

Interview Questions

Tips to Help You Answer

1. Tell me about yourself

You can talk about things like: What school you go to / Work interests and experience / Mention skills important for the job you're interviewing for / Hobbies if they have something to do with the job.

Example:

I am a senior at California High and I graduate in June. I worked in the office as a clerical aide for one year filing, answering phones, and taking messages. I am also a member of the Sports Club where I help create flyers and type memos to the principal when we plan events.

2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Be ready with at least 2 answers for each situation.

Hint: Give the strength *and* give an example of why it is a strength or when you used it. Also, make the strength important to the job you're interviewing for.

Example:

One of my strengths is that I can type. At school, I work as an office aide where one of my duties is typing memos and reports.

Hint: Give the weakness *and* show that you are doing something to get better. Make the weakness a *small* part of the job you're interviewing for..

Example:

A weakness I have is that I do not know how to use a copy machine. So what I did was ask my school counselor to teach me how to use the one at school. She is going to teach me how to use it and the other office machines as well.

3. Why do you want to work for our company?

Do some research so that you understand what the employer does. Also, use this as an opportunity to let them know about a positive quality you have.

Example:

I want to work in your store because my family shops here all the time and it seems like your employees enjoy their jobs. I also buy my cosmetics here and I think I could do a good job helping customers in that department. I also know the layout of the store, so it wouldn't take as much time to train me.

4. What are your future plans for school or work?

Employers like people who have goals, want to accomplish something and are motivated to go the extra mile.

Have goals: Graduating from high school / Going to community college / 4 year college or vocational school / Future job or career interests

Example:

I graduate in May and hope to attend Foothill College for two years before transferring to San José State, where I intend to get a degree in criminal justice.

5. Tell me about your last or current job. Why did you/do you want to leave?

Describe your last or current job and the skills you gained from it. Be fair about why you left and use positive words.

Example:

My last job was in customer service at Toys 'R' Us. I was in charge of keeping the game wall stocked and neat, as well as helping customers find toys, checking prices, and putting misplaced items back on the right shelves. I also worked on the cash register when things got busy. I resigned to return to school full time.

6. Why should I hire you?

Remember to concentrate on you and your ability to do the job. Don't worry about other applicants.

Example:

You should hire me because I am reliable and enthusiastic about the opportunity to work here. My previous experience in customer service and using a cash register will help me to adjust to this job quickly. I have had experience working during the evening rush when the store was very busy and was able to stay calm and keep my register moving smoothly. I think I would be a great addition to your team.

7. Do you have any questions?

It is important to have at least 2 or 3 questions, so you can gain information to help you understand more about the company, job duties, and/or supervision.

Sample questions:

- When will you be making a hiring decision?
- What qualities do you look for in a good employee?
- What is a typical day like?
- What do you think are some of the challenges of this position?
- What do *you* like best about the job/company?

Situational Interviewing

Situational interview questions give managers real life examples of your ability to do the job.

They ask you to describe how you would handle or have handled a situation, or what you would do under certain circumstances.

It's easy to list skills and accomplishments on your resume. Now you need to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the interviewer how you successfully go about solving problems, resolving conflicts, and making things happen.

What makes situational interview questions challenging, is there are an infinite number of situations or circumstances. How do you know in advance what specific situational interview questions you will be asked?

Actually, it's really not *that* difficult once you know the pattern to answering these types of questions.

The key is to always ask yourself these 2 questions:

1. What do they *really* want to know about me?
2. What do they *fear* about me?

Companies fear or want to know:

- How well you get along with people and influence others: Resolving conflict, coping with difficult people, influencing others, working in a team, flexibility.
- How you cope with stress and disappointment: Missing deadlines, getting criticized, dealing with demanding customers.
- Do you have the skills you say you do to do the job: Technical abilities and knowledge of systems, products, sales, service, management, organizational skills.
- Are you a self-starter and easy to manage: Do you take the initiative to solve problems and get things done?

So, in preparing for your interview, think of situations where you dealt with one or more of these kinds of challenges. If you have never worked, think of examples from other areas of your life, such as school, sports or clubs.

Top 10 Situational Interview Questions

1. Describe the toughest challenge you ever faced and how you worked through it.
2. Give an example of an important goal you set and describe your progress in reaching that goal.
3. Describe the ideal working environment to do your best work.
4. Discuss a situation during the past year in which you had to deal with an upset customer or coworker.
5. Tell me about a time when your work was criticized.
6. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get something done or resolve a problem.
7. Tell me about a time when you had to stick by a decision you made even though it made you unpopular.
8. Describe the most difficult boss you worked for and how you dealt with them.
9. Share with me an idea or improvement you implemented that made a difference.
10. What have you done in your life that you are most proud of?