

A woman with curly hair, wearing a brown blazer over a white shirt, is sitting at a desk with papers. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing an office or study environment.

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**What Questions
Do Interviewers
Ask During a Job
Interview and How
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What Questions Do Interviewers Ask During a Job Interview and How Do You Prepare for Them?

You never know what questions you will be asked in an interview, but you can be ready to answer common questions. You should also be ready to talk about all the information on your resume or [Personal Data Form](#).

It takes practice to be comfortable responding to interview questions. Sometimes it takes several interviews to feel confident; it's like learning how to drive. Someone can show you the basics, but the more you drive the better you get.



Write It Down: What kind of questions will I be asked?

You should be prepared to answer different kinds of questions. One great way to prepare is to write down your answers to common questions. Once you have done this, you can practice your answers. Writing down the questions and practice increases your chances of having well prepared answers so you won't fumble, mumble or hesitate when an interviewer asks a question.

Use the [Interview Questions Form](#) (in the Worksheets section) or use a blank page in your notebook and write "Job Interview Questions I May Be Asked" on the top. Write down "Tell me about yourself." This is one of the most common ways that interviewers start an interview. Your response to this question can set the stage for a great conversation.



Tell me about yourself

Prepare 3-4 sentences that describe your value as an employee. This can be similar to the Profile section of your resume, the About summary if you have a LinkedIn profile, or the work-ready content you included on Facebook under "About You."

- Look at your skills, education and experience.
- Think about where you have worked, volunteered and gone to school.
- Write a brief answer to this question that includes:
 - The kind of work you do best
 - An example of your experience, education or success
 - Specific skills you have
 - What you are looking for in a job

For example, you are interviewing for a job in retail that requires work in a stock room and you have relevant experience. When the interviewer says "Tell me about yourself," you could say:

"I am a hard worker who likes to work with a team to get the job done. I enjoyed working in a stock job where I also had to take inventory. This job used my math skills and ability to organize things. I am looking for a new job where I will be busy and can use my skills to keep track of things."

This kind of answer gives the interviewer ideas for additional questions. The interviewer could ask, "How else have you used math at work?" or "How big was the team you worked with?" or "How often did you take inventory and how long did it take?"

If you had replied "I am a hard worker. I come to work on time and I need a job," you would not sound confident or prepared. The interviewer would not have anything to ask about. The interviewer would have to try harder to get information from you.

Here's a sample response to "tell me about yourself" for someone who wants to work in a healthcare related job:

"I have five years of experience in health care and pride myself on always providing excellent patient care. I feel especially proud of the number of patients and families who ask for me by name. I'm looking for a new job where I can exceed patient expectations and provide excellent care."

And another for a candidate interviewing for a job as a Security Guard:

"I recently earned my New York State Security Guard License because I understand the value of protecting a business, its customers and employees. I'm very observant, while working in a residential building I knew the names of all of the tenants. I know that my skills and education will make me an asset as a Security Guard and I'm excited about starting this new career."





Take the Extra Step: Practice Your Answer Out Loud

Once you are happy with your answer, practice saying it. You can practice with a friend or family member or someone else who is helping you with your job search. You could also rehearse by yourself in front of a mirror or record yourself on your phone, computer or tablet. Your goal is to be able to make this statement with confidence.

What other questions can I expect?

Other questions that you might hear will have certain themes, or there may be a group of questions about the same topic. Here is a list of those themes and some suggestions for good answers. Write down the questions for each topic in your notebook. Leave space for the answer you would use.

Questions About Job Skills		
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
What are your qualifications for this job?	Give specific examples of similar work you have done, job training or education.	For an IT Help Desk Job: I have a Google IT Support Professional Certificate and two years of experience in an office setting.
Do you have the experience or training for this work?	Know the details of the job you are applying for and how your skills relate.	For a bookkeeping job: I am highly organized and have expert skills in Excel and am certified in QuickBooks.
What were your responsibilities at XYZ job?	Think about the content of your Personal Data Form and resume. Expect questions to focus on previous work and have examples of success.	If you worked in Purchasing: I was responsible for receiving and organizing \$100,000 of goods each month for the manufacturing facility.
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
What did you do for the two years you were not working?	Be prepared to explain any gaps in your employment history. Think about skills you may have gained during this time.	<p>I was taking care of an elderly relative. I gained a lot of experience negotiating with health care providers.</p> <p>or: I took time off to finish my degree. I completed projects that demonstrated the skills I learned in class.</p> <p>or: I was able to take time off to be a stay-at-home parent. During this time, I built leadership skills volunteering to head my local scout troop.</p>

Avoid using words or terms that were specific to the other places you worked. The interviewer might not understand them. For example, the interviewer may not know what an “ADR Report” is.



Questions About Your Education and Training		
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
What was your favorite class in school?	Identify at least one class you enjoyed with information directly related to the job you are applying for.	For a Customer Service position: My English and public speaking classes where I gained skills to get my message across speaking and in writing.
Why did you decide to get a certificate as a Home Health Aide?	Know the requirements for the certification.	I get my job satisfaction out of taking care of people. With the HHA certification, I can contribute with more security for both myself and the patients I help.
What is the most important thing you learned in the training program?	Think about the content of your Personal Data Form and resume. Expect questions to focus on previous work and have examples of success.	For a job in manufacturing: I learned the safe handling of hazardous chemicals and passed the test without a problem.

Questions About Attitude Towards Jobs and Work		
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
What did you like about your last job?	Focus on the positive, don't say, "The job was OK," or "It was work."	I worked with a team that always pulled together to beat sales goals.
What didn't you like about your last job?	Think of something that is not a negative about the product or people, such as your hours were cut.	Business got slow and my hours were cut way back.
Why did you leave your last job?	Have a specific reason, not one that bad mouths an employer or your boss.	I took an opportunity with more responsibility where I could grow and learn.
How do you handle a tough situation at work?	Identify a time when you worked through difficulty, think of the steps you took. Use specific examples in answers to demonstrate that you have done this and can do it again.	After a storm I worked with a team to clean out a foot of water in the storeroom. We created a plan, got the equipment we needed and tackled the job.
Tell me about an accomplishment you are most proud of?	Ideally this will show off the kind of work you are applying for. If you don't have specific experience, talk about an accomplishment that demonstrates important skills.	I was able to complete an important project before the deadline and under budget. or: I organized the sale at the community center that raised the money needed for the summer program.
Tell me about a time when you made a mistake.	You will want to talk about a mistake you corrected, or found and got the solution for, not something you gave up on. Never blame other people for your mistakes.	I realized an order sent to an important customer was missing an important item. I contacted the customer, told them of the mistake and got the item shipped out right away.



Never focus on the negative. If you are asked what you didn't like, don't offer a list of complaints about the work, the workplace or the people. Do respond with a suggestion on what could have been improved. For example, don't say: "The boss yelled all the time" or "No one knew how hard I worked" or "It was too busy." You will sound more mature and professional if you say "I did not get a chance to use all of my computer skills" or "I wanted more responsibility."



Take the Extra Step: Be Prepared to Explain Why You Were Fired

If you were fired from a job, don't lie about it. Be ready to answer the question. Briefly state what happened and then explain that you learned from it. Note it will not happen again. Don't complain that you were treated badly or that your boss was wrong. For example, if you were fired for a poor record of attendance, you could answer "I did not meet the schedule requirements, but I have learned since then about the importance of coming to work on time and when I am scheduled."

Questions About The Job You Are Applying For		
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
Why do you want to work for this company?	Research the company so you can describe why you think it will be a great place to work.	I am excited about working for a company that will be growing from two locations to four in the next six months.
Why do you want this kind of job?	Identify something about the job that makes you happy, that uses your talents, skills and experience.	I enjoyed seeing a product from start to finish in my last job in project management and know I can use my skills and experience to contribute to the company. I am interested in this job because it will let me use my eye for detail and ability to get a job done.
Why are you the best candidate for this job? or Why should I hire you for this job?	Think about how your skills and experience will contribute to the company.	My passion for customer service will build repeat business. or: My high standards of patient care will produce outstanding healthcare outcomes.





Checklist for Success: Learn About a Potential Employer

You should find out as much as you can about the company and job that you are interviewing for:

- Try to talk to people who work there.
- Find information about the company on the internet.
- Go to the company website and check out the history, products or services and leadership.
- Search the company or organization name to see if there is anything about it in the news.
- Pay a visit as a potential customer if the job is at a store, restaurant or other public location.

These activities will give you specific reasons to use when you describe to the interviewer why you want to work for the organization. For example, if your research includes recent awards that the company won you can say, "I really want to work for the Health Care Agency rated #1 in patient satisfaction in New York State."



Take the Extra Step: Find The Questions Companies Ask Online

If you type, "interview questions Kohl's" in a search box you will get a list of entries with tips and questions that Kohl's interviewers ask. Do the same for the company you are preparing to interview with. Even if the questions you get are a little different you will be well prepared.



Questions About You		
Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
What are your strengths?	This is your opportunity to highlight skills that are related to the job you are applying for.	I am organized and hard working. or: It's important for me to see work done correctly.
What are your weaknesses?	Think of weaknesses that can also be considered a strength.	I am a perfectionist. or: I always expect my coworkers to work as hard as I do.
What are your career or job goals? or: "Where do you see yourself in 3 or 5 years?"	Goals you have for growth, contributions you can make to a company. Focus on work. An employer does not want to hear that your goal is to "work for about a year" or "make enough money to move out of the country" or "get married and have children."	If you are looking for stability not promotion: I would like to work for an organization where I can continue to be an important part of the team that contributes to success. If you are interested in career growth: I would like to gain the skills and experience to be promoted to Supervisor.
What would be the perfect job for you?	Your strongest skills and work experience.	A job where I can use my skills at organizing and with numbers where I can grow and contribute to the company.
What are your interests and hobbies?	Whenever possible, stick to activities that demonstrate job related skills and/or focus on active pursuits.	I volunteer in a soup kitchen preparing meals for the homeless. or: I like to spend time with my family outdoors. or: I like to fix things. or: I like to bake for family events.



True Stories: I Scooped Ice Cream Too!

An interviewer at a pharmaceutical company spent a lot of time asking a recent college grad about a summer job at an ice cream parlor. Turns out the interviewer had spent a summer making sundaes, too. Be prepared for questions that may seem a bit off track but give an interviewer time to talk about shared experiences.



Questions About Interpersonal Skills

Sample Question	Information to Include	Sample Answer
Tell me about a time when you worked well with a team.	This can be any team, at work or outside of work, but should include specifics of what you got done, not simply that it was a nice bunch of people.	I was on a team that set the record for sales for the last month of the year. We all focused on the goal and helped each other with every sale.
What do you do when there is a conflict on a team?	Your focus needs to be on how you found solutions using a specific example, not simply passed it on to your boss.	Once, my team members were complaining a lot about the way certain people were scheduled. We found out the reasons for the disagreement and worked on a way to do the schedule to meet everyone's needs. The situation made us all see that you have to talk about problems, not bury them or gossip.
Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a coworker.	Describe how you worked to resolve the situation, even if it wasn't perfect, never point fingers.	A coworker didn't agree with the way a process should be completed. I sat down and talked about the situation. We didn't always agree and the second time we had to get our boss involved, but I now know what I respect about the way this person does their job.
How do you handle a difficult customer?	Focus on the positives and good outcomes, never talk about all customers as a problem. Use specific examples.	Last week a customer received an order damaged. They were really upset, I listened and asked them how we could correct the situation. We did not have the exact part but I sent a replacement and will follow up to send the exact part.



Take the Extra Step: That's a Good Question...Let Me Think About It

No matter how much preparation you do, you may hear a question that you never expect and it seems to stump you. Give yourself a minute to think by saying, "That's a good question, let me think for a minute." Gather your thoughts and respond. Interviewers will appreciate you not simply blurting out the first thing that comes into your head.

If you are asked questions that sound alike, you can use similar answers as long as you continue to answer with enthusiasm. Don't say "I already told you..." or "I answered that question already." Interviewers meet a lot of people and may repeat questions without realizing it. Don't point this out to them - just answer the question.



Here is an example of how these questions and answers might look on your [Interview Questions Form](#) or in your notebook.

Job Interview Questions I May be Asked	
Sample Question	Sample Answer
1. Tell me about yourself.	I am a hard worker who enjoys challenges and wants to find a job where I can use my customer service skills to help people find the products they want. I have a great attitude and can smile all day no matter how busy it gets.
2. Why do you want to work for ABC Audio?	I know that ABC Audio has a great reputation for selling really good equipment, doing fabulous installations and making sure everything is in good shape with follow up service. I would like to be part of a company that provides such great products and service.
3. What are your strengths?	I am a very friendly and outgoing person who gets along with, and can speak to, all kinds of people. This makes me really well suited for providing customer service.
4. What are your weaknesses?	I don't know a lot about electronics but I love music and am a very quick learner.
5. Why did you leave your last job?	I was ready for more responsibility and the next level up was not available. I took a part-time job that allowed me to finish school and look for a new opportunity at the same time.
6. What did you like best about your last job?	I liked it when it was really busy and I just kept moving and got a lot done. I can work with more than one customer at a time, talking to one while the other is thinking or conferring with their spouse.



True Stories: If You Could Be Any Animal?

Some interviewers ask questions that don't seem job related at all. These may be looking for creative answers, identifying how someone reacts to change or an unusual situation, or to see problem solving. One interviewer always asked, "If you could be any animal what would you pick and why?" He could not describe a job related reason for the questions, just that he "liked it." Don't try to figure these out, take a deep breath and answer the best you can.

There's an app for that!

You can find lists of potential questions, some recommendations for responses, and the potential to customize your answers on apps created for your smartphone. Two free ones to check out include [Job Interview Prep Questions](#) (Apple) and [Interview Questions & Answers](#) (Google Play). If you install one of these apps, you can check the content and use it for preparation at home or on the go. If the apps mentioned here don't work for you, search for others. There are many free options available, so you don't have to pay for an app like this.



It's your turn to ask questions

At the end of an interview you will probably be asked, "Do you have any questions?" Prepare to answer this question too. If you have questions about the job or company, this is the time to ask them.

Some questions might include:

- What are the hours for this job?
- Who would I report to?
- When do you need someone to start work?
- How much does the job pay?
- How do people get promoted?
- How many people work here?
- How many people are you hiring?
- What is the next step in the interview process?

There is no reason to be afraid to ask questions, including those about how much the job pays. You will sound more organized and ready to work if you ask good questions. You don't want to ask questions that the interviewer is not prepared to answer or could put them in an uncomfortable position. For example, don't ask,

- Did I get the job?
- How did I do?
- When can I start?

Asking about the interview process or when you will hear from the employer is better than asking, "When is my next interview?" Don't put the interviewer on the spot. You may be asked to meet someone else or schedule another appointment, but don't push if it is not offered.

You should always be prepared to ask at least one question. If you cannot think of one about the job or the company, you can always ask the interviewer one of these questions:

- Why do you like working here?
- How long have you worked here and why have you stayed?

These are good questions because people like talking about themselves. You can also gain some good information from the answers.

**Always ask for a business card from an interviewer.
You will need this to write a thank you note.**





Chapter 11 To Do List

- _____ Research the company or organization you are interviewing with.
- _____ Make a list of potential questions and answers, write them down.
- _____ Prepare questions that you can ask the interviewer.
- _____ Practice questions and answers face to face, using a mirror or recording on your phone or computer.

Quick Links to Resources

Resource Name	Web Address
Job Interview Prep Questions	Apple App Store
Interview Questions and Answers	Google Play store



Need Help?

The Westchester Library System offers workshops, resources, and one-to-one counseling to guide your job search and improve your interviewing skills. Find out more at FirstFind.org.

