

Practice Interview Questions

There are thousands of different interview questions and several hundred books giving sample interview questions and suggested answers. Being prepared for anything an interviewer can throw at you, with an honest answer, adds to your success in an interview as well as making you feel more confident and relaxed. Behavioural questions are very popular, i.e. "Give me an example of a time when..." With this, the employers are assuming that past behaviour will reflect future behaviours, and these questions will often be used to test for Employability Skills.

The most common feedback we receive from employers as to why a person has not been successful in an interview is the lack of ability to articulate skills and experiences. Remember, story-telling is a great skill when practised, and in an interview, employers are looking for you to tell them relevant and concise stories about your skills and experiences to date, and/or your passions and future career plans.

Here are just some of the many questions which have been developed to test various skills:

General questions

What attracted you to this position?

Tell me about yourself (very common to get an idea of where you are coming from and the ideal opportunity to do some relevant story telling - also great to link to your "elevator pitch")

What do you think this position involves?

What are you looking for in this job?

Experience

Do you think you are overqualified for this position?

Do your skills match this job or another job more closely?

What experience do you have in this field?

Are you currently employed? Are you applying for any other jobs?

Knowledge of the organisation

What do you know about this organisation?

Why do you want to work for this organisation?

How did you prepare yourself for this interview?

Your past

Have you ever had to fire anyone? How did you feel about that?
Have you ever been asked to leave a position?
Tell us about a time when you encountered a negative perception of yourself in your job and what you did to change it.
Why do you want to leave your current employer?
What has disappointed you about a job?
Are you happy with your career to date?
What would your previous manager say your strongest point is?
As of today have you performed the best work you are capable of?
Why did you choose this particular career path?

Your future

What is your five year plan?
What is your ten year plan?
What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself five or ten years from now?
How long would you expect to work for us if hired?

Team work

Are you a team player?
What do co-workers say about you?
What do you enjoy most and least about working with a large number of people?
What position do you prefer on a team working on a project?
What are your preferred working conditions, working alone or in a group and why?
Give us an example of a dysfunctional team of which you were a member. What did you do to improve the cohesiveness of the team?
Tell me about the most challenging team you have had responsibility for. What did you do to ensure the efficient operation of that team?
What kind of person would you refuse to work with and why?
Tell us about a time when you were responsible for/involved in ensuring that team members (or a colleague) remained enthusiastic and committed to a project/program/goal/etc. over a period of time.
Describe a time when you had to arrive at a compromise or had to help others arrive at a compromise.
Give an example of an instance when you worked with someone who you found difficult to get along with. How did you handle the situation?
Tell us about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of work. What did you do?
Describe a favourite work experience and tell me why it was satisfying.
What do you enjoy most and least about working in a team?

Knowledge present/past

What innovative and new opportunities are available for this industry? What are you looking forward to?

What do you think will be the single most important issue impacting on the industry in the next five years?

What was the worst/most embarrassing situation of your career? How would you have done things differently with 20/20 hindsight?

How do you propose to compensate for any lack of experience that you may have?

Work ethics

What is your philosophy towards work?

What motivates you at work?

Describe a time when you've had to work under pressure? How did you handle this?

Describe your work ethic.

What motivates you to do your best on the job?

What factors do you think determines a person's progress in an organisation?

Tell me about your relationship with your previous bosses

Your leadership roles

What do you enjoy most and least about being in a leadership role?

Give me an example of how you have coached or mentored someone in the work place.

Describe your management style.

Tell me about a time where you had to make a difficult ethical decision

In the work place what kind of decisions do you find most difficult?

What qualities do you look for in a boss?

How would you describe your training and management style?

Have you ever had difficulty getting others to agree with your decisions? How did you handle it?

Have you ever had to discipline or counsel another employee? What was the nature of the situation and how did you go about it?

Can you recall a work experience where a problem arose and your manager or boss was unavailable? How did you handle the situation, and how did things turn out?

Describe a time when you had to build a team to accomplish a task. How did you go about building the team, and was it successful in attaining its goals?

Lack of success

What do you believe are your weaknesses?

What have you learned from mistakes on the job?

What are your weakest areas concerning the position advertised?

What has been your biggest professional disappointment?

Conflict/Problem Solving

Tell us about a recent problem you had to solve.

Tell me about a problem you have had with a supervisor or manager and how it was solved.

Tell me about a problem you have had with a colleague working under you and how it was resolved.

Give an example of a disagreement or conflict you had with a colleague/peer and what you did to address it.

Tell me about a time when senior management assigned you a task that you thought was impossible?

How have you coped when you have had to face a conflict of interest at work?

What irritates you about co-workers and how do you address these issues?

Tell me about a time when you helped resolve a dispute between others.

Describe some recent decisions you've made which carried more than the usual element of risk.

Tell me about a time when a problem was not solved the way you would have liked.

Give me three examples of the types of problems you like to solve.

How do you approach solving a problem?

Deadlines, frustrations, difficult people and silly rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these types of situations?

How have you coped when your work has been criticised?

Innovation/Success

Tell me about some of your career highlights and in particular any experiences that relate specifically to this position you have applied for.

Tell me about a time when you encountered a negative perception of your organisation and what you did to change it.

What have you done to improve your knowledge and skills in the last year?

Describe your current situation and tell me about a significant achievement you are very proud of.

Give us an example of an innovative you may have developed and/or managed.

Do you consider yourself successful in your career to date?

How would you know you were successful once in this career?

Can you describe a time when you have taken initiative? What was the result?

What is your greatest strength?

Tell me about your greatest accomplishment to date?

Ability to learn new skills

What courses did you find easiest/hardest at school?

How long did it take you to get up to speed in your last job?

In which type of working environment do you learn best?

What skill areas do you think you need to improve on?

Ability to meet responsibilities independently

What are some of the biggest responsibilities you've had in the past?

Describe a time when you had to figure out a difficult problem on your own. How did you go about it?

How do you keep yourself motivated?

Tell me about a time when you felt you didn't meet your responsibilities.

Decision-making ability

Provide an example of a time when you had to come to a decision even though you did not have enough information. How did you go about it?

Tell me about a good and a bad decision you've made in the last year.

What kinds of decisions take you the longest to make?

Describe a situation in which you had to get information from a number of different sources before making a decision. How did you go about it?

Attention to detail

Describe a project you worked on that required very close attention to detail.

How do you stay organised?

Can you provide some examples of instances when you've discovered errors in your work or someone else's?

How do you know if a project you are working on is going well?

Career changers

Why are you interested in this new career path?

How will you compensate for your lack of industry knowledge?

What other types of jobs or companies are you considering at this time?

What worries you most about making this career change?

Comfort in start-up environment

How well do you deal with frequently shifting priorities?

How important are deadlines to you?

What pace do you typically work at?

How open are you to working on projects or doing tasks that you are not very familiar with?

Creativity

What type of working environment makes you creative?

What is the most innovative thing you have done in your previous job?

What types of changes did you implement at your last job?

How do you encourage creativity in co-workers?

Customer-service orientation

Tell me about the last time you received really great customer service.

What's the most difficult customer service situation you ever had to deal with? How did you handle it and what did you learn from it?

Why did you choose to go into customer service?

Describe a time when the customer was wrong. How did you handle it?

Give an example of a time when you have dealt with an upset customer. What was the situation? How did you feel? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Flexibility

How would you describe the amount of structure and feedback that you need to be successful?

Do you prefer stability and continuity or frequent change in your daily work environment?

How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Can you give examples of times when you were assigned a number of tasks and had to prioritise what needed to be done?

Have you ever had to reinvent your job to meet your company's changing needs?

Describe an experience where you had faced a big change? What was the change? How did you deal with that change? What are the benefits you received from that change? What did you learn from that?

Initiative

Can you describe any projects or tasks that were primarily undertaken because of your efforts? How successful were they?

Have you ever come up with ways to make a job you were doing or a project you were working on easier or more enjoyable?

What type of balance do you strive for between your work and your life?

What skills would you like to learn or improve on in the next year?

IT Experience

How long have you been using the Internet?

Tell me about some websites you like and dislike. Why do you like or dislike them?

Tell me what you think of our website.

What gets you really excited about the Internet?

What computer packages have you used in the past, and what do you like and dislike about them?

If we were to introduce new technology into the workplace, how would you approach this and what would you do to bring yourself up to speed?

Strategic thinking

Describe a time when you helped your company identify a new revenue opportunity.
How would you describe this company's strategic position in the industry?
How do you keep up to date on the latest happenings in the industry?
Tell me about a company that you admire because of its superior business strategy.

Negotiation skills

Describe your methods of influencing people. Give three examples.
Describe a negotiating experience that you are particularly proud of.
Describe a project that you had to sell to your superiors. How did you go about it?
Describe your worst negotiating experience.

Oral/written communication skills

What is your experience in terms of presenting to large or small groups? Can you describe a time when you were particularly successful making a speech or presentation? Can you describe a time when you were unsuccessful in making a speech or presentation?
What has been the hardest public speaking experience you have been in and why was this the hardest?
What different approaches do you take in talking to different people?
What kinds of writing have you done? Can you give examples?
What are some difficult writing assignments you have been given or have taken on yourself?

Project management skills

How do you organise and plan for projects?
Tell me about a time when a project you were in charge of fell behind schedule. What did you do about it?
Tell me about a new process or idea you implemented that was difficult to bring to completion. What approach did you take to get others to go along with the process or idea?
Tell me about a time you prioritised a number of tasks for a project. How did you go about it?
Tell me about a time when your project was running behind schedule and/or over budget, what was the situation and what did you do to rectify the situation?
Describe an experience where you had to complete a few tasks at the same time and every task was important to you and having the same priority. You had to complete all the tasks. How did you manage that? What was the result?

Salary

What kind of salary do you need?
Tell me about your salary expectations
If you had enough money to retire right now, would you?

Results orientation

Do you set performance standards for yourself, and, if so, how?

What have you done in your current or past position to improve your organisation's key metrics?

Tell me about a time when you weren't pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

Describe a new skill you learned recently.

How do you motivate yourself?

Job hoppers

Why do you want to leave your present job after such a short time on the job?

Why do you think this job is a better fit for you?

What motivates you to work hard and do well?

Private life/family

How do you balance your personal life with the work pressures on a daily basis?

Would you be willing to relocate if required?

What is more important to you: the money or the work?

Are you willing to work overtime?

Are you willing to put the interests of the organisation ahead of your own?

Tell me about your dream job.

Why you?

Why should we hire you?

If I said that you were one of the weakest candidates I have interviewed today, what would you say to defend yourself?

You are not really suitable for this job, are you? Justify to me your suitability.

Why do you think you would do well at this job?

If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for? Is it you?

Explain how you would be an asset to this organisation.

What new skills or ideas do you bring to the job that our internal candidates don't offer?

If we were to call your referees, what three words would they use to describe you?

Source: www.seek.com.au

For more information about interviews, elevator pitches, employability skills, or to book a mock interview with the Careers team, check out the The Edge: www.federation.edu.au/edge