

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below are common interview questions that you could expect during a job interview. Some of the questions and helpful answers are taken from Harry Dahlstrom, author of *The Job Hunting Handbook*.

### 1. Tell me (us) about yourself.

Give a brief (30-60 second) pitch about yourself. After your pitch, give the interviewer a copy of your resume and your list of references. You may also want to ask for a copy of his or her business card at this time; you can use this later to write a thank you note.

### 2. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?

Show that you have done your research about the company by explaining how the skills that you have are a good fit to the company. Do not mention anything about salary or benefits that the company offers.

### 3. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?

Recall the key points of the job posting. Choose the top few (2-4) requirements for this position and give supporting examples to show how you excelled. For example, you could say, "I have always exceeded my sales goals each year and have earned bonuses because of that." Another example: "When I have deadlines, I don't just strive to meet the deadlines. Instead, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule."

### 4. What are your weaknesses?

Choose one or two weaknesses that are not part of this job description. Show how you have tried to improve on these weaknesses. For example, if you state that you get nervous public speaking, also state that you took a public speaking course to help you through it.

### 5. Have you ever failed at anything? If so, what did you learn from that experience?

Remember that everyone fails. The important thing is to focus on the lesson you learned. Describe the event, describe the goal you hoped to achieve, describe the failed outcome, explain what went wrong, and explain the lesson learned from the failure. Make sure it is not related to the job you are interviewing for. For example, state how you failed at downhill skiing but you signed up for an instructional skiing course to help you improve. You want to show that you can overcome obstacles.

### 6. Of what accomplishment are you most proud?

You can choose a professional or personal accomplishment for this answer. You can tell how you followed through on a professional concept – from start to finish. Or you may talk about your marriage, birth of a child, or how you helped someone in need.

### 7. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large was the group? How did you do?

Everyone has spoken before a group of people. If you did well, state that you did well and why you did well (you were well-prepared, you practiced, etc.). If it did not go well, state what you did to improve for the next time (took a public speaking course, signed yourself up for open-mic night, etc.).

### 8. Why should we hire you? Or, why should we hire you over another candidate?

Tell about all of the skills you have to offer – you're a quick learner, you are open to trying new things, you always give 100%, you're a team player, you're not afraid of hard work, etc. Also state that you want to work for this company and why (see question 2).

### 9. Have you had difficulty getting along with a co-worker and how did you handle it?

Explain the difficulty between you and your co-worker and how you were able to fix it. Remember – make this positive – focus on the outcome, not the problem.

### 10. Have you had difficulty getting along with a supervisor and how did you handle it?

Don't give a clear yes or no answer to this question. Either way will get you in trouble. State simply that there were times we had slight disagreements, but we worked through them because we worked well together and had the utmost respect for each other.

**11. Give some examples on how you were successful working as part of a team.**

I am successful and enjoy working as part of a team. I can also work independently. Give a few examples of when you worked with a team to accomplish something.

**12. What qualities/qualifications do you have that will make you succeed in this position/company?**

Recall the key points of the job posting. Choose your three to five best qualities that relate to the top few requirements of this position and try to give supporting examples to show how you excelled. For example, you could say, "I have always exceeded my sales goals each year and have earned bonuses because of that." Another example: "When I have deadlines, I don't just strive to meet the deadlines. Instead, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule."

**13. What motivates you to put forth your best effort?**

You will want to choose something that relates to this particular job. For instance, you can say that you worked on several teams to help others implement your software and you were motivated by the challenge of finishing ahead of schedule, by making your customers happy and by completing the job as a team. Talk about internal motivators rather than external ones (deadlines, paycheck).

**14. What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?**

You can choose a few generic traits – hard working, a team player, and detail-oriented. Then choose something specific to the company. For example, if this position is in sales, you may want to say "experience and success in the sales industry."

**15. Give an example of a situation in which you provided a solution for your supervisor.**

Give an example of something that is somewhat related to the position in which you are applying. Think about a time at work when there was a problem or issue. How did you help?

**16. Give an example of a time in which you worked under the pressure of a deadline.**

You may explain that you work better under pressure and that you enjoy working in a challenging environment. Explain the time frame, what you did to stay organized and on top of the deadlines and tell how early you finished the project.

**17. Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity.**

**What did you do?**

State that the process of getting the problem fixed is where the opportunity laid – you learned throughout the process. This could be a webpage error that you didn't know how to fix. Along the way to fixing the error, you learned more about webpages that you wouldn't have learned if this problem didn't occur.

**18. By providing examples, demonstrate that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and/or environments.**

Reiterate that you are flexible and able to adapt to new surroundings. Give an example of each if you can – how you adapted to a variety of people, situations and environments. You could include how you babysit young children often throughout high school and one of your first volunteer outings in college was at a nursing home. Explain what you learned from both sets of people. Give another example of a situation and environment in which you adapted.

**19. What effective leadership qualities do you think are important? Provide examples of past experiences.**

You may choose from several qualities – organized, career-driven, encouraging, flexible, and more. Explain how you have each of these qualities and how they have helped make you successful.