

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## 1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?

This question seems simple, so many people fail to prepare for it, but it's crucial. Here's the deal: Don't give your complete employment (or personal) history. Instead give a pitch—one that's concise and compelling and that shows exactly why you're the right fit for the job. Start off with the 2-3 specific accomplishments or experiences that you most want the interviewer to know about, then wrap up talking about how that prior experience has positioned you for this specific role.

## 2. How did you hear about the position?

Another seemingly innocuous interview question, this is actually a perfect opportunity to stand out and show your passion for and connection to the company. For example, if you found out about the gig through a friend or professional contact, name drop that person, then share why you were so excited about it. If you discovered the company through an event or article, share that. Even if you found the listing through a random job board, share what, specifically, caught your eye about the role.

## 3. What do you know about the company?

Any candidate can read and regurgitate the company's "About" page. So, when interviewers ask this, they aren't necessarily trying to gauge whether you understand the mission—they want to know whether you care about it. Start with one line that shows you understand the company's goals, using a couple key words and phrases from the website, but then go on to make it personal. Say, "I'm personally drawn to this mission because..." or "I really believe in this approach because..." and share a personal example or two.

## 4. Why do you want this job?

Again, companies want to hire people who are passionate about the job, so you should have a great answer about why you want the position. (And if you don't? You probably

should apply elsewhere.) First, identify a couple of key factors that make the role a great fit for you (e.g., “I love customer support because I love the constant human interaction and the satisfaction that comes from helping someone solve a problem”), then share why you love the company (e.g., “I’ve always been passionate about education, and I think you guys are doing great things, so I want to be a part of it”).

## **5. Why should we hire you?**

This interview question seems forward (not to mention intimidating!), but if you're asked it, you're in luck: There's no better setup for you to sell yourself and your skills to the hiring manager. Your job here is to craft an answer that covers three things: that you can not only do the work, you can deliver great results; that you'll really fit in with the team and culture; and that you'd be a better hire than any of the other candidates.

## **6. What are your greatest professional strengths?**

When answering this question, interview coach Pamela Skillings recommends being accurate (share your true strengths, not those you think the interviewer wants to hear); relevant (choose your strengths that are most targeted to this particular position); and specific (for example, instead of “people skills,” choose “persuasive communication” or “relationship building”). Then, follow up with an example of how you've demonstrated these traits in a professional setting.

## **7. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?**

What your interviewer is really trying to do with this question—beyond identifying any major red flags—is to gauge your self-awareness and honesty. So, “I can't meet a deadline to save my life” is not an option—but neither is “Nothing! I'm perfect!” Strike a balance by thinking of something that you struggle with but that you're working to improve. For example, maybe you've never been strong at public speaking, but you've recently volunteered to run meetings to help you be more comfortable when addressing a crowd.

## **8. What is your greatest professional achievement?**

Nothing says “hire me” better than a track record of achieving amazing results in past jobs, so don't be shy when answering this interview question! A great way to do so is by using the S-T-A-R method: Set up the situation and the task that you were required to complete to provide the interviewer with background context (e.g., “In my last job as a junior analyst, it was my role to manage the invoicing process”), but spend the bulk of your time describing what you actually did (the action) and what you achieved (the result). For example, “In one month, I streamlined the process, which saved my group 10 person-hours each month and reduced errors on invoices by 25%.”

## **9. Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work, and how you dealt with it.**

In asking this behavioral interview question, “your interviewer wants to get a sense of how you will respond to conflict. Anyone can seem nice and pleasant in a job interview, but what will happen if you’re hired and Gladys in Compliance starts getting in your face?” says Skillings. Again, you'll want to use the S-T-A-R method, being sure to focus on how you handled the situation professionally and productively, and ideally closing with a happy ending, like how you came to a resolution or compromise.

## **10. Where do you see yourself in five years?**

If asked this question, be honest and specific about your future goals, but consider this: A hiring manager wants to know a) if you've set realistic expectations for your career, b) if you have ambition (a.k.a., this interview isn't the first time you're considering the question), and c) if the position aligns with your goals and growth. Your best bet is to think realistically about where this position could take you and answer along those lines. And if the position isn't necessarily a one-way ticket to your aspirations? It's OK to say that you're not quite sure what the future holds, but that you see this experience playing an important role in helping you make that decision.

## **13. Why are you leaving your current job?**

This is a toughie, but one you can be sure you'll be asked. Definitely keep things positive—you have nothing to gain by being negative about your past employers. Instead, frame

things in a way that shows that you're eager to take on new opportunities and that the role you're interviewing for is a better fit for you than your current or last position. For example, "I'd really love to be part of product development from beginning to end, and I know I'd have that opportunity here." And if you were let go? Keep it simple: "Unfortunately, I was let go," is a totally OK answer.

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