

Answering the Most Common Interview Questions



Interviewers seem to have favorite questions that they *always* ask *every* job candidate. The best way to impress interviewers is to have thought about the question and prepared to answer it in advance.

Get comfortable answering them.

Smart job seekers prepare *in advance* for those questions so they can answer them effectively, impress the listener. Some people find it helpful to write out their answers. Others just make notes. Whichever method you choose, take the time to prepare.

If you can, have a friend or family member ask you the questions, and then answer them without looking at your notes. Or, practice in front of a mirror. Whatever works best for you?

Why Employers Ask These Questions

The questions asked in a job interview may seem random and weird to you as a candidate. Often the interviewers are not trained or experienced in job interviews, so, for some employers, a job interview can be very weird.

Usually, solid reasons exist for asking each question. Hiring the wrong person can be a very costly mistake, so interviewers are highly motivated avoid being responsible for making a hiring mistake.

Basically, employers have 3 main reasons for asking every job interview questions:

1. **To decide if you are qualified for the job** -- can you actually do the job?
2. **To determine if you are a "good fit" for the organization** -- will you be a good subordinate, co-worker, or boss?
3. **To learn how interested you *really* are in the organization and the job** -- are you applying for every job you see or are you sincerely interested in *this* job?

Stay focused on the job, the job requirements, the employers, and you're fit for the job when you answer these questions. Resist the urge to "spill your guts" and NEVER bad-mouth a current or former employer. You are just moving on in your career.

In the USA, employers are banned by law from asking specific questions about a potential employee -- age, race, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. Sometimes employers ask those illegal questions in job interviews, anyway. Be prepared to respond appropriately.

The Job Interview Questions Asked Most Often

These are the most common questions asked and how to handle them.

Tell Me/Us about Yourself

Often the opening question, it is not an invitation to ramble on about your life history, your favorite baseball team, your car, your school, your family, etc. In fact, keep those thoughts to yourself because they could disqualify for a job, depending on the preferences of the person/people interviewing you.

As with most other job interview questions, your answer should focus on why you are a good fit *for this job*. This question is often one of the first ones asked because the interviewer is looking for an overview of your qualifications for their job and also why you are interested.

What Is Your Greatest Weakness?

Yes, this question is asked often, in spite of how silly it sounds, and yes, you *do* have a weakness. Be prepared to share it.

The best answers have two parts, defining your weakness but knowing how to improve it if you are hired at this job.

Take care to choose the "right" weakness for *each* job, and be prepared in case the follow up questions asks you for another weakness.

What Is Your Greatest Strength?

Choose the strength most appropriate for the job you are seeking. Being "able to leap tall buildings in a single bound" didn't get Clark Kent his job as a reporter -- his writing skills did.

In your answer to this question, fit your strength to the job and the employer. As above, the best answers have two parts. Prepare by developing a list of your strengths based on what you, and others, think you do best. Look at your performance reports and awards you have achieved for ideas.

Once you have your list of strengths, choose the ones most appropriate to the the requirements of the job you want. In the interview, **share examples of your accomplishments** to demonstrate your strengths.

Where Do You See Yourself in 5 Years?

This question is easy to fumble. "Your job" or "CEO" are *not* good answers! Yes, they want to know if you are planning to stay, and what you think your future holds. They are also trying to discover if you are a good fit.

This is also a very good question for you to consider, for more than interview preparation. Looking into the future with an idea of where you want to be is the essence of career planning, even when not done in great detail. Where *do* you see yourself in 5 years?

For each job interview, focus your answer on the job and that employer. Can you see a clear career path in the job titles in their job postings? How big is the organization? Mention a couple of those details in your answer.

How Did You Find This Job?

This question is often asked early in an interview. Often this question is asked so that the employer can understand which recruiting method or platform being used is the most effective. When the employer understands what is working vs. what isn't, they can adjust and change to use the most effective method for their recruiting.

They also ask this question to gauge how interested you are in the job and in working for them. Don't admit that you just stumbled over the job posting on a job board you check every day. That doesn't make you sound truly interested in either the company or the job. Instead, demonstrate your interest in the employer.

Why Do You Want to Work Here?

This may sound like an invitation to describe how landing the job will benefit you. *Again, it's not!* The want to understand how much you know about them -- how interested you really are in the organization and the job.

As with the where-do-you-see-yourself-in-5-years question, putting together the answer to this question is a good exercise for your job search and career. Is this employer a good place to work, or NOT? You don't want to be looking for a new job too soon.

What Do You Know About Us?

Lack of knowledge about the employer equals lack of interest in the interviewer's mind, which is deadly. Demonstrate that you are actually interested enough in the opportunity to have research the employer and even the interviewers. Too many candidates just hit the apply button for no reason (apparent to the employer). Show that you are not that uninterested candidate.

Why Do You Want to Leave Your Current Job?

Careful! No ranting and no trashing of your current employer. Many good reasons exist to decide to leave, and they can have nothing to do with how horrible your manager might be.

Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?

If you were fired!

Being fired happens to many of us, and it's not necessarily because you were a bad employee. But, regardless of the reason, you can frame the situation so that you don't come across as someone an employer would avoid hiring.

If you quit!

People quit their jobs for many good solid reasons, but you need to be able to explain why clearly and without seeming angry or saying nasty things about that previous boss or organization.

If you were part of a layoff!

Layoffs happen to many people and are not your fault. So, be prepared to explain about the layoff without trashing anyone or anything at your former employer.

Explain Your Gap in Employment

Finding a job when you are unemployed is challenging, but you need to be prepared with an explanations for the gap. This is how to explain that gap.

Why Should We Hire You?

Frame your answer to this question in a way that highlights your qualifications for the job. Do NOT explain how having the job will benefit *you*. Use this strategy to answer.

Why Do You Want THIS Job?

This may sound like an invitation to describe how landing the job will benefit you. *But, it's not!* Describe why this job interests you, sharing both your personal goals and your understanding of the job.

Do You Have Any Questions?

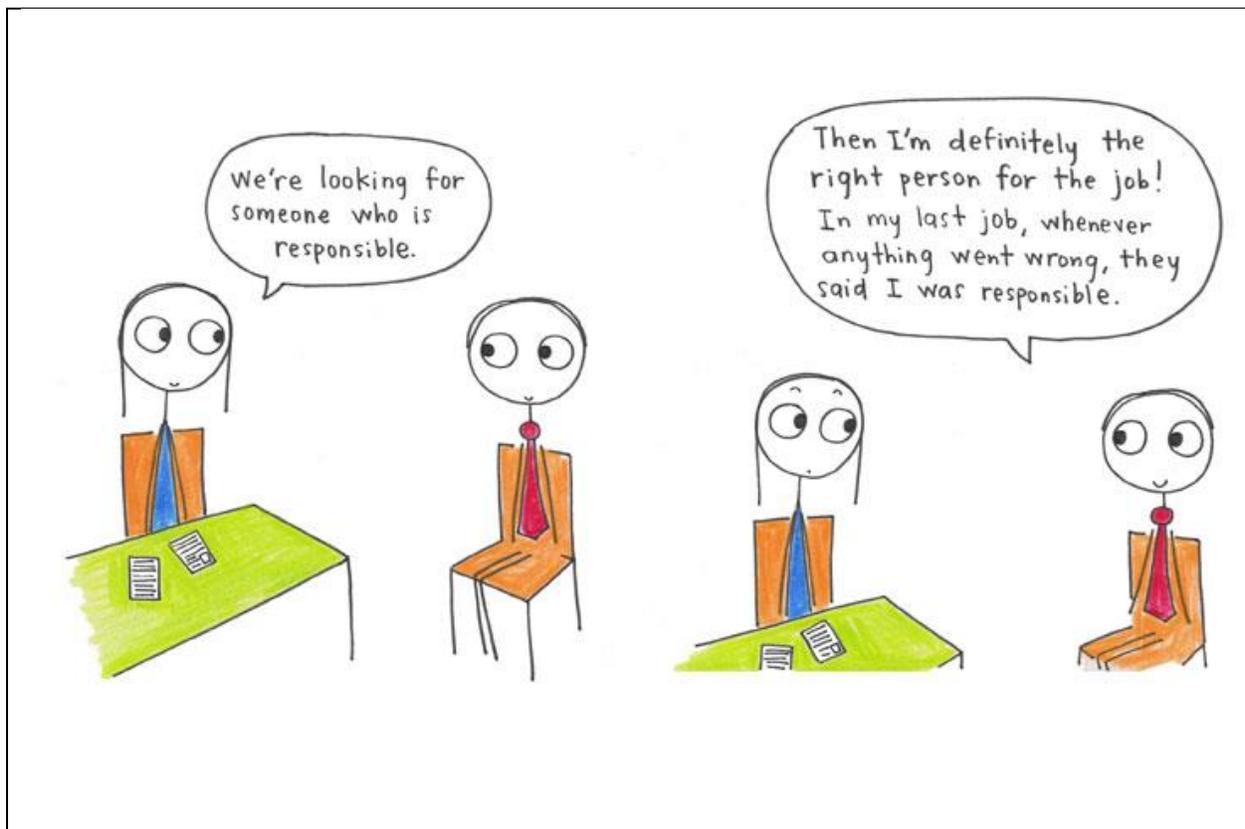
Don't make the mistake of under-estimating the importance of this question! Having good questions (not about the vacation time!) is a sign to employers of your interest in the opportunity.

Using Your Pre-Interview Preparation, Answer the Questions Smartly!

Do NOT go into a job interview anticipating that a job offer is waiting for you when you get there. And don't expect to "wing-it" to a successful conclusion. Think of a job interview as an audition for the job.

Accept the invitation to interview as an opportunity to demonstrate why you are the candidate they should hire. Increase your confidence and your probability of success by being well-prepared for every job interview

Be Sure to Send a Thank You Note after the Interview



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Source: https://www.job-hunt.org/job_interviews/common-job-interview-questions.shtml