

The Interview—What Will They Ask?

Typical Questions Asked by Employers

An interview is a dialogue. It is an opportunity for you and the interviewer to learn more about each other and is not about winning the position. Focus on creating a relationship based on rapport, and on understanding and addressing the potential employer's concerns. You will probably be observed on how you react to certain questions and how you are able to "think on your feet" when answering. Memorizing questions and answers is not the best way to impress a prospective employer. However, your preparation is essential to answer the common questions listed below.

General Tips on How to Answer Questions

Think about each question before answering. Consider what information the question is really probing you for. Pausing a bit will give you time to take a deep breath, relax and collect your thoughts. Remember, the key is to listen to what the employer is asking and answering the questions in a well thought out manner.

WHAT THEY ASK

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why did you decide to seek a job with this organization?
- Why did you choose this organization over our competitors?
- What do you know about our products/services?
- Why did you choose your particular field of study?
- There are thousands of possible careers. Why do you want to follow this particular career path?
- Why did you choose USC?
- What distinguishes you from other candidates?
- What job-related skills have you developed?
- How does your education relate to this job?
- Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Describe how you handle stress.
- How do you handle criticism?
- Give an example of a situation in which you worked through a problem to a solution.
- What kind of supervision gets the best results from you?
- Do you prefer working with others or alone?
- What is your experience working on a team (work or school)?
- What kind of job do you expect to hold five years from now? In ten years?
- What are your career goals—both short-term and long-term?
 - Five years ago—how would you have answered this interview question: "Where do you see yourself five years from now?" Do you think you have achieved what you wanted to?
- Describe your perfect job.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
- What personal development strategies have you used to overcome any of your weaknesses?
- Discuss two accomplishments from your college experiences.
- Why do you want this job?
- What are your salary expectations?
- How do you feel about working overtime?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Are you open to relocation?

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WHAT THEY SHOULD NOT ASK

- Are you married?
- When do you plan to start a family?
- What race are you?
- What is your national origin?
- How old are you?
- What is your religion?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- What type of military discharge did you receive?
- What is your maiden name?

WHAT YOU SHOULD ASK

- Can you tell me more about the structure of your training program?
- What challenges are currently facing your organization/industry?
- What kind of training would I be given for this position?
- What qualities are you seeking in the person for this job?
 - Tell me about the type of projects past employees/interns have participated in.
 - Is this job an addition to staff or a replacement of a past employee?
 - Tell me about the immediate projects the person coming into this job will be responsible for.
- What attracted you to (organization name you are interviewing for)?
- What are the things you like most about working here?
- What are the metrics the company/group uses to measure performance?
- How do you define success?
- What exciting or challenging directions do you anticipate over the next few years?
- How do you measure an individual's success in your organization?
- What is the next step?
- When will you make your selection?

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT ASK

- What does your company do?
- What can your company do for me?
- What types of benefits do you offer?
- How much time do I get for vacation?
- How much is the signing bonus?