

Interviews – The Questions

Introduction

Generally the interview comprises two parts, one where you are asked questions which forms the bulk of the interview, the other, a much smaller part at the end of the interview, where you have a chance to either ask your own questions or say a bit more about yourself. For both it is essential that you prepare and practise answering the questions before the interview. The **tips** and **common questions** below give you an indication as to what to expect, they are not exhaustive but do use them to practise your answers.



Tips for part-time job interviews

These can be quite informal and may not even feel like an interview. But don't be fooled, they are still assessing you and your ability to do the job. So the questions will generally be around any previous experience, your college life, your skills and your personality – think about how these will be useful in the job.

Tips for apprenticeship/graduate job interviews

Employers realise that many people don't always have relevant experience and so the questions will be assessing your skills or "competencies" as employers like to call them. These will relate to the skills they are looking for and are displayed on their website. If you do have some sort of experience then they will ask you questions about this. If it's not related then they will be assessing if you can transfer the skills you used into the job you have applied for. Make sure you know which skills they are looking for.

Tips for high level interviews

These interviews will be challenging, you will purposefully be put under a lot of pressure. If you have done a high level course then they will want to know what it has done for you and what it can do for the company. Depending upon the job requirements, they may also focus on your ability to think strategically, will often ask the same question a number of times to assess the depth of your experience, and they will use case studies to assess your business knowledge.

Weird Questions

Some questions can seem a bit strange such as "If you were an animal, what animal would you be?". These questions put you on the spot and can feel weird, unrelated or seem ridiculous. But there is usually a reason behind it, and quite often it's to assess your ability to think under pressure, to reason, to present a persuasive argument and to defend it. The trick in answering these is to talk through the reasons/rational as to why you came up with your answer. For example if the job was for a Customers Services position you might say "If I was an animal I'd be a Labrador as I like people, am very friendly and always pleased to see people". So there is not always a right or wrong answer, it is simply your opinion.

Tips for "experienced hire" interviews (jobs that require a number of years of experience)

These interviews will assess how your previous experience will be useful for the job. So the trick here is to persuade the interviewer that your experience will help you to do the duties of the job you are applying for. To do this map the "new" job duties onto duties from your existing or previous job(s).

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Questions you will probably be asked at all job interviews

- Why did you apply to us?
- Where did you hear about the position?
- How much do you know about our organisation?
- How much do you know about the job?
- What interests you about this position?
- What do you think you have to offer this company?

Questions typically asked at Placement and Graduate interviews

- Why did you choose your particular course/degree?
- Why did you choose your college/university?
- What did you most/least like about your course?
- What was your weakest/strongest subject?
- Tell me about your project work/dissertation?
- How are your studies related to this position/vacancy?
- Besides your course, what else do you feel you have gained from college/university?
- Whilst at college/university, did you work/become involved in student life?
 - What positions of responsibility did you hold?

Questions relating to your career aspirations or needs

- How would your friends describe you?
- Where do you see yourself in 2/3/5 years' time?
- What are you looking for from your career?
- Why are you interested in moving to this company/this sector?
- Why did you seek to obtain your professional qualifications/degree?
- What other companies/organisations have you applied to?
- What salary range/benefits are you looking for?
- Briefly tell me what you have been doing since college/university.

Questions which assess your own skills and requirements

- What do you think you have to offer our company – what skills do you bring?
- What are your training and development needs?
- Do you like leading a team/working in a team environment/working alone?
- What motivates you on a day-to-day basis?
- What has been your main career achievement to date?
- What was the most difficult problem you faced in your career? How did you solve it?
- You mentioned in your application that you have experience of communication/project management/team working/responsibility, give me an example demonstrating one of these skills.

Questions relating to your personality and interests

- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you consider to be your main achievement to date?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses? [think about "weakness" as an opportunity for development.]
- How do you spend your spare time?
- What motivates you?

Strange Questions

- If you were an animal what animal would you be?
- What newspapers do you read?
- What is the weight of a fully laden jumbo jet?

Questions that you can ask the interviewer

It is common for the interviewer to give you an opportunity to ask questions or to provide any additional information about yourself, here are some questions you could ask:

- What are the initial priorities of the position?
- How does this position fit into the organisational structure?
- How much scope/autonomy/flexibility/career growth/responsibility is there within this position?
- How would you describe the company's managerial style/culture?
- How do you see the company performing over the next few years?