Sample Interview Questions & How to Answer Part 1

**Question 1: Why Do You Want To Work For Us?**  
It’s rare for an interview not to include this question.  
The good news is that it’s an easy one to prepare for.  
Most companies want to recruit people who are enthusiastic about the company and its products. They don’t want people on the team who “ended up there by accident”. So this is your chance to show why working for the company is important to you and why you think you will fit in.  
  
They will be looking for evidence that you can make a contribution and will be able to grow into the role they are recruiting.  
  
This question is designed to screen out candidates who aren’t serious about the company or may be using it as a stop-gap, while they look for something better.  
  
It’s also your chance to make the most of the company research you have done. You can use this opportunity to add comments that show you understand the company’s position in the market place; the role of its competitors and any challenges it may be facing.  
Sample Answer: “I'm not looking for just another pay check. I enjoy my work and am proud of my profession. Your company produces a superior product/provides a superior service. I share the values that make this possible, which should enable me to fit in and complement the team."

**Question 2: What interests you about this job?**  
When you're asked what interests you about the position you are interviewing for, the best way to respond is to describe the qualifications listed in the job posting, then connect them to your skills and experience. That way, the employer will see that you know about the job you're interviewing for (not everyone does) and that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job.   
For example, if you were interviewing for a Human Resources Manager job where you would be responsible for recruiting, orientation, and training, you will want to discuss how you were responsible for these functions in your past positions, and why you are interested in continuing to develop your expertise in Human Resources management.   
Another example would be if you were interviewing for a Programmer / Analyst position. In that case, you would mention your interest in learning and excelling at new technologies, your experience in programming both new applications, and your interest in and your ability to problem solve.   
In all cases, you will want to convey your enthusiasm for the opportunity to interview, along with your solid ability to do the job.

**Question 3: What do you know about Our Company?**  
A typical job interview question, asked to find out how much company research you have conducted, is "What do you know about this company?"   
Prepare in advance, and in a word, research, so, you can provide relevant and current information about your prospective employer to the interviewer. Start by researching the company online. Review the "About Us" section of the company web site. Google the company, read blogs that mention it, and check Discussion Boards and social networking sites.   
Use the information you have gathered to create a bulleted list of relevant information that you can easily remember during the interview. Taking the time to research will help you make a good impression with how much you know about the company.

**Question 4: What challenges are you looking for in this position?**  
A typical interview question to determine what you are looking for your in next job, and whether you would be a good fit for the position being hired for, is "What challenges are you looking for in a position?"   
The best way to answer questions about the challenges you are seeking is to discuss how you would like to be able to effectively utilize your skills and experience if you were hired for the job.  
You can also mention that you are motivated by challenges, have the ability to effectively meet challenges, and have the flexibility and skills necessary to handle a challenging job.   
You can continue by describing specific examples of challenges you have met and goals you have achieved in the past.

**Question 5: Who was your best boss and who was the worst?**  
I've learned from each boss I've had. From the good ones I learnt what to do, from the challenging ones - what not to do.   
Early in my career, I had a mentor who helped me a great deal, we still stay in touch. I've honestly learned something from each boss I've had.

**Question 6: What have you been doing since your last job?**  
If you have an employment gap on your resume, the interviewer will probably ask you what you have been doing while you were out of work.   
The best way to answer this question is to be honest, but do have an answer prepared. You will want to let the interviewer know that you were busy and active, regardless of whether you were out of work by choice, or otherwise.   
As I said, it doesn't really matter what you did, as long as you have an explanation. Hiring managers understand that people lose their job - it can happen to anyone - and it's not always easy to find a new job fast. Also, there are legitimate non-employment reasons for being out of the workforce.

**Question 7: Why did you choose this particular career path?**  
Sometimes in interviews, you will be asked questions that lend themselves to be answered vaguely or with lengthy explanations. Take this opportunity to direct your answer in a way that connects you with the position and company, be succinct and support your answer with appropriate specific examples.  
Sample Answer: "I chose advertising because I have always been a strong communicator with a good eye for design. I have a particular interest in creating dynamic eye-catching pieces that support a new product being introduced to the market. I also like the fast-paced high-energy environment that seems to be commonplace in the advertising industry."  
Advice: Your answer needs to convince the interviewers that your skills are exactly what they want. They want to know if you have a realistic view of what it is like to work in their industry. Be specific; show them that their industry and your career goals are in sync.

**Question 8: What are your aspirations beyond this job?**  
Again, don't fall into the trap of specifying job titles. Stick to a natural progression you see as plausible. How should this job grow for the good of the organization? Then turn your attention once again to the job at hand. If you seem too interested in what lies beyond this job, the interviewer will fear that you won't stick around for long.  
Sample Answer: Beyond this job as a marketing assistant, I see myself moving up through marketing analysis into brand management and eventually running a category. I'm aware that there are several skills I need to develop in the interval, and I believe with your continuing-education program and my own motivation for self-improvement, I'll have those skills when the opportunities arise for greater responsibility. That's why I'm determined to learn from the ground up, starting as a marketing assistant.

**Question 9: Why do you think this industry would sustain your interest in the long haul?**  
What expectations or projects do you have for the business that would enable you to grow without necessarily advancing? What excites you about the business? What proof can you offer that your interest has already come from a deep curiosity-perhaps going back at least a few years-rather than a current whim you'll outgrow?  
Sample Answer: The technology in the industry is changing so rapidly that I see lots of room for job enhancement regardless of promotions. I'm particularly interested in the many applications for multimedia as a training tool.

**Question 10: Tell me about yourself?**  
This is not an invitation to ramble on. If the context isn't clear, you need to know more about the question before giving an answer. In such a situation, you could ask, "Is there a particular aspect of my background that you would like more information on?" This will enable the interviewer to help you find the appropriate focus and avoid discussing irrelevancies.  
  
Whichever direction your answer ultimately takes, be sure that it has some relevance to the world of your professional endeavours. The tale you tell should demonstrate, or refer to, one or more of your key behavioural profiles in action--perhaps honesty, integrity, being a team player, or determination. If you choose "team player" (maybe you're the star player on your team tennis group), you can tell a story about yourself outside of work that also speaks volumes about you at work. In part, your answer should make the connection between the two, such as, "I put my heart into everything I do, whether it be sports or work. I find that getting along with teammates--or professional peers--makes life more enjoyable and productive."  
  
Or you might describe yourself as someone who is able to communicate with a variety of people, so give an example from your personal life that indicates an ability to communicate also at work.  
  
This isn't a question that you can answer effectively off the cuff. Take some time in advance to think about yourself and those aspects of your personality and/or background that you'd like to promote or feature for your interviewer.

**Question 11: What has been the biggest disappointment in your life?**  
Your response to the question "What has been the greatest disappointment in your life?" will help the interviewer determine know how easily you are discouraged.   
Sample Answer: If possible, tell about a personal disappointment i.e. the early death of a parent, child, or school friend. Believe it or not, it is okay to have not had a "greatest" disappointment.

**Question 12: What are your pet peeves?**  
Your response to the question "What are your pet peeves?" will help the interviewer determine if you would be a good fit with the company culture.   
Sample Answer: I do not have a pet peeve. If something is bothering me, I step back, analyse "why", and find a good solution. If you asked my teenage daughter she would tell you my pet peeve is the volume on her radio!

**Question 13: How has your education prepared you for your career?**  
This is a broad question and you need to focus on the behavioural examples in your educational background which specifically align to the required competencies for the career.  
Sample Answer: My education has focused on not only the learning the fundamentals, but also on the practical application of the information learned within those classes. For example, I played a lead role in a class project where we gathered and analysed best practice data from this industry. Let me tell you more about the results . . .  
Focus on behavioural examples supporting the key competencies for the career. Then ask if they would like to hear more examples.

**Question 14: When was the last time you were angry and what happened?**  
When the interviewer asks "When Was the Last Time You Were Angry? What Happened?" he or she wants to know if you lose control. The real meaning of the word "angry", to an interviewer, is loss of control and it's important to know how you handle situations when you're angry.   
Sample Answer: Anger to me means loss of control. I do not lose control. When I get stressed, I step back, take a deep breath, thoughtfully think through the situation and then begin to formulate a plan of action.

**Question 15: How do you evaluate success?**  
I evaluate success in different ways. At work, it is meeting the goals set by my supervisors and my fellow workers. It is my understanding, from talking to other employees, that the GGR Company is recognized for not only rewarding success, but giving employees opportunity to grow as well. After work, I enjoy playing softball, so success on the field is catching the winning pop-up.

**Question 16: What are the major reasons for your success?**This is not the time to become extremely self-centred and arrogant. Keep in mind that employers are often looking for team players rather than Lone Rangers. A good response to this question may relate to a mentor/and or philosophy of work or the people you work with. Also, use this question as an opportunity to inquire about an appropriate "fit for success" with this company.

**Question 17: Describe a typical work week for you.**  
Interviewers expect a candidate for employment to discuss what they do while they are working in detail. Before you answer, consider the position you are applying for and how your current or past positions relate to it. The more you can connect your past experience with the job opening, the more successful you will be at answering the questions.   
It should be obvious that it's not a good idea talk about non-work related activities that you do on company time, but, I've had applicants tell me how they are often late because they have to drive a child to school or like to take a long lunch break to work at the gym.   
Keep your answers focused on work and show the interviewer that you're organized ("The first thing I do on Monday morning is check my voicemail and email, then I prioritize my activities for the week.") and efficient.

**Question 18: How would you describe the pace at which you work?**  
When you're asked to describe the pace at which you work, be careful how you respond. This is another question where faster isn't necessarily better. Most employers would rather hire employees who work at a steady pace. Someone who is too slow to get the job done in a reasonable time frame isn't going to be a good hire. Neither is a candidate who works frenetically all day.   
Options for answering this question include saying that you work at a steady pace, but usually complete work in advance of the deadline. Discuss your ability to manage projects and get them done on, or ahead, of schedule. If you work at a job where you have set criteria (i.e. number of calls made or responded to) that measures accomplishments, discuss how you have achieved or exceeded those goals.

**Question 19: Give me proof of your persuasiveness.**  
This is a question about leadership, but try not to use an example in which you were the designated leader. If possible, describe a time when you didn't really have authority but instead used your powers of persuasion to get people on your side. Describe your goal and the outcome of your efforts. Why did people trust or believe you?  
Sample Answer: During my summer internship I was assigned the task of conducting a benchmarking study for all the communication expenditures for a major utility. I had to get the consensus of employees in several different departments. Unfortunately, they resented the fact that I was just a summer intern, and they refused to cooperate. I had to schedule individual meetings with every employee and persuade each one that I was doing what would be ultimately to his or her own department and to the company. After a frustrating month, I finally got everyone's cooperation, the project went flawlessly, and in the end I received a bonus for my efforts.

**Question 20: Would your current boss describe you as the type of person who goes that extra mile?**  
When interviewing with companies, you will often be asked questions that seem straightforward to answer. However more often than not - a ‘yes’ ‘no’ answer is not good enough. Always try to back up what you are saying with examples, as this will validate what you are trying to say.  
Sample Answer: "Absolutely. In fact, on my annual evaluations, he writes that I am the most dependable and flexible person on his staff. I think this is mostly because of my ability to prioritise."  
Advice: Share an example or experience that demonstrates your dependability or willingness to tackle a tough project. If you describe "long hours of work," make sure that you prove the hours were productive, and not the result of poor time management.

**Question 21: What new skills or ideas do you bring to the job that our internal candidates don't offer?**  
Often in an interview, you will be asked to separate yourself from other candidates who may be more qualified or may be less of a risk-factor.   
Sample Answer: "Because I've worked with the oldest player in this industry, I can help you avoid some of the mistakes we made in our established markets."  
Advice: This question addresses your motivation in adding "true value" to the job. Evaluate the job carefully, considering current limitations or weaknesses in the department and your unique abilities. Your ability here to prove "I offer what you need and then some" could land you the job.

**Question 22: Give us an example of a situation where you didn't meet your goals or objectives.**What they're looking for with this one is an example of where objectives weren't met and what you did to rectify the situation.  
  
Better still, provide an example of where things almost went wrong and what you did to prevent it.  
  
Beware: a common trap to fall into is to give one of the following two answers:  
Bad: "I can't think of such a situation."  
This makes you either seem unbelievably perfect (i.e. arrogant) or completely naïve and unable to spot and avoid potential disaster.  
Bad: Give an example of a situation that went wrong, but not realise until you're half way through the story that it doesn't have a happy ending!  
Try to make the examples relevant to the job for which you are applying.  
  
However, it's generally acceptable to offer non-work related examples, if these are good illustrations of transferable skills required for the job.

**Question 23: Give us an example of a situation where you faced conflict or difficult communication problems.**  
This is not the time to tell the interviewer how much you hate your current boss or colleagues!  
  
It’s also not the point to launch into a tirade about how difficult people in your office are to work with and how many arguments you have.  
  
So what are they looking for? They’re looking for someone who can rise above conflict and diffuse the emotions, finding a win-win solution.  
  
Basically, recruiters want to employ people who will get on well with others, whilst still delivering the company’s objectives.  
  
This type of question is your chance to demonstrate your interpersonal and team-working skills.  
  
The interviewer will be looking for maturity and the ability to be able to keep your calm, whilst others around you are losing theirs. Don’t feel you have to provide an answer that gives you full credit for the solution – it can often be more powerful (if it’s true) to demonstrate how you worked with others to find a fix.  
  
Practise your answer to this question. It can have many guises, but is almost guaranteed to be asked in some form.

**Question 24: Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?**  
Note that if you say no, most interviewers will keep drilling deeper to find a conflict. The key is how you behaviourally reacted to conflict and what you did to resolve it.  
For example: “Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person’s perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, and then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example . . .”  
Focus your answer on the behavioural process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively.

**Question 25: If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something, how would you handle this?**  
An answer that works well is: "It depends on the situation and the personality of the supervisor." To elaborate, give examples:  
My present supervisor does not like to have his authority questioned. He's fairly new on the job and almost all of the people he supervises have been on the job longer than he has. He's never bothered to learn the procedures, how things are done or how the computer system works. But if any of us tell him that how he wants something done won't work, he gets extremely angry. So, I never tell him he's wrong. Never. Whatever he tells me to do, I smile and say "okay." Then if I know a way to get it done that will work, I do it that way, give him the results he wants and never tell him I didn't do it the way he told me to. He got the results and is happy. I saved myself the stress of being yelled at and gave him what he wanted, so I'm happy.   
My prior supervisor was more easy-going and if I told her "you know, I think it might work better if I do what you asked in such and such a way," she say "okay, try it."   
If I were a new hire on a job, I would probably not question a supervisor because I might think I didn't know enough. Except on the new job I'm going to. The director has admitted that she's new on the job and there are a lot of things that a secretary does that she doesn't know how to do, so she will be depending on me to know how to keep the office running.