

Common Interview Questions—Practice List

Recognizing Types of Questions

There are multiple types of questions that you may face in an interview. The primary types are **traditional**, **situational/behavioral**, **critical incident**, or **hypothetical**. These questions are meant to assess different skills, qualities, and attributes. Regardless of the type of questions you're asked, it is most important to **stay calm, breathe, and think before speaking**. Think, **what are they really asking? Listen to the whole question** before starting to think about your answer because often questions have multiple parts. **Demonstrate you're a match** for the company and position by **relating your response** back to the needs outlined in position description. **This should be the goal of every single response you give.**

There are different strategies for responding to the different types of questions. If asked a traditional question, it's important to listen to the whole question and address what's being asked. Remember to **K.I.S.S your response—Keep It Simple, Silly**. This will help you **refrain from rambling** once you've completely answered the question. For situational/behavioral questions, use the **S-T-A-R** or **P-A-R Methods**, where you focus on a specific situation or problem that you've experienced, and explain in detail the action steps you took to resolve the situation/problem and what results occurred. Both critical incident and hypothetical questions can be answered using a **Mini-speech Method**, where you introduce your idea, have a body of your speech, and then conclude your idea to stay on track. *These two question types are very different though, so you'll have to listen to and interpret what's being asked of you.*

For more specific information on the different types of questions and strategies for answering questions, please see the "**Successfully Navigating the Interview & How to Answer Common Questions**" guide, available from your Career Counselor.

The Ultimate List of Potential Interview Questions

Navigating this list can seem daunting, so I suggest scanning and highlighting questions that are more relevant to your **industry**, **interview type** (*phone, in-person, etc.*), and **interview level** (*entry-level, mid-level, etc.*). Additionally, you'll never know which exact questions will be asked, but it is always good to prepare in as many areas as possible and **reflect on your skills and experiences**, so you'll be able to draw from different areas in your interview.

Traditional Questions
Please tell me a little about yourself.
How did you hear about this position?
What can you tell me about the company? / What do you know about our products and services?
Why are you interested in this job? / Why do you want to work here? / What attracted you to this company?
What's your ideal company?
Why should we hire you?

What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
What are your greatest professional strengths?
What do you consider to be a weakness?
What are three positive character traits you <u>don't</u> have?
Where do you see yourself in five years? / Where would you like to be in your career five years from now?
What's your dream job? / What are your lifelong dreams? / What do you ultimately want to become?
What is your personal mission statement?
What kind of goals would you have in mind if you got this job?
What other companies are you interviewing with?
Why are you leaving your current job?
What did you like <u>least</u> about your last job?
Why were you fired?
What are you looking for in a new position?
What type of work environment do you prefer?
What's your management style?
How would you describe your work style?
When were you most satisfied in your job?
What were the responsibilities of your last position?
What do you know about this industry?
What do you think is the greatest challenge facing your field?
What do you think will be the next major breakthrough in your field?
How do you feel about environmental regulations in your field?
Are you willing to relocate?
How would your boss and co-workers describe you? / What are three positive things your last boss would say about you? / What negative thing would your last boss say about you? / What three character traits would your friends use to describe you?
Why was there a gap in your employment?
How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?— <i>either behavioral or traditional, depending on your response</i>
What would your first 30, 60, or 90 days look like in this role?
What are your salary requirements? / What salary are you seeking?
What's your salary history? / How does our salary range compare to your last position?
Which fringe benefits are most important to you?
What are you looking for in terms of career/professional development?
How do you want to improve yourself in the next year? / What are you doing to prepare yourself for advancement?
If I were to ask your last supervisor to provide you additional training or exposure, what would she/he suggest?
How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with the team?
How long will it take for you to make a significant contribution here?
What do you look for in terms of culture -- structured or entrepreneurial?
What techniques and tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person?

Who was your favorite manager and why? / Was there a person in your career who really made a difference?
What do you think of your previous boss?
What kind of personality do you work best with and why?
If you were interviewing someone for this position, what traits would you look for?
Who has impacted you most in your career and how?
What's the most important thing you learned in school?
Why did you choose your major?
What will you miss about your present/last job?
What are the qualities of a good leader? A bad leader?
Do you think a leader should be feared or liked?
How do you feel about taking "no" for an answer?
How would you feel about working for someone who knows less than you?
How do you think I rate as an interviewer?
Tell me one thing about yourself you wouldn't want me to know.
Tell me the difference between "good" and "exceptional."
What's the last book you read?
Who are your heroes?
How do you feel when your compensation is based, in part, on team results?
What does the word "teamwork" mean to you?
How do you feel about working on cross-functional teams?
Tell me how your education has prepared you for this position.
How do you feel about the way your career has gone so far?
What do you believe are the most important performance criteria for a _____?
Do you have any questions for me?

Situational/Behavioral Questions
Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work, and how you dealt with it.
Tell me about a time you exercised leadership. / What was the last project you led, and what was the outcome?
Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision that was made at work.
If I were your supervisor and asked you to do something that you disagreed with, what would you do?
How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?— <i>either behavioral or traditional, depending on your response</i>
Tell me about a time when you did something wrong. How did you handle it?
If I were to give you this salary you requested but let you write your own job description, what would it say?
Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty at work.
Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?
Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? How did you handle it?
Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it? How did they handle it?
Tell me about a time you failed. What did you learn from that experience?

What is your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?
How do you handle working with people who annoy you?
If you were at a business lunch and you ordered a rare steak and they brought it to you well done, what would you do?
What was the most difficult period in your life, and how did you deal with it?
If you found out your company was doing something against the law, like fraud, what would you do?
What if you were given an assignment that was too difficult for you? How would you resolve the issue? Has this happened?
What's the most difficult decision you've made in the last two years and how did you come to that decision? / How do you make difficult decisions? Please provide an example.
Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them.
Tell me about your proudest achievement. / What are you most proud of?
What did you do that was innovative in your last position?
Describe a typical strategy that you use to motivate people. Please provide an example of when you implemented this strategy.
What criteria do you use when assigning work to others? And how do you follow-up with those assignments? Please provide an example.
Tell me about an idea of yours that was implemented primarily through your efforts.
How did you handle a past situation when the rules were changed at the last minute?
Tell me about your most difficult relationship with a team member. How did you handle it?
Describe a time when you experienced a setback. How did you handle it?
Tell me about a situation in which you had to handle an irate customer or client.
Give me an example of how you sold an unpopular idea to fellow co-workers.

Critical Incident Questions
What do you think we could do better or differently here at _____ company?
We are facing a situation in which we... If you were on our team, what would you recommend we do to resolve this situation?
Two years ago we had a conflict between... If you had been the supervisor in this situation, what would you have done?
Suppose you are suspicious that some workers are doctoring their time cards. What would you do?
If an employee came to you claiming sexual harassment, how would you handle it?
If your company suddenly announced the closing of your facility by January 1 st , what would you do?
We are experiencing a growing problem of waste in our milling operation. How would you handle this if we hired you? (example)
Last year there was a lot of strife among our sales staff. If you had been with us, what would you have done? (example)
Like many firms, we are experiencing a decline in sales of our traditional products. What would you suggest we do about it? (example)
We have traditionally faced difficulties in recruiting a diverse staff because most of our plants are located in small, rural, Western cities. How would you suggest we improve our recruiting efforts? (example)

Hypothetical/Unusual Questions
If you were an animal, which one would you be/want to be? / What's your spirit animal?
How many tennis balls can you fit in a limousine?
List five words that describe your character.
Suppose you had a customer who claimed his computer hardware was damaged in shipment. How would you handle this?
Suppose you are suspicious that some workers are doctoring their time cards. What would you do?
If you were at a business lunch and you ordered a rare steak and they brought it to you well done, what would you do?
What is your greatest fear?
What is your biggest regret and why?
If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
What would you do if you won the lottery?
How many times in a day do a clock's hands overlap?
How would you weigh a plane without using scales?
Tell me 10 ways to use a pencil other than writing.
Sell me this pencil/pen.
Why is there fuzz on a tennis ball?
If you could choose one superhero power, what would it be and why?
If you could get rid of any one of the US states, which one would you get rid of and why?
Which US state best represents your personality?
If you could live in any year, when would you live?
If you were a child's toy, which toy would you be?
With your eyes closed, tell me step-by-step how to tie my shoes.
If you were a vegetable, which kind of vegetable would you be?
Here's a sheet of paper. Write a policy statement for the assignment of overtime.
If you had your education to do over, what would you do differently?

Unlawful Questions
Are you planning on having children?
Where are you from?
Any marriage plans? / Do you have a significant other?
How long do you expect to work for us?
Which religious holidays do you observe?
How old are you?
What do you like to do outside of work? / What do you like to do? / What do you do after work?
What is your greatest achievement outside of work?
What kind of car do you drive?
What magazines do you subscribe to?
What's the best movie you've seen in the last year?
What would you do if you won the lottery?
What do you like to do for fun? / What do you do in your spare time? / What is your favorite memory from childhood?

“Do you have any questions for me?”

Inevitably, you'll be asked “Do you have any questions for me?” **You should always have questions prepared.** You're interviewing them just like they're interviewing you! **If you don't have any questions to ask, then they will assume you're not interested.** It is important to ask questions to not only learn more about the company but also about the job's challenges. **Prepare 8-10 questions in advance, write them down, and bring them to the interview with you.** There's no reason for you to try to memorize your questions, especially since you're already remembering so much.

Questions should be about **getting to know more about the company or position**, not about you and your needs. Don't ask “What's in it for me?” questions about salary, vacation, retirement, promotions, benefits, etc. Rather, focus on **organization-centered** and **team-oriented** questions. The best questions come as a result of listening to the questions the interviewer just asked you. Don't ask questions that were already answered in the position description, during the interview, or on the “About Us” webpage (which you should have read during your research/preparation).

Don't just use these questions as a resource. **Think about potential questions as you're preparing/researching before the interview.** If you only use these questions rather than tailoring questions to the company/position, it won't be personal, and you'll be less likely to seem interested in the job. For more specific information, please see the **“Successfully Navigating the Interview & How to Answer Common Questions”** guide available from your Career Counselor.

Sample Questions for You to Ask Employer
When do you expect to make a hiring decision? / What are the next steps in the interview process?
Describe your ideal employee for me. / What skills and experiences would make an ideal candidate? / Other than what's in the position description, what attributes does someone need to have in order to be really successful in this position? / What have past employees done to succeed in this position?
Tell me about the culture of _____. / What is the company and team culture like?
How would you describe the work environment here—is the work typically collaborative or more independent?
What's your favorite office tradition?
Can you tell me about the last team event you did together?
How does _____ encourage employees to come up with new ideas?
What is a typical workday for this position? / How do you envision a typical day in this role?
What is the possibility of flexible working hours?
From what you've been asking during the interview, it sounds like you have a problem with...Can you tell me a little more about the current situation and how that would affect...
How does _____ evaluate employees? / What constitutes success in this position and at this company?
What is the performance review process like here? How often would I be formally reviewed?
What metrics or goals will my performance be evaluated against?

What are the performance expectations of this position over the first 12 months?
Other than what's outlined in the position description? / What characteristics are you looking for in applicants for this position,
How might _____ support me if I wanted to pursue a bachelor's degree (or a master's degree)?
How often would I be working as part of a team?
What, in your estimation, is the most unique characteristic of _____?
How might a more advanced degree affect my position at _____?
What do you like most about working for _____?
Tell me about the merger with _____.
I noticed in the <i>Wall Street Journal</i> last week that your stock has risen almost 4% during this economic recession. What explains this increase?
Can you tell me about the people/team I would be working with?
Who will I work with most closely? / Which other departments work most closely with this one?
Who will I report to directly?
What are the qualities of successful managers in this company?
Can you tell me about my direct reports? What are their strengths and the team's biggest challenges?
Tell me about your training program. / Tell me about the training process. / How will I be trained? / What training programs are available to your employees?
What major departmental changes do you anticipate during the next five years?
What is the most important criterion for selecting a person for this position?
Which of your products are most in demand?
Who are your major competitors?
How much collective experience do your top officers have in the field?
What new skills can I hope to learn here?
How do you see this position evolving in the next three years? / How has this position evolved since it was created?
Do you expect the main responsibilities for this position to change in the next six months to a year?
What can I help to clarify that would make hiring me an easy decision?
How can "X" scenario move "Y" idea forward? (referring to an earlier question or their business model/project)
If you could improve one thing about the company, what would it be?
What's the most frustrating part of working here?
Who's your ideal candidate and how can I make myself more like them?
How did you get your start? / How long have you been with the company?
Has your role changed since you've been here? / How has the company changed since you joined?
What is holding the company back?
What keeps you up at night? (keeping the tone professional)
What concerns/reservations do you have about me for this position? / Do you have any hesitations about my qualifications? / Is there anything that concerns you about my background being a fit for this role?
What made you decide to work here?

What have you enjoyed most about working here? / What's your favorite part about working here?
Where do you see _____ in the next five years?
What can you tell me about your new products or plans for growth?
Can you tell me how you resolve a conflict on your team? (if you're talking with your potential supervisor)
What is the single largest problem facing your staff, and would I be in a position to help you solve this problem?
Who previously held this position? / Where is the last person who held this job moving on to? / Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to?
Is this a new role that has been created?
What are the most immediate projects that need to be addressed? / Can you show me examples of projects that I'd be working on?
What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next three months?
What types of skills is the team missing that you're looking to fill with a new hire?
What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?
Would I be able to represent the company at industry conferences? / Are there opportunities for professional development?
What are the most important things you'd like to see someone accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?
I've read about the company's founding, but can you tell me more about ___?
What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?
What gets you most excited about the company's future?
What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked?
Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful? / Can I answer any final questions for you?

Resources:

Stewart, C. J., & Cash, W. B. (2014). *Interviewing: Principles and practices* (14th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.
<https://www.themuse.com>
<http://www.monster.com/career-advice>
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse>
<http://www.forbes.com>
<http://money.usnews.com/money/careers/>