

Preparing for an Interview – Advice and Sample Questions

General Guidelines in Answering Interview Questions

Everyone is anxious in interviews. If you simply allow yourself to feel nervous, you'll do much better. Remember also that it's difficult for the interviewer as well. In general, smile and be positive. Never be negative. Rehearse your answers and keep them short. Try not to talk for more than two minutes straight. Don't try to memorize answers word for word. Use the answers shown below as a guide only, and don't be afraid to include your own thoughts and words. To help you remember key concepts write down and review a few key words for each answer. Rehearse your answers frequently and they will come to you naturally in interviews.

Try to find out what the employer wants in an employee, and then show them how you meet those qualifications. Match your abilities with the job description as best you can. Your goal is to present your abilities and qualifications as the perfect "key" that fits the "lock" of the position. If you do well, the recruiter or hiring manager might email REP something like this:

"In regards to tips for her interview, she presented professionally, spoke calmly and with poise. She is passionate, eager to apply her talents and she was not hesitant to ask questions."

For In-Person Interviews

- Bring a photo ID. You'll need this to get into most office buildings
- If possible, bring two copies of your current, REP resume (The employer will probably already have a copy, but just in case, it's good to have a paper copy you can look at during the interview)
- Arrive at least 30 minutes early. Locate the building entrance and then take a brief walk or perhaps get a cup of tea or coffee nearby. Walk into the building at least 15 before the interview. Many buildings have extensive security procedures that take time before you can get into the office.

- Be very friendly with all the security guards, receptionists, secretaries etc. If you are rude to them, they may tell the hiring manager. If you are friendly and interested, they may say something that can help your case. If possible, learn their names and thank them, using their name, as you leave.

Successful Interview Strategies

- A. Always tell the truth – but in positive light. This takes practice and thought. Don't make things up. Bring attention to the things you have to offer that fit the job.
- B. Always remember – you have real value as an employee and the employer will benefit if they hire you!
- C. You must go to your interview alone. It is not okay to bring a friend, family member or child to an interview. In some cases, REP can ask for permission for you to bring an interpreter.
- D. Carefully review every line of the job description. Note where you have the right experience and think about how to emphasize that. Note where you lack the experience the employer wants. Think of ways to show that you have done something similar and ways to assure the employer that you can learn the skills you lack. If you have any question about the job description, consult your mentor.
- E. Remember the name of everyone who interviews you. Sometimes you will be expecting to interview with one person and there will be two or more. If you're not sure who they are or what their job is you should ask. You can also ask if they have a business card.
- F. Have your current REP resume in front of you if possible so you can refer to it during the interview. If interviewing in-person, bring two copies and offer one to the interviewer. They may already have it, but this action helps you get the resume out in front of you on your lap.
- G. Think before you answer. A pause to collect your thoughts shows that you are a thoughtful person
- H. As a daily exercise, practice being more optimistic. For example, just as an exercise in your daily life, try putting a positive spin on events and situations that you would normally regard as negative. This will sharpen your selling/marketing skills. The best salespeople, as well as the best-liked interview candidates, come off as being naturally optimistic, "can-do" people.
- I. Smile and try to use your interviewer's name (but not too many times), "Jennifer, I know you are busy, so thank you for making time to see me."
- J. Maintain good eye contact
- K. Speak clearly, positively, and confidently
- L. Lean in and show with your body that you are alert, engaged and energetic
- M. Never wear a hat, sunglasses or an outdoor jacket during an interview – take these things off
- N. Ask for a business card or the email of your interviewer. You will need it to send a thank you note later that day. (Your mentor can help you with this.)
- O. Keep notes. Right after each interview, write what could have gone better, and make a note of things you learned about the job, company or interviewer that you would like to remember. (If you can remember the questions they ask and share them with REP, this can help us prepare other clients to interview there.)

About the 16 Interview Questions...

The questions and suggested answers below are designed to be as specific and realistic as possible. But no preparation can fully cover the thousands of possible questions you may be asked. Familiarize yourself with these main ideas and strategies.

1. Tell me about yourself

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Start with the present and tell why you are well qualified for the position. Be sure to add any special credentials or helpful education you have. Remember that the key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for. Try to uncover your interviewer's greatest need, want, problem, or goal. Do all the preparation you can before the interview to uncover this person's wants and needs. As early as you can in the process, ask for a more complete description of what the position entails and what success looks like. Try to tell of a short example of your past responsibilities and your past achievements. All of this should be focused on presenting yourself as a good match for the job.

Example: "Well, I'm new in this country, and I'm very happy to be here. I'm someone who takes a lot of pride in the work I do. I'm honest, reliable and I'm a very hard worker. I like to make sure that every customer is a happy customer when they walk away – my boss at my last job seemed to really like that."

2. What are your greatest strengths?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Prior to any interview, try to have a list mentally prepared of your greatest strengths. You should also have a specific example or two which illustrate each strength, an example chosen from your jobs. You should have this list of your greatest strengths and corresponding examples from your achievements well committed to memory. Then, once you uncover your interviewer's greatest wants and needs you can choose those achievements from your list that best matchup.

1. A proven track record as an achiever
2. intelligence/knowledge of how to manage
3. Honesty...integrity...a good human being
4. Good fit with corporate culture...someone to feel comfortable with...a team player who fits well with the interviewer's team at all levels
5. Likeability...positive attitude...sense of humor
6. Good communications skills
7. Dedication...willingness to work hard to achieve excellence
8. Definiteness of purpose...clear goals
9. Enthusiasm...high level of motivation
10. Confident...healthy...a leader

3. What are your greatest weaknesses?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Pick something that will not affect the success in the role. For example, perhaps, “I sometimes push people too hard. I like to work very hard and sometimes I get upset if other workers aren’t putting in enough effort.” Then explain what you are doing to improve this behavior and engage the team to all work together as one. Try to play down the weakness and turn the conversation towards the positive.

Another example, if you are a salesperson, “ I like to spend as much time as possible in front of customers, selling rather than doing the administrative aspects of the role. Of course, long ago learned the importance of completing the administrative items as well. But what I really love to do is sell.”

4. Why are you leaving (or did leave) this past position?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Remember to never say anything negative about your previous industry, company, boss, staff, employees or customers. Try to avoid saying things like, “didn’t get along,” or “didn’t like the company.” Try to say you found a better opportunity elsewhere or wanted to move to place where, “I could advance towards my goals.”

5. The “Silent Treatment”

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Sometimes you answer an interviewer's question and then instead of asking another question, the interviewer stays silent. If this happens, keep quiet yourself for a while and then ask, with politeness “is there anything else I can tell you about that?” Try not to say too much and wait for the next question.

6. Aren’t you overqualified for this position?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: As with any objection, try not to view this as a sign of imminent defeat. It's an invitation to teach the interviewer a new way to think about the situation, seeing advantages instead of drawbacks. Try to calm the interviewers concerns by letting them know that in addition to having the skills to do the job extremely well, you are known for building very good teams that will be happy to both recruit and train others, so the firm has a strong base. List any other skills you have so they know they get someone who can do the role, plus, they get more.

For example, “I believe because of my unusually strong experience in (XYZ), I will be able to be useful to you right away. I’m eager to start working and I know I’ll be happy putting my many kinds of skills to work for your company.

7. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Reassure your interviewer that you are looking to make a long-term commitment and that this position is exactly what you are looking to do and what you do extremely well. As for your

future, you believe that if you perform each job with excellence, then future opportunities will take care of themselves, but that you definitely see yourself with this employer for quite some time.

8. Describe your ideal company, location, and job.

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Respond with a description of something very close to what this company is offering, being sure to make your answer believable with specific reasons stated with certainty.

9. Why do you want to work at our company?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: This question is your opportunity to impress, thanks to the in-depth research you will have done before the interview. Best sources for researching your target company: their website, news articles, annual reports, etc. You can also say that your mentor at REP told you it is a very good company to work for and they treat employees well.

10. Why do you want this job?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Try to be specific about how it fits with your skills and personality. Cultural fit is very important. You might also add something about the company--it has terrific products, an amazing reputation, etc.

11. Who has inspired you in your life and why

SUGGESTED ANSWER: A short and simple comment regarding someone you very much respect that will not be a controversial pick, would be an authentic and good answer. Example: the founder of a successful business you know about or your parents who taught you to work hard and focus on honesty and respect for others.

12. I'm concerned you don't have enough experience in...

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Indicate that you are a very fast learner and give the interviewer an example of how in one of your last roles, you utilized just the kinds of skills they are asking for. Try not to be defensive, although it is hard.

13. You've had a number of short stays at past jobs; can you tell me about that?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: If any of the job changes were not of your doing, describe the restructuring that occurred or the job eliminations simply. If you changed for a better role, additional responsibility, stronger firm, etc, explain that. Try to be as positive as you can to come across as loyal and as someone who does not change jobs unless there is a good reason. You may also explain that you faced difficult situations due to the

political or economic troubles of your home country, but try to stay positive. Don't go into detail about hard times you faced in the past.

14. May I contact your previous employer?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: If the answer is yes, say simply, yes, of course. "My manager and I had a very good relationship. In addition, I have three others from both (name of your previous firm) and (name of the one before that)."

If the answer is no, please try to stay positive and say, my manager is not available but (another person) is and I would be happy to give you their email and phone number. If they persist, explain that towards the end of your time in the job, there was a lot of stress on your manager, and you would rather not bother them if it all possible. If you have good performance reviews, you might offer to share those too.

15. What are your salary expectations?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: Remember to let the interviewer bring up salary first. You should not ask about pay or vacation time, breaks, lunch hour, etc. Try to have a sense of the pay for the position you are applying for, and then provide a range and say, "But I'm sure I'll be happy to work for the pay rate that is normal and customary for a job of this kind."

16. Do you have any questions for me?

SUGGESTED ANSWER: This is a chance for you to ask what qualities the employer looks for when they are hiring for this sort of job. You might ask, "What makes someone successful in this job?" or "What challenges does the employee need to handle to do this job exceptionally well?" You might also ask if there are ways to advance and get promoted if one stays a long time with the company.

17. Can you give an example of how you once went above and beyond what was expected to serve a customer?

This is an important question to prepare for if you will be in a customer-facing job. Think back and practice telling a little story that shows you have very good skills for working with customers. Note: a customer could be someone within your company, perhaps in another department or at another company location – if your job was to help them, you can consider them an internal customer.

18. Can you tell me about what you have done as a manager to lead your team and keep them focused and motivated?

This question will only come up if you're interviewing for a management job. Think back and practice telling a little story that shows you have strong skills for helping other team members deliver the best they have to offer to the organization. Do you lead by example? Are you a good mentor, coach or teacher? Are you a demanding but fair boss? Your answer should show that you're an adaptable, clever manager who has an understanding of what motivates workers and how to prevent problems with poor work performance from those you supervise.

Prepare a C.A.R. Story

Sometimes an interviewer will ask you for an example of time you performed beyond expectations, that is, a time you did a really good job with something in your workplace. To be prepared for this, think of an example of a time when you were working and you did something very smart or helpful for your company. Practice telling this brief story in three parts:

1. **Challenge** – you identified a problem or issue
2. **Action** – you did something to solve the problem
3. **Result** – your action created an improvement, a good result.

Example: “When I was working at Bosco Repairs Inc., we had a problem with our customers complaining that our work crews left a dusty mess behind after the repair (the Challenge). I suggested to my boss that we start a system where we require the work crew to text a photograph of the work site at the end of the job to him, and not leave until he gave his approval (the Action). After that we had many fewer complaints and customers started recommending us to their friends which, over time, led to more business (the Result).”

Your story can be about something very simple and it should be quite short. If you can't think of story, try to remember a time your employer gave you a nice compliment and use that story.

Practice Ways to Describe Yourself in an Interview

Practice saying the words and expressions below. Which of them might others use to describe you? Get comfortable using the ones that fit your personality...

I am...

Reliable Responsible Professional Detail-oriented	Dedicated Focused A hard worker A quick learner	A good problem solver A self-starter A team player	
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I can multi-task	I work well with others	I work well with all different kinds of people	
I follow instructions	I'm outgoing and friendly	I really care about the company I work for and want it to succeed	
I care about doing a job correctly	I enjoy people and like working with customers and guests		
I care about giving good service			

Think how you would respond if someone said, “give me three reasons why we should hire you.”

Three reasons to hire me: I'm hard-working, I'm honest, I like working with people

Three reasons to hire me: I'm professional, I'm responsible, I'm always on time

Three reasons to hire me: I'm dedicated, honest and enthusiastic.

Three reasons to hire me: I'm a great with customers, I'm a problem solver, I'm a team player

Have Your Own Questions Ready

Often, at the end of interviews, the interviewer asks you if you have any questions. Be prepared for this. Consider asking something like, "How did you end up working here at Century 21?" and then, "What do you like most about working here?"

When the Interview is Over You Must Send a ‘Thank You’ Email.

At the end of the interview, they will usually tell you that they have other people that will be interviewing and they will say it may be a while, but if they want to reach you they will. This normal. **Smile, thank them for their time**, ask for a business card (or get their email address) and leave.

Important: Contact your REP mentor to let them know how it went. Your mentor will help you send a thank you note by email later that same day. If there was more than one interviewer, send thank you emails to all involved.

Good luck! Know that your mentor and REP ‘have your back.’

Are You Prepared? Use These Checklists

For an in-person interview:

- ◇ Do you know exactly where the interview is?
- ◇ Do you know how to get there?
- ◇ Do you know your travel time and when you must leave to arrive there early?
- ◇ Do you know how to dress appropriately, and do you have the right cloths?
- ◇ Do you have the documents you'll need to bring? (REP resume, EAD card, Social Security Card, Photo ID)
- ◇ Do you have the name, title, and contact info of the people you will be meeting with?
- ◇ Have you read the job description, and do you understand everything in it?
- ◇ Have you researched the company – do you understand what they do?

For a video interview:

- ◇ Do you know exactly how to connect to the video chat?
- ◇ Do you have a quiet place with good internet?
- ◇ Does the background look appropriate and is your face well lit, well framed, and in focus?
- ◇ Do you know how to dress appropriately, and do you have the right cloths?
- ◇ Do you have the documents you'll need to show (REP resume, EAD card, Social Security Card, Photo ID)
- ◇ Do you have the name, title, and contact info of the people you will be meeting with?
- ◇ Have you read the job description, and do you understand everything in it?
- ◇ Have you researched the company – do you understand what they do?

Want more practice?

Watch these videos:

How to interview at Target Stores (but it has good advice for any interview anywhere)

<https://youtu.be/BlQuAgPRHng?si=gnks1VPmRtPReGPm>

Top 30 Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_LmCruLjis&ab_channel=DonGeorgevich

and

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uGODmOsIWI&ab_channel=DonGeorgevich