Interviewing Questions Guidelines

Remember that there is no one right answer to any of these questions, there is only the best answer for you. However, you should remember to keep all answers work–related as much as possible (don’t be afraid to give specific examples) and never give a one-word (just saying yes or no) answer. Know what your hard skills, soft skills and transferrable skills are. Here are a few tips to help you answer interviewing questions:

1. **Tell me about yourself.**

They want to know about your experience, training and education (hard skills). You can also use your transferrable skills or soft skills here, but make sure that you are not telling the interviewer personal information (favorite color, music you like, etc.)

2. **Why should we hire you?**

Tie your answer into the position/company (look closely at the job description and company profile/mission). Use both your hard skills and interpersonal skills.

3. **What are your weak points?**

This is both an honesty and a character question. We all know we have a weakness (even Superman has kryptonite). A good way to do this is to think of something that you may not do well that isn’t directly related to the duties of the job you are interviewing for. For example, I only have basic computer skills for a job that only requires basic computer skills (such as cashier). I don’t do well speaking in front of large groups (for customer service). Even better is to tag on the phrase “But I’m willing to learn.” Avoid the cliché “I’m a perfectionist”; all you’re really saying with that answer is that you may be difficult to work with/for.

4. **What are some of your strengths?**

Again, tie your answer into the position/company using your hard skills, transferrable skills and interpersonal skills. Look closely at the job description and company profile/mission.

5. **What did you dislike about your last job?**

Avoid saying anything negative about your boss or co-workers. Instead, go with something that you disliked such as no opportunities for advancement or location that will be an honest answer but won’t sound petty.

6. **What did you like about your last job?**

There’s almost no bad answer for this question. If you really liked your co-workers, you could answer “I really enjoyed the working environment; we had a great camaraderie and sense of team spirit.”

7. **Describe a situation in which you assisted someone else in solving a problem.**
Give a specific example and an outcome. The example could be use a co-worker, customer or client.

8. Describe a situation in which you were under a great deal of pressure. How did you deal with it?

Give a specific-example using this guide: What was the situation? How did I handle it? What was the outcome? If you draw a blank then explaining how you deal with pressure on the job is better than nothing.

9. Why do you want this job?

Think about why you responded to the ad and you have your answer.

10. What qualities or special skills do you bring to this job?

For an answer to what qualities you want to think of your transferrable skills and soft skills and for what special skills think of your hard skills (be specific, don’t say “I’m good with computers.” Talk specifics like “I'm proficient in Microsoft Office Word, Excel and PowerPoint.”


Seems like a no-brainer, but don’t just say yes (never give a one-word answer). Try “I can follow directions as long as they are clear and concise” or use a specific, work-related example.

12. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?

They are hoping for a work or career accomplishment, but educational and personal accomplishments are good too. Just make sure it is an accomplishment, such as a completing a lengthy or difficult project, earning a promotion, going back to school to get your degree, completing a marathon or climbing to the top of a mountain. Don’t use things like my daughter’s wedding or the birth of my grandchild. These may be your happiest or proudest moments, but don’t really answer the question.

13. Can you work without supervision?

See #11

14. How soon would you be able to start if you were hired?

Be honest. If you are currently employed say I need to give notice to my current employer. If you need a couple of days to arrange day care, etc., say I am available in two days.

15. Have you done this kind of work before?

Talk about your experience, where you worked and what your duties were. Use your transferrable skills here if necessary.

16. Why did you leave your last job?

See #5. If you were laid off, were there other people laid off at the same time? If so say “I was one of 20
17. **What do you know about our organization?**

To find out about a company or organization your first stop should be their website or Linked-in. If it's a small businesses such as a restaurant look at the menu or see if they are featured on a website like Yelp, Facebook or Twitter.

18. **Can you tell me why there are gaps in your work history or work record?**

It depends on how many and how long the gaps are (don't lie). Check your resume first. If you use years instead of months small gaps may not be immediately noticeable. Also, you may want to consider a Functional or Combination resume. Employers will ask about any gap of over 6 months.

19. **Why do you want this job when your qualifications are over and beyond the requirements for this job?**

The question the interviewer is really asking is “Are you going to leave this job the first chance you get?” Talk about being willing to make an adjustment and the possibility of future advancement.

20. **What was your worst mistake?**

Your answer should reflect your ability to learn from your mistakes and/or overcome difficulties. For example: My biggest mistake was not finishing my degree in Underwater Electronics when I first started, but I’m currently taking classes at Night School University.

21. **Is there anything more you want to tell me about yourself?**

If there is something good that you really want the interviewer to know about you but haven’t had the chance to tell them up to this point in the interview, this is the time. Think about your transferrable and soft skills here.

22. **Is there anything more you want to tell me about your work experience?**

See #21. This is a good chance to talk about transferrable skills if the position that you are applying for is not the exact same as your last position.

23. **What are your short and long term goals?**

Tie them into the company/organization. Remember they are talking about professional and career goals, not your personal goals. Think 6 months for short-term and 5 years for long-term.

24. **How do you react when people criticize your work?**

Try some variation of this: “I welcome constructive criticism as a learning experience. It helps me gage what I am doing right or wrong and how I can improve my performance.” Obviously they want to see how you react to input from managers and co-workers.
25. What are your salary expectations?
See the Gateway website for salary negotiation and average salaries.

26. Do you have any questions for me?
See Interviewee Questions on the Gateway website.

27. What kind of work are you looking for?
Match your answer to the job description and company/organization profile.

28. How would you describe yourself in a work setting?
Think of it as: How would your co-workers describe working with you?

29. Can you explain why you have been out of work for so long?
See #18

30. How would you describe yourself?
Describe yourself as a worker. Use your soft/interpersonal skills.

31. How do you deal with stress?
Give an example or a general description of how you deal with stress at work. “I take a step back, assess the problem or situation and then determine if I need to ask for help.”

32. What was your last position?
Talk about your last job, but don’t just quote the job description on your resume. Talk about how you completed/handled your responsibilities.

33. What are you looking for in a job?
Think about it for a minute. What are you looking for: stability, opportunity for advancement, a challenge? Be honest.

34. If I were to contact your previous supervisor, how would he/she describe your work ethic?
Same as #28 but from your supervisor’s point of view.