

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewing can be one of the most nerve-racking experiences you can face. It helps to show up prepared and confident in your answers. Here is a list of sample questions to prepare for in advance. Be aware that the questions may not be asked in the exact same way. There are no “right” answers to these questions, but there are plenty of bad ones. That is why you should practice interviewing so you are confident in your answers.

PERSONAL

- **Tell me about yourself.**

- Don't go on a tangent. Your answer to this question should only take a minute or two. Your communication and ability to stay on track with your answer are two things they are watching closely. The interviewer wants to see that you can tell your story from Point A (the beginning) to Point B (the end) without getting sidetracked, distracted, or scattered. This will tell them how you'll communicate as an employee.

- **There are three components:**

- 1. **Who are you?**

- Your first sentence should be an introduction to who you are professionally, an overview statement that shows off your strengths and gives a little sense of your personality too. This is not easy to do gracefully on the fly. It pays to prepare a bit in advance.

- 2. **Expertise Highlights**

- Don't assume that the interviewer has closely read your resume and knows your qualifications. Use your elevator pitch to briefly highlight 2-4 points that you think make you stand out.

- 3. **Why are you here?**

- End by telling them you want the position and why.

- **In your lifetime what do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment, what did you learn from it?**

- If you get this question, consider yourself lucky - it's an opportunity to showcase your biggest achievements without the risk of sounding pretentious or smug. Still, the answer requires a bit of strategizing. It's best to list all the things you're proud of and then choose your three or four “greatest hits” -the stories highlighting your problem-solving, technical or leadership qualities that you can use in multiple interview scenarios. You must also relate it to a lesson that you've learned.

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- **What do you consider your strengths/weaknesses?**

- This is a great opportunity to showcase some of your strengths such as communication, leadership, etc. Make sure to give examples. When asked in a job interview about your weaknesses, you can pivot your answer to also discuss the steps you're taking to improve on your weakness and turn it into a strength.

- **Why should I hire you?**

- This is where you need to spend a ton of time thinking about the role, the competencies, and how you're the perfect fit. It's not about qualifications - everyone who's made it to the interview is definitely qualified. But what sets you apart?

- **Additional questions:**

- What have you learned from your extracurricular activities?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- Which of your academic, social or work achievements have been the most rewarding?

PROFESSIONAL

- **How has your education prepared you for this position? What skills do you have that will be used in this position?**

- My college education has exceptionally prepared me for a smooth transition from school to work by providing me with the skills necessary to succeed. Highlight skills such as communication, teamwork, critical-thinking skills and how to problem solve.

- **What is your ideal working environment? Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team? Explain.**

- Employers are looking for an answer to this question that overlaps with what they can offer as an organization. Also, they want an honest and confident response. To find a job you can succeed in, remain honest and truthful about your ideal working environment.

- **Where do you see yourself in five years? How do you plan to reach that goal?**

- Think about the promotions you should get if you work hard for this company over 5 years. Tell the manager you plan to be working for him or her in that position.

- **Additional questions:**

- How do you work under pressure?
- How do you manage your time?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?

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BEHAVIORAL

- **Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict? How did you handle that situation?**
 - This question is likely to come up during an interview for a position in a team environment. It aims to assess your conflict-management skills and determine how you value your coworkers. In your answer, consider discussing a time when you and a coworker disagreed on how to solve a problem or faced personal differences.
- **What have you learned from your mistakes?**
 - This question is for positions that involve client- or customer-facing roles. You can use this question to demonstrate your customer service, communication and critical thinking skills under pressure. You can also use it to showcase your integrity and ability to admit and correct your mistakes.
- **How do you resolve conflict on a team project?**
 - This question may come in slightly different forms, but the idea is to evaluate your teamwork and interpersonal skills. You will have to work with others who may not share your style or priorities at any job. Answer the question in a way that doesn't make you seem like the victim in the situation. Rather than criticize your coworkers, explain how you worked with them to resolve the issue.
- **Give an example of a time when you set a goal for yourself and successfully pursued it.**
 - Recruiters are looking for applicants who take initiative. Think about a time when you set goals for yourself that went beyond the duties of your position. This shows your recruiter that you're self-motivated and regularly take action to benefit the organization.
- **Additional questions:**
 - Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a problem.
 - Give an example of a time you demonstrated leadership in your previous job.
 - Describe a time where you overcame obstacles to get something done.



TIP FROM A RECRUITER:

Many companies are now taking advantages of virtual and phone interviews. It is an efficient and cost saving way to conduct interviews. It is common for a person's first interview to be conducted virtually or by the phone before their face to face interview.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

COMPANY-SPECIFIC

- **Why did you decide to seek a position with our company?**
 - Your reasons should send the signal that you've actually done the research and that you align with both the job requirements and the company culture. Be it your admiration for the company and their product/services or a specific initiative such as their newsletter or ads - this will tell the interviewer that you're not approaching the job opportunity halfheartedly.
- **What do you know about our company?**
 - A good answer will demonstrate your knowledge of the company and industry. That means you must do your homework so that you can identify specific reasons for wanting to work there.
- **Do you have any questions for me?**
 - Refer to "Questions to ask during an interview" on page 38 of this guide.
- **Additional questions:**
 - What qualifications and personal characteristics do you have to match our needs?

ACADEMIC

- **Why did you select Nicholls?**
- **What led you to choose your major?**
- **What course(s) did you like the most/least?**
- **Why should we accept you into this program?**
- **What factors influenced you to go to graduate school?**



TIP FROM A RECRUITER:

The ability to express yourself articulately is very important to most interviewers. This includes the ability to listen effectively, verbalize clearly, and express yourself confidently.

UNDERSTANDING ILLEGAL OR UNETHICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Potential employers are supposed to ask you questions that are related to the job you are seeking. Those questions should be related only to facts that are relevant to whether you can perform the functions of the job. Some types of questions are protected from being asked by law, such as those that are based on race, color, sex, marital status, number and/or ages of children or dependents, religion, and national origin (unless disclosure of this information is required to meet the job description). Other questions regarding age, sexual orientation, and disability are also prohibited if they are used solely to discriminate against a prospective candidate.

Inappropriate Interview Questions and How to Handle Them

- **You can rephrase the question.** For example, you may encounter an employer who states, "This job requires a lot of travel; would your spouse object to you being away from home often?" You could answer, "Are you asking me if I will be able to travel for the job? If so, yes, I can assure you I can travel as needed."
- **You can answer the question.** If you answer the question directly, you may jeopardize your chances of being hired. Although there may be legal recourse available to you, this is not the preferred outcome for most job applicants.
- **You can refuse to answer the question, which is well within your rights.** If you refuse to answer, you still run the risk of appearing uncooperative or confrontational and losing the job. There may be legal recourse, but that is hardly a perfect situation.
- **You can examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.** For example, if an employer asks you, "What kind of child care arrangements have you made?" Your answer could be, "I can meet the work schedule that this job requires."

Adapted from The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

How to Handle Illegal Interview Questions

Remember: it is not illegal to answer an illegal question if you feel comfortable doing so. Conversely, you can respond by saying, "I do not feel that is relevant to the position or interview." You might choose to answer by addressing the concerns behind the questions. Examples if you choose to answer:

- What is your national origin or place of birth? "I am authorized to work in the US."
- Do you have any disabilities? "I have no issues that would keep me from effectively carrying out this job."

REMOTE/VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Many employers choose to interview candidates remotely prior to inviting them for a face-to-face interview. Remote interviews include video interviews, phone interviews, as well as pre-recorded interviews. For the most part, you would prepare as you would for any interview. However, there are things that make these interviews unique. Here are a few tips:

- Practice! Complete a mock interview with Career Services.
- Be ready 10 minutes before the phone/video interview appointment.
- Have a pen and paper ready to take brief notes.
- Keep your résumé/CV and the job description in view; avoid shuffling papers.
- Conduct the interview in a space free from distractions.
- Enunciate and speak slowly, clearly and directly into the phone/microphone.
- Smile so your friendliness can be heard and seen.
- Address the interviewer(s) by name. Know who asked the question and address that person.
- Sit at a desk or table or consider standing.
- Respond as you would in person. If something sounds interesting to you, say it!
- Don't be afraid to ask for a question to be repeated.

A note about virtual/video interviews

- Do a test run of the video platform with a friend the day before to make sure audio and video are working and be sure to conduct the interview in a quiet location.
- Try your best to make the background professional and not distracting.
- Dress as you would for an in-person interview.
- Have the interviewer's contact information (phone number) ready just in case the audio drops, screen freezes or other technical hiccups occur. Stay calm and act professionally and quickly if this happens.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Office of Career Services has interview rooms available for you to reserve if you would like to conduct your interview in a professional setting. Contact our office at (985) 448-4509 to reserve a space.