



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?

This is an opportunity to use the research you collected. Use the company attributes as you see/understand them to talk about how you would fit in.

WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE FOR THIS POSITION?

Make sure you have a sense of what is critical from the interviewer's perspective. Offer the kinds of problems you can solve. Target your responses to what you have learned about the responsibilities of the position.

WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR LAST JOB/COMPANY/BOSS?

Criticizing a prior employer is a warning flag that you could be a potential problem. Make a positive statement first. Then choose one neutral negative (for example: limited potential for growth, desire to take on new challenges, change in job priorities that called for a change professionally).

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?

Design the response so that your weakness can be seen as a positive characteristic. (For example: "I don't like to be over-supervised because I have a lot of initiative. I like to anticipate problems before they arise.")

WHAT WOULD YOUR REFERENCES SAY ABOUT YOU?

You have nothing to lose by being positive. However, keep in mind that references are usually checked if the company is considering making you an offer.

COULD YOU GIVE ME SOME REFERENCES OF PEOPLE YOU DIDN'T GET ALONG WITH?

Be ready. Have a few people in mind that differed with you but with whom you learned to share a mutual respect. Prepare these references for possible contact.

WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR JOB?

Be honest, but again, don't be negative, critical, or complain. Generally, a good answer is that you were "looking for better opportunities/advancement." If you were fired/laid-off from any job explain the circumstances accurately and put yourself in the best possible light.



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FREQUENTLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Here are some questions that could be asked in an interview. Prepare appropriate answers. Practice your answers to these and other possible interview questions with someone you know and get objective feedback about your responses.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Describe a typical workday on your last job.
- I see on your résumé that you feel qualified in the area of _____. Give me specific examples that will support that.
- How would someone who knows you well describe you? What adjectives would he/she use?
- In which area or areas of your performance was your supervisor most critical? Why? Did you agree with that?
- Name someone you particularly respect. What traits do you like or admire about this person?
- How would you rate your probability of success in the position we have been discussing? Why?
- Describe how you deal with conflict.
- What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Why are you interested in our company?
- What was your most satisfying job experience?
- Describe an ideal job for you.
- What is the biggest problem you have had to face, and how did you handle it?
- At which of your past jobs were you least successful? Why?
- How do you feel about overtime?
- Who can I speak to in order to verify what you have told me?
- I see many people with good credentials. Why should I hire you?



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SOME GOOD ANSWERS TO SOME DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

As you know, there is precious little time between the end of an interviewer's questions and the point at which it is appropriate for you to begin responding. After listening carefully to the question being asked, it is acceptable to pause momentarily to ponder your answer before delivering it. Too long a pause, however, creates an uncomfortable situation for both you and the interviewer and may make him/her question your competency.

To reduce the possibility of being shocked or surprised into silence by an unexpected question from an interviewer, you must be prepared. You can start by studying the following suggested interview responses:

Q: Why do you want to work here?

A: If you have done your research, you should know the answer to this one! Tell the interviewer what you find appealing about the idea of employment with his or her company, but do not go overboard.

Q: Why should I hire you?

A: You know who you are and what you have to offer. Your poise and confidence levels are being tested here. Give the interviewer a short, generalized summary of your qualifications.

Q: What interests you about this position?

A: Answer this one with short responses like "the challenge," "the opportunities for advancement," "the diversified responsibilities," etc. If you wish to elaborate, you will get the chance.

Q: How long will you stay with us (the company)?

A: Please do not answer "forever" or "as long as you want me!" Adopt the attitude that you are no more in need of them (the job and its rewards) than they are of you (your talents and skills). How about "As long as I can provide value and am able to learn and grow in the company"?

Q: What would you like to be doing five years from now?

A: Refer again to the work you have done at STRIVE. You should be well-prepared to demonstrate the fact that you are a job seeker with direction and goals to achieve.

Q: Why do you want to change jobs/fields?

A: This is not a trick question! There are valid reasons why people leave one job or field of endeavor for another including new challenges, greater advancement potential, learning experiences, varied responsibilities, etc. Stay away from the wage or salary issue, and definitely do not speak negatively about former supervisors or co-workers in response. If you are seeking a change, be ready to explain why in a satisfactory manner.

Q: Why have you been out of work so long?



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A: Be ready for this one if you have any gaps in employment. Perhaps you were raising a family, going to school, or conducting an active job search. State whatever you were doing as positively as possible. Do not volunteer any negative information.

Q: Why have you changed jobs so frequently?

A: This is not dissimilar to the previous question, but your answer to this one may be subject to greater scrutiny. Employers are extremely wary of job hoppers! If you have had more than your share of short-term jobs, you must convince the interviewer that those days are behind you and this is the job that you have been looking for. You need to be honest and sincere and make the interviewer aware that your frequent job changes were not directly related to your work performance. Hopefully, they were not!

Q: Have you ever hired or fired anyone?

A: If you have performed these duties in the course of your employment, you have, by virtue of this fact, increased your employment options. If you have not had the experience, but feel you are capable of performing in this area, let the interviewer know.

Q: How many people have you supervised?

A: With this question and the one preceding it, the interviewer is trying to determine the depth of your experience. If you have supervised the work of others, either directly or indirectly, tell the interviewer, but don't sell yourself short or exaggerate your experience.

Q: Do you have a reliable source of childcare?

A: You would not be interviewing for the position if you had not made adequate childcare arrangements, would you? If the interviewer somehow becomes aware of the fact that you have children, assure him/her that you have a dependable childcare provider and a back-up plan in case of an emergency. (If you do not have a back-up babysitter, arrange for one!) If you have worked before and had an excellent attendance record, by all means let the employer know!

Q: Do you have your own transportation?

A: Obviously, this question is difficult only if you do not have your own vehicle. If you are dependent upon public transportation (the bus, subway or taxi), the prospective work site is bus or subway accessible or taxi/car service affordable, and the routing and scheduling will enable you to get to work on time, then your task here is to convince the employer that punctuality and attendance will be no problem for you despite your lack of personal transportation. If the work site is located in an area where public transportation is non-existent or impractical and you will have to depend on someone else to get to work, you would be better off not applying to the company.



STRATEGIC TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

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- Be on time.
- Know the interviewer's name.
- Bring a spare copy of your résumé.
- Expect to spend some time developing a rapport.
- Pay attention to your non-verbal communication.
- Don't be embarrassed by nervousness.
- Don't play comedian.
- Don't exaggerate.
- Follow the interviewer's lead.
- Be prepared for personal questions.
- Pay attention.
- Be sure you understand the question.
- Emphasize the positive.
- Do not interrupt the interviewer/employer.
- Do not bring up the topic of salary.
- Do not ask about vacations.
- Pay attention to your timing of answers. (Don't be too long winded.)
- Emphasize what you can do.
- Do not try to give the answers they want.
- Take a pen and small pad, but don't take too many notes. Eye contact is more important.
- Be consistent.
- Avoid debates.
- Never slight a former employer or colleague.
- Admit errors you may have made.
- Don't overplay your technical knowledge.
- Try to be as specific as possible.
- Don't talk about your children
- Watch your grammar!
- Have some questions prepared.
- Don't bring exhibits.
- For an interstate application, suggest a telephone interview.
- Don't expect an offer on the spot.
- Be careful with the closing.

Handout and materials: VIDEO: Interview Do's and Don'ts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIucmfPOBV8>

Adapted from the Mock Interview from the Young Adult Career Development Curriculum, 2013