

Common Interview Questions and Answers

1. Tell me about yourself:

The most often asked question in interviews. You need to have a short statement prepared in your mind. Be careful that it does not sound rehearsed. Limit it to program-related skills unless instructed otherwise. Talk about things you have done in class and jobs you have held that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Start with the item farthest back and work up to the present.

2. 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 organization. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to do something special or other forward-looking reasons.

3. What experience do you have in this field?

Speak about specifics that relate to the position you are applying for. If you have no experience, talk about the skills learned in class and how you have practiced them.

4. 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.

5. What do co-workers say about you?

Be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work. Jill Clark, a co-worker at Smith Company, always said I was the hardest workers she had ever known. It is as powerful as Jill having said it at the interview herself.

6. What do you know about this organization?

This question is one reason to do some research on the organization before the interview. Find out where they have been and where they are going. What are the current issues and who are the major players?

7. 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.

8. Why do you want to work for this organization?

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

9. 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 is good evidence of your team attitude. Do not brag, just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. This is a key point.

10. What is your philosophy towards work?

The interviewer is not looking for a long or flowery dissertation here. Do you have strong feelings that the job gets done? Yes. That's the type of answer that works best here. Short and positive and indicate a benefit to the organization.

11. Explain how you would be an asset to this organization.

This is a good question. It gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. Give a little advance thought to this relationship.

12. Why should we hire you?

Point out how your assets meet what the organization needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison.

13. Tell me about a suggestion you have made.

Have a good one ready. Be sure and use a suggestion that was accepted and was then considered successful. One related to the type of work applied for is a real plus.

14. What irritates you about co-workers?

This is a trap question. Think real hard but fail to come up with anything that irritates you. A short statement that you seem to get along with folks is great.

15. What is your greatest strength?

Numerous answers are good, just stay positive. A few good examples: Your ability to prioritize, 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

16. Tell me about your dream job.

Stay away from a specific job. You cannot win. If you say the job you are contending for is it, you strain credibility. If you say another job is it, you plant the suspicion that you will be dissatisfied with this position if hired. The best is to stay generic and say something like: A job where I love the work, like the people, can contribute and can't wait to get to work.

17. Why do you think you would do well at this job?

Give several reasons and include skills, experience and interest.

18. What are you looking for in a job?

See answer # 16

19. What kind of person would you refuse to work with?

Do not be trivial. It would take disloyalty to the organization, violence or lawbreaking to get you to object. Minor objections will label you as a whiner.

20. What is more important to you: the money or the work?

Money is always important, but the work is the most important. There is no better answer.

21. What would your previous supervisor say your strongest point is?

There are numerous good possibilities:

Loyalty, Energy, Positive attitude, Leadership, Team player, Expertise, Initiative, Patience, Hard work, Creativity, Problem solver

22. 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 be below the interview right there. Stay positive and develop a poor memory about any trouble with a supervisor.

23. What has disappointed you about a job?

Don't get trivial or negative. Safe areas are few but can include:

Not enough of a challenge. You were laid off in a reduction Company did not win a contract, which would have given you more responsibility.

24. 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.

25. Do your skills match this job or another job more closely?

Probably this one. Do not give fuel to the suspicion that you may want another job more than this one.

26. 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, Recognition

27. Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?

This is up to you. Be totally honest.

28. How would you know you were successful on this job?

Several ways are good measures:

You set high standards for yourself and meet them. Your outcomes are a success. Your boss tells you that you are successful.

29. Are you willing to put the interests of the organization 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.

30. What have you learned from mistakes on the job?

Here you have to come up with something or you strain 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.

31. If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?

Be careful to mention traits that are needed and that you have.

32. Do you think you are overqualified for this position?

Regardless of your qualifications, state that you are very well qualified for the position.

33. How do you propose to compensate for your lack of experience?

First, if you have experience that the interviewer does not know about, bring that up: Then, point out (if true) that you are a hard working quick learner.

34. What qualities do you look for in a boss?

Be generic and positive. Safe qualities are knowledgeable, a sense of humor, fair, loyal to subordinates and holder of high standards. All bosses think they have these traits.

35. 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.

36. What position do you prefer on a team working on a project?

Be honest. If you are comfortable in different roles, point that out.

37. Describe your work ethic.

Emphasize benefits to the organization. Things like, determination to get the job done and work hard but enjoy your work are good. If you have a part-time job – this is your chance to talk about your time management skills – balancing work with a full-course load.

38. Tell me about the most fun you have had on the job.

Talk about having fun by accomplishing something for the organization.