

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

(The employer wants to know if you are prepared, organized and concise)

- Try to put context to your resume. Be careful not to give into a long answer. Two-three minutes should be enough. Touch on these areas:
 - Two Approaches: Past – Present – Future; or Present – Past – Future
 - **Past** – focus on where your journey started related to your field of interest and the position. Highlight those skills and experiences you know relate to the position for which you are applying.
 - **Present** – focus on your current status and involvements.
 - **Future** – Detail your short-term Career Goals, describing the type of work related to the position without calling out the organization directly.

What do you know about our company/organization/department?

(The employer wants to know if you prepared by researching their company)

- If you've done your homework, this will be easy. Be aware of services provided, products offered, department/organization history, reputation (if positive!), mission, vision, values and people. Check to see if they were in the news recently (in a good way). You can always follow up with "But I would love to know more from your point of view. Do we have time to cover that now?"

Why have you chosen this particular field of study?

(The employer wants to know that you are purpose oriented and focused)

- Relate your answers to the mission, products or service of the organization.

How do others describe you?

(The employer wants to know what it is like to work with you)

- Be honest and use words the organization may have used in their position description. Describe 2-3 characteristics.

What do you consider to be the most important accomplishment in your last job? Why?

(The employer wants to know if you are bringing relevant skills to the position)

- Be as specific as possible. Give an example of how you increased profits, increased efficiency, or contributed to the bottom line, in some way.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

(The employer wants to know if you are self-aware)

- Strengths: present two or three. Relate your strengths to the current position and particular organization.
- Weaknesses: don't say you have none. Mention ONE concrete issue. Avoid personal characteristics such as perfectionism. Deliver your weakness in a positive manner, showing what you are doing and plan on doing to address the issue. For example: "One of the things I am working on is becoming more fluent in Spanish and I am taking a community education class in Spanish to get better."

Describe your best/worst boss.

(The employer is really asking two things: What kind of boss do you like to work for? How diplomatic will you be?)

- Best Boss: describe in terms of how you were able to be particularly productive and efficient – relate in terms of the job you did.
- Worst Boss: discuss how you learn something in every situation – and one thing you learned from what might be described as “worst boss” is the importance of open and honest communication (or something similar).

Give an example of a time you showed leadership.

(The employer wants an example of your initiative)

- It is okay to use non-work examples if you need to. Think of study abroad experiences, volunteer work, etc.

Why are you leaving your current job?

(The employer cares about your motivation and values)

- Appropriate answers include looking for growth, challenge provided by this job. If there were difficulties with your previous employer, refer to a difference in style or opinion. Do not personalize; never be negative. Keep it short.

What has your experience been in “x” (when “x” is something you have not done formally)?

(The employer cares how well you match the job criteria)

- If you have not had much experience, say so, but refer to your successes and accomplishments requiring the same skills. Call attention to your ability to learn or to pick things up quickly.

What are your long-term career goals?

(The employer cares about your maturity and how long you may stay with the new position)

- Talk first about the job fits those goals. Then talk about your longer-range goals beyond this position. Keep your goals general and semi-tailored to the industry.

Why should we hire you?

(The employer wonders how you handle stress and how confident you are)

- Relate past experiences that represent success in solving problems and that may be similar to those of the prospective employer.
- Promote strengths

What salary would you expect?

(The employer wants to know if the salary they offer is acceptable. But if they can get away with paying you less, they probably will!)

DO NOT DISCUSS SALARY/BENEFIT EXPECTATIONS UNTIL AN OFFER IS MADE. If an employer asks:

- Do your research to find the “going rate” for the job.
- If you DO NOT know the market value for this job, return the question by saying that you would expect a fair salary based on the job responsibilities, your experience and skills and the market value of the job. Then ask what salary range has been set for the job.
- If you DO know the market value of the job, you might inquire, “My understanding is that a job like the one you’re describing may be in the range of \$___ to \$___. Is that correct?”
 - The first value should be what salary figure you would accept; and preferably more.
 - The second value should be higher than you expect but not too high. You do not want to price yourself out of the running.