Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

A lot of jobs require someone who can think on their feet or present ideas with crispness and clarity. This question provides employers with an early preview of your core skills, your personality and your ability to respond to an unstructured question.

---------------------------------------------------------by detail------------------------------------------------

This is something you'll be asked a lot at the beginning of an interview. Here are three tips that'll help you nail the opener.

Be succinct, honest and engaging.

I call this the “SHE” formula. Resist the urge to give a detailed account of the last two decades of your career. The interviewer is looking for an answer that shows them you're qualified and can respond to an unstructured question.

Use the job description to prepare.

Reread what they want and highlight the most required skills that you have. Are they looking for someone who can solve problems or deal with tough customers? Pick a few and brainstorm how you can describe yourself while showcasing your strengths for what they’re seeking.

Tie your story to their needs.

People love a good tale, so weave in some personality. For example, maybe you fell in love with the hospitality industry because your grandparents ran a bed and breakfast. Connect your story back to the job, keep it short, and be truthful.

1. What is your greatest strength?

Employers want to see if you can strike the right balance between confidence and humility. Hiring managers also want to get a sense for how self-aware and honest you are and align your strengths to the role at hand.

-----------------------------------------------------by detail------------------------------------------------

When responding to this question, you want to sound humble and not like you’re arrogant or bragging. Here are some tips to help you give them a great answer.

Describe a relevant experience.

If you're applying for a sales job, tell a story about a time where you helped a customer solve a problem with your solution.

Give specific details.

Tell them about a time you closed a deal that helped you hit a percentage of your annual number. When you share those facts with them, it helps them visualise how effective you have been.

Show them you’re a well-rounded person.

For example, share a story of when you used a “soft” skill, like effective communication with a coworker, and then one about you using a technical skill, which could be anything asked for in the job description.

1. What is your greatest weakness?

The interviewer is assessing whether your weaknesses will get in the way of doing the job. Employers are looking for humility and whether you’re committed to learning and growing. This is a place you can showcase what you’re doing to improve.

-------------------------------------------------by detail--------------------------------------------------------

This can feel like a tricky question, but it’s a good opportunity to shine. Here are some tips on how to answer:

Be humble.

You want to communicate an authentic story that shows you're self-aware. It's okay that you don't come off as perfect, that's authentic, which is important for someone who will have to trust you in the role that they're hiring for.

Choose a trait that is not too relevant to the job.

For example, if you're applying for a project manager role, choose a weakness that is more related to creativity, which is something that doesn't disqualify you from the description of the things that would make someone successful in that role

Show how you manage it.

Have a fix-it strategy. For example, if you struggle with remembering product details so you track them in their phone or side notebook, that's okay, share that with them. That shows that you've got commitment to solving that problem and addressing it.

1. Why should we hire you?

This question tests how persuasive you are. Interviewers want to see if you can make a calm, confident case for yourself, even if they’re acting skeptical. They’re looking for factual and compelling answers.

-------------------------------------------------by detail--------------------------------------------------------

This is a nerve-racking question, so make sure you're set up for success. Here are some tips that can help you do well in answering it:

Ask yourself why you think you’re qualified.

Prepare for the interview by picking three or four qualifications and experiences that help them understand why you're a fit for this job.

Tell them how you’d fit in.

Paint a picture of what you’d accomplish that gives you a leg up on the competition. Also, show them why you are a great match for this company by letting them see that you know about their mission, their vision, how they operate—and how you would fit into that really well.

Speak authentically.

How you say something is as important as what you say. So when you're sharing your successes and you're answering these questions, speak like the best version of yourself and make sure that you're doing it in a way that allows the interviewers to connect to you.

1. Why do you want to work here?

Interviewers want to understand what prompted you to apply for this job. They don’t want candidates who are indifferent to where they work. Instead, they want someone who offers very specific reasons for why they want this job.

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You would be amazed by how few people get this question right. So you've got a big opportunity to shine.

Make it all about them.

Your best answer will be about what they need. It'll show that you've done your research and have thought through what you can contribute to that team.

Show them how you can help.

Weave your story into the context of what you can contribute. If you have strong accounting skills and are interviewing for a finance role at a humane society, you could suggest that this job would allow you to blend your professional skills with your passion for animals.

Speak from the heart.

Telling a genuine story can make a big difference. For example, I once worked with a client who was applying for a zoo event manager job and she had grown up next door to that zoo and had great memories of the peacocks flying over the fence and sitting on her dad's car. So her answer was that she wanted people to have fun memories of that zoo just like she did. Try to top that.

1. Tell me about a time you showed leadership.

Employers want to understand your capacity to step up and handle tough situations that undoubtedly arise in the workplace. They want to know when you’ve seen an opening to lean in and lead with good judgment.

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Show the results.

Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

1. Tell me about a time you were successful on a team.

If you can show that you’ve helped a team move through a challenge, you probably have strong communication and interpersonal skills. These kinds of “soft” skills are in high demand and make people successful in their jobs.

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1. What would your co-workers says about you?

Interviewers want to know if you’ll fit in with the team. This question can also help you highlight your strengths without feeling like you’re bragging.

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This question gives you an opportunity to share how amazing you are—without feeling like you're showboating. Here are three quick tips on how to answer it:

Find features that fit.

Re-read the job description and look for answers that go well with it. For example, if they need a strong problem solver, maybe you can share that your office nickname is “The Fixer” because you're so good at solving tough challenges.

Share some of your reviews.

Before the interview, go through your LinkedIn recommendations and performance reviews and see if there are some gold nuggets you might want to show them. And if it's on LinkedIn, mention it to the interviewers so they can read the whole recommendation if they want more detail.

Back it up with evidence.

If you think your colleagues would say that you're super creative, resist the urge to say “People like that I can think outside of the box”. Instead, share a tangible example of your creativity that ties to the job description.

1. Why do you want to leave your current role?

Employers say they want to hire people who are running “to” a role as opposed to running “away.” However, they are also interested in your honesty when things haven’t worked out and will give people second chances when they demonstrate hunger.

--------------------------------------------by detail------------------------------------------------------

Hiring managers will often ask this question, and it's a test. Are you running away from something, or are you running towards something? The advice when you get this question is simple:

Stay positive.

Employers want to see that you have a good attitude in general. Resist the temptation to say bad things about your current job, employer, or boss.

Focus on where you’d like to go.

You should come off as someone who is looking forward, not backward. Portray your interests more in the light of what you want to get out of your next role.

Bring it back to them.

Show them that you’ve done your homework about their company, and relate what you tell them back to the specific job you're interviewing for.

1. Describe your most challenging project.

Employers want to get a sense of what ‘challenging’ means to you. They also want to know how you handled the situation in a calm way. They’re looking for a storyline to prove that you can turn a bad story into a good story.

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1. Tell me about something you’ve accomplished that you are proud of.

This question assesses how you define a professional success. If the story resonates, the employer will want you to do similar things at his or her company. You should focus on the impact and outcomes.

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1. Can you explain your employment gap?

This question isn’t designed to rule you out - it’s a good sign if you get the interview. Interviewers want to get more context about the gap and whether you’re still going to be a great fit for the role, despite the gap.

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Most people are nervous about how a gap will be perceived—even if there's a good explanation, But if they’ve invited you in for an interview, then the gap hasn’t ruled you out. Here are some tips on how to discuss it:

Be honest.

The truth will set you free. Try to put the situation into the best light and don't lie; it's bound to come back and haunt you. So if your job was eliminated through a merger, just say so.

Speak with confidence.

For example, if you had taken some time away from working, avoid acting like you're embarrassed, apologetic or ashamed. The interviewer is going to pick up on that. Instead, pause and you see how they respond. The more calm, succinct and confident you are, the more at ease the interviewer will be with your answer—and with you.

Show the benefits of your time off.

Bring up the good that came out of that time whether you were laid off, stepped away to be with family, or even got fired. It's a great way to reframe the situation and an opportunity to showcase some useful skills that you gained during that time.

1. What are you salary expectations?

If this question arises early, odds are that the interviewer is really asking: “Can we afford you?” If it arises much later, the interviewer may be hoping that your salary requirements are aligned to what they have budgeted for this role.

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This is a question you'll get all too often, so here are a few tips to help you master the answer:

Give them a salary range.

Let them know there’s room to negotiate (instead of starting with a specific number). Avoid going too low though, because that's going to work against your interests. And don’t go too high either, or you may freeze yourself out of the opportunity.

Do some neutral research.

Give them a reasonable place to start from. You can use a resource like the LinkedIn Salary Tool to find out what other companies are paying people in this role and share with them what you learned about this salary range. Then they’ll have to base their compensation at least on those numbers because you've let them know what other similar organizations are giving to employees who do that job.

Bring up signing bonuses.

Doing this can create a win-win situation for both parties. At the end of a negotiation, asking for extra money up top is often a way to bridge the gap between what you want and what you’re being offered.

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

Interviewers want to know you’re going to be enjoyable to have around and not just that you have the hard skills for the job. Use this question to set yourself up as interesting, fun, curious, or a go-getter.

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With this question, employers are looking to get a feel for your likability and cultural fit. So what should you say—and not say? Here are a few tips.

Pick one of your favorites.

Go ahead and share something about your hobbies, volunteer work, or the places you enjoy traveling to. Maybe you're taking classes to help you accelerate your skills. In general, you just want to tell them something that's true and will paint you as an interesting, healthy, or good human being.

Keep it short.

For example, if you're a bird watcher in your free time, skip the 22-minute account of every species you've ever documented. Share enthusiastically so your passion shines through, but don't ramble on endlessly. Doing so might give the people to whom you're trying to make a good impression the feeling that you're nervous or that brevity just isn't your strong suit.

Stick to appropriate topics.

Avoid anything that might be pulverizing or offends somebody who's not a part of a particular group like politics or religion. Choose something uncontroversial or beneficial, and take advantage of the opportunity to show them that you're the complete package.

1. Tell me about a time you failed or made a mistake.

Being able to admit to a mistake shows maturity and personal accountability. Employers want to know you’re self-aware and that you learn from past experiences. Errors are inevitable in any job - it’s how you handle them that matters.

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1. Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person.

Employers know that difficult people are everywhere and situations come up frequently. Explaining how you’ve been able to handle a challenging person in a mature way demonstrates your ability to manage difficult moments successfully.

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1. Describe your leadership style.

Good leaders can explain their values and priorities in a few words. This is a test to see if you can explain yourself. It also helps to determine whether your approach meshes with the company’s own culture.

---------------------------------------------------------by detail-----------------------------------------------

This is a question you’ll hear a lot and answering with authenticity is key. Here are three tips I have to help you get started:

Be clear about your leadership style.

Don’t be vague or ambivalent. If you're a team builder, say so. If you're tough, but fair, own it. Be very concise and clear on how you define your leadership so that they know very well what you're all about.

Give a detailed example that highlights it.

Talk about a situation, a problem or an obstacle, and then walk through what did you do and what was the result. What did it mean to your organization, company, and the customer? And be sure to include how you brought your team along, because this isn't all about you.

Show situations where you've adapted.

Life's not going to be simple. People want to see how you've grown and changed given the situation. Just like you look for that in the people you're going to hire, the same thing with the hiring manager who's looking to hire you.

1. Tell me about a time you had to manage conflicting priorities.

Employers want to see how you handle competing priorities, understand the implications of missing deadlines, and can stay cool under pressure.

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1. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Employers want to determine how serious you are about your career and whether your goals match the goals for this job. Employers don’t expect you to offer up a specific title you want. Instead, they want to know what you hope to accomplish.

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The key to answering this question is to focus on what you can give to the employers or the role. Here are three tips:

Break the time into chunks.

Let them know what you might do in each two-to-three year period. This helps the interviewer to visualize and see what you're describing. Take them through what you plan to do in the first few years and how you plan to take it up a notch in the years after that.

Talk about how your goals will help them.

Paint a vivid picture about the value that you plan to deliver within each of those two-to-three year chunks that you described.

Avoid talking about job titles.

Resist the urge to tell them about what you want your position to be in two, three, or five years because that can come off as overly presumptuous.

1. Tell me about a time you have to persuaded someone.

This question is all about sizing up your emotional intelligence. Interviewers are looking for problem solvers, not shouters. Strong answers showcase your listening skills and your ability to guide people to better choices.

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1. Tell me about a time you disagreed with someone.

Occasional conflicts are a fact of life. Interviewers want to see if you can work through those tensions in a respectful way. If you helped steer things toward a good compromise, that’s a big plus. Signs of anger or bitterness will count against you.

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1. Tell me about a time you created a goal and achieved it.

Strong answers reassure interviewers about your ambition and your determination to press ahead. Pick a trivial goal, and you’re at risk of being tagged as a slacker.

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1. Tell me about a time you surpassed people’s expectations.

Employers want to know they are hiring high quality people. If you have a story about surpassing an expectation, you’ve probably gone above and beyond the call of duty and that’s a great thing!

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1. Tell me about a time you had to handle pressure.

Some jobs are high-stress and interviewers will test you to see if you can handle the heat. You’ll get partial credit for talking about your heroic efforts to get everything done, but you’ll get more points if you’ve enlisted allies.

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1. Tell me about a time you had to learn something quickly.

Interviewers want more than a one-time success; they’re looking for signs of a well-tested strategy that helps you gather information and put it to use. They also want to know if you feel comfortable with rapid learning.

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1. Do you have any questions for me?

This question isn’t just designed to make sure you leave with all of your questions answered; it’s intended to see if you’re prepared and to assess how curious and thoughtful you are.

------------------------------------------------by detail-----------------------------------------------------

The way you respond to this question shows employers if you're engaged, intelligent and interested. Here are some tips on how to answer:

Show them you’re paying attention.

It’s important to let them know you’ve been listening.You may want to take notes as the interview unfolds and then loop back to something you'd like to delve further into like an aspect of the job, the team, or the challenges that lie ahead.

Let them know you’re excited.

While being qualified for the job is essential, showing passion for their products, brand or industry takes it to the next level. So maybe you can ask a question about one of your favorite products they make or see how they're responding to an industry trend.

Get them talking about their careers.

People love talking about themselves and appreciate when you notice the interesting things they're doing. For example, you can ask them how they got from Job X to Job Y, or how their work as a musician helped them in their current career. People hire people that they like and who seem genuinely interested in the role.

Software Engineer Questions

1. Why do you want to work for our company?
2. What kind of tech team dynamic do you excel in?
3. Let’s say there are two kinds of tech workers: the innovators and the executors. Which of these categories do you fit into?
4. How do you measure success for yourself technically?
5. Why do you think that technical teams need to be inclusive and represent a variety of backgrounds?
6. When you join a new technical initiative, what is the first thing you do?
7. If you had to pick between owning the entire process for one product versus contributing to multiple products at once, how would you decide?
8. If you were stuck in solving a technical problem, how would you ask for help?
9. How would you explain concepts like polymorphism and inheritance to a computer science student?
10. How would you explain a web service infrastructure to a technial audience with a software background but limited system-level knowledge?
11. What would you do if asked to take on a problem where you did not have the technical skills?
12. Tell me about the most challenging technical problem you have solved?
13. Explain how you would design a ride-sharing app.
14. Explain how you’d design twitter and system tradeoffs involved.
15. Give me an example of how you’d secure data so that it cannot be misused or inappropriately accessed.
16. Tell me about a time you disagreed with a fellow engineer and how that issue was resolved.
17. Tell me about a time when insights about the industry or customers impacted your technical execution.
18. Tell me about a time you had to push back on an unreasonable request from an executive or customer.
19. What do you think an ideal product-engineering relationship should look like?
20. How would you drive alignment among senior leadership to help accelerate decisions?
21. How do you measure success in an engineering project?
22. What is the mix of technical and management qualities you look for in engineering leaders and managers?