



How to answer the 7 top interview questions

Interviews can be intimidating and nerve wracking without the right preparation.

This short guide aims to provide you with the 7 top questions that employers ask at interviews, and more importantly how to answer these potentially tough interview questions confidently and competently.

1. Tell me about yourself

Since this is often the opening question in an interview, be extra careful that you don't talk too much or too long. Keep your answer to a minute or two at most. Cover four topics: early years, education, work history, and recent career experience. Emphasise this last subject. Remember that this is likely to be a warm-up question. Don't waste your best points on it.

2. Why do you want to work for us?

Here, and throughout the interview, a good answer comes from having done your homework so that you can speak in terms of the company's needs. You might say that your research has shown that the company is doing things you would like to be involved with, and that it's doing them in ways that greatly interest you. For example, if the organisation is known for strong management, your answer should mention that fact and show that you would like to be a part of that team. If the company places a great deal of importance on research and development; emphasise the fact that you want to create new things and that you know this is a place in which such activity is encouraged. If the organisation stresses financial controls, your answer should mention a reverence for numbers.

If you feel that you have to concoct an answer to this question, for example, the company stresses research, and you feel that you should mention it even though it really doesn't interest you then you probably should not be taking that interview, because you probably shouldn't be considering a job with that organisation.

Your homework should include learning enough about the company to avoid approaching places where you wouldn't be able or wouldn't want to function. Since most of us are poor liars, it's difficult to con anyone in an interview. But even if you should succeed at it, your prize is a job you don't really want.

3. Your CV suggests that you may be over-qualified or too experienced for this position. What's your opinion?

Emphasise your interest in establishing a long-term association with the organisation and say that you assume that if you perform well in this job, new opportunities will open up for you. Mention that a strong company needs a strong staff.

Observe that experienced staff are always at a premium. Suggest that since you are so well qualified, the employer will get a fast return on his investment. Say that a growing, energetic company can never have too much talent.



4. What important trends do you see in our industry?

Be prepared with two or three trends that illustrate how well you understand your industry. You might consider technological challenges or opportunities, economic conditions, or even regulatory demands as you collect your thoughts about the direction in which your business is heading.

5. Why are you leaving (did you leave) your present (last) job?

Be brief, to the point, and as honest as you can without hurting yourself. If you were laid off in an across-the-board cutback, say so; otherwise, indicate that the move was your decision, the result of your action. Do not mention personality conflicts.

The interviewer may spend some time probing you on this issue, particularly if it is clear that you were terminated. The "We agreed to disagree" approach may be useful. Remember that your references are likely to be checked, so don't make up a story for an interview.

6. In your current (last) position, what features do (did) you like the most? The least?

Be careful and be positive. Describe more features that you liked than disliked and don't mention any personality problems.

If you make your last job sound terrible, an interviewer may wonder why you remained there until now.

7. How successful do you think you've been so far?

Say that, all-in-all; you're happy with the way your career has progressed so far. Given the normal ups and downs of life, you feel that you've done quite well and have no complaints.

Present a positive and confident picture of yourself, but don't overstate your case. An answer like, "Everything's wonderful! I can't think of a time when things were going better! I'm overjoyed!" is likely to make an interviewer wonder whether you're trying to fool them...or yourself. The most convincing confidence is usually quiet confidence.

We hope you have found this guide useful. At Vanilla we pride ourselves on the level of customer service we provide to our candidates and clients ensuring the recruitment experience is a positive one.