

Questions to Consider Asking the Interviewer

Adapted from this great resource: "[Three Questions to Ask](#)" by Toni Bowers, 2009

So many people are concerned with making a good impression during a job interview that they forget it's a two-way street. You're there not only to market yourself but to find out if the job and the company are a good fit for you. You should use the interview to ask questions for yourself. So what type of questions should you be asking? Here are a few:

What's an average day like here?

The question may prompt the interviewer to go into great detail about the day-to-day workings of the company, which is great information to have. If you deem it appropriate, respond to their answer with an example of how their work environment suits your style of operation.

How would you describe the culture here?

The interviewer may answer that it's pretty laid-back or it's all business, or there's a good mixture of gender and cultures. Of course, he may also lie through his teeth. But if you're any good at reading people, even that might be valuable.

What qualities are you looking for in the person who fills this position?

You're looking for answers like "Someone who is good with details" or "Someone who can communicate technical issues to end-users," etc. If the answer is "Someone who doesn't mind skipping lunch or always being on call," then you have some solid information on which to base your decision about the job.

Other questions to consider asking:

- What is the next step in the hiring process? Or, when might you make a hiring decision?
- What tools/applications/languages do you use?
- What is your history with student interns/employees?
- What typical projects or tasks do student interns work on?
- What makes a student intern successful? What traits are best suited for your company?
- How do the various members of the team work together—who is in charge? etc.
- How would successful performance in this position be measured?
- Is there much turn over in your company?
- What's the management style?
- Do entry-level employees get to travel to conferences? Is that a perk or are they on their own?
- What makes new college grads attractive; what should students be working on?

Top 10 personal values employers seek in employees:

- Honesty/Integrity
- Adaptability/Flexibility
- Dedication/Tenacity
- Reliability/Responsibility
- Loyalty
- Positive Attitude/Motivation
- Professionalism
- Self-Confidence
- Self-Motivated
- Willingness to Learn

*Adapted from this great [resource](#):
R.S.Hansen et al, 2010*

How to Handle the Hardest Questions

Now and then we find ourselves in interviews getting completely stumped or we mentally ‘kick’ ourselves for how we responded to a particular question after the interview. These things happen. We’re just people being people in what often feels to be a socially-awkward experience commonly referred to as an interview. So how do we make the most of responding to the hardest questions?

We Practice. Make a commitment to treat the interview process with the respect it deserves and you will find that after enough “on and off camera” attempts:

- Your confidence will grow
- Your responses will gain clarity and charm
- Your questions for the interviewer will mature
- And you’ll experience the awesome “feel good” moment after a successful interview

➤ Q and A: Tough Questions and Great Answers

Adapted from: *[“Ten Tough Interview Questions and Ten Great Answers,” 2010 CollegeGrad.com](#)*

1. Tell me about yourself.

What the hiring manager really wants is a quick, two- to three-minute snapshot of who you are and why you’re the best candidate for this position. Talk about what you’ve done to prepare yourself to be the very best candidate for the position. Use an example or two to back it up. Tell me about yourself does not mean tell me everything. Just tell me what makes you the best.

2. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?

Note that if you say no, most interviewers will keep drilling deeper to find a conflict. Focus your answer on the behavioral process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively. For example: Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I’ve found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person’s perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example . . .

3. What is your greatest weakness?

Most career books tell you to select a strength and present it as a weakness. Such as: I work too much. I just work and work and work. Wrong. First of all, using a strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving. Second, it misses the point of the question. You should select a weakness that you have been actively working to overcome. For example: I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I’m now taking steps to correct this. I just started using a pocket planner; then show them your planner and how you are using it. Talk about a true weakness and show what you are doing to overcome it.

In reviewing these responses, please remember that they are only to be viewed samples. Please do not rehearse them verbatim or adopt them as your own. They are meant to stir your creative juices and get you thinking about how to properly answer the broader range of questions that you will face.

