Land Your Next Job by Studying These 20 Common Interview Questions and Answers

Use these 20 interview questions and answers to prepare to get your next job.

By Robin Madell | Edited by Jennifer Ortiz | March 31, 2022, at 5:12 p.m. | [U.S. News & World Report](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them)

There's only one thing standing between you and the job that you want: your answers to common interview questions. When you know how to answer interview questions in a way that impresses the hiring team, then your chances of being extended an offer are much higher.

Below is a list of 20 interview questions and answers. The suggested answers are meant to inspire your personalized approach to addressing these popular questions, weaving in the details that are specific to your own [career background and skill set](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/how-to-showcase-your-skills-to-land-a-job).

* [Tell me about yourself.](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#yourself)
* [How did you find out about the position?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#position)
* [Why do you want to work here?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#why)
* [What interests you about this job?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#interests)
* [Have you used our product/service?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#product)
* [How would you improve our product/service?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#improve)
* [What's your greatest strength?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#strength)
* [What's your greatest weakness?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#weakness)
* [What salary range are you looking for?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#salary)
* [What would you do in the first 30, 60 and 90 days on the job?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#days)
* [What professional achievement are you most proud of?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#achievement)
* [What would former co-workers say about working with you?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#say)
* [Where do you see your career in three to five years?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#future)
* [Why should we hire you?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#hire)
* [Why are you looking for a new job?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#new-job)
* [Tell me about a major challenge you’ve faced at work and how you overcame it.](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#challenge)
* [Tell me about a failure you experienced and how you handled it.](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#failure)
* [There’s a gap in your employment history – why?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#gap)
* [How would you describe your work style?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#describe)
* [Do you have any questions for us?](https://money.usnews.com/money/careers/interviewing/articles/know-these-interview-questions-and-how-to-answer-them#questions)

Tell Me About Yourself

While this may sound like an open-ended question that you can answer however you like, don't let its simplicity fool you into disclosures that are too casual and personal. The interviewer is trying to get a sense of what kind of person you are and what you value to determine your level of professionalism and how well you would fit on the team.

You might start by focusing on who you are as a professional, since this is a job interview, after all. Tell a bit about your educational and career background and some key facts about your job history.

While it's OK (and perhaps expected) to share something that's a little bit personal and unique to you, be careful about what exactly you reveal here. Think in terms of sharing one of your key hobbies or interests outside of work – for example, playing volleyball, cooking or [volunteering](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/when-and-how-to-list-volunteer-work-on-a-resume). Be cautious about revealing details about your age or family status that some employers may be unintentionally biased against.

How Did You Find Out About the Position?

The employer is trying to see if one of their marketing methods reached you, or if you found out about the job through some other way. Whether you learned of the opening from a colleague, online or through a job ad, share the method with the interviewer. You may get brownie points if you happened to have learned about the job from the company's website. If you took extra time to learn about the organization while applying, be sure to mention it.

Why Do You Want to Work Here?

Hiring managers use this question to try to gauge a candidate's motives for seeking the opportunity. While your primary reason for applying may be financially motivated, this would not be the emphasis to share during the interview.

Instead, think of other reasons you chose to throw your hat in the ring at the specific organization. Maybe you like the [company's culture](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/different-types-of-corporate-culture) that you read about online, or maybe you've heard from current employees that they love their jobs. If so, spend some time figuring out the best words to use to explain that.

Another good answer could tie back to your career interests. For example, if you're a marketer applying for an entry-level marketing position, you might focus on sharing what it is about the company that makes you feel this would be the right place to develop your career skills in your field.

What Interests You About This Job?

This question may seem tricky, since you may feel you don't know enough yet about the job as simply a candidate and not a hired hand. But you can prepare for this query in advance by doing some due diligence before your interview.

Spend at least an hour reviewing the details of the company's job description and determining how to draw links between what the manager wants and the talents you bring to the table. You might even bring a printout of the job description to the interview to refer to specific language as you answer this question. Point out to your interviewer that you have been thinking a lot about the specific needs of the position and how your background and experiences make you the right fit for it.

Have You Used Our Product/Service?

You don't want to be caught off guard by this question having not tried out the product or service that you would be working with. So, knowing that this is a common interview question, you would be wise to give the company's tools a test drive prior to your interview, if at all possible. When trying it out, take notes about your experience and share specifics during your interview.

How Would You Improve Our Product/Service?

It takes a bit of diplomacy to navigate your response here, since you don't want to imply with your answer that the product or service is substandard. However, by coming up with a good idea here – for example, for an additional feature or other bells and whistles that customers might enjoy – you could earn points with the interviewers for your creativity.

What's Your Greatest Strength?

The challenge of answering the standard "greatest strength" question is that you want to strike the right balance between sounding confident but not arrogant. The strength that you share need not be related directly to the position that you're applying for, but should be clearly tied to an attribute that the specific employer would value.

For example, highlighting your effectiveness working with teams and groups is something that would come in handy in most jobs, so this would be a good choice to share if it's true for you.

What's Your Greatest Weakness?

The best answer to this has changed over time. While the go-to response used to be to choose an area that shows your tendency to "care too much" about your job, this response has been overused. If you try it, you may receive pushback from a savvy interviewer who wants you to share a true weakness.

An effective approach is to share something legitimate that isn't your top strength – but also share some concrete ways that you are working on improving in that area.

What Salary Range Are You Looking For?

If this is your initial interview, err on the side of caution with this question by avoiding specifics. A smart tactic is to switch the question around and ask if a [salary band](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-02-15/how-to-determine-what-youre-worth) has been identified for the job based on your experience level and location.

What Would You Do in the First 30, 60 and 90 Days on the Job?

Active listening will come in handy here. This common interview question may be hard to prepare for in advance, since details that you learn during the interview itself about the employer's priorities may help you formulate a better, more specific answer.

If you need a refresher about any points that your interviewers have raised in terms of their priorities, or if they haven't shared them yet, it's fair to ask for clarification before you begin answering. Knowing what the hiring manager cares most about is key to how you should frame your plan for what you would do during your initial months in the position.

What Professional Achievement Are You Most Proud Of?

While you may actually consider saving someone's life as a lifeguard in high school to be your proudest moment on the job, don't take this question literally unless you are actually interviewing to be a lifeguard.

The correct approach to describing your greatest professional achievement is to hone in on the position that you're applying for and find a relevant experience in your past career arsenal to showcase something that the hiring manager would hope to find in an employee. An equally smart strategy is to focus on a general accomplishment that would impress any employer, such as creating a tactic to increase your department's productivity.

What Would Former Co-Workers Say About You?

When asking this question, the hiring committee is trying to gain a sense of your personality, work style and how well you work with others. While not every past colleague may have reacted to you in the same way, focus on finding commonalities in how people have perceived your best assets. If it is in fact true, then you can't go wrong with indicating that past co-workers and bosses have found you to be a dependable, trustworthy, conscientious and deadline-driven team player.

Where Do You See Your Career in 3-5 Years?

This question requires some diplomacy, since indicating that you see yourself in the hiring manager's position might not be well-taken. It would also, in most cases, be a faux pas to share your dream of launching a startup, particularly if it's in a different field altogether from the job for which you are currently interviewing. A more prudent answer would be to emphasize a vision of yourself making an impact in your industry and mentoring more junior members of your team as you move up the ladder.

Why Should We Hire You?

You should be prepared to respond to this classic interview query no matter what type of position you're applying for, so it's a good idea to prepare and practice your response to it.

If this question comes early in the meeting, use it as a chance to hit on the most relevant points of your experience and skill set, pointing out how well your background fits with the job requirements. If it arrives toward the end of the interview, then take the opportunity to recap the highlights of what you would bring to the company, as well as how you would leverage your abilities to solve the employer's biggest problems.

Why Are You Looking for a New Job?

If you already have a job and are conducting a job search, the interviewer might be naturally curious as to what has prompted your desire for change.

Be careful here, as revealing a dissatisfaction with your current company, boss, or co-workers could serve as a red flag for the hiring team. Instead of complaining about grievances you may have about your current position, focus your answer on your desire for greater [opportunities and career growth](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/how-to-improve-your-career-development).

For example, you might say: “While I’ve been excited about the opportunities I’ve had in my current position, I’m looking for a company that I can move to the next level with. I am very invested in this industry and want to be with a key industry player to further my career growth.”

Tell Me About a Major Challenge You’ve Faced at Work and How You Overcame It

Like with most interview questions, it’s important to tread carefully and phrase your answers in a positive way. This is particularly true with a question like this one that requires addressing difficulties.

Your goal should be to share an experience that showcases your ability to persevere and move beyond obstacles without revealing details that could paint you or your colleagues in a negative light.

While your answer will be unique to your experience, here’s a sample of how to strike this balance: “I once was faced with the challenging situation of needing to generate a key deliverable to the company’s top client in a tight timeframe that made it impossible for me to do everything I wanted. I solved this by recruiting some co-workers from a different department to lend a hand so that we could create the best product possible under the circumstances, and we ended up impressing both my boss and the client.”

Tell Me About a Failure You Experienced at Work and How You Handled It

Like the “challenge” question above, it can be tricky to talk about professional failures and career disappointments. But many employers will understandably want to know how you react in less than optimum circumstances, so you should be prepared to address the question of failure during your interview.

When discussing missteps, always plan to end on a positive note. And avoid the “TMI” syndrome of sharing more personal details than necessary to make your point; keep it professional and top-level rather than going into the nitty-gritty about the failure.

Here’s a possible response, which you can tailor to your own circumstances: “At my last job, my teammate’s department had been relying on my department to collaborate on a goal they had developed independently of me. I had initially agreed to help out, but quickly realized that doing so would jeopardize my own department’s deliverables to the CEO that week, so I had to pull out of the collaboration before we’d really gotten started. This felt like a failure on my part since I wished I had pushed back initially about my limited bandwidth rather than agreeing on working together. I apologized to my colleague and she understood when I explained about my own deadlines."

There’s a Gap in Your Employment History – Why?

Astute managers will scrutinize your resume to see if you have a consecutive employment history, and will quickly pinpoint any gaps. If you have a gap in your resume, you need to prepare in advance to explain why you weren’t working for that period of time.

Honesty is the best policy here, and many employers will understand that in times [when the job market is tight](https://money.usnews.com/careers/articles/job-market-outlook), some candidates may have gaps in their work history. It helps if you can add some things that you did during your break from employment that facilitated your career goals, such as any volunteer work, education or training that you may have done.

A sample answer: During that period, my entire company faced layoffs, and we had short notice about the fact. I quickly set to work on my job search and landed a position pretty quickly, but it’s true there’s a small [gap in my employment](https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/articles/2018-05-23/mind-the-gap-how-to-explain-gaps-on-your-resume) history because of that. During the time that I was job hunting, I also took an online course on [add industry topic] to learn a new skill that would help in my next position.

How Would You Describe Your Work Style?

Anyone considering hiring you may want to gain a basic understanding of what your work style is, so that they can determine whether that style will be a fit for the position.

Work styles that many employers value are collaborative, team-oriented, detail-oriented, conscientious and supportive.

There are no right or wrong answers here, though if you know something in advance about the types of qualities that this particular employer or company values, then that can help inform your response. For example, if you’re applying for a sales position, it’s more important to emphasize that you’re an energetic go-getter with people skills than if you have a [work-from-home job](https://money.usnews.com/careers/best-jobs/slideshows/best-remote-working-jobs) as a graphic designer that you can do independently on your own schedule, where the work style of detail-oriented conscientiousness may be more valued by the hiring team.

Do You Have Any Questions for Us?

While you may feel like wrapping up the interview experience as soon as possible, answering with, "No, I think you've covered everything!" won't impress most hiring managers. Instead, you should come prepared to ask some standard questions of the interviewers, which shows that you're interested in learning as much as you can about the position and company.

Some strong questions to ask at this juncture include:

* What is your favorite thing about working here?
* What are the three biggest challenges that I would face in the position if I'm hired?
* Would I be working directly with you, and what are the other key departments that I'd be working with?
* What is the company culture like, and what do employees like most about it?