

INTERVIEW PREPAREDNESS

Interviewers' FAQ



Career Services

How to prepare yourself:

An interview is a method for a potential employer to determine whether or not you are a good fit for the position and the organization. Although it can seem like a one way conversation, an interview is designed to be *interactive* - a way for you to see if the potential organization would fit well with you. Being prepared before an interview can make, what some view as a dreadful process, one which can, not only land you a position, but be memorable as well. Here are some examples of common interview questions:

- **Tell me about yourself?**
 - One of the most commonly used and dreaded interview questions. This will set the tone for the rest of the interview. The answer should be well-thought out and tailored to the position for which you are interviewing. You should be able to sum up pertinent skills and qualifications in 2 minutes. Practice, practice, practice!
- **What are your strengths and weaknesses?**
 - If the interviewers request 3 of each, give 3 of each; if they want 5, give them 5. Talking about your strengths should be easy; it's the weaknesses everyone gets stuck on. Be realistic with the things you consider weaknesses. If you have trouble coming up with some, then ask a friend, family member, coworker, or professor. With that being said, discuss your weaknesses in terms of strengths. For example: *"Some of my professors in the past have said that I am quiet, and project an air of being "stand-offish" because I keep to myself during classes. To change this perception, I have joined a couple of clubs, and have been more open to others by engaging in class lectures, and conversing more frequently with my classmates."*
- **Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?**
 - This is your opportunity to sell your interviewers on your commitment to your career path and the position. Your answer should focus on what you are excited about regarding this position; how you see yourself contributing to the growth of the organization, and the opportunity this position provides for your professional development within the organization.
- **What do you know about this organization?**
 - Look at the organization's website, talk to any employees you may know, be informed about their values, vision, and mission statement, etc. This is where all of your research comes into play. The more you know, the more comfortable you will be answering this question.
- **Why did you apply for this position?**
 - Here you can tie your research in with your answer. Mention the organization's values, vision, and mission statement; discuss how they align with yours. Talk about why the position appeals to you, and what you can offer the organization.

- **When do you think you will start making a meaningful contribution to this organization?**
 - Be realistic. The interviewer is looking for a well-thought out answer. It is instinctive to answer with *“right away”* which is fine as long as it is accompanied with a practical response. Do your homework! Know what the position entails. An acceptable response would be: *“While I would like to pull my own weight and meet demands right away, it might take me around six months to fully immerse myself into the organization and to start making a meaningful contribution.”*
- **Tell us about the biggest challenge you’ve ever faced in your career?**
 - This question is designed to see how you react under pressure, but in reality your biggest achievement is clearly a great challenge. Limit your response to your recent career history, and remember to use the S.T.A.R. approach when answering this question.
- **Give me some examples of how you worked as a member of a team.**
 - This should be a fairly easy question to answer as everyone has worked a part of a team. It can be a group project for school (if you’re a recent graduate), or even a charity project. If the interviewer does not specify how many examples to give, then limit it to 2-3 depending on the length. Remember to use S.T.A.R. when explaining them.
- **Describe a time when you were in a difficult work situation and how you dealt with it.**
 - This is another S.T.A.R. question designed to test your problem solving skills, ability to take initiative, and to work in unfavorable situations. Remember to use an example from your professional experience as well as one that has a happy ending.
- **What would your past/current employer say about you?**
 - This interview question is looking for your ability to view yourself from an external perspective. Focus on the positive; **NEVER say anything negative about a previous boss/colleague, or employment.** You should be able to back up your descriptions with evidence. For example, use previous performance reviews, letters of recommendations (from professors, or internships), any work awards, etc. Be able to simultaneously answer a possible *“Why would you say that?”* follow-up question.
- **Why should I hire you?**
 - In other words, *“What can you do for us?”* is the underlying message of this question. Think about what you can do for the organization. What does the position entail? This on 2-3 qualities that match what you have to offer and what the position is asking for and summarize how you fit those qualities with brief examples.
- **Do you have any questions?**
 - **YES** you do! Always have at least 3 questions prepared prior to your interview. You can also formulate follow-up questions during the interview. **NEVER** bring up salary or use it as a question. **NEVER** ask questions from which you can get the answer on their website. Ask open-ended questions (questions that require more thought to answer rather than giving a *“yes”* or *“no”* response). Some examples of acceptable questions are:
 - *“What have past employees done to succeed in this position?”*
 - *“What have you enjoyed most about working here?”*
 - *“Do you have any hesitations about my qualifications?”*