Discuss What Makes for Good Interview Answers

- If you know some things about the company and the position, what does that tell the interviewer?
- If you talk about other experiences you've had that have some relation to the position you're applying for, (volunteering, family experiences, school events/clubs or other jobs), what does that tell the interviewer?
- When you talk about your experiences, interests, strengths, and weaknesses with the interviewer, what does the interviewer learn about you in relation to the job?
- How important is it to be honest? What could happen if you're dishonest?

Reviewing Common Interview Questions and Possible Answers

Imagine you're interviewing for a server job at a local restaurant. The interviewer has several questions for you.

There are some possible answers listed for each question. Indicate which possible answers you think are best and worst. "Good" answers would convince the interviewer that you're the right person for the job. Sometimes, it won't be clear which are the best or the worst! **_Ready…Go!_**

Question 1: "Tell me a little about yourself."
Some possible answers:
a) I'm looking for a job and would like you to hire me.
b) I'm passionate about food – I like to cook and eat good food, and I like to help other people enjoy a good meal. A few weeks ago, I helped my father cook a big meal for about 30 family members and friends, and I played the role of "server" for that meal. I brought all the food from the kitchen to the table, made sure my vegetarian sister got the plate she asked for without meat, brought more drinks when people's glasses were empty, and brought extra silverware for the young children because they kept throwing theirs on the floor.
c) I like eating and cooking, and I like helping others. I have some experience with serving food as I've helped my family to serve big meals before. It can be challenging, but it's fun.

Which is the best answer (the most likely to get you the job), in your opinion?
Which is the worst (the least likely to get you the job)?
Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 2: "What do you know about our restaurant?"
Some possible answers:
a) I looked up some information about you on the Internet and see that you've been in business for 50 years. That's a long time! I like that there's so much history for this restaurant – I think that would mean you have a long future ahead of you, too.
b) I've never heard of this restaurant or eaten here. What are you guys all about?
c) I actually used to eat here when I was younger – we moved away a few years ago, but I really enjoyed the atmosphere. It's not too crowded, and the servers are always friendly. The food is good, too! You guys have really good reviews on Yelp and Facebook, and my friends who still live near the restaurant like to come here.

Which is the best answer (the most likely to get you the job), in your opinion?
Which is the worst (the least likely to get you the job)?
Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 3: "Why do you want this job?"

Some possible answers:

a) Customer service is a big part of being a server, and I really like to see others enjoying themselves. Eating meals together is a fun activity, so being a part of that when friends and families come to eat is awesome.

b) I need money and I don't really want to work at the gas station I applied to.

c) I have enjoyed being the "server" at some events my family puts on, but I'd really like to challenge myself in a new environment. I like to meet new people, and learn from them, and in this job, I'd not only get to know my fellow servers, but also lots of customers who have interesting stories to tell or who give me new perspective on what people are like.

Which is the best answer (the most likely to get you the job), in your opinion?

Which is the worst (the least likely to get you the job)?

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 4: "What do you consider to be your weaknesses?"

Some possible answers:

a) I am a perfectionist, so I have to talk myself down sometimes – there's a balance between "done" and "perfectly done", and I am always learning about how to get to "well done" so that I can finish with a task and move on to the next. We all have lots of things to manage (especially in a fast-paced environment like a restaurant), so it's important to make progress on lots of things.

b) I wish I were a better public speaker. I prepare myself well, and try to have good visuals to help get my message across, but sometimes I get nervous and stumble over my words or forget to say something important.

c) I don't have any – I work hard and I learn really well. I like to work in teams and I can be successful taking care of tasks on my own.

Which is the best answer (the most likely to get you the job), in your opinion?

Which is the worst (the least likely to get you the job)?

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 5: "What do you consider to be your strengths?"

Some possible answers:

a) I can lift a lot of weight, so I can carry a server's tray really easily and not drop anything. I also don't get sick very much, so I wouldn't have to call in sick and have people cover my shifts.

b) I like to have conversations with people, so they feel comfortable with me. I learn quickly, by watching how others do the job, listening to their advice, and trying things on my own (even when it makes me a little nervous).

c) I am good at managing data. I can use spreadsheets and organize paper data as well – I have a filing system at home that makes it easy to find things whenever I need to. I'm also great at caring for animals. I always take my pets to the vet for their annual check-ups, and I make sure they're eating right and getting enough exercise.

Which is the best answer (the most likely to get you the job), in your opinion?

Which is the worst (the least likely to get you the job)?

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?