

Fifty Questions to Expect During Your Job Interview

1. “Can you tell me a little about yourself?”

-Give your 15-second sales pitch. After you’ve given your sales pitch, hand the hiring manager a fresh copy of your resume plus your typed list of references. Next, this is important – ask for the hiring manager’s business card. That business card will have all of the manager’s contact information, including his/her email address and direct phone number. You’ll need this information so you can stay in touch with the hiring manager after the interview is over.

2. “Tell me what you know about my company.”

-Before you go on the interview, be sure to visit the company’s website. Get an overview of the company’s key products and services. Google the company name for news. Find out who they are, what they do, and why you want to work for them.

3. “Why did you decide to become a (snake charmer)?”

-Tell your story. Include lots of detail and use body language to bring your story to life. Add a touch of humor when appropriate.

4. “What skills or requirements do you think are needed for this job?”

-This information should be in the advertisement where the job was posted. Use that information if you have the skills.

5. “What motivates you to do a good job?”

-Money is not a good answer. Instead, try this: “Having responsibilities and getting a pat on the back when the job is done right.”

6. “Why is customer service so important in business today?”

-“Customers who receive helpful service from friendly employees are more apt to come back again and again. They are also more apt to tell their friends about us. Good service means more business.”

7. “Why should I hire you instead of someone more qualified?”

-Toot your horn. Tell the manager that you have more than good skills to offer – you’re a team player, you’re not afraid of hard work, you’re a quick learner, you’re reliable, you give more than just the minimum effort, and – you want to work for this company because....

8. “Did you ever have a disagreement with your boss?”

-Answer “yes” and you’re a troublemaker, answer “no” and you’re a wimp. Find the middle ground: “Sure we disagreed. But we worked well together. For example...”

9. “Tell me about the toughest boss you ever worked for.”

-Never badmouth a former boss, it says you’re a troublemaker. Instead, turn a negative into a positive. “That would be Mr. Gray. He was a demanding, detail-driven perfectionist. But, I learned more from him than anyone I’ve ever worked with. For example...”

10. “What salary or wage are you looking for?”

-Get the manager to throw out the first figure. Ask, “What salary or wage do you usually offer someone with my skills and abilities?”

11. “Tell me about your current (or last) job.”

-Give the company’s name and what they do. Give your job title. List your duties and responsibilities. Explain your accomplishments.

12. “Why are you leaving that job?”

-Job stagnation, demotions due to downsizing, or simply having made a poor choice are all good reasons.

13. “What will your manager say when you give notice that you’re leaving?”

-Explain why you’ll be missed. Don’t give the impression that they’ll be glad to be rid of you.

14. “Did you enjoy school?”

-The manager wants to know if you enjoy learning and whether you might benefit from a training program.

15. “In school, which course did you find most difficult?”

-The manager wants to know if you have perseverance: “My first term in history, I got a D. My study skills were all wrong, so I joined a study group. By second term I pulled it up to a B and kept it there.”

16. “Did you participate in any school activities?”

-School activities show that you’re sociable. They show that you enjoy being part of a group and that you can work with other people. This is important in the work place.

17. “Do you plan to continue your education?”

-Adding to your education says that you want to grow and prosper, professionally as well as personally.

18. “Have you ever been convicted of a crime?”

-It’s not illegal to ask this question if it has a bearing on the job you are seeking. A Bank, for example, wouldn’t want a convicted embezzler working in the vault. If you have a conviction, admit it. Explain what happened. Acknowledge that you made a huge mistake. Tell what you’ve done to make amends. Ask for a chance to prove yourself.

19. “Last year, how many days of work (or school) did you miss? How many days were you late?”

-This will tell the manager whether you’re going to show up for work on time every day. If you’ve missed more than a few days, have some good explanations ready.

20. “What salary were you paid on your last job?”

-Tell the truth.

21. “As a youngster, what did you do to earn your own spending money?”

-Baby-sitting, lemonade stand, newspaper route, shoveling snow, mowing lawns, and other jobs show early signs of ambition and a respect for work.

22. “What do you do to relax after work?”

-Don't brag about auto racing, bungee jumping, scuba diving, or any other sport that might be dangerous. They suggest a likelihood of injury and an absence from work. Instead, mention something wholesome like athletics, a hobby, a project, traveling, or entertaining friends.

23. “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. For example...”

24. “Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of the team?”

-“Either. I'm not afraid to take responsibility and I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and pitch in.”

25. “Have you ever been fired from a job?”

-Everybody gets fired from a job at least once in their lifetime. And don't be afraid to tell the truth if it was your fault. Fessing up says that you are a responsible, mature adult. Explain what happened. Explain what you learned. Explain what you would do differently if the same situation happened again.

26. “Tell me about your strengths.”

-You know the five or six requirements needed for the job you want. Choose your strongest job requirements and offer examples to show how you excelled.

27. “What are your weaknesses?”

-Choose one or two weaknesses that are not part of the job requirements. Be sure to include an action point to show what you did about each weakness. For instance, “I'm terrified of public speaking. I get so nervous I start to shake. So, I signed up for a stand-up comedy class to help get over the jitters.”

28. “Tell me about your favorite accomplishment.”

-A personal touch works well here, such as your marriage, birth of a child, or helping someone in need. You could also offer something both personal and benevolent. “I’m no athlete, but I did run a 5 kilometer road race in under 45 minutes-and I raised over \$1,000 in pledges for a favorite charity. I’m proud of that.”

29. “Who did you ask to serve as personal references and why did you choose them?”

-“I chose a good mix – a former boss who can tell you about my skills and job performance – a coworker who can tell you about the hard work and extra effort we put in as a team – and a former coach who can tell you that I’m not only a good team player, I can work independently and I always complete my share of the work.”

30. “What are the three things you look for when considering a new job?”

-The things that make people happiest at work are not always about money and benefits. Experts say that the following things are often more important: Being appreciated, having respect, being trusted., taking on new challenges, having a good boss, working with people you enjoy, and making a difference.

31. “How are you unique?”

-Try this: “I’m a quick learner, a hard worker, I’m easy to coach, and I always deliver more than what’s expected. I could be one of the best employees you’ll ever hire.”

32. “Tell me how you keep a positive attitude when the job gets stressful?”

-Here’s how positive people stay positive: They know that attitude is a choice. They choose to plan ahead and schedule the time needed to get things done. They choose to be around other positive people. They choose to laugh and have a sense of humor. They choose to be friendly and helpful to everyone. They choose to offset negative thoughts by looking for the positive points.

33. “Please tell me about a time when you had to motivate a coworker.”

-Some of the best motivational tools include praise and encouragement, giving a helpful demonstration or example, explaining the rewards of the job, and brainstorming for better ways to do the job.

34. “Can you tell me about a goal you set for yourself?”

-The manager wants to know if you set goals. People who set goals are more productive than those who do not set goals. The best goals are specific, measurable, and plausible. For example, “I want to pay off my \$1,000 car loan in six months,” is a better goal than, “I want to pay off my car loan quickly.”

35. “Describe a problem you faced and how you solved that problem.”

-Think of something related to work, school, sports, or volunteering. Tell it as a story. The manager wants to see how you: 1). Define the problem, 2). Identify options and, 3).Decide on a solution.

36. “If you were told to report to a supervisor who was a woman, a minority, or someone with a physical disability, what problems would this cause for you?”

-“I don’t see any problems. I genuinely like people. I’m easy to coach and I’m and I’m easy to work with. For example...”

37. “Tell me what would you do if one supervisor told you to do something, and another supervisor told you not to do it?”

-The manager wants to see how you would handle a dilemma. Try this: Think about what would happen if you did act, and what would happen if you did not act. Write down the pros and cons of each. Make a decision.

38. “Tell me about a time when you broke the rules.”

-Sometimes it’s necessary to break the rules. Just make sure your reasoning and judgment are sound.

39. “Can you tell me about a time when a supervisor was not pleased with your work?”

-The manager wants to know how you react to criticism. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when preparing your answer: Top employees see criticism as a learning experience, not a reprimand. They listen without arguing or becoming defensive. They learn what needs to be done differently. They agree to the changes and implement them. They follow up by asking the supervisor for a new critique of their work. They also regain their enthusiasm and confidence quickly.

40. “Tell me about a time when you were swamped with work and how you handled it.”

-The manager wants to know how you prioritize your time. Experts suggest you start by making a list of all the tasks you need to do today. Next, arrange those tasks from most important to least important. Then, select the task which is most urgent. Start there.

41. “Please tell me about a time when you showed initiative at work.”

-Initiative is not about working harder. Initiative is about doing more than what your job requires. For example: Taking on a new responsibility without being asked, coming up with new ideas to make the job easier or better, taking a class or reading a book to learn a new skill, or noticing a problem on the horizon and taking action to correct it.

42. “Describe a difficult decision you had to make.”

-The manager wants to know about your decision-making skills. Here’s a basic decision-making formula: Define the problem, learn what others did in similar situations, list the pros and cons for each option, and then choose the best option.

43. “Tell me about a time when you failed.”

-Everybody fails. What’s important is the lesson learned from the failure. Keep these tips in mind when planning your answer. Describe the event, describe the goal you hoped to achieved, describe the failed outcome, explain what went wrong, and explain the lesson learned from the failure.

44. “Describe a time when you had to work with a difficult person.”

-The manager wants to see how you interact with moody, lazy, or obnoxious people. Ideally, you are a peacemaker who tries to resolve conflicts. When provoked, you have a private talk with the person. You remain pleasant. You explain how the behavior makes you feel. And you try to reach an agreement with the culprit.

45. “Please tell me about a time when you were disappointed.”

-The manager isn't so much interested in what happened, but what you did about the disappointment. Try something like this: “When I didn't get the promotion – I was surprised and hurt. But, I swallowed my pride and congratulated the winner – she earned the promotion. The next day, I reviewed my work performance. I redoubled my efforts, and I haven't missed a promotion since.”

46. “Tell me about a project you worked on.”

-The manager wants to know about your role in the project, specifically what you did. Begin by describing the project and the project's goal. Then, describe the team you worked with, specifically your duties, your responsibilities, your contribution, and any new skills you learned. Finally, tell whether the project met its goals.

47. “Tell me where you expect to be 5 years from now?”

-Try this: “It's hard to tell where anyone will be five years from now. But, I am looking for a company where I'll be appreciated, trusted, and able to make a difference. I want to work with people I enjoy, people who challenge me, and a good boss who's not afraid to tell us we did a good job. I think your company might be the one I'm looking for. That's why I'm here today.”

48. “Are there any questions I didn't ask, that I should have asked?”

-This is a great time to bring up any special skill, ability, or accomplishment that wasn't discussed.

49. “Okay, you’ve got one minute to convince me that you’re the best person for this job. Begin.”

-Do it in only 30 seconds and you’ll make a big impression. Start by delivering your 15-second sales pitch. Then, spend 15 seconds explaining why you want to work for this company. End by asking for the job.

50. “Do you have any questions for me?”

-Managers want to hear intelligent questions. Examples: “Would you describe a typical workday and the things I would do?” “Which duties or responsibilities are most important for this job?” “What are the major challenges the new hire will face in this job?” “How will I be trained or introduced to the job?”