

## **TOP 20 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **1. What is your greatest strength? (HR)**

"What is your greatest strength?" is one of the easier interview questions you'll be asked. When you are asked questions about your strengths, it's important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the job. The best way to respond is to describe the skills and experience that directly correlate with the job you are applying for.

#### **Sample Answers**

- When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
- I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter and I've earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.
- My time management skills are excellent and I'm organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work.
- I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations.

### **1. What is your greatest weakness? (HR)**

When you're asked what your greatest weakness is there are several different ways you can answer, including mentioning skills that aren't critical for the job, skills you have improved on, and turning a negative into a positive.

#### **Non-Essential Skills**

An alternative approach is to analyze the key skills and strengths required for the position you are interviewing for and then come up with an honest shortcoming which is not essential for success in that job. For example if you are applying for nursing job, you might share that you are not particularly adept at conducting group presentations. In this case it will be critical to underscore your strength in one to one communication with patients while providing an example of your difficulty with presentations to large groups.

#### **Skills You Have Improved**

Another option is to discuss skills that you have improved upon during your previous job, so you are showing the interviewer that you can make improvements, when necessary. You can sketch for employers your initial level of functioning and then discuss the steps you have taken to improve this area and then reference your current, improved level of skill.

If you use this strategy be sure not to mention anything that you improved upon that is related to the job for which you are interviewing. You don't want your qualifications for the job to be questioned.

### **Turn a Negative into a Positive**

Another option is try to turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to get projects completed or wanting to triple-check every item in a spreadsheet can be turned into a strength i.e. you are a candidate who will make sure that the project is done on time and your work will be close to perfect.

Note that the term "weakness" isn't used in the sample answers - you always want to focus on the positive when interviewing.

### **Sample Answers**

When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.

Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my organization skills.

I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done correctly the first time.

I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.

Sometimes, I spend more time than necessary on a task, or take on tasks personally that could easily be delegated to someone else. Although I've never missed a deadline, it is still an effort for me to know when to move on to the next task, and to be confident when assigning others work.

I had difficulty with calculus during college, but I persevered with tutoring assistance and extra effort and completed 2 levels with a B minus average.

I've learned to make my perfectionism work to my advantage at work. I am excellent at meeting deadlines, and with my attention to detail, I know my work is correct.

I used to like to work on one project to its completion before starting on another, but I've learned to work on many projects at the same time, and I think it allows me to be more creative and effective in each one.

## 2. How do you handle stress and pressure?

A typical interview question, asked to get a sense of how you handle on-the-job stress, is "How do you handle pressure?" Examples of good responses include:

- Stress is very important to me. With stress, I do the best possible job. The appropriate way to deal with stress is to make sure I have the correct balance between good stress and bad stress. I need good stress to stay motivated and productive.
- I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become stressful.
- I actually work better under pressure and I've found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment.
- From a personal perspective, I manage stress by visiting the gym every evening. It's a great stress reducer.
- Prioritizing my responsibilities so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job.
- If the people I am managing are contributing to my stress level, I discuss options for better handling difficult situations with them.
- I find that when I'm under the pressure of a deadline, I can do some of my most creative work.
- I'm not a person who has a difficult time with stress. When I'm under pressure, I focus, and get the job done.
- I find it exhilarating to be in a dynamic environment where the pressure is on.
- I find a fast pace to be invigorating, and thrive when the pressure is on.
- I've done some of my best work under tight deadlines, where the atmosphere was very stressful.
- I'm the kind of person who stays calm under pressure, and handles stress fairly easily.

It's a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer. That way, they get a clear picture how well you can work in stressful situations.

## 3. Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it.

There is no right or wrong answer to questions like "What are the most difficult decisions to make?" or "Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it." These are [behavioral interview questions](#) designed to discover how you handled certain situations. The logic behind these types of questions is that how you behaved in the past is a predictor of what you will do in the future.

Give concrete examples of difficult situations that actually happened at work. Then discuss what you did to solve the problem. Keep your answers positive ("Even though it was difficult when Jane Doe quit without notice, we were able to rearrange the department workload to cover the position until a replacement was hired.") and be specific. Itemize what you did and how you did it.

The best way to prepare for questions where you will need to recall events and actions is to refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You can use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved a difficult situation.

#### **4. How do you evaluate success?**

Best answer to the interview question "How do you evaluate success?"

I evaluate success in different ways. At work, it is meeting the goals set by my supervisors and my fellow workers. It is my understanding, from talking to other employees, that the GGR company is recognized for not only rewarding success, but giving employees opportunity to grow as well. After work, I enjoy playing softball, so success on the field is catching the winning pop-up.

#### **5. Why are you leaving or have left your job?**

One of the questions that is typically asked in an interview is "Why are you leaving your job?" or "Why did you leave your previous job?" if you have already moved on. If you were fired from your job, use [these answers](#) to respond. If you left of your own accord, review these suggestions on how best to answer and tailor your response to meet your particular situation. Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.

#### **Don't Badmouth Your Boss**

Regardless of why you left, don't speak badly about your previous employer. The interviewer may wonder if you will be bad-mouthing his company next time you're looking for work. I once interviewed a person who told me that her last employer was terrible. They didn't pay her enough, the hours were awful and she hated the job. That company happened to be my company's biggest, and most important, customer. And there is no way I would have hired someone who felt that way, justified or not, about our valuable client. So, she gave up any opportunity of getting the job as soon as she answered the "Why did you leave?" question.

Prepare answers to typical job interview questions, like this one, in advance. Practice your responses so you sound positive, and clear, about your circumstances and your goals for the future.

## Sample answers to the interview question "Why did you leave your job?"

- I found myself bored with the work and looking for more challenges. I am an excellent employee and I didn't want my unhappiness to have any impact on the job I was doing for my employer.
- There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.
- I'm looking for a bigger challenge and to grow my career and I couldn't job hunt part time while working. It didn't seem ethical to use my former employer's time.
- I was laid-off from my last position when our department was eliminated due to corporate restructuring.
- I'm relocating to this area due to family circumstances and left my previous position in order to make the move.
- I've decided that is not the direction I want to go in my career and my current employer has no opportunities in the direction I'd like to head.
- After several years in my last position, I'm looking for an company where I can contribute and grow in a team-oriented environment.
- I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my technical skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in the past.
- I recently received my degree and I want to utilize my educational background in my next position.
- I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.
- I left my last position in order to spend more time with my family. Circumstances have changed and I'm more than ready for full-time employment again.
- I am seeking a position with a stable company with room for growth and opportunity for advancement.
- I was commuting to the city and spending a significant amount of time each day on travel. I would prefer to be closer to home.
- To be honest, I wasn't considering a move, but, I saw this job posting and was intrigued by the position and the company. It sounds like an exciting opportunity and an ideal match with my qualifications.
- This position seemed like an excellent match for my skills and experience and I am not able to fully utilize them in my present job.
- The company was cutting back and, unfortunately, my job was one of those eliminated.

State how you are looking for a new challenge, more responsibility, experience and a change of environment. Do not be negative in your reasons for leaving. It is rarely appropriate to cite salary as your primary motivator.

## 6. Why do you want this job?

Why do you want this job? Are you prepared to answer this question in an interview? Career expert and author, [Joyce Lain Kennedy](#), shares her best job interview answers to the question "Why do you want this job?"

Keep in mind that you can customize these answers to fit your particular circumstances and the job you are applying for.

### **Joyce Lain Kennedy's sample answers to the interview question "Why do you want this job?"**

- This is not only a fine opportunity, but this company is a place where my qualifications can make a difference. As a finance executive well versed in the new stock options law, I see this position as made to order. It contains the challenge to keep me on my toes. That's the kind of job I like to anticipate every morning.
- I want this job because it seems tailored to my competencies, which include sales and marketing. As I said earlier, in a previous position I created an annual growth rate of 22 percent in a flat industry. Additionally, the team I would work with looks terrific.
- I well understand that this is a company on the way up. Your Web site says the launch of several new products is imminent. I want to be a part of this business as it grows.
- Having worked through a college business major building decks and porches for neighbors, this entry-level job for the area's most respected home builder has my name on it.
- As a dedicated technician, I like doing essential research. Being part of a breakthrough team is an experience I'd love to repeat.
- This job is a good fit for what I've been interested in throughout my career. It offers a nice mix of short- and long-term activities. My short-term achievements keep me cranked up and the long-term accomplishments make me feel like a billion bucks.
- I want this job selling theater tickets because I'd be good at it. I'm good at speaking to people and handling cash. I would like a job with regular hours and I'm always on time.
- Although some companies are replacing Americans with imported low-wage workers, you are standing tall. This company's successful strategies, good reputation and values make it heads and shoulders above its competition.
- I'd fit right in as a counter clerk in your fine drycleaners. I have observed that the counter clerk position requires competence at handling several activities in quick order -- customer service, payments, bagging and phones. I like multitasking and, as a homemaker, I have a lot of practice in keeping all the balls in the air.
- The work I find most stimulating allows me to use both my creative and research skills. The buzz on this company is that it rewards people who deliver solutions to substantial problems.

## **7. Why should we hire you?**

A typical [interview question](#), asked to get your opinion, or to validate the interviewer's opinion, on why you would be the best candidate for the position, is "Why should we hire you?"

The best way to respond is to give concrete examples of why your skills and accomplishments make you the best candidate for the job. Take a few moments to compare the job description with your abilities, as well as mentioning what you have accomplished in your other positions. Be positive and reiterate your interest in the company and the position.

## **8. What are your goals for the future?**

The best way to respond to the interview question "What are your goals for the future?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" is to refer to the position and the company you are interviewing with.

Don't discuss your goals for returning to school or having a family, they are not relevant and could knock you out of contention for the job. Rather, you want to connect your answer to the job you are applying for. Examples of good responses include:

- My long-term goals involve growing with a company where I can continue to learn, take on additional responsibilities, and contribute as much of value as I can.
- I see myself as a top performing employee in a well-established organization, like this one. I plan on enhancing my skills and continuing my involvement in (related) professional associations.
- Once I gain additional experience, I would like to move on from a technical position to management.
- In the XYZ Corporation, what is a typical career path for someone with my skills and experiences?

## **9. Tell me about yourself. (HR)**

I'd be very surprised if you haven't been asked this one at every interview. It's probably the most asked question because it sets the stage for the interview and it gets you talking. Be careful not to give the interviewer your life story here. You don't need to explain everything from birth to present day. Relevant facts about education, your career and your current life situation are fine.

## **10. Tell me what you know about this company.**

Do your homework before you go to any interview. Whether it's being the VP of marketing or the mailroom clerk, you should know about the company or business you're going to work for. Has this company been in the news lately? Who are the people in the company you should know about? Do the backgrounds work, it will make you stand out as someone who comes prepared, and is genuinely interested in the company and the job.

## **11. What relevant experience do you have?**

Hopefully if you're applying for this position you have bags of related experience, and if that's the case you should mention it all. But if you're switching careers or trying something a little different, your experience may initially not look like it's matching up. That's when you need a

little honest creativity to match the experiences required with the ones you have. People skills are people skills after all, you just need to show how customer service skills can apply to internal management positions, and so on.

## **12. If your previous co-workers were here, what would they say about you?**

Ok, this is not the time for full disclosure. If some people from your past are going to say you're a boring A-hole, you don't need to bring that up. Stay positive, always, and maybe have a few specific quotes in mind. "They'd say I was a hard worker" or even better "John Doe has always said I was the most reliable, creative problem-solver he'd ever met."

## **13. Have you done anything to further your experience?**

This could include anything from night classes to hobbies and sports. If it's related, it's worth mentioning. Obviously anything to do with further education is great, but maybe you're spending time on a home improvement project to work on skills such as self-sufficiency, time management and motivation.

## **14. Where else have you applied?**

This is a good way to hint that you're in demand, without sounding like you're whoring yourself all over town. So, be honest and mention a few other companies but don't go into detail. The fact that you're seriously looking and keeping your options open is what the interviewer is driving at.

## **15. What motivates you to do a good job?**

The answer to this one is not money, even if it is. You should be motivated by life's noble pursuits. You want recognition for a job well done. You want to become better at your job. You want to help others or be a leader in your field.

## **16. Has anything ever irritated you about people you've worked with?**

Of course, you have a list as long as your arm. But you can't say that, it shows you as being negative and difficult to work with. The best way to answer this one is to think for a while and then say something like "I've always got on just fine with my co-workers actually."

## **17. Tell me about any issues you've had with a previous boss.**



Arrgh! If you fall for this one you shouldn't be hired anyway. The interviewer is testing you to see if you'll speak badly about your previous supervisor. Simply answer this question with extreme tact, diplomacy and if necessary, a big fat loss of memory. In short, you've never had any issues.

### **18. Would you rather work for money or job satisfaction?**

It's not a very fair question is it? We'd all love to get paid a Trump-like salary doing a job we love but that's rare indeed. It's fine to say money is important, but remember that NOTHING is more important to you than the job. Otherwise, you're just someone looking for a bigger paycheck.

### **19. Are you willing to put the interests of X Company ahead of your own?**

Again, another nasty question. If you say yes, you're a corporate whore who doesn't care about family. If you say no, you're disloyal to the company. I'm afraid that you'll probably have to say yes to this one though, because you're trying to be the perfect employee at this point, and perfect employees don't cut out early for Jimmy's baseball game.

### **20. Finally, do you have any questions to ask me?**

I'll finish the way I started, with one of the most common questions asked in interviews. This directly relates to the research you've done on the company and also gives you a chance to show how eager and prepared you are. You'll probably want to ask about benefits if they haven't been covered already. A good generic one is "how soon could I start, if I were offered the job of course." You may also ask what you'd be working on. Specifically, in the role you're applying for and how that affects the rest of the company. Always have questions ready, greeting this one with a blank stare is a rotten way to finish your interview. Good luck and happy job hunting.

## **Top 10 HR Interview Questions & How to Answer Them**

These are top 10 HR interview questions and will help you in preparing for the interview. The key thing to remember when responding to interview questions is to keep your answers brief and to the point. If you are faced with a difficult question, make sure you stay calm, don't get defensive, and take a moment to think about your response before you answer.

Remember, the responses below are only suggestions. Try to personalise your response as much as possible.

## **What have your achievements been to date?**

A. Select an achievement that is work-related and fairly recent. Identify the skills you used in the achievement and quantify the benefit it had to the company. For example, 'my greatest achievement has been to design and implement a new sales ledger system, bringing it in ahead of time and improving our debtors' position significantly, saving the company £50,000 a month in interest'.

## **Are you happy with your career-to-date?**

A: This question is really about your self-esteem, confidence and **career** aspirations. The answer must be 'yes', followed by a brief explanation as to what it is about your **career** so far that's made you happy. If you have hit a **career** plateau, or you feel you are moving too slowly, then you must qualify your answer.

## **What is the most difficult situation you have had to face and how did you tackle it?**

A: The purpose of this question is to find out what your definition of difficult is and whether you can show a logical approach to problem solving. In order to show yourself in a positive light, select a difficult work situation which was not caused by you and which can be quickly explained in a few sentences. Explain how you defined the problem, what the options were, why you selected the one you did and what the outcome was. Always end on a positive note.

## **Why have you applied for this particular job?**

A: The employer is looking for evidence that the **job** suits you, fits in with your general aptitudes, coincides with your long-term goals and involves doing things you enjoy. Make sure you have a good understanding of the role and the organisation, and describe the attributes of the organisation that interest you most.

## **Top 10 Interview Tips**

- **Check Out the Company**
- **Dress for Interview Success**
- **Improve Your Interview Technique**
- **Prepare for a Phone Interview**
- **Practice Interviewing**
- **Use Your Contacts**
- **Most Common Interview Mistakes to Avoid**
- **Take the Time to Say Thank You**
- **Handle a Group Interview**
- **Interview While Dining**
- **More Job Interview Tips**