

The Job Interview: 10 Common Questions



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Question #1

Tell me
about
yourself.

What They Mean.

The employer want to learn more about who you are and why they should hire you.

Some Advice.

Focus on 4-6 points you want the employer to know.

Achievements, experience, training and education, personal interests are all examples.

Be brief; don't go into too much detail.

Sample Answer:

“People who know me best say that I’m...”

.....
“I can summarize who I am through these achievements which I am most proud of...”

Question #2

What is
your
greatest
weakness?

What They Mean.

Even though the question is about weaknesses, your answer should always be framed around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee.

Some Advice.

A good idea is to focus on something that doesn't relate to the particular job you are applying for.

You can also turn a negative into a positive by discussing how you overcame this weakness.

Sample Answer:

“Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped me stay on top of all my tasks.

I use my phone to keep track of important dates and send me reminders.”

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Question #3

Why do you think you are the right person for the job?

Why should I hire you?

What They Mean.

The employer is looking for you to prove yourself to them. They want to be convinced of why they should hire you above other candidates.

Some Advice.

Your answer should be a short “sales pitch” that explains what you can offer.

Give concrete examples of why your skills and accomplishments make you the perfect candidate for the job.

Sample Answer:

“You have explained you are looking for someone who is able to complete tasks in a timely manner and can shift roles if something unexpected is needed. In my volunteer jobs, I was given numerous task to complete independently, which I did very well and was flexible when asked to quickly help out when other needs came up.

Question #4

Describe your relationship with your last boss.

What They Mean.

Do you respond well to authority?

Are you an employee who can get along with others?

Some Advice.

Stay positive and never go into details about negative behavior from a previous boss.

Focus on showing the hiring manager what a good person you are to work with, and how well you get along with others.

Sample Answer:

“My relationship with my former boss was an overall positive one. We worked well together and she felt she could rely on me to complete projects under tight timelines. We did have a couple of minor miscommunication problems, however I spoke to her about how we could best overcome these issues and we came to a solution together.

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Question #5

Why are you currently not working?

Why did you leave your last job?

What have you been doing in the meantime?

What They Mean.

The employer wants to know if there were any past problems in your work that affect your ability to do the best job you are applying for.

Some Advice.

Be honest without going into too much detail.

Remember to expand on the positive and be brief on the negative.

State briefly on what you have been doing with your time since your last job.

Sample Answer:

“I had some health problems so I took time off to fully recover.

During that time, I took courses to keep my skills current and now that I am better, I am eager to share those skills.”

Question #6

Tell me about a situation in a past job where you could identify a problem.

Then explain what you did.

What They Mean.

Employers want to know how flexible you are and if you adapt to different kinds of people and situations.

Some Advice.

Give concrete examples of different situations that happened at work.

Describe the action you took.

Keep answers positive and be specific.

Sample Answer:

“When I first began my position bussing tables at ABC Restaurant, I had difficulty understanding my specific duties on the floor.

I asked to speak with my manager and she clarified what the expectations were for my section.

I felt far more confident after clearing up the confusion.”

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Question #7

What do you like most or least about your previous job?

What They Mean.

The employer is hoping to discover what type of atmosphere you would flourish in, what duties you would excel in or are good at.

Some Advice.

MOST: Focus on the area that would be part of the position you are interviewing for.

LEAST: Focus on an area that is not going to be a large part of the job.

Sample Answer:

Example job interview position: Grocery clerk

“At my previous job at Domino’s Pizza I enjoyed working behind the counter helping to prep hundreds of pizza boxes each day, receive and assist with deliveries, and prepping the many toppings for orders.

Completing those tasks meant I could have a variety of assigned jobs and move around.

Question #8

Tell me something that’s not on your résumé. Explain why you want the job.

What They Mean.

Employers are concerned about your motivation to take on the job as well as your skills.

Some Advice.

Emphasize why you were inspired to apply for the job, or to see if there is a position available.

Sample Answer:

“For me, this isn’t just a summer job. I love that by working here at the animal shelter I’ll be doing my part to care for animals who need help the most. Ever since I was little, my family always had rescue dogs or cats.

My family currently has 2 dogs from local shelters and they’re a wonderful part of our family.”

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Question #9

How do you handle stress and pressure?

What They Mean.

Employers know everyone feels stress and pressure at times. This question lets them learn how it affects you and how you manage it.

Some Advice.

The best way to answer is to give an example of how you handled stress in a previous job.

Don't focus on a time when you procrastinated on completing a task and then felt rushed.

Try to describe when you were given a difficult task or multiple assignments.

Sample Answer:

"I try to react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become so stressful.

For example, when I deal with an unhappy customer, rather than focusing on feeling stressed, I focus on the task at hand. It also helps the customer feel better too."

Question #10

Describe a time when you took initiative—when you did something you were not expected, or asked, to do.

What They Mean.

The employer wants to see if you are able to be proactive in your work – meaning try to anticipate what needs to be done before it is pointed out.

They want to know if you could respond to the need without being told.

Some Advice.

Have examples ready to describe ways you have taken initiative in the past and how your supervisor appreciated this quality.

Sample Answer:

"At my previous job, I noticed the other employees weren't lifting up the floor mats when sweeping the floor.

I took the initiative to remove, sweep and put the mats back at the end of the shift. My manager thanked me for noticing and was glad I helped make the work place a cleaner environment."