

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

All information on this guide was found from the following website (www.about.com)

The link to Interview Questions and Answers is as follows:

(<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/interviewquestionsanswers/a/interviewquest.htm>)

What is your greatest weakness? When you're asked what your greatest weakness is, try to turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to get projects completed or wanting to triple-check every item in a spreadsheet can be turned into a strength i.e. you are a candidate who will make sure that the project is done on time and your work will be close to perfect.

Note that the term "weakness" isn't used in the sample answers - you always want to focus on the positive when interviewing.

- When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
- Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my organization skills.
- I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done correctly the first time.
- I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.

What is your greatest strength? This is one of the easier interview questions you'll be asked. When you are asked questions about your strengths, it's important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the job. The best way to respond is to describe the skills and experience that directly correlate with the job you are applying for.

- When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.
- I have exceeded my sales goals every quarter and I've earned a bonus each year since I started with my current employer.
- My time management skills are excellent and I'm organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work.
- I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations.

Tell me about yourself? You walk into the interview room, shake hands with your interviewer and sit down with your best interviewing smile on. Guess what their first question is? "Tell me about yourself."

Do you "wing it" and actually tell all manner of things about yourself? Will you spend the next 5 minutes rambling on about what an easy-going, loyal, dedicated, hard working employee you've been? If this is the case, you stand a good chance of having bored your interviewer to death thus creating a negative first impression.

Because it's such a common interview question, it's strange that more candidates don't spend the time to prepare for exactly how to answer it. Perhaps because the question seems so disarming and informal, we drop our guard and shift into ramble mode. Resist all temptation to do so.

Your interviewer is not looking for a 10-minute dissertation here. Instead, offer a razor sharp sentence or two that sets the stage for further discussion and sets you apart from your competitors.

Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Give them "your synopsis about you" answer, specifically your Unique Selling Proposition. Known as a personal branding or a value-added statement, the USP is a succinct, one-sentence description of who you are, your biggest strength and the major benefit that a company will derive from this strength. Here is an example of a Unique Selling Proposition: "I'm a seasoned Retail Manager strong in developing training programs and loss prevention techniques that have resulted in revenue savings of over \$2.3Million for (employer's name) during the past 11 years."

What a difference you've made with this statement. Your interviewer is now sitting forward in her chair giving you her full attention. At this point, you might add the following sentence: "I'd like to discuss how I might be able to do something like that for you." The ball is now back in her court and you have the beginnings of a real discussion and not an interrogation process.

Be Specific

The key is that you must lead with your strongest benefit to the employer. Be specific and don't wander about with some laundry list of skills or talents. Be sure to put a monetary value on your work if at all possible and be ready with details when you're called upon. Give an estimated value to the \$\$ you've either helped to make or save for your employer.

Be Prepared

When you walk into an interview, remember to always expect the "tell me about yourself" question. Prepare ahead of time by developing your own personal branding statement that clearly tells who you are, your major strength and the clear benefit that your employer received. The advantages of this approach are that you'll quickly gain their attention and interest them in knowing more. You'll separate yourself from your competitors. You'll also have a higher chance of being positively remembered and hired.

What is your salary expectations? Before you start talking pay (and salary negotiations) with a prospective employer, you need to find out how much the job (and you) are worth. You will need to take the time to [research salaries](#), so, you are prepared to get what you're worth and a job offer that's realistic and reasonable.

Salary Negotiations

Once you know what you *should* be earning, how do you go about getting it? Start by being very patient. When interviewing for a new position, do your best not to bring up compensation until the employer makes you an offer. If you're asked what your [salary requirements](#) are, say that they are open based upon the position and the overall compensation package. Or tell the employer you'd like to know more about the responsibilities and the challenges of the job prior to discussing salary. Another option is to give the employer a salary range based upon the salary research you've done up front. Once you've received the offer you don't need to accept (or reject) it right away. A simple "I need to think it over" can get you an increase in the original offer.

And if you're ambivalent about the position a "no" can bring you a better offer too. I turned down a position I knew I didn't want, regardless of salary, and received three follow-up phone calls upping the compensation package. Be careful though, if you do definitely need that new job there's a risk that the employer may accept your declining the position and move on to the next candidate.

What are your short-term and long-term goals? (Do you plan to continue your education? Refer to this answer as well) The best way to respond to the interview question "What are your goals for the future?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" is to refer to the position and the company you are interviewing with.

Don't discuss your goals for returning to school or having a family, they are not relevant and could knock you out of contention for the job. Rather, you want to connect your answer to the job you are applying for. Examples of good responses include:

- My long-term goals involve growing with a company where I can continue to learn, take on additional responsibilities, and contribute as much of value as I can.
- I see myself as a top performing employee in a well-established organization, like this one. I plan on enhancing my skills and continuing my involvement in (related) professional associations.
- Once I gain additional experience, I would like to move on from a technical position to management.
- In the XYZ Corporation, what is a typical career path for someone with my skills and experiences?

What did you like the most/ least about your last job? When you're asked what don't like about your previous job, don't be too negative. The reason is that you don't want the interviewer to think that you'll speak negatively about the new job or the company when you're ready to move on, if you get this job. Rather, it makes sense to talk about yourself and what you're looking for in a new role.

Sample Answer

I enjoyed the people I worked with. It was a friendly and fun atmosphere and I actually enjoyed going into work each morning. I felt the leadership team was great as well. They knew all of their employees on a first name basis and tried to make those personal connections. I also enjoyed that fact that the office tried to do community outreach with local organizations.

One of the reasons I am leaving is that I felt I was not challenged enough at the job. As a fresh face in the working world, the company offers a great opportunity for a good entry level position, however, after being there for so many years, I felt I was not able to reach my full potential because of the lack of challenge and there was no room for advancement in the company. While I did enjoy working there and appreciate the skills I developed while with the company, I feel my skill set can be better utilized elsewhere, where my capabilities are more recognized and there is the opportunity for growth.

What style of supervision do you best work under?

What do you expect from us as an employer? When you're asked what interests you about the position you are interviewing for, the best way to respond is to describe the qualifications listed in the job posting, then connect them to your skills and experience. That way, the employer will see that you know about the job you're interviewing for (not everyone does) and that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job.

For example, if you were interviewing for a Human Resources Manager job where you would be responsible for recruiting, orientation, and training, you will want to discuss how you were responsible for these functions in your past positions, and why you are interested in continuing to develop your expertise in Human Resources management.

Another example would be if you were interviewing for a Programmer / Analyst position. In that case, you would mention your interest in learning and excelling at new technologies, your experience in programming both new applications, and your interest in and your ability to problem solve.

In all cases, you will want to convey your enthusiasm for the opportunity to interview, along with your solid ability to do the job.

How do you perform under pressure and give an example? (Or) How do you deal with stress? Can you give an example?

A typical interview question, asked to get a sense of how you handle on-the-job stress, is "How do you handle pressure?" Examples of good responses include:

- Stress is very important to me. With stress, I do the best possible job. The appropriate way to deal with stress is to make sure I have the correct balance between good stress and bad stress. I need good stress to stay motivated and productive.
- I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become stressful.
- I actually work better under pressure and I've found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment.
- From a personal perspective, I manage stress by visiting the gym every evening. It's a great stress reducer.
- Prioritizing my responsibilities so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job.
- If the people I am managing are contributing to my stress level, I discuss options for better handling difficult situations with them.

It's a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer. That way, they get a clear picture how well you can work in stressful situations.

Why should I hire you? A typical interview question, asked to get your opinion, or to validate the interviewer's opinion, on why you would be the best candidate for the position, is "Why should we hire you?"

The best way to respond is to give concrete examples of why your skills and accomplishments make you the best candidate for the job. Take a few moments to compare the job description with your abilities, as well as mentioning what you have accomplished in your other positions. Be positive and reiterate your interest in the company and the position.

How do you work with those of diverse backgrounds? Can you give an example? (Answer not from website) I'd recommend that you respond by stating that you treat everyone equally and try to reflect upon an instance when you worked with someone (co-worker or consumer) from a different background. Remember to reflect positively and not negatively.

Describe your relationship with your last supervisor? For the most part, the following questions may be asked to determine if you are a team player. Take a few seconds, when asked a difficult question, before you answer. An interviewer is not expecting you to have a ready answer. However, the Boy Scout Motto - Be Prepared - - certainly applies here as well.

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a co-worker who wasn't doing his/her fair share of the work. What did you do and what was the outcome?

I worked closely with Ann who, for the most part, always carried her fair share of the work load. During a stressful time, working on a project with a deadline, I realized Ann's contributions to the project were almost minimal. I made the decision to wait until after the project to speak with her. I'm glad I did, because I learned she'd been going through a very tough time in her personal life and she appreciated my willingness to go the extra mile so the project was completed on time. As a result, our ability to work well together significantly increased.

Give me an example of a time when you took the time to share a co-worker's or supervisor's achievements with other?

At my most recent position, one of my co-workers, Dan, did an outstanding job of calming an irate customer, solving the customer's problem and completing a sale. When our boss asked me how things were going, I told him everything was going fine and that Dan had just completed calming an irate customer and closing a sale. It was a win-win-win- for our boss, Dan and the customer.

Tell me about a time that you didn't work well with a supervisor. What was the outcome and how would you have changed the outcome?

Early in my career, I had a supervisor (Judy) who was in a fairly good mood on Monday, but it deteriorated each day until by Friday, the supervisor was finding fault with everything I did. I didn't realize, until I left that position, that I had been a contributor to the decline in her mood. Judy would ask me how my weekend was (on Monday) and during the week she would ask how it was going. I would tell her how much fun I was having (I was single) and how I was looking forward to the weekend plans. After I left, I realized my life was in complete contrast to hers and I reminded her of it almost daily. When she asked the questions, I should have had a quick answer, and then asked her how she was doing!!!!

Have you worked with someone you didn't like? If so, how did you handle it?

Yes, I've worked with someone whom I found difficult to like as a person. However, when I focused on the skills they brought to the job, their ability to solve problems and the two things I did appreciate, slowly my attitude towards them changed. We were never friends, but we did work well together.

Tell me about a time that you helped someone.

Most recently, we had a new hire (Paul) that was really struggling with getting to work on time, and I knew the boss (Harry) was getting irritated. Over lunch one day I explained to Paul how important it was to our boss for everyone to be there at least 10 minutes early. It was personal with the Harry, but you could really get on his bad side when you were frequently late. The new employee was grateful for the advice. At his previous employment, the boss was only concerned about the work getting done on time; he/she did not "watch the clock".

Tell me about a time that you misjudged a person.

There was a long-time employee (George) at my second company who was very gruff when he spoke to me. At first, I went out of my way to win the George's approval. Then I realized that was compounding the problem. So I observed how he interacted with other employees and discovered I wasn't alone. He was gruff to most people. I quit trying to gain his approval and, in the process, discovered he'd learned his behavior from a former boss he'd had whom he admired.

How do you get along with older (younger) co-workers?

Suggested answer if your co-workers are older: There are times when I just know that a new way of doing something makes more sense to me; but, first hand, I learned that my "better way" may not be the best way to get the job done. As a consequence, I respect my older co-workers knowledge and I've learned how to make a suggestion at the appropriate time.

Suggested answer if your co-workers are younger: I quickly realized it was not my job to "parent" the younger people with whom I work; it was my job to get to know them and for us to find common ground where we could effectively work together. It took time, but the result was worth the effort.

Why do you want to work for our company? Why do you want this job? Are you prepared to answer this question in an interview? Career expert and author, [Joyce Lain Kennedy](#), shares her best job interview answers to the question "Why do you want this job?"

Joyce Lain Kennedy is the nation's first syndicated careers columnist. Her work is distributed by Tribune Media Services and appears in more than 100 newspapers and web sites. In addition, Joyce is author of eight career-related books including [Job Interviews for Dummies](#), where you can read additional excellent interview advice, [Cover Letters for Dummies](#) and [Resumes for Dummies](#).

Keep in mind that you can customize these answers to fit your particular circumstances and the job you are applying for.

Joyce Lain Kennedy's sample answers to the interview question "Why do you want this job?"

- This is not only a fine opportunity, but this company is a place where my qualifications can make a difference. As a finance executive well versed in the new stock options law, I see this position as made to order. It contains the challenge to keep me on my toes. That's the kind of job I like to anticipate every morning.
- I want this job because it seems tailored to my competencies, which include sales and marketing. As I said earlier, in a previous position I created an annual growth rate of 22 percent in a flat industry. Additionally, the team I would work with looks terrific.
- I well understand that this is a company on the way up. Your Web site says the launch of several new products is imminent. I want be a part of this business as it grows.
- Having worked through a college business major building decks and porches for neighbors, this entry-level job for the area's most respected home builder has my name on it.
- As a dedicated technician, I like doing essential research. Being part of a breakthrough team is an experience I'd love to repeat.
- This job is a good fit for what I've been interested in throughout my career. It offers a nice mix of short- and long-term activities. My short-term achievements keep me cranked up and the long-term accomplishments make me feel like a billion bucks.
- I want this job selling theater tickets because I'd be good at it. I'm good at speaking to people and handling cash. I would like a job with regular hours and I'm always on time.
- Although some companies are replacing Americans with imported low-wage workers, you are standing tall. This company's successful strategies, good reputation and values make it heads and shoulders above its competition.
- I'd fit right in as a counter clerk in your fine drycleaners. I have observed that the counter clerk position requires competence at handling several activities in quick order -- customer service, payments, bagging and phones. I like multitasking and, as a homemaker, I have a lot of practice in keeping all the balls in the air.
- The work I find most stimulating allows me to use both my creative and research skills. The buzz on this company is that it rewards people who deliver solutions to substantial problems.

What do you feel was your greatest contribution to your last job? Your potential employer will want to know what you accomplished, and what you didn't, in your current or last position.

The best way to respond is to give an example of something you accomplished that is directly related to the job you are interviewing for. Review your resume and review the job posting. Find the best match and use that to show how what you accomplished will be beneficial to the company you are interviewing with.

If you wrote a [targeted cover letter](#) when applying for the job use the information you included to create your response. For example, if you are interviewing for a job at a school where you will need to manage student registration, explain to the interviewer how you registered students for courses, designed and managed registration software, and solved customer problems.

If you didn't fail at anything, say so. If you can think of an example, be sure that it's a minor one and turn it into a positive. For example, if you were working on a project that was behind deadline, explain to the interviewer how you adjusted the workload and the timeline to get back on track and ahead of schedule.

How would your past supervisor describe you? (Answer not from website) I would take the opportunity to reflect upon your stronger attributes, such as good team-player, hard-worker, dependable, reliable, punctual, etc...

What is your definition of job success? I evaluate success in different ways. At work, it is meeting the goals set by my supervisors and my fellow workers. It is my understanding, from talking to other employees, that the GGR company is recognized for not only rewarding success, but giving employees opportunity to grow as well. After work, I enjoy playing softball, so success on the field is catching the winning pop-up.

OR- Why do you think you will be successful at this job?

The interviewer is concerned as to whether you see this as a career move, or stop-gap employment.

As my resume reflects, I have been successful at each of my previous places of employment. My research of your company, the job

description outlined, and the information we've exchanged today, lead me to believe I have the skills and experience for which you are looking; and I'm eager to be a contributing employee.

What types of activities did you perform in your last position? When you are asked questions related to your current or previous positions, it's important to be specific and to be positive about what you did in your previous position(s).

The best way to respond is to describe your responsibilities in detail and to connect them to the job you are interviewing for. Try to tie your responsibilities in with those listed in the job description for the new position. That way, the employer will see that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job. Focus most on your responsibilities that are directly related to the new job's requirements.

It's also important to be honest. Don't embellish your job, because you don't know who the hiring manager will be checking with when they check your references.

If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something how would you handle it? An answer that works well is: "It depends on the situation and the personality of the supervisor." To elaborate, give examples:

My present supervisor does not like to have his authority questioned. He's fairly new on the job and almost all of the people he supervises have been on the job longer than he has. He's never bothered to learn the procedures, how things are done or how the computer system works. But if any of us tell him that how he wants something done won't work, he gets extremely angry. So, I never tell him he's wrong. Never. Whatever he tells me to do, I smile and say "okay." Then if I know a way to get it done that will work, I do it that way, give him the results he wants and never tell him I didn't do it the way he told me to. He got the results and is happy. I saved myself the stress of being yelled at and gave him what he wanted, so I'm happy.

My prior supervisor was more easy-going and if I told her "you know, I think it might work better if I do what you asked in such and such a way," she say "okay, try it."

If I were a new hire on a job, I would probably not question a supervisor because I might think I didn't know enough. Except on the new job I'm going to. The director has admitted that she's new on the job and there are a lot of things that a secretary does that she doesn't know how to do, so she will be depending on me to know how to keep the office running.

What were you doing since your last job?(gaps in employment) If you have an [employment gap](#) on your resume, the interviewer will probably ask you what you have been doing while you were out of work.

The best way to answer this question is to be honest, but do have an answer prepared. You will want to let the interviewer know that you were busy and active, regardless of whether you were out of work by choice, or otherwise. Here are some suggestions on how to explain what you did while you were out of the workforce.

- I worked on several freelance projects, while actively job seeking.
- I volunteered for a literacy program that assists disadvantaged children.
- My aging parents needed a temporary caregiver and I spent time looking after them.
- I spent time being a stay-at-home mom and volunteering at my daughter's school.
- I took some continuing education classes and seminars.

As I said, it doesn't really matter what you did, as long as you have an explanation. Hiring managers understand that people lose their job - it can happen to anyone - and it's not always easy to find a new job fast. Also, there are legitimate non-employment reasons for being out of the workforce.

Why were you fired? Fired from your job? Don't know what to say in an interview? Career expert and author, [Joyce Lain Kennedy](#), shares her twelve best job interview answers to the question "Why were you fired?"

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Joyce Lain Kennedy's sample answers to the interview question "Why were you fired?"

- Being cut loose was a blessing in disguise. Now I have an opportunity to explore jobs that better suit my qualifications and interests. My research suggests that such an opportunity may be the one on your table. Would you like to hear more about my skills in working with new technology?
- My competencies were not the right match for my previous employer's needs but it looks like they'd be a good fit in your organization. In addition to marketing and advertising, would skills in promotion be valued here?
- Although circumstances caused me to leave my first job, I was very successful in school and got along well with both students and faculty. Perhaps I didn't fully understand my boss's expectations or why he released me so quickly before I had a chance to prove myself.
- The job wasn't working out so my boss and I agreed that it was time for me to move on to a position that would show a better return for both of us. So here I am, ready to work.
- After thinking about why I left, I realize I should have done some things differently. That job was a learning experience and I think I'm wiser now. I'd like the chance to prove that to you.
- A new manager came in and cleaned house in order to bring in members of his old team. That was his right but it cleared my head to envision better opportunities elsewhere.
- Certain personal problems, which I now have solved, unfortunately upset my work life. These problems no longer exist and I'm up and running strong to exceed expectations in my new job.
- I wanted my career to move in a different direction, and I guess my mental separation set up the conditions that led to my departure. But by contrast, the opportunity we're discussing seems to be made for me and I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility.
- I usually hit it off very well with my bosses, but this case was the exception that proved my rule of good relationships. We just didn't get on well. I'm not sure why.
- My job was offshored to India. That's too bad because people familiar with my work say it is superior and fairly priced.
- I outlasted several downsizings but the last one included me. Sign of the times, I guess.
- I was desperate for work and took the wrong job without looking around the corner. I won't make that mistake again. I'd prefer an environment that is congenial, structured and team-oriented, where my best talents can shine and make a substantial contribution.

Kennedy also says, "Practice in advance what you'll say. Then keep it brief, keep it honest and keep it moving." That way, you'll get past the sticky issue of getting fired and can move on to your skills and why you're qualified for the job.