

Mastering Common Interview Questions

- Different interviewers will ask different questions, and may have different expectations, depending on their role.
 - An HR manager is looking to make sure the candidate has the minimum qualifications for the role and is a good fit.
 - A supervisor is most interested in your past experiences and the specific skills you can bring to the job.
 - A potential coworker will ask questions to determine if you are a good fit for the team.
- Ask the recruiter for a schedule of the interview and the names of interviewers.
- Review the company website, as well as press releases and media mentions about the company to determine company culture and get a sense of company norms.
- Common question formats:
 - Behavioral: draws from past experiences to show skills and knowledge. “Tell me about a time...” “Give me an example of...”
 - STAR Method
 - Situation/ Task- describe the assignment or project
 - Action- define the steps you took or solutions you considered
 - Results- explain the outcome of the task, and what you learned from it
 - Experience + Learn = Grow Method
 - Experience- describe a past experience that relates to the position
 - Learn- discuss what you learned from that experience
 - Grow- explain how you grew from the experience and how you will apply that knowledge in the future
 - Situational: shows problem-solving, analytical, and planning skills. “How would you...”
 - Resume-based: asks about specific experiences from your resume.
 - Technical: asks about specific technologies, concepts, or projects related to your field
- “Tell me about your strengths.”
 - Interviewers are trying to determine your competency for the job.
 - Identify the skills required for the job, and prioritize what you would focus on.
 - Prepare specific examples of a time when you utilized the strengths.
- “Tell me about your weaknesses”
 - Be realistic and honest.
 - Analyze the job description, and determine which qualifications you don’t have. Determine which of the qualifications are the least important, or that you could learn quickly.
 - Describe a plan to improve upon the weaknesses.
- “Why are you interested in our company?”
 - Explain how you would contribute to the position.
 - Express interest in the company and demonstrate that you understand the position.
 - Employers might also be asking this to determine how long you might stay in the job. Explain how the company fits into your long-term goals.
- “Are you willing to relocate or travel?”
 - Preferred answer is yes, but do not be insincere.

- Ask questions to better understand the company's needs: "Can you tell me what career trajectory I can expect within the new position?" "How long is the average stay at a project site?"
- Be honest if the answer is no, and give a valid reason.
- "What would you like to accomplish in the first 90 days?"
 - Use past experiences to demonstrate how you will perform in the future.
 - Highlight what's good about the organization and describe how your skills can improve the company. "I really like x project, and I think it will be even better if we can also use xyz skills to improve it."
 - Make a few realistic recommendations based on what you know. Let the interviewer know that this may change as you learn more about the position and the company.
 - Address how you will work with your supervisor and team.
- "When have you gone above and beyond at work?"
 - This is a behavioral question intended to determine work ethic.
 - Have a few examples prepared about how you have exceeded expectations, but make it clear that your example was not a one-time thing.
 - STAR Method or Experience + Learn = Grow Method
 - Three motivation types:
 - Achievement- motivated by a sense of accomplishment
 - Authority- a drive to lead or be heard by others
 - Affiliation- motivated by helping others
 - Relate your examples to the current company.
- "Tell me how you handled a difficult situation"
 - Use this question to demonstrate your problem solving and people skills.
 - Show your critical thinking skills as well as your ability to fit into company culture.
 - Develop your answer to show integrity, initiative, and professional growth.
 - Do not speak ill of coworkers or the organization. Do not use an example in which you did not learn or grow from the situation.
- "How did you handle a disagreement with your boss?"
 - Understand the company's conflict culture.
 - Choose an example that highlights your understanding of different viewpoints. Make sure your example has a positive outcome, and describe what you learned.
 - Explain how you advocated for your point of view and show that you listened to the other person's side of the issue.
- "What makes you interesting?"
 - Focus on the role and why you should be hired; don't discuss topics unrelated to the job.
 - Showcase your personality through a story, and be excited about the project/company.
 - Describe any specific skills or experiences that relate to the position, especially if they go above and beyond the job description.
- "What questions do you have?"
 - Always ask questions at the end of the interview, otherwise you may seem uninterested in the position.

- Prepare different questions depending on who you're interviewing with (for example, questions about specific projects aren't appropriate for an HR manager, but they would be for a team lead).
- Ask about company culture, and ask for specific examples.
- Good topics to ask about: work environment, collaboration, criteria for success.
- Use this time to re-address any answers you weren't confident about earlier in the interview.
- Prepare thank you notes ahead of your interview and mail them ASAP. Send a thank you to each person you interviewed with.