

They do not know if we're any good or if they even want to hire us.

So we can't command a high salary right now. If we go too low with our price, they'll hold us to it later.

Go too high? We'll scare them off before they even know what we're worth! Stand

our ground and tell them we don't have a number in mind yet, or aren't sure.

Good answer sample:

"Right now I'm focused on finding a job that's the right fit for my career.

Once I've done that, I'm willing to consider an offer you feel is fair, but I do not have a specific number in mind yet, and my priority is to find a position that's a great fit for me."

27. Do you have any questions for us?

Do not ask about salary, benefits, time off, or anything that isn't related to the work. Wait for

them to bring it up, or until we know they want to offer us the position. If we don't ask good

questions to each person we speak with, we're very unlikely to get hired. **Good answer**

sample:

"Yes, I have a couple of questions actually. The first thing I wanted to ask: is this a newly created position, or did somebody hold this role in the past? And if so, what did that person go on to do after this position?"