



HANDLING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employers need to decide if you are the best person for the job and a good fit for the organisation. How you respond to the interview questions is a key factor in their decision making. Considering and preparing for some of the questions you expect to be asked so that you convey the relevant information, will boost your confidence and performance during the interview.

And while you can never be sure exactly what you will be asked, here are some common questions you should be prepared for:

- **Tell us about yourself.**

This is a common and important opening question as it enables you to create a great first impression. Generally, start with an overview of your highest qualification, achievements you are proud of, any work experience you may have had and the skills you developed. Try to articulate what you can offer and why you are a good candidate. To sound confident, practise this out loud, but don't sound too rehearsed in your response.

- **Why did you apply for this position? Why are you a good candidate for this role?**

You need to demonstrate that you have researched the role, and what is required to perform successfully in it. Study the job description, or research what the position usually involves. Be ready to provide examples for each of the competencies and skills required. Be honest but optimistic if you don't have some of the skills required. Employers prefer someone who is honest about their abilities and is keen to learn. Also mention the aspect of the job advertisement that attracted you to it, what you would enjoy about the job.

- **What are your strengths?**

Identify four to five strengths that align with those skills the employer is seeking in the advertisement. Whichever strengths you choose to share, you must be able to provide evidence of having demonstrated them in the experiences you have had or where acquired them.

- **What are your weaknesses?**

You can frame your weaknesses more positively as areas of development. Rather think about one to two skills you would like to improve and mention what you have done to do so. For example, you might want to improve public speaking deciding to join Toastmasters to gain confidence in doing so.

- **How do you prioritise your work?**

Employers are interested in how you plan and organise yourself and your work; how meet deadlines and competing priorities. Think about how you have managed multiple tasks and delivered them on time. Provide insight into the ways in which you keep track of what you need to deliver and produce.

- **What has been your greatest achievement?**

Think about achievements whilst at university, awards you received, accomplishments you are proud of in any of your experiences (sport, vacation work, voluntary work, extra-curricular activities), overcoming significant challenges. Try and link your achievements to what the employer might value.





- What has been the most difficult situation you faced?

This question is designed to assess how you cope under pressure and seeks to understand how you overcame the difficult situations, how you dealt with unexpected situations, tight deadlines or difficult people.

Out of the box questions

Interviewers may want to test your ability to think laterally and problem-solve. These questions are designed to catch you off guard and there are no correct answers; to test your creativity, consider these:

- If you were the ruler of the world for a day, what three rules would you make?
- If you had a ticket to anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

Questions about the employer

Research the company website and social media platforms to know more about the company, the people you will meet and the industry. This research helps to identify questions you may add to your own list of questions to ask and to demonstrate your interest in the sector.

Questions to ask the interviewer

Towards the end of the interview, you are normally given a chance to ask questions of your own. Take along a list of questions, but do not ask any that were answered in the interview. Some examples include:

- Something you noticed on their website that interested you but wasn't covered in the interview (e.g. a product/project, international offices/opportunities, team structure)
- What training or induction process is run for new recruits?
- How big is the team you would join?
- What is the work environment like?
- How often and how are performance appraisals done?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process? (This is important to ask so that you know when to follow up and what to expect.)

Questions to avoid asking

- Asking about the salary in the first interview
- Personal and irrelevant questions
- Anything that is explained on their website

STAR technique for answering questions

Interviewers commonly use 'behavioural' questions so that they can get a sense of how you handle different situations. Some examples are:

- Describe a time when you faced conflict in a professional setting and how you resolved it
- Tell us about an experience where you have had to take the lead in a team

You can refer to things you have done in work/study/extra-curricula/personal contexts.

When answering, use the acronym **STAR** to structure your answer:

Situation – where, when, and with whom

Task – the task or project that you were working on

Action – the actions you performed in response to or to complete the task

Result – the outcome you achieved, what you learned, what you would do differently

