

A Primer on Answering Questions in an Interview

The following is a list of some typical interview questions with suggestions for responding. Answers are demonstrated using specific examples. This gives employers more of an idea of your real capabilities. Also, remember to smile during an interview in order to allow your own personality to show!

Question: Tell me about yourself.

Answer: Tell the employer about your skills and interests – especially those relating to the position you are applying for. Indicate positive characteristics such as being dependable, honest, etc. This has also been referred to as a **60 second commercial**. For example: “I am a highly motivated and dedicated employee who works above and beyond what is asked of me. I have done filling of medical charts, delivery of mail as well as chart collation. These skills can be directly transferred to the work you need to get done in your department everyday.”

Question: Why do you want to work here?

Answer: Mention the positive things you have learned about the company. This will show you are highly motivated to work there. Be certain to let the interviewer know you can do the job and that you would fit in well.

Question: Why do you think I should hire you?

Answer: Clearly point out your related skills and experiences. Tell the employer about past work successes. Also, mention education, training and hobbies relevant to the position.

Question: Why did you leave your last job?

Answer: It is best to be truthful in most cases. Keep your answer brief and positive. If you had problems with co-workers, be certain not to blame others. Take your responsibility in the problem and express what you learned as well as what you would do differently today.

Question: What is your biggest strength?

Answer: Don't be afraid to say good things about yourself. Describe positive past experiences as examples of things you say about being dependable, honest, hardworking, creative, etc. For example: “I am very quick to learn new things. In my last job, my supervisor had me learn all the tasks in our department and had me train new staff.”

Question: What is your biggest weakness?

Answer: This can be difficult. The trick is to respond in a way that it will actually be perceived by the employer as a strength! For example: “My

weakness is probably that I am somewhat of a perfectionist. I find that it is hard for me to stop working on a project until it is nearly perfect. However, I have learned that I cannot let perfection get in the way of getting the job done on schedule.”

Question: What would you like to be doing in five years?

Answer: The employer wants to know if you plan to stay with the company. Avoid mentioning that you would like to be the “manager” or “supervisor” unless you are positive that is your career path. Be general in your response assuring the interviewer that you would like to be with the company in five years, growing professionally and contributing to the organization.

Question: Have you ever been fired or asked to leave a job?

Answer: If you have been fired or asked to leave a position and it will most likely be uncovered during reference checks be certain you are the one to tell the interviewer. Be as positive as possible and never blame the employer. You could say, “Unfortunately I did have a problem with my last supervisor. It did result in my leaving the job. However, I learned a lot from that experience especially about the importance of communication and I don’t think it will happen again.”

Question: When would you be willing to start?

Answer: The sooner the better. If you are presently working and need to give fair notice most employers can make arrangements to give you time. However, if you are unemployed it would make a negative impression to ask for two weeks to “get ready.” Remember, you want to make a good initial impression – one that shows you will be hardworking, motivated and cooperative.