

# Top 12 Interview Questions Exposed

The key to an interview is to be well prepared in advance. Many people typically find it difficult to explain exactly what their strengths and accomplishments are in detail. As difficult as it is, you must develop the skills to successfully convey what you bring to the table. There is no substitute for preparation! By preparing answers to all of the questions in this book, you'll have the ammunition you need to answer the additional questions that come into play. Plus, you will feel more confident walking in to the interview.

The key is to listen to the question that is asked and then pause for a moment before answering it. Once you have provided your answer, stop talking! Do not offer answers to other things that come to your mind unless they **directly** relate to the question. Your answers should be short, sweet, and to the point. If you can weave in some statistics about your past performance, you'll hit a home run.

If you know that **this** is the ideal job for you, in the right company, and in the right industry, don't be shy about it. Let your interviewer know. Enthusiastic people are much more likely to get hired than people who simply match the job description.

Interviewing takes practice, but it is far less stressful when you truly know what you want your next job to look like. Interviewing for jobs that you love will be the easiest thing you'll ever do, and it will also be easy for the hiring manager to make their decision to hire you!

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## QUESTIONS

### 1. Tell me about yourself.....

#### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- To test your overall preparedness for the interview
- To allow you to feel comfortable and have a sense of control
- To see your communication style, your personality, and how you organize your thoughts
- To stall for time to review your resume and collect *their* thoughts
- To see which topics you naturally emphasize, e.g., personal life, work, hobbies, etc.

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***“I was born on a farm in Pennsylvania...”*** – Interviewers typically want to hear about your work history, not about your personal life. Think of this question as “Tell me the highlights of your career.”
- ***“What would you like to hear about specifically?”*** – If they wanted to give you a specific question, they would have asked you one.
- ***“I started at company x and then went to y and then went to z...”*** – Don’t rehash your entire resume – just provide highlights. Watch for non-verbal cues that suggest that you are rambling.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Provides a 30 second synopsis that concludes with an accomplishment. The end includes a question that steers the interviewer away from this question to a topic that enables you to demonstrate your accomplishments.
  - Example: “My passion is helping companies hire extraordinary employees. For the past x years I have helped several companies transform their recruiting departments from weak to world class. I have led teams that hired 900 teachers in 4 months, 400 pharmaceutical sales reps in 3 months, and 500 IT professionals in a year. Would you like to hear more about one of those accomplishments in particular?”

## **2. Why are you interested in working for your company?**

### **WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...**

- To determine how much you have researched their company
- To understand your true interest in their company versus their competition
- To learn your truest interest in their industry
- To determine how clear your career goals are

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***“I am interested in your company because you are in a growing industry.”*** – This is not a specific enough answer. It is simply too general.
- ***“I am interested in your company because you produce cheese, my favorite food.”*** – This is not a strong enough reason. Don’t other companies produce cheese as well?
- ***“I hear that this is a great place to work.”*** – Although other people may have told you this information, this answer doesn’t explain why this is the right company for **you**.

- ***“I am interested in this company because of its many career growth opportunities.”*** – This reason is not compelling enough.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Includes details to explain why this company interests you, backed up by facts and figures researched before your interview.
  - For example: if you discovered that the company is launching a new product in six months, tell the interviewer you’d like to contribute to that project.
- ❖ Gives examples of why you have a personal interest in working in this industry.
  - For example: you may want to work in healthcare because you have a passion for helping people. Or, you may want to work in fashion because sewing has always been a personal hobby.

## **3. What kinds of positions are you looking for?**

### **WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...**

- To understand your truest interest in this **specific** open position
- To determine your long term potential at their company
- To determine how much you have researched their company
- To read your body language to determine whether you are being honest

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***“I am interested in whatever you have open.”*** - Interviewers want to hire people with passion for their job, not desperate people.
- ***“I am interested in positions that will offer me the ability to use my skills and to grow with the company.”*** – This is too general of an answer and fails to differentiate you, in the interviewer’s mind, from other candidates.
- ***“I am interested in project management jobs, but I will also consider administrative jobs.”*** – These job categories are too diverse, which suggests that you are willing to settle.
- ***“I have a strong background in IT and have been successful in all of my positions.”*** – This doesn’t answer the question – it explains what you’ve done in the past when we want to know what you are interested in **now**.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Demonstrates exactly what you’d like to do at this point in your career.
  - Rather than rehashing your resume, speak from the heart. What do you really want to do? How can you make a difference?

- ❖ Shows your passion for the position with examples of why you enjoy doing this type of work.
  - An interviewer would prefer to hire someone who demonstrates strong interest in their position, as opposed to someone who is more qualified but lacking passion.

#### 4. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

##### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- They are concerned that you will be bored and will resign once the market improves
- To identify if this position is just a small stepping stone on your career path
- To determine if there are future opportunities at their company for you
- To see how high you personally set your sights for career growth
- To determine whether you are goal oriented and have already created a plan of action

##### WEAK ANSWERS...

- ***“I would like to become a consultant in 5 years.” Or “I plan to start my own business.”*** - Neither answer suggests that an investment in you will provide long term gains.
- ***“I’d like to manage a team in 5 years.”*** - In many instances this goal can be reached within 1-3 years, so you may want to aim for higher aspirations.
- ***“I don’t know yet. I’m just starting out in your industry.”*** – You don’t have to know for sure, but you should at least venture a guess.
- ***“What career opportunities do you have here?”*** – This doesn’t answer their question. Tell the interviewer what **you** are interested in regardless of what is available.

##### A STRONG ANSWER...

- ❖ Shows that you are taking responsibility for your own career growth while also benefitting from future mentorship.
  - For example, “I am a marketing assistant now, but one day, with the right guidance, I’d like to be the VP of Marketing.”
- ❖ Shows that you are looking to expand your skill set over time.
  - For example. “I have plenty of analytical skills because of my finance background, but my goal is to gain skills in IT and marketing so I can be a well-rounded manager.”

## 5. Why did you leave your last position?

### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- To determine whether you are voluntarily resigned, were terminated or were laid off
- To see whether you exited on a good note or a bad note and what your feelings are
- To identify if there is a better opportunity at their company for you
- So that when they check your references, they can determine if you were being honest

### WEAK ANSWERS...

- ***“Because I didn’t get along well with my boss.”*** – Even if your boss was an ogre, this raises a red flag that you might not get along well with others. Avoid negativity if possible.
- ***“Because they eliminated my position.”*** – If this is true, mention how many other positions were eliminated along with yours, and then mention your strong references.
- ***“Because the salaries they paid were not competitive.”*** - This might raise concerns that perhaps you didn’t deserve a higher salary.
- ***“Because I kept getting passed over for management opportunities.”*** – This might suggest that you are a poor performer or aren’t management material.

### A STRONG ANSWER...

- ❖ Where termination is concerned – take responsibilities for your actions without blaming former bosses, companies, or other situations
  - Mention why the company was justified in their decision to terminate you. Highlight what you learned from the experience, and explain why it will never happen again.
- ❖ Where you resigned voluntarily – explains that you are searching for new challenges which you couldn’t find at your former company.
  - Share details about what you are seeking from this new company: a stronger manager, a mentor, more responsibility, larger projects, etc.

## 6. Why are you still unemployed?

### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- To identify how actively you've been searching and your true motivation to land
- To find out what you have been doing with your time, in an indirect way
- Because they feel sympathetic about the situation and truly have an interest in knowing
- To determine whether you take responsibility for your actions

### WEAK ANSWERS...

- ***"Because the job market is terrible."*** – Do not blame outside circumstance – despite the fact that the job market might be impacting your search, people *are* landing.
- ***"Because there is too much competition."*** – Again, some of your competitors are landing because they may be using different strategies than you are.
- ***"I don't know."*** – This is a poor answer to any interview question. You should at least venture a guess.
- ***"Because I wasn't really putting my heart into my search at the beginning."*** – Unless you have a compelling reason, i.e., tending to sick family member, traveling, or taking classes, this is not a strong answer.

### A STRONG ANSWER...

- ❖ Shows that you are taking responsibility for your current situation.
  - Explain how you've accelerated your search with new approaches (such as networking) and are confident that you'll land soon.
- ❖ Details how you've been very selective and are only considering positions that are perfect for you.
  - Explain that this is an ideal position for you. Be prepared to share details about offers you may have declined or instances where you were strongly considered.

## 7. Tell me why you are the most qualified?

### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- Because they have seen candidates with educational credentials that you don't have
- To determine whether you have enough years of experience to be considered
- Because they believe that industry experience is vital for success in the position
- To see whether you have enough confidence in your skills to overcome their objection

### WEAK ANSWERS...

- ***"I have 3 years of experience and I really believe that it is more than enough for this position."*** – Disagreeing with an interviewer is never a good idea. Reminding them of what you have achieved instead is a better plan.
- ***"I have an Associate's Degree and 5 years of experience. Why isn't that sufficient?"*** – At times, a BA or BS is a fixed requirement – in this case, emphasize everything you bring to the table beyond a degree.
- ***"I've been a project manager in financial services, so a project manager in pharmaceuticals should be the same thing."*** – When changing industries, it's **your** job to convince your interviewer that each of your **specific** skills will directly transfer into the new role.

### A STRONG ANSWER...

- ❖ Demonstrates that you are confident in your skills and despite that the requirements are, you will be successful
  - For example, "Being an outstanding manager in this role requires strong leadership, communication and organizational skills, all of which my references will corroborate."
- ❖ Demonstrates that you are a fast learner and will overcome your deficiencies in short order.
  - For example, "I entered the IT industry and the manufacturing industry without having experience in either, and in both cases, I was one of the top performers in my division."

## 8. How would you rate yourself on a scale from 1-10?

### WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...

- To determine your skill level in a particular area without having to formally test you
- To see if you have strong enough skills to be successful in the position
- To evaluate if you are lacking in confidence in a particular area
- To determine whether you are self-confident or simply egotistical
- To see whether you are an honest person

### WEAK ANSWERS...

- ***"I rate myself as a 5 in Microsoft Word."*** – If Microsoft Word is a requirement, you should at least be a 7. If you truly are a 5, explain how you are improving your skills.
- ***"I rate my presentation skills a 10."*** – No one is perfect. Even the best presenter can develop their skills further with input from a new trainer or coach.
- ***"I can fix computers like no one else can!"*** –You didn't answer the question if the interviewer asked for an exact number.

### A STRONG ANSWER...

- ❖ Demonstrates confidence but also indicates that there is always room for improvement.
  - For example, " In Excel, I'm a 9 instead of a 10 because I'm currently teaching myself pivot tables." This indicates that you are at an advanced level, Can learn on your own, and are motivated to grow in your career.
- ❖ Corroborates that fact that you are strong in a particular area by introducing a third party.
  - For example, "My former manager told me that I was the best graphics designer she ever had. I always had strong performances ratings in that area, so I would rate myself as a 9 since there is always room for improvement."



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## **10. You seem overqualified, don't you agree?**

### **WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...**

- Because they are concerned that you will be bored in the position and resign prematurely
- Because they think you may not fit in with their current team
- To find out if you are honestly interested in the position
- To see how you respond to negative feedback

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***"I am interested in anything right now because of the economy."*** – Recruiters do not want to hire desperate people. They want to hire passionate people.
- ***"No, I am not overqualified."*** – To disagree with the interviewer on this topic also means that you have outstanding skills to offer.
- ***"I'm happy to stay in the position for at least a year"*** – Industries and companies differ on how long they want their employees to stay. Therefore, it's best not to talk about leaving at all.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Demonstrates that although you may be overqualified, this is exactly the career level and position you are seeking.
  - For example, "In Excel, I'm a 9 instead of a 10 because I'm currently teaching myself pivot tables." This indicates that you are at an advanced level, can learn on your own, and are motivated to grow in your career.
- ❖ Corroborates that fact that you are strong in a particular area by introducing a third party.
  - For example, "I have been a manager and a director, yet I'm looking for a position where I am a sole contributor who can make a large impact using my leadership skills."
- ❖ Reminds the interviewer that there are benefits to hiring an overqualified person, using some concrete examples.
  - For example, "Thank you for recognizing my strong skills. If you were a passenger, would you prefer a qualified or overqualified pilot? How about just qualified surgeon? I may be overqualified, but I will also be a strong and more efficient performer than someone who is just qualified."

## **11. Tell me about your least favorite manager?**

### **WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...**

- To determine what kinds of kinds of manager you like and/or dislike
- To ensure that you are strong match for the manager to whom the position reports
- To see how well you respect authority and if you speak negatively about former managers
- To ensure that you get along well with people in general
- To determine what your management style is.

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***“I never had a manager that I didn’t like.”*** – Unless you’ve only had one manager, you are dodging the question with this answer.
- ***“My manager Bob was a jerk. He treated everyone badly”*** – Keep your answer positive, even when it’s about a manager that you didn’t like.
- ***“I didn’t like my manager because he made promises and didn’t keep them, like when he promised to promote me.”*** – This might raise concerns in your interviewer’s mind that perhaps you were not strong enough to be promoted.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Indicates that you can take difficult situations and turn them into positive experiences.
  - For example, “Bob was a micromanager whose style didn’t fit my personality. I am a strong performer that is productive without being closely monitored. Once Bob became confident in my excellent work, he loosened the reigns.
- ❖ Demonstrate that you can learn from poor behavior.
  - For example, “My manager berated people publically, so I was afraid to make mistakes. While I never was the subject to his waft, I learned to never do that to my own staff, despite the mistakes they may make. ”

## **12. What is your greatest weakness?**

### **WHY INTERVIEWERS ASK THIS...**

- To determine whether your weakness will be detrimental for the position in question
- To identify your long term potential at the company, despite your weaknesses
- To gauge whether you are a negative or positive person
- To read your body language to determine if you are being honest

### **WEAK ANSWERS...**

- ***“I have been known to be late on occasion.”*** – Employees don’t hire people who are tardy.
- ***“I am a procrastinator”*** – This isn’t a great quality for most jobs.
- ***“I am a workaholic and can’t say no.”*** – Interviewers hear this all the time and would likely tell you to provide another response.
- ***“I am a perfectionist.”*** – This is not considered a weakness for many positions.
- ***“I am a manager who has high expectations of my staff, so I push them hard.”*** – This is now a weakness for many industries and will prompt a request for another.

### **A STRONG ANSWER...**

- ❖ Is genuine and demonstrates that you are aware of your own limitations
  - There are no perfect employees – companies seek to hire honest, coachable employees.
- ❖ Contains an actual weakness, yet also details how you are working to improve and overcome it.
  - For example, “My manager berated people publically, so I was afraid to make mistakes. While I never was the subject to his waft, I learned to never do that to my own staff, despite the mistakes they may make. ”