

Commonly Asked Interview Questions (and Answers)

It is virtually impossible to predict exactly what will be asked on an interview but there are a few answers that you can prepare ahead of time. Use this chart to practice your answers to these questions. Be sure to prepare your questions for the interviewer. (listed beneath)

QUESTION	EXAMPLE	YOUR ANSWER
<p>“Tell me about yourself.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1-2 minutes spoken ✓ Your background: academic, work experience, extra curriculars—as they pertain to this job! ✓ Why you are there and what you can bring to the job. ✓ Your personal brand ✓ Practice, practice, practice 	<p>(interviewing for an entry level position in a non-profit organization)</p> <p><i>“My name is Jennifer Smith. I graduated from ABC University with a degree in women’s studies. I started at ABC with a major in biology, thinking I was going to pursue a career in environmental protection. But then, two things happened. First, I realized that I was more interested in environmental policy rather than the scientific aspect. Then I took an elective in women’s rights and a light went on for me. I had always supported women’s rights and was amazed that it continues to be an issue in this day and age. Since that time, I have been able to volunteer and work on behalf of women’s rights, both for abused women as well as homeless women. I am here today because I believe my demonstrated passion for women’s rights as well as my experience in non-profit organizations will be beneficial to your organization.”</i></p>	
<p>Can you tell me a little about your strengths and weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify 3 strengths—as they pertain to this job ✓ Identify one weakness and how you 	<p><i>“My interpersonal skills probably top the chart of my strengths. I thrive on approaching people I don’t know and quickly establishing rapport. I can think on my feet and I manage stress well. One area that challenges me is</i></p>	

<p>manage it</p>	<p><i>that of delegating. It's hard for me to delegate to other people, whether it be a team project for school or on the baseball field. I know this is a problem so I have trained myself to make a list of those things I have to do myself and those things that can be passed on. It's still not easy for me but I have found that when I consciously make that determination, I actually get more done and the quality is better."</i></p>	
<p>Can you tell me about your leadership experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This can be direct leadership—of a student organization ✓ Can also be indirect leadership—although not specifically designated a leader, maybe you assumed leadership in a certain situation—a class project, working with a group to plan an event; a recognized leader. <p>Be sure to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of the situation 2. Obstacles or challenges 3. End result 	<p>SITUATION <i>"I was in charge of the committee that was asked to revise our school's vision as they were transitioning to a co-ed school.</i></p> <p>OBSTACLES <i>There were some issues because not all of the faculty agreed with the transition and we had to get their buy-in within a pretty tight time frame.</i></p> <p>END RESULT <i>I quickly realized that I had to include my advisor on each step we took and each meeting we held to communicate the changes. We were able to come to agreement and meet the deadline. I learned the importance of ongoing communication."</i></p>	
<p>Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a task but didn't have the information you needed. What did you do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ They are trying to assess your ability to self manage 	<p>SITUATION When I started my summer internship at XYZ Online Marketing, I quickly realized that it was a small organization which meant that I was left to my own devices. I had to figure things out on my own.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be sure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Situation 2) Obstacles 3) End result 	<p>OBSTACLES</p> <p>There was one instance in particular when I had to rely on myself to get the job done. The sales people were at an off site conference. When the sales manager called in to get the latest sales figures, I realized I didn't know how to use that system.</p> <p>END RESULT</p> <p>I knew I could access our prospective client database but I didn't know if that would give me access to the sales figures. After manipulating the data I could access, I was able to call him back to give him the information he wanted."</p>	
<p>Where do you want to be in 5 years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A dreaded question but frequently asked. ✓ Be honest but keep in mind that most entry-level positions don't provide much autonomy. 	<p><i>"Simply put, my ideal job at this stage in my career is one in which I can learn the products and industry and I can contribute to your success. Eventually, I'd like a job that gives me control over my day but I know I am not in that position right now and it will take some time to get there."</i></p>	
<p>Tell me about a time when you failed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ They are trying to see how you would handle it when a mistake is made on the job. ✓ Be sure to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Situation 2) Obstacles 3) End result: what you learned... 	<p><i>"When I was a freshman, I had a great on-campus job, probably one of the best. Unfortunately, I didn't take it seriously. I showed up late, not properly dressed and probably showed some attitude. What a shock when I wasn't hired back the next year. It forced me to take a good, hard look at myself and where I was headed. I made the conscious decision to turn my grades and</i></p>	

	<p><i>attitude around. I soon discovered that it felt good to do good and everything was on the upswing from there. I was young but was able to turn myself around."</i></p>	
<p>Why should I hire you over the next person?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opportunity to remind them why you are unique and the best person for the job. ✓ Sell yourself again. ✓ Be sure to relate your qualities to the position you are interviewing for! 	<p><i>"You mentioned that they most important skills you are looking for are the ability to communicate with diverse groups of people, solve problems as well as a developed business acumen. My experience at the admissions office required that I field answers quickly to prospective students, parents and administrators. When the admissions requirements were changed, I was on the committee to communicate the new requirements to new and existing students so that it was understandable and accepted with a minimum of problems. This has enabled me to work with diverse groups of people as well as solve their problems. Finally, my internship at XYZ taught me how a business runs... The nuts and bolts of profit, revenue as well as expenses. As soon as I start here, I will do my best to complete the reports and analysis on time and in such a way as to make them as user friendly and informative as possible."</i></p>	

QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER:

Prepare two questions ahead of time:

- 1) The job
- 2) The organization

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- 1) How will you know you've hired the right person in 3 (or 6) months' time?
- 2) Where do you see the organization in 2-3 years?