

# Interviewing Questions and Strategies



"It is *not necessarily* the *best qualified* people who get the jobs, but rather, those who are *the best qualified at getting a job.*"

You should VIEW YOURSELF AS AN ASSET, and you should be prepared to explain to ANY INTERVIEWER WHY you would be an asset to their company.

## There are five critical interview skills:

1. The ability to **fully describe skills**, i.e., work experience, skills, about yourself.
2. The ability to satisfactorily **answer problem questions**, i.e., the reason you left your last job, the length of time you have been unemployed, etc.. Be brief and be positive.
3. The ability to "**come across**" well. This includes being dressed appropriately, friendly but business like manner, confident attitude, good eye contact and a SMILE.
4. The ability to **show interest and enthusiasm**. You know that you want the job, make sure the employer knows (without appearing desperate).
5. A **positive entry and exit**. Walk in with confidence, look interested and alert. When the interview is coming to a close - summarize your strengths. Explain why you should be hired. Ask for the job. Then follow-up after the interview.

Knowing exactly how to answer interview questions is difficult, especially for people new to job hunting or those who haven't gone through the process in awhile. These key ideas can help you prepare for interview questions. Use the answers provided as prompts for DEVELOPING YOUR OWN personal responses.

## THE EMPLOYER WANTS TO KNOW:

1. If you have the **necessary skills** to do the job. Think of an example of a skill required for the job you are interviewing for and how you are able to accomplish the work.
2. If you will be **dedicated** to the company. Are you willing to respond to emergencies, put in the extra effort it takes to satisfy a customer, or get the training necessary to convert to a new computer system?
3. If you work well as **part of the team**. Teamwork means the ability to get along well with co-workers, to put your team's needs above your own to accomplish a common goal and to take direction from your supervisors. An employee who is skilled, but argumentative, too strong willed, or too sensitive isn't going to be a good team player. Most employers are pretty good at spotting resistive applicants.
4. If you will maintain a **professional attitude**. Employers love workers who see what has to be done and go ahead and do it on their own (It makes them look good).

# General Questions

These samples can help you prepare for commonly used interview questions. Use the ANSWERS PROVIDED AS PROMPTS for developing *YOUR OWN* personal responses.

## 1. Tell me a little about yourself or Tell us how your experience qualifies you for...

- \* Talk about your experience, qualifications and accomplishments. *Use examples of work or volunteer activities* that illustrate: problem solving abilities, teamwork, stability, or dependability.
- \* Show your level of confidence, energy and communication skills.

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## 2. Why do you want to work here?

- \* Be prepared by researching the company so that the employer will see how the job fits with your goals or training. The employer must see a benefit to the company.

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## 3. What are your strengths...your weaknesses?

- \* Present an honest and realistic view of your best skills, traits and qualities that are **work related** abilities.
- \* Bring up a weakness that could be seen as a strength or can be turned into a strength in the work area, i.e., a perfectionist, or have a difficult time saying "no".

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## 4. What do you hope to be doing five or ten years from now?

- \* Long and short term goals indicate motivation to many employers. Employers are looking for commitment and interest in the work. They want to know whether you will be comfortable with the job.
- \* Have two or three goals in mind, and be ready to tell the interviewer how these goals relate to the job. They can be involved or as simple as taking more computer classes to further your ability to do the job. Don't, however, tell them that you want their job in a few years.

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### **5. Why did you leave your last job?**

- \* Changing or leaving a job doesn't need to be negative. When describing previous work, employers, supervisors or co-workers, **be positive**. The interviewer looks for a pattern of previous jobs, as well as how you might do on this job.
  - \* Positive reasons for leaving a job include: learned enough to move on, peaked out on current level, or ready to move up (job stagnation), or company down-sizing.
  - \* When describing any medical reason, personal problem or personality conflict, or firing, explain the circumstances or reasons it will not happen again.
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### **6. Why should you be the one hired for this position?**

- \* Have four or five skills to offer the interviewer. Briefly provide examples of your work.
  - \* Beware of passing judgment on others because you don't know who else has applied. Also, avoid answering from a selfish point of view. Refer only to the candidate you do know (yourself), i.e., "I can't speak for the others, but I can for myself, I can assure you that..."
  - \* Researching the company ahead of time may provide insight into their needs and goals and how you fit those needs.
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### **7. Tell me about your previous (or current) job.**

- \* The interviewer wants to understand your need for supervision and motivation. Indicate accomplishments, special projects, production goals or quotas met.
  - \* Concentrate on transferable attitudes and aptitudes between jobs. Show creativity, responsibility and dedication.
  - \* Consider: **What did I do?**  
**Were duties related to the job I'm applying for? How so?**  
**What equipment or machines did I operate?**  
**How long was I there and why did I leave (or want to leave)?**
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### **8. Give an example of any major problem you faced and how you solved it.**

- \* Think of something related to work, school, civic, or leisure activities.
  - \* The interviewer wants to see how you define a problem, identify options, decide on a solution, handle obstacles and solve the problem.
  - \* *Tell it as a story and give details.*
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**9. Are you at your best when working alone or in a group?**

\* “Both. I enjoy working as part of a team and I can work independently to get my share of the work done.”

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**10. How do you handle stress and pressure?**

\* List something constructive that you do that releases pressure (exercise, talking, writing, or something that deals with the stress rather than holding it in). There is more stress and violence in the workplace and employers are trying to eliminate those who may have difficulty controlling anger or are unable to deal with stress.

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**11. Do you have any questions for me?**

\* Yes, always have one or two.

\* **NEVER ASK ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT SALARY, VACATIONS, PAID HOLIDAYS OR SICK DAYS.** You are looking for a job, not a vacation.

\* A few suggestions:

1. What three traits are most important to you in the person you hire?
  2. Which duties are most important for this job? Least important?
  3. How would I get feedback on my job performance, if hired?
  4. What major markets does this company (or parent company) compete in?
  5. Would you describe a typical work day and the things I'd be doing?
  6. Would you give me a brief tour? I'd like to see the work areas.
  7. Has the company had a layoff in the last three years? If so, for how long and was everyone recalled?
  8. What are the department's yearly goals? What is the largest present problem?
  9. How would I be trained or introduced to the job? Is additional training available?
  10. How will you go about making the decision of whom to hire?
  11. What are the opportunities for advancement or overtime?
  12. Do you anticipate any new products or expansion plans for the near future?
  13. Would you tell me something about the people I would be working with?
  14. In reviewing my qualifications, what do you view as my greatest potential in contributing to this company?
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