

Interview Techniques

Common Questions



An interviewer has the difficult task of discovering and assessing what kind of person you are and how well you will fit the job and the company in a very short period of time. Therefore, you may be faced with fairly common or standard interview questions.

You should ensure that you listen carefully to the questions and tailor your responses accordingly, answering truthfully without exaggerating. Communicate in a clear and logical manner, not speaking too loudly/softly or too fast.

Whilst it is a good idea to be prepared for some of the common questions, your responses should not appear rehearsed or 'rote like'. Following are some of the more common questions and some ideas about what the employer may be looking for and suggested ways to respond.

Q. Tell me about yourself

This question may be used to assess your personality, communication skills and ability to think on your feet. You should talk about your skills and experience, focussing on work related factors. This should include your interests and experience as it relates to the job, past working experience, training / education / qualifications and a summary of your career. You should always try to link your experience to the position.

Q. Why do you want to do this job / work for this company?

The interviewer is looking to see if you will be satisfied with your job and want to stay. You should demonstrate your knowledge of the company and use positive comments such as the company's reputation, the fact that it has the kind of job you are looking for, your interest in that kind of work. Re-emphasise your suitability for the position.

Q. What do you think you have to offer this company?

This is an opportunity for you to talk about yourself and your achievements, concentrating on the skills you have that are required for the position. Describe without exaggerating, but ensure you provide enough information to show your strengths and successes.

eg " I have strong sales skills which is evident in my achieving 150% of my sales targets last year. I am a good team player and am keen to be involved in the new division you are establishing to work the Asia region."

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Q. What do you enjoy most about your current / last job?

The key to this question is to respond with what you have enjoyed about work that strongly relates to the key competencies and requirements of the position you are applying for. You should also mention that you are looking forward to expanding your experience in these areas.

Q. Where do you see yourself in five years time?

This question is designed to assess your ambition and career planning. You should demonstrate that your long term goals are appropriate for the position being discussed and your commitment to them.

Q. Do you work well under pressure?

You should answer this question with a 'yes' and ensure you give a specific time when you were under pressure and how you attacked and resolved the situation.

Q. Why did you leave your last position?

This question is looking for any difficulties you may have faced or created in your last role. People leave jobs for many reasons and you should try to only mention those that are favourable to you. Some common reasons for leaving jobs include:

- the company was retrenching
- it was part-time and you were ideally looking for more hours
- it required too much travel away from home
- you had gone as far as you could career wise in that company
- the company was taken over by another

Whatever reasons you give, point out that the job for which you are being interviewed does not have the same problem / restraints that led you to leave your last job. Emphasise the positive aspects as this will make you sound like a loyal and appreciative employee.

Q. Why should we employ you instead of someone else?

You should list your skills and attributes you have that show you will make a valuable employee. You may have mentioned them before but this is like a summary for the interviewer – a snapshot if you like.

At all times you should appear professional, confident and enthusiastic. Try not to sound like you have been practising your answers. Always relate your answers to practical experiences and show how those experiences are valuable to the position you are being interviewed for. And, if you don't understand the question, do not hesitate in asking for it to be repeated. Better that than giving an irrelevant answer.