



10 Tough Interview Questions

To do your best at an interview, anticipate the questions you may be asked, then practice what you're going to say. Practice in front of a mirror or with family and friends. You'll be more relaxed, confident and more likely to be hired.

These 10 questions are examples of some you might be asked. Each one gives you an opportunity to present yourself as a skilled, energetic worker who brings high value to an employer.

1. **Tell me about yourself.** Make your answer short and sweet. Stick to experiences and goals that relate to the specific job for which you are applying. Resist the impulse to stress your years of experience. It's more important to talk about your skills and achievements that show you can deliver. Emphasize your flexibility and positive attitude.
2. **Why are you looking for a job?** Keep it brief. A straightforward answer is best. For example, "My organization was forced to downsize." Avoid negative statements about yourself, your work, or your ability to get along with others. Never criticize former employers or coworkers.
3. **You haven't worked for a long time.** Why not? You may have gaps in employment for many reasons. Be honest. Speak confidently about your experiences during the gaps. Some could transfer to on-the-job skills. For instance, if you were a caregiver, you managed complex financial issues. As a volunteer, you might have worked with diverse groups and on flexible schedules.
4. **What are you looking for?** It takes a lot of thinking to be ready for this question. Don't speak in generalities. Be prepared to name the type of position you think would be appropriate for you and how your skills would translate to a new employer.
5. **Aren't you overqualified for this position?** Even though "overqualified" can be shorthand for "old" or "expensive," it's important to stay positive. Express your enthusiasm for the job and pride in your qualifications. Explain what makes you interested in this position at this point in your career—such as wanting to apply your skills to a new field or to achieve more flexibility and work-life balance.

6. **We have state-of-the-art technology. Would you be able to jump right in?** Show you are adaptable and tech-savvy. Give examples of projects you've done which required computer skills and familiarity with electronic media. Emphasize training you've taken to keep your skills up to date.
7. **What are your major strengths?** This question allows you to focus on the credentials you have that will help you succeed on the job. Your response should emphasize your key adaptive or transferable skills, because the decision to hire you is largely based on these skills. You can deal with the details of your specific job-related skills later.
8. **What's your biggest weakness?** This is a reverse invitation to toot your own horn. Do it with an answer that puts you in a good light. For example, "I'm too detail-oriented, but I work hard to control that." Or "I often will do things myself, but I'm now spending more time showing others how to do the things I would like to have done. They often do better than I expect because I am clear about explaining what I want." Keep it simple—and smile.
9. **What are your salary requirements?** Try to postpone this question until a job offer has been made. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area (sites like salary.com or salaryexpert.com can help). If you don't know the range and the interviewer persists, reply, "What salary range are you working with?" The interviewer may very well tell you.



10. Do you have any questions? Show your interest and initiative by asking specific questions about the organization and what you can expect in the job. Use your questions to demonstrate how your skills can contribute to the organization. Answering "no" to this question says you're not really interested in the job. Be sure to do your research. Understand the industry and the direction the organization is headed.

*Remember, no matter what questions interviewers ask,
the underlying question is always, "Why should I hire you?"
Be prepared to give them lots of good reasons.*