

30 Basic Job Interview Questions

How to Answer Them

1. Can you tell me more about yourself?

“Tell me about yourself” should be expected in job interviews, but talking about yourself can feel uncomfortable. It’s often asked as a first question or an icebreaker. Your answer gives the interviewer a sense of who you are and your background beyond your resume. When answering this question, **focus on experiences that highlight your qualifications**.

It’s OK to mention personal interests that will help the hiring manager connect with you, such as a shared alma mater or a nonprofit interest. But for the most part, you should steer your response toward how you’ll contribute to the organization. Gather specific skills and accomplishments that make you a strong candidate. Take the opportunity to start the interview off with points that paint a positive picture.

Example Answer:

I’m a recent college graduate with a degree as a certified accountant from Kentucky State University. I also completed an internship at a financial management firm, where I got hands-on experience in financial analysis. During my time at the firm, I discovered that I enjoyed managing finances and creating investment plans for retirees, which led me to apply for this role.

2. What do you think your greatest weakness is?

Every candidate puts their best foot forward during the hiring process. Hiring managers are looking for a glimpse of your self-awareness and how you manage constructive criticism. When answering this question, it’s essential to **be honest but frame your response positively**. Phrase your answer in a way that shows you’re actively seeking personal and career growth and development.

Example Answer:

I think my greatest weakness is that I struggle a bit with balancing multiple priorities. I can lose myself in a project, which can make me feel overwhelmed and stressed when numerous tasks are on my to-do list. To manage this, I’ve been setting smaller goals and creating better task management and daily workflow routines.

3. What do you feel your greatest strength is?

The hiring manager is curious about how well you know yourself and why you think you’ll excel in this role. This is a great opportunity to **show how passionate you are about the job** and explain why your experience makes you a great fit.

Example Answer:

I’m incredibly excited about this role because I’m passionate about seeing the big picture and finding more efficient workflows. For example, in my previous role, I identified opportunities to streamline a simple daily process in how tasks were communicated and completed. Ultimately, those tiny savings added up, and they saved the company an hour per day, which added up to savings of over 250 hours

of labor yearly. This role is an excellent fit for me because it allows me to use those same analytical and problem-solving skills within a larger organization.

4. Why are you interested in this role?

Hiring managers are looking to discover how well you researched the company. Are you looking for any open position, or are you excited about the opportunities this particular role and organization offer? Here, you can **share specifics about the company and why this job is the perfect fit for your career goals**.

Example Answer:

I'm interested in this role because it offers me the chance to combine my marketing knowledge with my passion for helping others. I learned about the organization's mission and how it helps people improve their lives through education and financial literacy. I've watched the jobs page for roles fitting my skill set, and I was delighted when this position was posted. I know I can be an asset to the team, and I'm excited about this role's potential opportunities.

5. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Hiring and turnover are costly. When you're applying, responsible leaders are looking to **ensure that your goals and plans align with the company's visions and career paths**. The best way to answer this question is to clearly understand your long-term development goals and how this position can help you achieve them.

Example Answer:

In five years, I hope to become an industry expert that inspires school-aged kids from all backgrounds to pursue an engineering career. Ideally, I'd love to use this role as a platform to learn and grow to become a company leader where I can mentor new team members. As I mentioned previously, the company's culture and mission statement align closely with my values, and in five years, I'm hoping to be here, growing my career.

6. Why are you looking for a new role?

Don't air all of your dirty laundry here. You want to steer away from focusing on any negative aspects of your current role. Instead, **focus on why you're excited about the new job and how it fits into your career path**. Compare the two companies if you can find a way to do so that doesn't sound like you're throwing your current company under the bus.

Example Answer:

I'm looking for a new role because I want to pursue an opportunity that will help me expand my skill set and build upon what I've learned so far. The company I work for has a well-established senior team, so there's less room for growth. One of the things I love about my current job is the ability to impact small business success with efficient web design. This position is the perfect combination. I'll have the chance to challenge myself in a new way while working more closely with the customer to bring their vision to life.

7. What motivates you on a daily basis?

Employers are looking to **ensure that your intrinsic motivations align with long-term company values and goals**. If your motivation is a specific benefit or salary range, that will wear off at some

point, and your job performance will suffer. On the other hand, if you're passionate about the mission or find the duties creative and challenging, you're more likely to be a consistently high-performing employee.

Example Answer:

As a care advocate, I am passionate about helping patients navigate the complicated insurance and medical system. On a personal level, I've seen the devastating impact that occurs when patients postpone routine care. I look forward to the ability to personally support others' health in positive ways.

8. Why are you the best candidate for this role?

This question can feel like you're walking a tightrope. You don't know the other candidates and don't want to sound arrogant by saying you're the best. But on the other hand, you need to communicate your confidence and job fit. The solution is rooted in your research and **reframing your response into one that shows you're uniquely qualified**. You can tie in previous experiences and skill sets with the job duties to highlight your excellent fit.

Example Answer:

What makes me uniquely qualified for the role is my experience leading a high-performing sales team at a larger agency. We consistently led the company and exceeded our goals. Not only that, but we had exceptional customer service reviews with a high ratio of returning customers. Blending that experience with my time spent mentoring new team members makes me an excellent fit for this role.

9. What three words would your most recent teammates use to describe you?

Even when a role is relatively independent, you'll still need to interact and collaborate with others. Hiring managers are looking to discover **how well you work within the boundaries of a team**. Consider the traits and skills you've been praised for and feedback you've received during performance reviews.

Example Answer:

My current teammates would describe me as reliable, adaptable, and proactive. I understand that meeting my personal goals can't get me very far without us succeeding as a team. Because of that, my teammates' feedback is consistently that I am an excellent team player who takes initiative and is open to feedback.

10. Describe your ideal company culture.

In recent years, U.S. companies have spent over \$223 billion due to employee turnover. Much of that stems from a poor cultural fit. Even if the organization doesn't have a toxic culture, ensuring applicants mesh with the team and thrive personally helps lower that number substantially. Not only that, but if they have an excellent reputation and a unique culture, they will be rigorous in defending it. Do your research and **be specific in explaining why you'll enhance the company culture**.

Example Answer:

In my experience, I've thrived at companies that balance team goals with opportunities for personal development. I'm excited about working in a smaller team with a diverse group. I believe encouraging employees to bring their unique perspectives and share ideas will lead to creative solutions. I also look forward to learning from teammates with different backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets. Ultimately, my ideal company culture values collaboration, creativity, and learning from diverse perspectives.

11. What would you do in your first 90 days in this role?

Will you be able to hit the ground running? **Hiring managers want to know that you can strategize and plan.** When discussing goals, focus on topics such as integrating yourself with the team, developing relationships with other departments, and learning more about the role. Keep it specific by describing projects or tasks you think you'll prioritize within those 90 days.

Example Answer:

In my first 90 days in this role, I will focus on learning more about the team and our unique contribution to the industry. I plan to meet with key stakeholders, review current projects, understand our process flow, and build relationships with other departments. Additionally, I think it's essential to gain a thorough understanding of our product offering so that I can support our customers and ensure we meet their needs. As part of this, I'd like to review customer feedback and develop a plan to ensure I'm consistently exceeding their expectations.

12. Give an example of when you received negative feedback and how you responded.

Hiring managers are seeking to understand whether or not you have a growth mindset. Negative feedback is inevitable, and leaders are looking for those who understand that criticism isn't personal. Instead, you want to **communicate that you'll use feedback to improve your skills.** Use [the STAR method](#) to describe a situation, the feedback you received, and how you applied it to achieve a better outcome.

Example Answer:

Recently, I was given negative feedback about a large project I completed as a virtual assistant. My supervisor noted that the formatting of my presentation needed to be in line with company standards and clarified for the audience. I took this feedback and spent several days revising the presentation by making sure all elements were cohesive and easy to understand. I also contacted my supervisor to ensure that we updated the style guide to clarify their standards moving forward. In the end, they were happy with the project and appreciated that I took the initiative to improve the document for everyone on the team.

13. Describe a problem you solved in a creative way.

Creative thinking is a tremendous asset in today's workforce. Business continues to get more competitive, and thinking outside the box can ensure the company stays on the leading edge of the industry. Consider the role you're applying for and **highlight a time you solved a problem the position would have to deal with.**

Example Answer:

As a [marketing manager](#), I was tasked with increasing our online presence without increasing our budget. I identified an opportunity to leverage influencers in a few other industries who had an engaged and growing audience. By forming creative partnerships with these influencers, we increased our brand's visibility and drove more traffic to our website without investing in ad spending.

14. Describe a time when you had to make a decision without time to research.

When you're interviewing, **hiring managers often want to understand your ability to think on your feet.** Especially [in leadership roles](#), you'll need to use the information you have at the time to make the

best decision possible. Depending on the situation, you can touch on how you'd make a different decision in the future now that you have more information.

Example Answer:

When I was managing a hospitality team, a time-sensitive issue with a customer's room cleanliness needed to be addressed due to their travel constraints. I had to decide on the best course of action, as the housekeeping manager needed to be available to gather more information. After brief consideration, I offered them a refund, which wasn't policy. After they left, we determined that they were placed in a room that hadn't been cleaned due to a computer error. As such, it was the right course of action. Regardless, it's always best to use the available information to give the best possible customer service for the situation.

15. Why are you leaving your current job?

No matter how toxic your current work environment is, it will still reflect poorly on you if you focus on the negative. Instead, you can **talk about how you're looking for new challenges or a better fit for your skill set**, but avoid being hostile toward your current workplace or colleagues. Even if there's drama or you have a horrible leader, you'll want to reframe your answers positively.

Example Answer:

I'm currently at a point in my career where I want to take on new challenges and grow my skill set further. My current role has been a great learning experience, but I'm intrigued by the opportunity that this position provides to utilize my expertise differently. I'm eager to expand my knowledge and grow professionally, which is why I'm excited about this opportunity.

16. Describe a time when you went above and beyond for a customer or client.

Showing you can take the initiative and are willing to go the extra mile speaks volumes about your character and professionalism. When describing a time you went above and beyond, try to **focus on what drove you to go above and beyond**. Was it a concern for the customer? A desire to ensure everything went smoothly?

Example Answer:

As an event planner, I had a customer with incredibly high expectations for their event. Because of the complexity of their requests and timeline, I knew it would be challenging, but I could also see that they felt pressured to put on a memorable event. To ensure everything went smoothly, I put in extra time and effort beforehand to create a detailed plan and ensure the staff was fully prepared. I also kept the customer updated on the status of various details. That required extra communication and time, but it helped them relax and feel confident in the outcome. My hard work paid off, as the customer was delighted with how everything turned out. It was a great feeling to have exceeded their expectations.

17. Why do you want to work remotely?

Remote work can be a bit glorified in the media and modern culture. Hiring managers want to ensure you have realistic expectations and a plan to address the challenges. **Keep your answer focused on the professional benefits**. Explain how working remotely can help you meet your development goals and would work well with your personality type.

Example Answer:

I'm a self-starter motivated to stay productive and reach my goals. I find that having the flexibility to work from different locations increases my productivity, allowing me to avoid office distractions and politics. Additionally, working remotely allows me to work in a custom-tailored environment to boost my productivity. I'm also looking forward to using the time I'm saving by not commuting to fit in more exercise, which boosts my creativity.

18. How will you handle or minimize distractions when you work remotely?

Recruiters are hesitant to hire remote workers who aren't realistic about the distractions you'll face working and living in the same location. It is essential to **show the interviewer that you can work productively even when you are not in a traditional office setting**.

An excellent way to do this is by outlining a few strategies that help you stay on track and focused. You can share things like setting up specific hours for working, turning off notifications and other distractions, and setting boundaries for yourself and others.

Example Answer:

I realize it can be easy to get distracted by the things around you, especially when you're at home. To combat this, I plan to use a few strategies that help me stay focused and on track. First, I'll set up and post specific hours for my workday next to my desk. That way, my family will know when I'm available and when I need to focus. Second, I'll turn off all notifications and distractions to stay focused. Finally, I will be diligent about prioritizing my tasks to ensure I stay on top of my deadlines. By using these strategies, I'll be able to maximize my productivity.

19. How do you stay connected to your teammates when you don't work in the same location?

Despite working alone, leaders need team members who facilitate communication and collaboration despite distances and varying time zones. You'll need to **demonstrate that you're knowledgeable, capable of using communication tools, and driven** to reach out.

Example Answer:

I'm very familiar with collaboration platforms, such as Zoom and Slack, and I'm comfortable participating in virtual meetings and team projects. I also actively seek time for informal conversations, so I schedule weekly coffee or lunch sessions with my colleagues. That way, we can catch up, have meaningful conversations, and brainstorm ideas. I respect everyone's communication preferences and give them space to respond as they need.

20. How do you set boundaries between your home life and your work tasks while working remotely?

Working from your home office can have many perks. But it also comes with a higher risk of burnout if you're not intentional about setting boundaries. It's all too easy to slip into a mode where you're always working. You need to **demonstrate that you are capable of establishing and maintaining boundaries**.

Example Answer:

I know that it can be challenging to separate home life from work when working remotely, so I take proactive steps to ensure I'm not working around the clock. To do this, I have a dedicated office space, set specific hours for my workday, and maintain a routine that helps me shift from work mode to home

mode. During my off-work hours, I turn off any notifications related to work and disconnect from my computer. Additionally, I take regular breaks throughout the day and steer clear of eating lunch at my desk.

21. Do you consider yourself a self-starter?

Without a manager stopping by your desk, you'll need the ability and motivation to take charge of your workload. Working remotely, **leaders will be relying on you to take the initiative to [manage your projects](#)** and stay on top of your deadlines. Share traits that reinforce that you're a self-starter.

Example Answer:

I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit and am highly motivated to complete tasks independently. I enjoy challenging myself to complete tasks by a specific time or with a set outcome. I'm also highly organized and can prioritize my work tasks to finish everything on time.

22. What does a typical day look like for you? What is your daily routine when you work remotely?

It might not seem vital, but your daily routine can make or break your success while working from home. Without social cues, you can quickly develop bad habits that lead to burnout and significantly impact your wellness. Outline any routines that **demonstrate how you prioritize and manage your tasks while working remotely.**

Example Answer:

My day starts with a cup of tea and a short workout to get my head in the best space. After that, I maintain my morning routine the same way I would if I worked in an office. I clock in at my set hours, check my emails, and review any new daily tasks. I use a planner and goal-setting sheet to set my daily goals. Using the Pomodoro Technique, I work in increments that allow me to stay focused and alert, taking small breaks every hour or so. When the day is done, I log off and take time for myself and my family. This helps me reset my mind and prepare for the next day. Overall, having a daily routine has been highly beneficial in helping me stay productive and organized when working remotely. It allows for sufficient breaks, so I stay energized and motivated.

23. How have you managed to stay productive while working from home?

When your team isn't in the same location, it can be challenging to stay productive. From distractions to technical difficulties, plenty of things can get in the way of your workflow. **Share specific examples of how you protect your focus despite distractions.**

Example Answer:

Admittedly, I learned the hard way that working from home isn't easy if you don't have a routine set in place or the right tools to stay motivated. Working remotely requires a certain level of self-discipline, and I initially struggled to avoid distractions. Recognizing that I wasn't thriving, I put new workflows in place to keep myself on track. I practice good time management skills, set realistic daily goals, and use task lists to prioritize my work. Also, I've scheduled a routine check-in with my manager, which helps me stay connected and in the loop on changing priorities.

24. [What is your expected salary?](#)

Beyond wondering if they can afford you, **interviewers want to see if you've thoroughly researched the industry and the position**. If you don't value yourself and your work, that might signal a lack of confidence in your performance. It's tricky since duties can vary between roles and geography. If you still need to learn all the specifics, you can either give a salary range based on research or answer that you'd like more information before [negotiating specific salary and benefits](#).

Example Answer:

After researching the industry and taking my experience and education into account, I'm targeting a salary between \$50,000-\$60,000. However, I'd like to learn more about the position's specific duties and benefit offerings before we discuss a fair amount for the role.

25. Can you talk me through your career gap, the reasons you left the workforce, and how you feel it's affected you professionally?

If you were out of the workforce for extended periods, it's essential that you can explain why and how it impacted your career. You'll want to **show that your gap was due to intentional and responsible decision-making**, rather than an inability to focus or commit to a career path. Tie in professional growth, such as [volunteer or freelance work](#), that you completed during your gap.

Example Answer:

I was out of the workforce for five years while raising a family after graduating college. With my partner in the military, we decided that the timing was best for our careers and families as we anticipated several moves. Now that my partner has left active duty and our children are a bit older, we're ready to move to the next stage. I am quite thankful I had that time to focus on volunteer work and exploring different career paths related to my degree. With some hands-on work, I discovered my passions, which led me to this role.

26. [Can you share a time you had a conflict with a teammate and how you handled it?](#)

You've inevitably had a difference of opinion with someone in the workforce. It's essential to show that you can [handle it skillfully](#) and professionally without devaluing other ideas. **Interviewers want to see how you approach difficult conversations and your ability to defuse tensions** while maintaining professional composure.

Example Answer:

I recently had a conflict with my teammate over an upcoming project. He wanted to tackle it with a method that I felt was outdated. We discussed our ideas at length. I could see that he didn't understand my vision, so I found a new way to explain it and shared some similar examples. With some additional explanation, he opened up to my suggestions, and we were able to blend both of our approaches for the best outcome.

27. What skills from your previous industry do you feel translate to this position?

When you're looking to change careers, you'll need to connect the dots for the hiring manager. They'll often need you to **explain [how your skills and experience translate to the new role or field](#)**, especially if they're not familiar with your previous duties. Highlight ways you can bring a fresh perspective while drawing on aspects of your experience.

Example Answer:

In my previous role as an account manager, I worked closely with customers to identify their needs and offered solutions. This translates well into this HR position because it's a role that supports our internal customers, just in a different way. Additionally, the data analysis skills I gained while working with customer feedback have been invaluable in creating reports on employee satisfaction. Furthermore, my familiarity with identifying trends and developing solutions to business challenges can benefit the team in various ways. Overall, I believe many of my skills will transfer to this role and fill any gaps.

28. Why are you looking to leave your current industry?

When you're transitioning to a new career, it's essential that you come across as motivated, rather than desperate. You want to make sure that the interviewer understands that you're eagerly moving toward something, rather than simply escaping a poor job fit. You'll need to **reassure the interviewer that your move is intentional because you think you'll thrive** instead of moving blindly away from your previous career.

Example Answer:

I'm looking to move away from my current industry because I've achieved all I can. I'm passionate about my company, and my role has been enriching. However, I've reached a ceiling with my current position and need to find an opportunity that will challenge me further. That's why this new position is so attractive to me—it offers an exciting chance to learn new skills and use the experience I've gained to develop further. Plus, I believe it will allow me to grow professionally and personally in ways that my current job doesn't provide.

29. Describe your ideal work environment.

Your interviewer wants to know if you'll fit their corporate culture well. Use your research into the company culture and notes from the job posting. But be cautious that you're not simply quoting what you read. Instead, **reframe culture cues as personal motivations**.

Example Answer:

I thrive in an environment that encourages learning and ideas. I'm always looking for new challenges, so having a goal-oriented workplace where everyone works together to meet deadlines and service targets is essential. My ideal work environment also values collaboration and open communication. This is something that lays the foundation for success as we can come up with better solutions, rather than aggressively competing. At the end of the day, the sales numbers don't matter if we lose customers due to toxic competitiveness.

30. What questions do you have for me?

It may seem like this is just a bonus question that might not matter that much, but it's actually an essential part of the interview. **Your questions will show how engaged you are in the role**, how much research you've done, and of course, if there's anything else you want to know. This is your chance to impress the hiring manager and ensure they remember you. Of course, your question will depend a bit on what's already been covered.

Example Answers:

I'm interested in learning more about what success looks like in this role. Do you have any clear objectives or metrics I could use to measure progress?

What are your team's biggest challenges, and how can someone in this role help overcome them?

I saw from your LinkedIn profile that you've been with the company for over 10 years. What culture attributes have inspired you to stay with the company?

Basic Interview Questions

It's nearly impossible to prepare completely for each question, as there are endless ways a hiring manager can word their inquiries. But the majority of questions fit into a few different categories.

Think through your experiences and **prepare to discuss situations that highlight your team and culture fit, your relevant skills, and your ability to apply essential characteristics**. You may need to reframe them to fit the exact phrasing, but you'll be ready for just about anything if you start with these questions and then expand to some broader experiences you can reference.

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