

The Complete Guide To
JOB INTERVIEW

ANSWERS

HOW TO GET JOB OFFERS WORD-FOR-WORD, EVEN IF
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ON AN INTERVIEW IN YOUR LIFE

CAREERSIDEKICK.COM

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO JOB INTERVIEW ANSWERS

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Introduction: What Will This Guide *Really* Do For You?

Hi, my name's Biron Clark, I'm a recruiter who has helped hundreds of job seekers get hired... in a lot of different industries like pharmaceuticals, biotech, software/IT, and more. Don't worry if you're not in one of those industries. The methods in this guide will help you get hired for *any* field or job.

Here's the deal- interviewing is a different skill than what you use to be great at your actual job. I can't help you become a better Accountant or Electrician or Scuba Instructor overnight. But I can help you get the job.

I'm excited that you took the first step and invested in this guide. I'm going to share with you everything I know about interview answers and techniques so that you can land a new job without all the stress.

Inside you're going to get the top 130 interview questions and answers to practice. I'm also going to give you the interview preparation steps and strategies that I've tested and recommended throughout my career. They really make a big difference in your success.

I'll show you how to use all of this to influence the outcome and tilt the odds strongly in your favor, even if you're not the most experienced person the company is interviewing. I want to help you feel confident and pass as many interviews as possible so you can land the job you deserve.

Let's get started...

SECTION ONE:

HOW TO GIVE PERFECT
INTERVIEW ANSWERS

The 4 “Keys” To A Great Interview Answer

Before we get into the interview questions and answers in the next section, let’s look at what makes a great answer. The examples coming up will make a lot more sense (and be a lot more helpful) after this.

So, what are the key pieces to a great answer? Great interview answers have a few things in common. They are...

1. **Detailed and specific**- Great answers use numbers, statistics and proof to impress the interviewer. They give exact information to back up your stories. They avoid general statements like “I’m a hard worker so I’m sure I would do well in this job.”
2. **Direct and clear**- Employers want someone who can be clear and get to the point quickly. Great answers address the question asked, without filling in unnecessary details and distractions. They provide enough information to be convincing, but they stay laser-focused on the original question.
3. **Results oriented**- Great answers talk about what you’ve achieved and accomplished in the past, rather than just talking about what you’re capable of in the future. Past accomplishments are a powerful way of showing your future value. So you’ll want to have a few stories of past successes that relate closely to the job. That brings us to the final point...

4. **“Tailored” to the company-** The average job seeker gives answers about themselves. If you want to stand out and get hired, you need to “tailor” your answers and make it about them. What are their concerns and challenges? What are their goals? How can you present yourself as a solution to their problems? How will you make them money (or save them money)? That’s what you need to show them in the stories and examples you share.

Coming up next: Don’t worry if that last piece on “tailoring” sounds difficult or intimidating, in the next chapter I’m going to give you three simple rules you can follow to give tailored answers quickly and easily.

The Perfect Tailoring Method

In your interviews, “tailoring” means customizing your answers for the company you’re talking to.

Is it really necessary? Yes. If you’re competing with anyone else for the job, it will make a huge difference. You’ll get more job offers and land a better job, no question.

I’m going to give you the best tailoring method I’ve found. It’s simple and easy to remember. There are just three rules to follow:

Rule 1: Know your audience. Review the job description and company website before your interview. Make sure you understand their business and the job requirements. How do they make money? Who are their customers? What does this job involve? You can’t give targeted answers if you don’t know anything about them. If you’re not sure how to do this research, I cover this in much more detail in the next chapter (“11 Step Complete Interview Preparation Method”).

Rule 2: Think from their perspective. Once you’ve studied the job and company, sit down and think about the type of person they’d want to hire. Really pretend you’re them. What problems do they seem to be looking for help with? What topics or skills are mentioned first on the job description? What pieces of experience seem required or essential?

Rule 3: Make your answers about *them*. Once you have an idea what they want, prepare detailed stories that will highlight your abilities that

relate to this job. When you give answers, try to target their priorities and needs. Make yourself seem like a solution to their problems and give highly relevant examples to show them your skills and experience are a great fit for what they need.

Let's look at an example. Say the interviewer asks you: *"Why do you think you would do well in this position?"*

I'm going to give you two sample answers. See if you can tell which person studied the company ahead of time and used it to tailor their answer.

Person A: *"Great question. I've been in the software industry for seven years and I've been managing people for three of those years, so I'm very confident I can come in and succeed in this Manager position. Managing people is one of my greatest strengths and I'm an experienced leader who could help the company grow in the coming years."*

Person B: *"Great question. I've been in the software industry for seven years and I've been managing people for three of those years, so I'm very confident I can come in and succeed in this Manager position. I'm also very comfortable hiring and training people. I read on your website that you have a goal of hiring 30 more entry level software engineers this year so I'd be ready to help with that effort immediately. I interviewed and hired my entire team of nine developers in my last job."*

See the difference? Person B is relating their experience to the job description and talking about how they can come in and solve the company's problems right away, in detail.

Person A gave a decent answer and is definitely qualified, but it sounds like the same answer they'd give any company looking to hire a Manager. It's not as convincing.

Coming up next: In the next chapter I'm going to give you the 10-step interview preparation method that I've used and recommended for years. It has everything you need to know about researching the company and getting ready before the interview. If you follow these steps you'll immediately stand out and impress the interviewer.

10 Step Complete Interview Preparation Method

These are the steps you should take before any interview. All of this will make the interview easier and more comfortable for you to navigate.

I know your time is important so I've listed the steps that I feel have the highest impact and are most beneficial. These are all things that I advise my clients to do, and things I would do myself.

Step 1. The 10 Minute Company Research Method

An interviewer isn't expecting you to be an expert on their company, but they're not going to hire you if you didn't put any effort into learning about them before applying or coming in to interview.

Here are some simple company research steps you can follow:

- Go on the company website. Find their mission statement if they have one. Make sure you understand it.
- Find out what services or products they sell. How do they make money?
- Look on Google. Who are their top one or two competitors and how do they seem different?
- Search Google News to see if there are any recent stories or press releases about the company. Find something new they are doing. Then ask a question about this in the interview to show interest in the job

and company. Example: *"I was on your website doing research and I saw a mention of _____. Can you tell me more about _____?"*

- Go on LinkedIn and look up the person you're interviewing with. Know what department they're in, how long they've been with the company, and what they did before this. Not only will it help you build a connection, but you can use this to predict what types of questions they're likely to ask you. More on this later.

Not knowing a single thing about the position or company you've applied to work for is the equivalent of an interviewer speaking with you before they've bothered taking a look at your resume. Not a great impression, right?

So take 10 minutes and follow the steps above for each company you speak with.

Step 2. Decide Why You're Interested in Their Job

Most companies are going to ask why you want to work for them, why you want the specific job, or both.

It only takes one or two good reasons to satisfy the interviewer, but not having anything prepared can lead to a very bad start to the interview.

Pick something unique to the company or role you've applied for. You want to appear excited about them in particular, not just any job. And beyond that you want to sound excited for a work-related reason (as opposed to salary, commute time, friends in the company, etc.) Here are a couple of examples:

Do say this:

- *"I reviewed the job description and I think the role would be a great next step in my career because ____"*
- *"I've heard great things about the company culture and I'm also very interested in the problems your business is solving such as ____"*

Don't say this:

- *"I applied because I need a job that pays more"*
- *"I applied because I need to find employment"*
- *"I applied because your office is close to my house"*
- *"I applied because I read that you offer four weeks of vacation"*

Think of it like dating. If you're on a first date and the person asks why you were interested, how are they going to feel if you say, "I was bored and just needed anyone to go out with tonight." Now compare that to saying, "It seemed like we had a lot in common and I wanted to get to know you better." Big difference, right?

Step 3. Decide the Main Reason You're Job Searching

The question you'll likely see here is: "So why are you looking for a new job?"

Most hiring managers won't hire someone who seems impulsive or can't explain what they're looking for.

If you're unemployed and don't have a current job, the way you explain yourself will be especially critical.

Be up-front and tell them you're in an active job search, but then focus the conversation on what you're looking for next.

Try to show that you've put a lot of thought into what is important to you in your job search and what you saw in this particular job that excited you.

Example answer:

"I'm in an active job search after being laid off four months ago. One of the big things I'm hoping to find next is a chance to further develop my leadership. This job seems to require that skill set and offer a chance to grow it further so I was excited to learn more about it."

If you are currently working while looking for a job, it's still important to give a good answer when they ask why you want a new job.

Whatever reason you choose, keep it work-related and phrase it as a positive. You can turn absolutely anything into a positive if you plan ahead of time.

Trying to escape a horrible manager? Tell the interviewer you're looking for an environment with stronger leadership to learn from.

Completely bored in your current job? Tell them you've enjoyed your role but you feel that you're ready for an even bigger challenge now.

I like the phrase: *"I'm ready for ____."* It sounds positive rather than sounding like a complaint. Examples:

- *"I'm ready for a bigger challenge at this point in my career"*
- *"I'm ready for exposure to a new type of product"*
- *"I'm ready for more leadership"*
- *"I'm ready for more decision-making and responsibility"*

Step 4. Review Your Resume

If you haven't interviewed in a while it's a good idea to glance through your own resume and make sure you're familiar with what the interviewer is looking at when talking with you. It'll help you tell a clear story and avoid mistakes when answering questions about your background.

Step 5. Study the Job Description

Hiring managers are looking for someone who can come in and make a real impact. Solve problems. Help the company make money. Etc.

To get hired for high quality jobs, you need to find out what they want and make the interview about them. The best way is to look at the job description.

The Five Minute Job Description Checklist:

- What is mentioned first or emphasized in the first paragraph?
- What are the top two skills or areas of experience they're looking for? Did they mention leadership before technical skills? Or vice-versa?
- What type of personality do they seem to want? Someone who is cooperative? Someone who takes initiative? Solves problems? Is independent?
- Is there anything that looks like it's absolutely required?

Step 6. Compare Your Resume to the Job Description

Once you've looked at the job description and your resume, compare the two. Look for overlaps and similarities.

The goal is to be ready to point out direct ways in which your experience will help you succeed if you're hired.

Companies want to hire someone who can hit the ground running and help immediately. Not someone who will need a lot of training and time to learn everything.

Let's say they ask the following: *"So, what made you feel you'd be a good candidate for this job?"*

Your answer: *"I noticed the job description mentions leading multiple high-impact projects for this group. It's an area I've done a lot with in the past. In my last job I managed the two largest and most complex projects in my department, and I'm eager to continue doing this in my career."*

You've just shown them that you've read the job description closely, that you have relevant experience in this area, and that you're excited to learn more on this topic.

Note: When you point out relevant areas in your background, recent experience is much better. In the interviewer's mind, each year that has passed takes away from the sharpness of your skills. It's not always true that your skills have "slipped" over time, but that's the perception.

Step 7. Prepare a Two Minute Summary of Your Career

This is in case they open the interview by asking, *"So, can you tell me about yourself?"* Or, *"can you walk me through your background?"*

This question isn't just a casual icebreaker. They're asking for a specific reason and it's not what most people suspect.

Sure, they care about your career story. They want to know how you got on your current path, why it interests you, etc. But they're also interested in seeing if you can deliver a concise story without getting sidetracked.

So you need to find a starting point, tell your story, and arrive at your current situation. What you want to choose for the starting point depends on your experience level.

If you just graduated, start the beginning of your latest education. Why you chose that area of study, some highlights along the way, projects, internships, and conclude with what you're looking for now in your job search.

If you have between one and ten years of experience, I'd recommend starting at the moment you graduated and joined the workforce. *"I graduated with my degree in Finance in 2014 and then..."*

If you have more than ten years of experience, you may want to consider starting your story even later. If you're applying for high level management positions, you might start at the beginning of your career in management: *"I first got into management in 2003 with a small software startup called..."*

Assuming you have some prior work experience, here are a few things to cover:

- How you got started in your current line of work
- Your most impressive accomplishments
- Key career moves you've made and why
- Finish by bringing them up to speed on your current situation and goals in this job search

Practice telling your career story in two minutes or less. The good news is that once you have this down, you'll be able to use it in every interview.

Here's a full example. This is what I would have said earlier in my career when looking to leave my first Recruiting job and join the next one:

"Well, my first job after graduating was an Account Management position for a telecom company. I liked the selling aspects of the role, but I wasn't passionate about the telecom industry. I started looking into sales positions and spoke with a friend about it, who mentioned I should also look into Recruiting because it's similar. I ended up joining a small biotech Recruiting firm, spending two years with the company while learning the industry, advancing in the organization and taking on internal leadership and mentoring responsibilities too. It's been a great experience but I feel I'm ready for an even bigger challenge now."

Any time you can show advancement or promotions within a single company is great. Do this if you can. Even if it's something small like training a few new hires.

Step 8. Review Your Previous Job Changes

Whether or not you're employed right now, there's a chance the interviewer will look through your resume and ask why you've moved from one company to the next in your career. So you want to be ready with answers ahead of time.

You can use some of the same advice I gave earlier about your reason for job searching: Don't phrase your answer as a complaint, and keep it work-related.

You can use phrases like these, which sound very positive:

- *"I left for an opportunity to _____"*
- *"I wanted more _____"*

Try to keep your answers very brief in this situation too. The goal is to satisfy the question and move on, not dwell on this topic or invite follow-up questions.

Here are some specific examples of good answers to explain job moves:

- *"My position was eliminated and I was laid off"*
- *"I left for career advancement and a higher level position"*
- *"I left for a chance to learn new skills, and a higher salary" (don't JUST say higher salary, combine it with something work-related)*
- *"I took a position that I felt would advance my career, and also shortened my commute" (same concept as above, don't JUST mention commute length)*
- *"I stayed for three years and learned a lot of valuable skills, but I felt it was time for a new challenge"*
- *"The company went through a period of struggle and I was laid off"*
- *"A colleague approached me and told me about an opportunity at his company"*
- *"I was recruited out of the company for a better opportunity"*
- *"The role changed a lot after I was hired. I left for a position that was a better fit for my career"*

Here are some reasons I'd avoid using:

- *"The commute was too long"*
- *"The work was boring"*
- *"My boss was horrible"*
- *"I had a disagreement with my boss or coworker"*

- *"I didn't agree with what the company was doing"*

The last two bullet points are very important. Don't ever plan on sharing a story about a disagreement or personal clash at work unless you have no choice. As soon as you share a story like this, the interviewer is going to start wondering if there's another side to the story. They're going to start thinking about whether you were part of the problem, even if you weren't at all!

Step 9. Review the Fundamentals

It's easy to fall into the trap of assuming you'll be fine in any interview because you're great at your previous or current job. But there are often big differences between the day-to-day work and the information companies will ask about in an interview.

I saw this a lot while coaching software engineers as a recruiter. They'd come to me after the interview and be frustrated because they had been asked questions that weren't needed to do the everyday work. They weren't able to answer many of them, but told me they were sure they could do the job if they were given a chance. That's the problem though- if you fail these questions you won't be given a chance to do the work. They didn't get hired.

So, don't just rely on instincts. If there's some background "academic" knowledge related to your field, consider brushing up on it before interviewing. You just need to do it once before beginning your job search, which is great.

This is especially important if you haven't interviewed in many years but have a lot of work experience.

Step 10. Know Who You're Talking To

Surprises are bad. The more you know before your interview, the better.

If you don't know who your interview is with, get in touch with whoever scheduled it for you and ask them. Find out who you'll be speaking with and look at their background on LinkedIn. If they have a very technical background, it's more likely they'll ask technical questions. If they're in HR, it's less likely but still possible.

If it's an on-site interview, also ask how the interview is structured: Is the entire interview with one person or multiple people? Is it a panel interview with everyone in the same room? Or will you be meeting each person one-by-one?

How to Practice

Nothing comes out perfect the first time... As a final step, practice your answers for the topics above to make sure you're mentioning the key points that you want to hit. However, I don't recommend memorizing answers word for word...

People who do that end up having so many phrases memorized that it gets jumbled and mixed up in their head. In the heat of the moment, they get nervous and it comes out wrong. Instead, think of each answer as a list of points you want to mention. Practice by checking if you hit each point.

Coming up next: Now that you know how to research and prepare for your interview (and a couple of the very first questions they'll ask you), let's look at 130 of the most common questions you'll face throughout the interview, with word-for-word answers you can use to practice and copy.

SECTION TWO:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS

78 Standard Interview Questions

The following chapter contains 78 competency-based interview questions with example answers. Each question also has an explanation of what key traits or pieces of information the interviewer is looking for, so you can avoid mistakes and feel confident in your answers.

You'll notice some of the preparation tips we covered in the previous chapters will be used in the example answers... like "tailoring" your answer based on the job, talking about things you noticed while researching the company, etc. If you haven't reviewed the previous sections, I recommend doing it now.

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Questions about your job search:

“What are you looking for in a new position?”

Interviewers ask this to see how careful you’re being in your job hunt. They aren’t going to hire you if you seem desperate. So be **specific** and be ready to answer without too much hesitation.

Example Answer:

“My priority right now is to find a job that will challenge me technically. I’m looking to stretch my skills and work with problems and difficult situations that I haven’t faced before. I did some reading about the technology and equipment your company is using and I think it’d provide a great environment for this so I wanted to learn more about the opportunity.”

(Aside from technical challenges, here are three other common things you can say you’re looking for: a chance to develop as a leader, a chance to work with a type of product or industry you are excited about, or a chance to work with a company whose mission/purpose you are excited about. Whatever you say, make sure it is something that fits the employer).

“Why are you looking to leave your current job?”

If you are employed, the interviewer will always want to know why you’re willing to leave. The key is to **avoid complaining** or sounding negative. Impress them by sounding positive about your recent experience and then talk about the things you are looking for in your next opportunity.

Example Answer:

"That's a great question. I've been in my current role for three years now and I enjoy it a lot. I've learned the industry and really grown my skills here, but I feel that in order to develop my career further I need to expose myself to a new set of challenges and a new work environment. So I'm looking for another great non-profit that can use my skills in PR and marketing to grow while providing these new experiences."

"Why did you leave your last job?"

Interviewers are always curious about past job changes. If you left willingly, your goal is to show them you make logical decisions and you had a good reason for leaving (see the full list below). If you were fired or laid off, be direct and upfront. The more you hesitate or sound unsure, the worse it appears. So rule #1 here is be **clear and direct**. Also, never badmouth past jobs, bosses or coworkers. **Don't complain or blame anyone else**, no matter what happened.

Example Answer If You Were Laid Off:

"Unfortunately, my company's biggest client went out of business and our revenue dropped substantially. My entire group of 10 was laid off because of this. I'm proud of the work that I did there up until this point though. I received stellar performance reviews, and my former manager is one of my strongest references."

Example Answer If You Were Fired:

"After some management changes, it became clear that the new department director had expectations for the role that didn't really fit with my strengths."

He ultimately decided to bring in someone from his previous organization who had more sales experience. The experience taught me that my real talent is in customer service and I know I would be a major asset in a role like this one, which focuses on improving customer experience. Would you like me to tell you more about my skills in that area?"

Example Answer If You Left Willingly:

"I had spent 4 years with the company and had learned a lot, but I felt like I needed to expose myself to a new set of challenges and a new work environment in order to continue growing. So I decided it was the right time for a change. My boss and team fully understood and wished me the best."

If you missed it in the last chapter, here is a list of reasons you can use to explain previous job moves:

- I was laid off
- I left for career advancement and a higher level position
- I left for an industry that I was interested in joining
- I left to work on a certain project or product that interested me
- I left to join a company I strongly admired
- I left for a chance to learn new skills, and a higher salary (don't just say higher salary, combine it with something work-related)
- I took a position that I felt would advance my career, and also shortened my commute (same concept as above, don't just mention commute time)
- I stayed for three years and learned a lot of valuable skills, but I felt it was time for a new challenge
- A colleague approached me and told me about an opportunity at their company
- I was recruited out of the company for a better opportunity

- The role changed a lot after I was hired, and I left for a position that was a better fit for my abilities

“How has your job search gone so far?”

This question can be intimidating but usually the interviewer is honestly curious how things are looking for you. You don't want to make it sound like you have absolutely nothing going on, but it's okay to say you've just started your job search and you're just beginning to explore different options. **Don't lie and say you have job offers if you don't.** It'll just lead to more questions and more lies.

Example Answer:

"It's gone well so far. I'm still relatively early in the process but I've had a few good phone conversations with companies that have indicated they'd like to move into the next steps with me. I don't have any expected offers yet but that could change next week. I can keep you updated."

Example Answer #2:

"It's gone very well. I'm in discussion with a few different companies at various stages of the process. I do have one offer in hand, but I told them that I'd like the opportunity to finish the interview process with the other companies I'm speaking to, and they understood. So I want to focus on evaluating my options and finding the job that can take advantage of my skills, and provide an environment that will help me continue growing as a scientific researcher."

"What other types of jobs have you been applying for?"

The interviewer wants to make sure you're interested in this type of job, and that you didn't apply because you're desperate. If their job is in sales and the 10 other jobs you've applied for are in HR, it's going to be a big concern for them. So you need to put their mind at ease and show them you've applied to similar jobs and that you're interested in this field. **Don't mention specific companies**, just tell them the types of jobs.

Example Answer For Entry Level Candidates:

"I've been applying for entry level lab technician roles, with a focus on large hospitals that have a reputation for research. Your hospital came up in a couple of conversations I had with colleagues and former professors, and seemed to be a great fit for what I'm looking for. So I thought it made a lot of sense to come in and have a conversation to learn more about the opportunity."

Example Answer For Experienced Candidates:

"I've been applying for lead and senior analyst positions at large or midsized banks, just like this one. I think that's the ideal next step in my career after 3 years as a junior analyst. In my last position I had the opportunity to lead a number of small projects and enjoyed the leadership aspects of that role, so that's something I'm looking forward to doing more of."

“What other companies are you interviewing with?”

If you want to share the names of specific companies you can, but I don't recommend it, and I would never do it in my own job search. It's safer to keep things confidential, and here's an easy way to do it:

Example Answer:

"I'm speaking with a couple of technology startups like yours that are looking to grow their backend software engineering teams. I'd like to keep the company names confidential. I would do the same for your organization if another company asked me who I was speaking with."

“Why are you looking for a new job?”

If you're unemployed, they want to know what happened. And they want to see if you've taken responsibility instead of blaming others. **Never badmouth** your last supervisor or company.

If you're employed, they want to learn why you're willing to change. Make sure your reason is **career-related**, not personal. And focus on the positives you want to gain in your next job instead of any negatives you want to escape.

Example Answer If You're Unemployed:

"I was fired from my last position two months ago. I learned a lot from the situation and take responsibility for the things I could have done better, such as communicating more clearly and developing better organization. I've taken steps to make sure this never happens again and I'm looking for a

company that can take advantage of my skills and provide the next step in my career."

Example Answer#2 If You're Unemployed:

"My last company laid me off when they went through a large downsizing and moved all manufacturing to Mexico. I'm actively looking for jobs and I'm hoping to find a company that can use my engineering and manufacturing expertise in a high-tech environment. I've read a lot about the state-of-the-art manufacturing systems you use, so this seems like the type of opportunity I'm looking for. To stay current over the past year I've consulted for 5-10 hours a week and completed multiple online courses related to manufacturing automation."

Example Answer If You're Employed:

"I've been in my current position for two years and have enjoyed it, but I think that in order to advance my career further I need to experience a new work environment and new challenges. So I'm looking to find a growing company with a strong finance team that could use my skills. I've read about your recent growth as a company in Forbes and on your own blog, and would be excited to help with some of the financial challenges in a fast-growing environment like this."

"What is one thing you're looking to either have or not have in your next position?"

This question is pretty open-ended. Keep your answer professional and work-related. Focus on **what you need to grow your career** and try to give an answer that makes you sound motivated and positive. And be

specific. Companies want to hire people who know what they want. This is not a good question for you to say, "I'm not sure."

Example Answer:

"I've been honing my data analysis skills for a few years now and, first and foremost, I'm looking for a position where I can continue to exercise those skills. Another thing that's important to me is that the position allows me to not only play with data, but also present my findings and suggestions directly to clients. That would be really exciting to me! I'm always very motivated by being able to see the impact of my work on other people. I noticed on the job description that interaction with clients is mentioned a few times, so this seemed like a great fit for that. Is that accurate?"

Example Answer #2:

"I enjoy collaboration. It's very important for me to be able to share ideas and cooperate with a team in my next role. I'm comfortable and able to work independently, but I find work more fulfilling when I'm given a chance to collaborate with other colleagues and even other departments in an organization. So I'd love to find an environment that encourages teamwork and communication."

(Note that both sample answers above are focused on what you'd like to have, instead of what you *wouldn't* like to have in your next job. I'd recommend this, as it sounds more positive).

"What are your salary requirements?"

If you want to be well paid, you do NOT want to give a specific number here. Especially if it's a first or second interview. You have the **least amount of leverage** to negotiate at that point. Why? The company isn't even sure they

want to hire you. So if you give an answer that's too high, you'll scare them off. If you give a number that's too low, you'll be stuck later. It's a lose-lose situation, so use this instead:

Example Answer:

"I really don't have a specific number in mind yet. My focus right now is to find the best fitting position for my career. Once I've done that, I'm willing to consider any offer you feel is fair."

"How soon could you be available to start?"

Be honest here. Set a reasonable expectation so there are no surprises down the road. If you require more than the standard amount of time (two or three weeks), explain why and ask if that's okay with them.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I'm available immediately. I could start within one week from the time an offer is made. I would just need time to review the offer and make a decision."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"A standard two week notice is all I would need, from the time an offer is made. Does that fit with the timeframe you had in mind?"

Example Answer If You Are Relocating:

"I would need a two week notice period, and two weeks to relocate. So in total I could begin within one month of accepting an offer. Does that fit with what you'd expect or what you were hoping for?"

“Would you work holidays/weekends?”

Be upfront and honest about your schedule. Employers are often willing to work around legitimate concerns such as family or education. Plus, you also want to make sure the position fits your needs. Don't try to mislead anyone. **Show you're excited to work for them** but be realistic about what you can and cannot do. And give as little personal information as possible. Keep it professional and only share the necessary details.

Example Answer:

"I'm a single parent, so while I can pick up an occasional weekend shift, I cannot commit to working every weekend. However, my holidays are much more flexible as long as I set my schedule in advance."

Example Answer #2:

"I'm an efficient worker, so I will gladly put in extra time as needed, but I find I can get the vast majority of my work completed during the regular workweek. I have no problem with the occasional long work weekend or holiday though."

“Are you willing to relocate?”

Be honest to avoid wasting time on a job you can't take. If you think it's a possibility, say so. Otherwise tell them it's not. Another piece of advice:

Don't mention specific things you'd relocate for. It doesn't sound good if you say "I'd relocate but only if I receive a \$5,000 raise." Or "I'd relocate but only if it's San Francisco or Chicago." So decide if you'd relocate for the right opportunity or not, and then give an answer. You can decide later if the opportunity is worth moving for. At this point you're just telling them if you could relocate for the right job.

Example Answer If Yes:

"Yes, for the right position I'm open to relocating. My priority is to find the best fit for my career right now."

Example Answer If No:

"I would very much like to join this company but I cannot relocate right now due to family reasons. I'm only looking for opportunities in my local area at the moment."

"Are you willing to travel for this position?"

Set realistic expectations for what you can and cannot do. You don't want to get hired for a job that has you traveling twice as much as you want, right? So it's best to give them a clear picture of what works for you, and turn it into a **back and forth discussion** about whether the job is a fit. Also, you can say you're flexible, give them an example of what type of travel would be fine, or even talk about a past position where you traveled and enjoyed it.

Example Answer If Yes:

"I am definitely willing to travel. My previous role at Bank of America required occasional travel and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to develop long-term relationship with clients in this position. Based on the conversations I've had with other financial consultants in this division, it sounds like they travel one or two times a month. Is that accurate?"

Example Answer If No:

"Unfortunately I'm not available to travel as a part of my job right now. If there's an occasional meeting that requires travel, that is fine. But I'm supporting my family and wouldn't be able to travel weekly or monthly. Is that something that you require for this position?"

"What are your career goals?"

The interviewer is always going to choose someone who seems goal-oriented if possible. For your answer, start with the short term and then go to long term. Also, **make sure your answer fits the job** you're discussing. If you mention a number of goals that will not be met by this job, they're going to assume you won't like the role. So they won't hire you, even if you could have done the job.

Example Answer #1:

"In the short term, I hope to work as a sales representative for a large healthcare company that is known for high quality products and customer service. Your organization caught my eye because of this. Working as a sales representative for a company whose mission I believe in will prepare me to hopefully take on expanded responsibilities in the future as they become available, and my long term goal is to either lead a sales team or train others in sales, after I've mastered the fundamentals and proven myself."

Example Answer #2:

"My current short-term goal is to use my marketing and communications skills to grow my career within a digital marketing agency like yours. I eventually want to develop into a position that also involves leading a team, so I plan on taking initiative to learn and advance my skills beyond the requirements of this job. One way I'll do this is by taking leadership roles

when working on group projects. That way when the opportunity to advance presents itself, I'll be ready to take the next step in the organization."

"Do you have any questions for me?"

Employers are **judging you** based on this simple question. They want to see if you have intelligent questions to ask and if you seem interested in the job. The two things you should focus on are the job and company. If you don't ask anything, they will think you're either not interested or **unprepared**. If you ask about salary or benefits, they're going to think that is all you care about, so save it for a follow up conversation. Here are some work-related questions you can copy:

Example Answer #1:

"Yes, I have a question. If I'm hired for this position, what would you recommend I do in the first 60 days to be as successful here as possible?"

Example Answer #2:

"I read on the company website that you recently started doing _____. Can you tell me more about _____?"

Example Answer #3:

"Why did you decide to come work at this company and what do you enjoy most about the job now that you're here?"

(Opinion-based questions like Example #3 are great because you can ask the same question to multiple people. You should ask at least one question to each person you meet, so opinion-based questions are a way of making sure you never run out of questions).

Questions about the job and company:

“How did you hear about this position?”

It's hard to get this question wrong, but there are a few guidelines to follow. Make sure you give **a brief, concise answer** that explains how you found them. Then explain **what caught your interest** or what made you want to apply.

Example Answer #1:

"I came across your website while doing some research on the top medical device companies in the Boston area. I noticed you're involved pretty heavily in prosthetics and that's an area that I'm excited about working in as an engineer, so I knew I should apply."

Example Answer #2:

"I mentioned to a colleague that I'm looking for a new opportunity in android development, and she told me that she had heard positive things about your work environment, and your lineup of products. I decided to apply to find out more about the opportunity and see if the position you have open is a good fit for my skills."

“What do you know about our company?”

This is one of the first things a company will ask you. It can set the tone for the whole interview and **it can cost you the job** if you don't have an answer prepared. The good news is it takes less than five minutes to ace this question. Here are a few steps to get you ready: First, search Google News

for the company name and read about a few recent developments. Then go on their corporate website and read about their products and services. **At the very least you should know how they make money and why their customers choose them.** Also considering finding out who their competitors are, who their CEO is, and how and when they were founded.

Example Answer #1:

"I went on your website and read about your product line and who your typical customer is. It seems like your software solves a pretty significant problem for startups that are hiring quickly but don't have the money to have an in-house HR team. I also did some research into your competitors. It seems like you have one or two other companies in this space, but from what I can tell, your pricing is more competitive and your software looks simpler and easier to use. Is that accurate or is there something else that sets you apart even more in terms of the competition?"

Example Answer #2:

"I found out about your company from a Forbes article that mentioned your CEO. So I read a lot about his background in finance, and how he came up with the idea for your business. Other than that, I know you mostly target younger professionals who don't trust traditional financial advisors and want a safe way to invest their money, without paying high fees. I have a few friends that use your website and they've all mentioned low fees as one of the reasons they chose you."

(Notice how some of the example answers in this guide end with a question for the interviewer. Like example #1 above. This is a great way to turn the interview into a back-and-forth dialogue and build a great connection. It'll make the whole process calmer and less stressful and will make you more

likeable. I'll share a lot more on this in the chapter titled: "11 Strategies for Interview Success". But for now, just try to notice when you see it).

"What is it about this opportunity that most excites you?"

This is another way interviewers check whether you did some research before coming in to interview. At the same time, they want to see if the job fits what you want in your career. You'll hear this over and over again throughout the guide, but the idea is this: They aren't just trying to find out if you can do the work; they're checking if you actually want the job and if you'll enjoy working there. **They want to hire people who will be excited about the work** because those people are more likely to work hard and stay longer.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"The courses I enjoyed most in college were those that involved lab work. I read the job description for this position and it seems very lab-focused. I'd be excited about having the chance to work hands-on and develop my skills further in the lab. I also noticed on your website that you mention a mentoring program for new hires, which sounds really interesting. Is there any more information you can share about that while we're on the topic?"

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"After five years in marketing, I'm looking for an opportunity to take on more leadership. I think that's the ideal next step in my career. I did some digging on your website and the way that teams and projects are set up in your organization looks really unique. I was attracted to the position because it seems like it'd allow me to take the lead on multiple projects, while also

keeping my hands-on marketing skills sharp. I don't want to get too far from the hands-on work so this excites me a lot."

"What's your greatest fear about this opportunity?"

This is another question that will test how much you know about the job. If you haven't reviewed the job description you will struggle with this question. So make sure you know your facts. You can also **use this as a chance to ask questions of your own.**

Example Answer:

"I don't necessarily have fears but there are a few things I wanted to clarify or find out more about. One of my long term goals is to mentor and train others. Can you tell me a bit about the company's plans for growth, and whether you give your employees the opportunity to train and teach others as they advance?"

"Who are our competitors?"

Talk about direct... this question doesn't give you any room to escape if you haven't done some research. You'll either know or you won't, so if you want to be ready for this, study up on their industry and find out who else sells something similar. **SimilarWeb.com is a good tool** for finding related businesses by plugging in a company's web address.

Example Answer:

"I went on SimilarWeb.com and it seems like your biggest competitor is a company called AllSource. I saw they offer many of the same products as

you, but they seem to be targeting a lower-end market. Is your strategy to cater to premium buyers?"

"What is the name of our CEO?"

If you're reading these questions in order you're probably noticing a theme here. We're getting into some very direct questions that **you need to study ahead of time** for. As a part of your company research, find out some information about the CEO so you'll be ready for this question.

Example Answer:

"Her name is Andrea Benson. I was reading about her on your website last night. Her background in psychology seems pretty unique for this industry. I was looking at a few of your competitors and it seems like they're all founded by people from the HR industry. So I enjoyed reading about her story."

"What caught your eye about this position, and why did you apply?"

To give a good answer here you'll need to know some detailed information about the job (**study the job description**), and you'll need to be able to explain what you're looking for in your job search. Then connect the two.

Example Answer:

"Two things caught my eye about the position. First, I read about your company culture on your own website and in a few articles online. I'm really attracted to that type of collaborative environment and it's something I'm looking for right now. I'm also passionate about the problems your company is solving in cancer treatment. I have a few family members who have been

diagnosed with cancer in the past few years so it's one of the areas I'd be most excited to work in. The job seemed like a good fit for my technical skills, and when I read about these two other factors, I knew I should apply."

"What concerns or hesitations do you have about this opportunity?"

This is very similar an earlier question, "What's your greatest fear about this opportunity?" This is another chance to ask a few questions of your own about the job. You don't want to sound extremely worried though. Try to phrase your questions as things you're curious about.

Example Answer:

"I did some research and noticed you had a significant round of layoffs a few years ago. Can you tell me more about that, and the current health of the company as well? Job security is something that's important to me and I'm looking for an organization where I can grow my career in the long term."

"What do you think we could do better or differently?"

If they ask this, they want to see that you can come up with ideas on the spot. Don't back away from the question and don't tell them you can't think of anything. Give them **at least one idea** for how they can improve. If you can, talk about how you'd go about implementing this if you were hired too.

Example Answer:

"In my career as a social media manager I've seen a few small changes make a big impact. I took a look at your company's accounts and I think by

simply changing the times your posts go out, you could reach more of your audience and get more clicks. It looks like right now, you're posting at the same times on every social media channel. Each channel has ideal times to post and they're not always the same. I have a little guide I put together for myself so one of the first things I'd do is try to automate this, and schedule everything at the ideal times. I'd then measure the results to see how much improvement we gained from this."

"Why should we hire you?"

Companies want to see how well you understand the position and how well you can articulate your value. Read the job description and then present yourself as a solution to **their problems** by showing experience and skills that will let you come in and help them immediately. Avoid claims like "I'm a hard worker" or "I'm a fast learner". They aren't specific enough.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I read the job posting and saw you mention needing someone with a great understanding of biology and an eagerness to learn. I just completed my degree in biology this year, and I'm very passionate about the subject. I've been following the research your company has been doing for a number of years and would be excited to start my career in a well-known organization like yours."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"It seems like you need somebody who can provide an immediate boost to your sales team, based on the job description. That's exactly what I've done in my career. When I joined my last company, the team hadn't hit its monthly goals in half a year. I quickly got up to speed and was able to

achieve 150% of my monthly goal on average for the rest of the year, while also helping three other team members beat their goals. The result was that our team finished the year 22% above our target, and we became the second highest performing sales team in the company out of 10."

"Why would you excel at this job?"

Don't just brag about yourself here... Make sure your answer is tailored for their specific job. **How can you help them?** What skills will benefit them if they hire you? At the end of the day, that's what they care about most.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I'm very motivated to build my career in mechanical engineering, it's something I've been passionate about since high school. I reviewed the job description and the work seems very similar to what I did in my university coursework, and my internship. So I think I'd be able to come in and contribute immediately to your efforts, without needing much time to get up to speed or train. I can go into more detail about the areas I noticed if you'd like."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I saw the job description says you need a strong leader with project management experience. In my last job, I managed five or six projects at any given time, for some of my company's biggest clients. I've also been in this industry for seven years so I could hit the ground running and immediately understand your clients' needs and over-deliver on their projects."

"Why do you want this job?"

Employers ask this to see how much preparation you've done, and to find out what your priorities are. They want to know you'll be happy in this role if they hire you. It costs the company a lot of money if they give you the job and you leave two months later.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I've been actively searching for jobs since graduating with my Nursing degree. I'm interested in intensive care and emergency medicine and I've seen this hospital mentioned as having one of the best ER's in the region. I thought the job description matched up well with my background, and also saw some of my personal strengths mentioned, like multitasking and being able to thrive in a fast paced environment."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I read in the job description that this position will manage one of your largest customer service teams. In my last job I did all of our customer service training and led a team of five, so this seemed like a great next step in my career. I also read a recent Forbes article where your CEO described your work culture very positively and company culture is something that's important to me."

Questions about your background:

“Walk me through your resume”

Can the interviewer read your resume on their own? Sure. But they want to hear how *you* explain it. They want to hear about job changes you’ve made, some of your biggest accomplishments, etc. So take them step by step through your resume, try to keep it to two minutes or less, and stay on track. Don’t get distracted or let your thoughts wander. **They’re looking for you to communicate clearly.** Sometimes that’s just as important as the facts you share.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"After graduating from high school, I decided to attend the University of Notre Dame. I chose Notre Dame because of the school's strong academics and strong athletics. I majored in finance and was actively involved in student government as a Class Council Rep and as a Senator. I chose finance because I knew that it would lead me to a career that was both quantitative in nature and involved interaction with people. During my college summers, I participated in internships to gain real-world experience. I worked at General Electric the summer of my sophomore year. The following year, I had a paid internship with Goldman Sachs. I'm now actively looking for a full time position since graduating in May."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I completed my undergraduate degree in Biology ten years ago, and then went on to complete my Master's Degree shortly after. My first job after graduating was with Pfizer, in their quality control department. I quickly advanced and became a supervisor, and then transitioned into quality

assurance. I was promoted to manager and led a team of five. In this role I was responsible for hiring, firing, training and mentoring within this group. Unfortunately our department went through layoffs at the end of last year. My job was eliminated, along with six other quality assurance managers. So I'm actively looking for a manager or senior manager position to continue building my career, and after many years at Pfizer I think a smaller organization would help me gain a new perspective and grow my skills further. So that's what attracted me to your company."

"Tell me about yourself"

This is similar to the question above. Interviewers ask this to learn about your **experience**, but also to see if you can **stay on track** with your story. So be concise and don't let yourself get sidetracked.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I graduated with my bachelor's in Computer Science this spring from NYU. I'm very interested in mobile app development, and I've created two apps that are in the iTunes store, one with 25,000 downloads. I'm actively searching for jobs and my goal is to find an entry level position with a company that's committed to mobile apps as a part of their strategy, so this job seemed like a great fit from what I read online about the work your team is doing."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I graduated with a degree in Business in 2010 and immediately found a sales position with a small healthcare startup. From there I was promoted to account manager, and ended up managing a team of 10. After four years with the company, I left for an opportunity with TD Bank. I've been here two

years and was promoted to senior account manager recently. I enjoy the role but I miss being in a fast-paced startup environment, so I'm looking for an opportunity to use my skills to help a fast growing startup like yours."

(The end of your story should bring them to your current situation and answer the question, "why are you here today?")

"Tell me about your current or most recent work"

Try to **focus on accomplishments**, not responsibilities. Talk about what you actually achieved or learned, not what your job duties were. Which one sounds better... "I was responsible for training new team members while also maintaining my regular duties", or "I trained and mentored five people while exceeding my personal goals by 39%"?

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I just graduated with my B.S. in Computer Science. My most recent work involved object oriented programming, and scripting with Python. My final group project as a senior was a script that analyzed financial headlines to predict whether the major stock market indexes would open higher or lower each morning. I led the project, delegated tasks, and oversaw the final script we created. I also went back through to optimize the code after we finished the initial project, and reduced the run time by 30%. I've also done a couple of web development projects, including a website for finding dog walkers in your local area. It currently receives 5,000 views per month."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I spent the past two years as a sales associate at IBM. I built relationships and sold our analytics software to medium and large businesses, mostly in

the finance industry. One of my proudest accomplishments was finishing the past year as the #3 sales associate in the department, out of 62 people. I think my success came from focusing on long term relationships rather than an immediate gain. The companies I spoke with trusted me and looked to me as an expert, rather than just a salesperson. This allowed me to succeed and quickly rise in the company."

"What's your greatest strength?"

Pick something professional that relates to the job you're interviewing for. Then **give details to back up your claim** and give the interviewer a clear picture of how this strength will make you an asset to their company if they hire you.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I have an extremely strong work ethic. When I'm working on a project, I don't just aim to meet deadlines. I do everything I can to complete the project well ahead of schedule. I plan on taking this approach that worked so well for me in my academic career and applying it to my professional career now. It seems like the job we're discussing here is going to require a lot of hours, especially during the initial learning stages. I think my work ethic and ability to go above and beyond the standard workload will help me learn the job and be productive much faster. "

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I pride myself on my customer service skills and my ability to resolve what could be difficult situations. Last year I had the highest customer feedback score in my company. In the five years I've worked as a customer service associate, I have learned to effectively understand and resolve customer

issues quickly while avoiding confrontations. I've found that to be a key skill in the field of customer service and think it would allow me to contribute right away to your team's efforts."

"What's your greatest weakness?"

Make sure to avoid cliché answers like, "I work so hard, it's difficult to turn it off sometimes." Or "I'm a perfectionist." Hiring managers have heard these answers hundreds of times. **They want to hear a real weakness.** I recommend you choose something skill-based, not personality-based. Then talk about what you've done to overcome that weakness.

Example Answer:

"I am poor at public speaking, but I have overcome this by writing notes and making sure I understand the topic before a presentation. Experience with this weakness has helped me become better prepared in that situation."

(This answer above is a great one to copy word-for-word. If you want to create your own, note that it's best to pick a skill that isn't vital to the job you're interviewing for. If it's a customer service job, don't say that interacting with customers is a weakness of yours).

"Why was there a gap in your employment?"

If you were unemployed for a period of time, **be direct and to the point** about what you've been up to. If you did anything to keep your skills fresh be sure to mention that (like taking an online course, volunteering, tutoring, etc). Then, steer the conversation toward how you will perform well in this job and contribute to the organization.

Example Answer #1:

"I decided to take a break for personal reasons. I had worked without a significant break for 10 years and wanted to take a brief period to plan the next phase of my career. I'm glad I did it, and I'm fully focused on growing and advancing my career further now, and finding an organization I can contribute to as an HR Manager and Recruiter."

Example Answer #2:

"I was laid off four years ago when my company went through a downsizing. Rather than jumping into the first new job I could find, I decided to conduct a careful job search and find a company that I could stay with long-term and really advance my career with. This search ended up taking nine months, which is the gap you see on my resume. It paid off though. I ended up staying with that next company for three years, and received two promotions. The company also gave me the opportunity to lead others, and I led a team of four associates."

"Can you explain why you decided to change career paths?"

Don't be thrown off by this question. Just take a deep breath and explain to the hiring manager why you've made the career decisions you have. Don't sound unsure or apologetic. If you can, **give a few examples** of how your past work will help you in your next job.

Example Answer:

"I began my career in HR. It was an area that always interested me, and it was closely related to my academic background. I enjoyed the job, but I wanted to be in an area that had a more direct impact on my company's success. So I recently decided to go into sales based on recommendations

from a few colleagues. I'm talking with a few companies right now, and actively searching for an entry level sales job. I think my communication skills and ability to work with a variety of personalities will help me make this a smooth transition. I've also had to learn how to have some pretty uncomfortable or difficult conversations through my time in HR. I'm persistent and not easily discouraged, which I think will be an asset as a salesperson."

"What professional achievement are you most proud of?"

This is a time to brag, not be humble. Think about your greatest professional accomplishment and how you achieved it. Be sure to choose something that had a big overall impact on your career. Whatever you share, **get specific and talk about real results**. Show exactly what you achieved and why it was a significant accomplishment.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

I'm most proud of my work in my recent internship. I had the chance to help develop a new iOS app for a fast-growing startup and I ended up taking the lead on the project after one of their team members quit. This was outside the original scope of my internship, but ended up being a great opportunity to learn and show what I'm capable of. I was able to deliver the app on time before the end of my internship, and have deployed it to the iTunes store. It currently has 25,000 users and over 100 four or five star reviews. I can send you the URL if you're interested."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"My proudest accomplishment was a new content marketing strategy that I created for our sales and marketing department this year. This was a three-month project and I was one of six team members. What made it notable for me was that my role expanded from being one of the team members to taking the lead on everything, from planning to execution. In the end, we delivered the new strategy and guidelines on time and received great feedback from multiple teams who use it. Our CEO recently sent out an email about how excited he was about it, and he included some of the latest stats and metrics. In the six months since the launch of this program, we've grown our website traffic by 43%, and have also boosted the number of customers that contact us for a free consultation by 20%. That's our primary way of getting leads from our website, so the CEO is extremely happy about this."

"What is something you are working on improving right now professionally?"

A company would much rather hire someone who is working to improve themselves! So show them that you've thought about this and that you've **taken initiative** on your own to improve.

Example Answer #1:

"I've started setting very specific goals each week in my work. I think this will help me be more accountable for my results, identify weaknesses and issues before they become a problem, and also recognize my strengths and reveal what I'm doing well. I've just started this and it's been exciting so far. One of the first things I noticed was that I tend to over-perform on goals related to analytical tasks. So I think this is one of my strengths that I should rely more on."

Example Answer #2:

"In the long term, I hope to become a manager, so I'm working on improving my leadership and communication. I've been taking more initiative on projects, delegating tasks, and creating more documentation for our department to help newer team members as they join the group. My boss noticed this and thanked me for my efforts. Shortly after, he invited me to start taking part in our interview process for new hires, which was a great experience."

"What can you offer us that someone else can't?"

It's okay to brag here, but back your argument up with **facts**. Before your interview, think about something unique you can offer them and go **make a confident argument** why they would be crazy not to choose you. Confidence counts for a lot here, but so do the facts and reasons you give.

Example Answer:

"I'd say my persistence and mental toughness is a skill that will be valuable for this job. No matter what kind of problems I run into, I always persevere until I solve or overcome them. I know working in a cutting-edge environment like this, there will be failures and days that don't go according to plan. I'm much more resilient than the average person you'd hire, and I am not afraid of a challenge."

"If I called your last boss right now and asked them an area you could improve on, what would they say?"

You can be honest here but **don't choose anything that's essential to the job** you're interviewing for. You could mention a skill that's a small part of your job, or mention a personality trait that you're working on improving. It's also possible to turn your answer into a positive by finishing with something your last boss appreciates about you. See the example below.

Example Answer:

"I think my boss would say I could learn to trust my abilities more and get more comfortable leading. I'm only a few years into my career so I've focused on learning how to succeed in the day-to-day job, and how to develop my career in this industry. I've done a good job of that, but I still need to improve my ability to trust my judgment in times of pressure. I'm getting more and more comfortable with this, but I am sure my manager would mention this to you. At the same time, I think he appreciates that I'm careful and calm under pressure, and that I don't make hasty decisions."

"What are some of your leadership experiences?"

Be prepared to give at least one specific example of a time you led, **even if you've never managed people directly**. If you're a recent graduate, you can mention projects you led in school, in an internship, in a volunteer organization or anything else.

Example Answer for Non-Managers:

"In my last position I led small projects, where two or three other team members reported to me and I delegated tasks. The largest project involved a complete overhaul of our negotiation process with clients. It was taking our account managers way too long, so the CEO asked me to build a small

project team and look at ways to make the process more efficient. We identified three key areas to address and finished the project ahead of schedule. The new process ended up saving each account manager an average of two hours per week, and the CEO was very positive about the result. Aside from leading projects, I also trained and mentored our new hires, and took part in interviewing the entry level candidates for our company.”

Example for Managers:

“I’ve been managing people for the past seven years. The first three years were in web design and front end development, and now I manage both the front and back end development teams in my current company. My total headcount right now is 13, but I’ve had as many as 17 people in my teams prior to a restructuring. I do all of the hiring and training for these teams, and conduct year-end performance reviews as well.”

“What sets you apart from others?”

Give an honest, genuine answer here. The interviewer will appreciate it. Make sure you mention something that’s **a strength that will help you succeed in this particular job**. This is a great answer to tailor to the company.

Example Answer #1:

“I’m naturally curious and I love challenging myself to learn more. Even if I’m not directly asked to learn something, if I think it will help me perform better in my job, I take the initiative and go learn. It seems like your team is looking for a self-starter like this based on the job description and that’s one

of the reasons I chose to apply. I was like this in school, and I've continued to keep this habit in my career."

Example Answer #2:

"Something that sets me apart from most of my peers is my attitude. I'm not afraid of new challenges and I've learned to view temporary failures and setbacks as a sign that I'm on the right track. I never let these things discourage me, which helps me overcome obstacles in my career. I love to take initiative and I actively look for challenges to help me keep growing, and I think that makes me different than most people. I know in this industry and with this particular job there will be days that don't go how I planned. That's just a part of working in this field. But I think my approach helps me stay calm and handle it better than most people."

Example Answer #3:

"One thing that sets me apart is my ability to taking coaching and feedback and quickly learn from it. I'm great at taking criticism and using it to improve, and I never take it personally when a manager tells me something I could be doing better. All of my past teachers and bosses would say I'm very coachable, and it allows me to learn a new job faster than most people."

(You don't have to dedicate a whole answer to it in every interview, but hiring managers love people who are "coachable." Like example #3 above. So do show this trait whenever you can. They don't want to hire someone who is closed-minded and unwilling to hear new perspectives and learn).

Questions about your personality and motivation:

“What personal weakness has caused you the greatest difficulty in school or in a job?”

This is a slightly different version of the “greatest weakness” question. The key here is to show you recognized your weakness and worked to improve it. **Show that it’s no longer a weakness**, and is not something that will hurt you in this job.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

“I think my biggest weakness in school was preparing for large projects. I started early enough, but didn’t do a good job of outlining the different steps and planning in terms of strategy. So I approached some of my early projects in a disorganized way that cost me a lot of time, and resulted in me having to re-do some of the work. I quickly learned that a few hours of planning before taking action can save you hours or even days in the long run. So now I consider planning and strategy to be one of my strengths and I make it a priority.”

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

“My greatest weakness used to be delegation. To improve my workers’ efficiency, I would take it upon myself to do many small projects throughout my shift as a manager that could have been done by them. I realized that I was doing more work than the other assistant managers, and they were achieving better results. This forced me to reevaluate my approach. I quickly realized that if I assigned each person just one small project at the

beginning of the shift and then followed up, everything would get done, and I could manage much more efficiently and actually accomplish more."

"If I had your three best friends sitting with us now, how would they describe you to me?"

Only mention positive traits. Since the question is pretty open-ended, you don't want to mention anything negative. After you share how they'd describe you, give an example or a reason to back up your claim.

Example Answer:

"I think my friends would say I'm creative and adaptable. I like to come up with unusual ways to solve challenges, and I try to do this in a way that makes my job easier and also helps the people around me. So that's something I think a lot of people notice about me. They'd also say I am accountable. They know I'm going to take responsibility and follow through with tasks that I say I will complete."

"How would your previous coworkers describe you?"

Just like the question above, keep it 100% positive here. Don't mention weaknesses unless you're asked. Give specific reasons to back up your claims too. **Tell stories and examples** to prove your point.

Example Answer #1:

"Whenever I work on a team, I tend to take the lead as much as possible. I think my coworkers would say that I'm a natural leader and that I'm not afraid of making decisions. They've seen that I stay calm under pressure and make decisions based on the facts in front of me. So they'd tell you I'm

logical and that I make calculated decisions, rather than reacting emotionally or jumping to conclusions."

Example Answer #2:

"My coworkers would say that I have a good work ethic and I'm reliable. I was usually the first one into the office each morning, and one of the last to leave. That was one of the ways I quickly earned the respect of my team in my last job, and the senior team members definitely noticed and appreciated that they could count on me. They'd always say I was open to feedback and that I did a good job of taking criticisms and advice, and using it to improve quickly as I learned the job."

"What would your last boss say about you?"

Mention something positive, explain why, and share a story to back it up. Giving specific facts and evidence is always more powerful than just saying you are good at something. Try to **tailor your answer to the job** too... pick a description of yourself that will show the company you'll perform well in the role you're interviewing for.

Example Answer:

"My manager would say I bring the team together and make the people around me better. On our last three-month project I delegated the tasks among five team members, and we ended up finishing two weeks ahead of schedule. I enjoy finding the best ways to use each person's talents while working on a team, and I thought the job we're discussing here could be a great next step in my career because of this experience. I read in the job description that a big part of my role would be delegating tasks and managing project timelines. Is that right?"

"If you had only one word to describe yourself, what would it be?"

See below for the 16 best answers.

Example Answers:

- 1. Adaptable*
- 2. Ambitious*
- 3. Analytical*
- 4. Consistent*
- 5. Cooperative*
- 6. Creative*
- 7. Determined*
- 8. Diligent*
- 9. Enthusiastic*
- 10. Focused*
- 11. Innovative*
- 12. Natural Leader*
- 13. Resilient*
- 14. Resourceful*
- 15. Results-Driven*
- 16. Self-Disciplined*

"What type of work environment do you prefer?"

You have two choices here. Either explain that you work well in a wide range of environments, or convince them that you prefer a work environment similar to theirs. Of course you'll need to know some facts about their work culture to do this, so research the company before your interview. Are they large or small? Is it a fast-paced or relaxed environment? Do they wear suits, or is it casual?

Example Answer #1:

"I've worked in a number of environments and have enjoyed pieces of all of them. I think I do my best work when I'm able to communicate and have a good relationship with my manager, and when I'm trusted to make decisions and handle my responsibilities. So those areas are important to me. But beyond that, I've enjoyed working in small, casual environments, as well as larger corporations. I've learned useful skills in both and learned to appreciate both."

Example Answer #2:

"I prefer a work environment where people communicate, trust each other, and feel like they can talk to their manager and get feedback when necessary. I think I can adapt myself to large or small companies, but as of right now I prefer a small startup environment, which is one of the reasons I was excited to interview here. I've read about your organizational structure and how management tries to let teams govern themselves, and it sounds exciting. Can you tell me more about that?"

"How do you take advantage of your strengths? How do you compensate for your weaknesses?"

This question can lead to some pretty long answers. It's great to share details and examples but remember to keep your answer on-point and focused. You want to show them that you have overcome weaknesses in the past and that you've found a successful method for doing it. Then talk about your strengths and how you take full advantage of them and **use them to benefit your employer.**

Example Answer:

"I'm very resourceful. If I am faced with a challenge or a weakness I need to overcome, I'll find information that can help me. Chances are, somebody has encountered a problem before me, so it's faster and simpler to see what worked for somebody else than to spend hours trying to reinvent the wheel. I'm not a great email writer so I recently spent 20 minutes looking online for follow up email templates. That ended up saving me hours the next week and boosted my response rate by 30%. At the same time, I try to use my strengths as much as possible, which I feel are communication and high energy. I spend most of my day making sales calls, while some of the quieter sales reps on our team do more research and emailing. This ends up helping all of us, because we end up with a balanced effort as a team, and this allowed us to exceed our goals last quarter."

"What's your leadership style?"

It doesn't matter if you've managed people or not. Use this question as a chance to show that you're **confident and comfortable** taking the lead in a group. You need to show them they can trust you to step up if asked. But remember to sound reasonable too. Nobody wants to hire someone who is a bossy dictator on a power trip.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"In class projects I often took a leadership role. I try to bring out everyone's strengths, facilitate discussions and communication so that we're all on the same page, and then track the project and track milestones to make sure we're all progressing as we should. I think it all starts with leading by example though. If you're not doing your own share of the work, nobody will respect you as a leader."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"As a leader, I try to be transparent and keep open channels of communication. I take initiative and lead by example, but I'm very open to questions, and I encourage open debate and discussion where appropriate. I think that helps my team trust me as a leader and it encourages them to take responsibility for their own success."

"How do you make decisions?"

This question is designed to test whether you make **calculated decisions**, or whether you rush and panic. The key is to show a step by step process that you follow, **leaving emotion and snap-judgments out of it!** Usually the steps will involve gathering facts and analyzing the situation, looking at the possible actions you can take, determining the likely outcome of each action, and then picking the best available choice.

Example Answer:

"The first thing I look at is the timeframe. If I have a week to make a decision, my approach is going to be different than if I have one hour. Once I've determined the time frame, I gather the key pieces of information that will help me make an informed decision. It's not always possible to know the outcome 100%, but I try to gather as much information as possible to make an educated guess at what will give us the best result. Another technique I like to use a lot is risk analysis. Looking at the worst case scenario and what can possibly go wrong with each decision is a good way to understand the pros and cons of different choices. It gives you a much clearer picture than if you only look at the best possible outcome of each choice."

“How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?”

To give a great answer here, you want to show them that you have a system in place and you're **comfortable when faced with stress**, even if it's not a situation you enjoy. You should show them that you're “battle-tested” and have been through stressful situations before and come out okay.

Example Answer #1:

“I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become more stressful. For example, when I deal with an unsatisfied customer, rather than feeling stressed, I focus on the task at hand. I believe my ability to communicate effectively with customers during these moments helps reduce my own stress in these situations and also reduces any stress the customer may feel.”

Example Answer #2:

“I actually work better under pressure and I've found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment. As a writer and editor, I thrive under quick deadlines and multiple projects. I find that when I'm under the pressure of a deadline, I can do some of my most creative work.”

“Describe the boss who would get the very best work from you.”

Unless you're 100% sure that you know the personality of the hiring manager, **be careful about making any strong statements here**. Give them a general idea of what type of management style will help you and leave it at that. Try to sound flexible too and **show them that you can adapt** and work with different types of managers.

Example Answer:

"I take a lot of pride in being detail oriented and delivering my work on time, and in a way that my team expects. So the type of boss I work well with is one who trusts me and gives me the tools I need to execute my work. I'm very open to feedback and coaching and don't mind frequent check-ins, but I do my best work in an environment where I'm also given some freedom, and where I can act as a second set of eyes and ears for my boss to save them time and make their job easier."

"What type of manager do you not work very well with?"

The best thing you can do is here is **show them that you work well with different leadership styles** and that you can adapt. It's okay to tell them what type of manager brings out the best in you (see the answer above). But don't tell them you absolutely cannot work with certain types of people. This question is a bit of a trap where you should flip the script and focus on the positive management traits that help you do your best work.

Example Answer:

"I think part of my job as an employee is to find a way to work well with any boss. I've had bosses in the past that were very hands-on and checked in every day, and I've had other bosses that would speak with me once or twice a week, and left me to do my work aside from that. I learned to perform well in either environment. For example, in my last job I had a very hands-off manager. So as the newest person on the team, I built strong relationships with my other team members and used their advice to get myself up to speed. In my first job after college, my boss checked in with me every morning, so I learned to develop great organization skills and

knew that I always needed to be prepared to speak about what objective I was working on that day, and why. So I enjoy either type of manager and think there are pros and cons to both."

"What will make you love coming to work here every day?"

This is another question designed to find out more about what you enjoy and what you care about in a job. They want to hire people who will stay a long time, work hard, and enjoy the role. Having to hire somebody new over and over costs a lot of money and it scares them. Retention is a big deal for hiring managers. So this is a great opportunity to tailor your answer and **show them why their particular company would excite you.**

Example Answer:

"It means a lot to me to have work that I find meaningful. Knowing I'm impacting other people positively is something that gets me out of bed every morning, and that's one of the reasons I wanted to interview here in particular. I know your technology is being used in hospitals around the country and impacting millions of people, so it would definitely provide a different perspective when challenges come up, or when a few late nights are required."

Example Answer:

"I'm driven by technical challenges. That's always what has motivated me, since I began studying electrical engineering. I would love coming to work every day to solve challenges, overcome obstacles and push my limits as an engineer. I'm the type of person who goes home and thinks about a problem I couldn't solve, and hops out of bed in the morning to try a solution I just

thought of. From what I saw on the job description and in a few articles about your latest project in solar energy, there's no shortage of technical challenge here. I was definitely excited to come in and learn more about it based on what I read so far."

"Are you a leader or a follower?"

Ideally you want to show that you're a strong leader but also able to work as a part of a team. Give an answer that shows them that you're comfortable taking the lead but that you're **flexible** and able to support other people too.

Example Answer:

"I think I'm a little bit of both. I consider myself a natural leader and I'm comfortable stepping up and leading by example and making tough decisions. At the same time I'm comfortable trusting somebody else's expertise or taking a back seat on a certain project if there's somebody who's more qualified to lead it. I focus on working as a team and doing what's best for the company. Sometimes that means leading, and sometimes it doesn't. I try to leave my ego out of it."

"What role do you tend to move into in group or team work, and why?"

Be honest and give them a real idea of how you contribute to a team. Tell them **your strengths** as a team member. But make sure to sound flexible too. Show them you've played a number of different roles and that you are **willing to adjust**. Otherwise you're much less likely to get hired.

Example Answer:

"In my last job, I often took a leadership role. I'm confident in my abilities so I look for a chance to lead where possible. I've found it to be a great way to learn new skills and challenge myself so that's why I've continued to look for these opportunities. I've definitely had times in the past year where I took a back seat on projects depending on the situation though, so I'm flexible and can adapt. It depends on what type of expertise is needed to lead the project."

"What makes you uncomfortable?"

Try to **turn this question into a positive**. Example #1 below this will show you how. If you don't want to do that, you could also mention a specific work situation that you encountered that you didn't feel comfortable with, and explain what you did to resolve the issue (Example #2).

Example Answer #1:

"One thing I'm uncomfortable with is looking back on a project and knowing I didn't give my full effort. I never like the feeling of going home knowing I could have done more in terms of effort or attitude, especially since those are two things I'm in complete control of. So I always make sure I've done everything I can to succeed in a situation."

Example Answer #2:

"At my previous job, several employees seemed like they worked different amounts. It was a little uncomfortable to see one person work weekends, while another coworker was leaving early most days. It never interfered with my work, but it was slightly concerning. A manager finally addressed it, so it did not have any long-term consequences."

“What’s the hardest thing you’ve ever had to do?”

Talk about a challenge and then explain what you learned from the situation and how you grew from it. If you have work experience, I recommend you name a professional challenge. You could mention a technical challenge, an ethical challenge, a difficult customer or client, or challenge you faced while working on a team.

Example Answer:

"In my previous position, I was in charge of selecting vendors for a large production project. We have a long-time vendor we've been working with for over a decade. Another vendor came in with a lower bid for the project. I didn't want to take the work away from a vendor with whom we did so much business, but I couldn't justify picking them out of loyalty if it was going to cost us more money. So I told the old vendor about the other bid to hear what they would say, and I also solicited references from the new vendor to see if their work matched what we had been getting. Our long-time vendor was able to bring down their bid in the end, and appreciated us telling them the situation. They actually did the job for less than the new vendor would have, so we ended up saving money and strengthening our relationship. This was a difficult situation because my boss was out of the office for the entire week and was not reachable by phone. So handling all of the communication and negotiation was something new to me, and was nerve-racking. I learned a lot from the experience though and got a great outcome."

“What's one thing you would like to do better? What's your plan for improving?”

Be ready to give them something specific here. The interviewer will love it if you show you've already thought about this topic. **Avoid saying anything that's an absolute requirement for the job though.** If you're interviewing for a delivery driver job, and you say you'd like to improve your road safety, you're probably not going to see a job offer. There are some things that they expect you to be great at from day one, so think about what those things are and don't mention them.

Example Answer:

"I'd really like to improve my comfort in public speaking. It's not something I've done a lot of recently, but I plan on picking up a few books on the subject, and then looking for at least one opportunity each month to put myself in front of a group and give a talk about a subject I know about. I think that will improve my communication skills at work too and will help my career in multiple ways."

“What motivates you?”

If you can give an answer that is tailored to the job or career you're in, that's great (see example #1 below). If not, it's okay. You might just be motivated by wanting to be the first manager in your family. Or you might want to earn more money for your family to give them a better life. That's fine. Whatever you choose, have **something specific you can share**. It's okay to tell a story here, even if it's a personal one. You can decide how much you're comfortable sharing. But if you can't explain what motivates you and what makes you get out of bed each morning, the interviewer is going to worry about how much effort you'll give in this job.

Example Answer #1:

"I've always been interested in the field of Nursing and helping other people. Working hands-on with patients and making a difference in their lives is what gets me out of bed each morning and motivates me to keep learning and working hard."

Example Answer #2:

"I've always been drawn to companies with a social impact and that's one of the reasons I wanted to apply here. I am motivated when I feel my work is making a difference and helping people. I'm a big believer in your product and I've seen first-hand how it has helped a few friends, so I decided to apply as soon as I saw a job opening that matched my skills."

Example Answer #3:

"The primary thing that motivates me is challenging myself and tackling new problems, especially when it comes to math. That's why I chose the field of statistics. Of course I want to work for a company that is making a difference, or whose products I believe in, but the technical challenge has to be there as well. That's the number one thing I look for and that's what gets me excited to wake up and come in each day."

Questions about your interests:

“What is your dream job?”

There's one trick to giving a great answer here and avoiding trouble:

Describe the characteristics you love in a job, but **don't name a job title**.

That way you can avoid having to pretend this is your dream job if it isn't, or mentioning something totally unrelated (like saying you want to be a movie star). So, describe what would make a job feel like a dream job to you. If you can point out any of those characteristics that match the job you're interviewing for, that's great. The example below will give you a better idea how to do this...

Example Answer:

"I think my dream job would be a combination of creating products that are making a difference in the world and getting a chance to share them with as many people as possible. I was excited about this position because I read that millions of people use your company's products each day and it seems like the work you're doing is having a big impact on society."

“Who do you look up to or idolize?”

Having someone you look up to will immediately show the hiring manager you're interested in learning and advancing, and that you're a well-rounded professional. If you don't have someone in mind right now, **take five minutes to do some research** and find a person whose work you admire.

Example Answer:

"Elon Musk is someone I admire a lot because of his willingness to take risks and push boundaries. I read about how close he was to bankruptcy when building SpaceX, the challenges he faced, and how he maintained a focused mindset through all of this. It's inspiring and something I use to motivate myself."

"What was the last book you read for fun?"

This is another question that interviewers will use to get a better sense of who you are as a person, and see if you're well-rounded. **Most great companies want to hire someone who has a life outside of work** and has genuine interests.

Example Answer:

"I recently finished reading 'The Wolf of Wall Street'. I had seen the movie, and a friend recommended the book so I picked it up a few weeks ago and just finished. It was great. I might be biased because I'm a salesperson but I loved it and got a lot of motivation from it."

(Note: it's totally fine to name a book that has nothing to do with your work too. Don't read the example above and think you need to relate it to the job. You don't).

"What is your favorite website?"

This question isn't particularly common, but if they ask, it's one more chance to show you have interests outside of work. Make sure you **have at least one website you can name**, and explain why it interests you.

Example Answer #1:

"There's a site I love called buckbooks. Each week they highlight self improvement and non-fiction EBooks that are on sale for 99 cents. It's a fun way to learn new skills and stock up on a lot of great books for almost no money."

Example Answer #2:

"I've been using a site called Canva a lot lately. It's a graphic design website where you can create images for business cards, PDFs, book covers, and a lot more. One of my hobbies is designing graphics and logos for myself and friends, so I've been using this site a lot lately."

"What do you like to do outside of work?"

People who have hobbies and interests tend to be happier and work harder. Sure, employers want you to be dedicated to your job. But they also want you to have a full life and that includes outside interests (avoid the companies who clearly don't. They'll likely be *miserable* to work for).

Example Answer #1:

"I like to read a lot. I try to mix fiction and nonfiction. I like to write too. I occasionally write on my blog and I've gone to a few blogging meetups in the city. Other than that, I spend time cooking, I like movies, and I like playing basketball with friends."

Example Answer #2:

"I like to do standup comedy on weekends. I found a comedy club that lets amateurs perform on the first Sunday of each month so I've done that a few times. It's helped my confidence a lot. I also travel and take landscape

photographs. I have a website with some of my photos, I can write down the URL if you want to look after."

"What do you like the most and least about working in this industry?"

Use this answer as a chance to be honest about what you appreciate about your line of work and the industry, and also some of the more challenging things that people in your industry face. Try to **turn those challenges into positive things**, or opportunities, rather than complaining.

Example Answer:

"I think this industry has a lot of smart, talented people I can learn from. I've already had a couple of great mentors in my career and the industry has no shortage of talent. I like that it's competitive as well. At the same time, I feel the industry is very fast-moving which can be a bad thing for some people. I've read about plenty of layoffs and companies going out of business in this industry as the market shifts, so it's not a place where you can sit back and relax. I think that suits me well though; I like to continue moving forward and pushing my limits to grow professionally."

"What was your favorite job you ever had and why?"

Use your answer to show them the type of environment you work well in. Try to **describe a job that seems similar to the one you're interviewing for**, so that they'll feel confident that you'll perform well if they hire you.

Example Answer:

"My favorite job was my first teaching job after college. I had a great boss who gave me a lot of responsibility and trusted me to make some important decisions right after starting the position, which helped me grow professionally. I enjoyed the fact that the school emphasized teamwork too. They encouraged team meetings, and meetings between different departments. Everyone knew what everyone else in the organization was working on to some extent, which helped us feel like we were all a part of the same effort. I tend to work best in an environment that's team oriented like this."

"What was your favorite part of your last job?"

Tell them something you enjoyed or appreciated about your last job, but continue on and **give an example of how you succeeded** in this environment and what you accomplished. That's a lot more powerful than just describing what the work was like.

Example Answer #1:

"I've always liked working directly with customers and clients. My favorite part of my last job was that direct interaction. I was able to strengthen our relationships with a number of our best clients and received a couple of awards for the work I did. Last year I grew the company's two largest accounts by 22% and 39% in terms of revenue. Having a major impact on our business' success while getting to work directly with customers every day was what I enjoyed most."

Example Answer #2:

"I enjoyed the bond our team had. We worked extremely well together, probably better than any other team in the company, and it really helped all of us succeed together. I consider myself a team player so this was an ideal situation. In terms of the actually day-to-day work, my favorite part was performing analytical research and being able to present this information and influence our company's strategy in a meaningful way. This same thing is what drew me to your company. I read the job description and noticed that this position will be advising a couple of different groups on strategy. I think it'd be a great fit for my research and analytical skills, and I've already presented to multiple groups in my last company."

Hypothetical questions:

“Where do you see yourself in five years?”

A lot of people hate this question, but don't worry... You don't need to accurately predict where you'll be in 5 years. Nobody's going to check up on you, right? But you do need to show you've **thought about it**.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"In 5 years I see myself taking on more responsibilities here and continuing to grow my career, either through management or higher level individual contributions. I'm not sure which path will make sense to pursue, but I know my goal right now is to build a strong foundation and gain valuable experience so that I'll have a successful future in this industry."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I'm glad you asked. One of the reasons that I applied to this job was your company's reputation for helping with its employees' career growth and providing advancement opportunities. In the long term I see myself mastering the skills needed to do well in this role and then taking on more leadership responsibilities to continue growing my career here. I hope to become a manager later in my career."

“What would you accomplish in the first 30 days on the job?”

Here's something you can try to make your answer stand out from anyone else they've talked to: Bring up something the interviewer **mentioned earlier in the conversation** and tie it into your answer. That'll really

impress them. Both examples below use this strategy, and you can do this for other interview questions and answers too.

Example Answer #1:

"You mentioned earlier that being able to work independently is what separates the successful people from the unsuccessful people in this job. So I'd make it my goal to learn the job inside and out within the first 30 days, so I can work independently and not need the help of my team. I'd do this by taking careful notes in training, studying the materials outside of work hours, and staying late for the first month to have as much time as possible to learn the job."

Example Answer #2:

"From our discussion and from my research into your company, I have a few things in mind that I would love to implement in my first month on the job. I know that my ability to learn quickly and mesh easily with others will help me fit in, and I'll make it a priority to get a sense of how the team operates and find the best way to use my skills in this setting. It seems like teamwork is a priority here so that'd be the first thing I tackle. From there, I'd make sure I speak with my manager and that I have a clear understanding of my goals and expectations in the role, so that I can succeed in the coming months."

"What would you do in the first 90 days of this position to succeed?"

You will instantly impress any interviewer if you have a three-month plan for succeeding before you're even hired. Take a look at the job description, look at what's required and then think about how you'll learn those tasks if you

take this job. I recommend breaking this down into **segments of 30, 60 and 90 days**. Both examples below do this.

Example Answer #1:

"I'd try to break the first 90 days in three 30-day phases. During the first phase, I'd focus on learning everything possible and building trust with the group and my manager. I'd learn what everyone does well and what they need to succeed. In the second phase, I would look to blend my skills with the team's work habits and start contributing as much as possible to our productivity. In the third phase I'd look for additional responsibilities I can take on, additional ways I can help the team, and tasks I can perform to go above and beyond the basic requirements of the job."

Example Answer #2:

"I'm glad you asked this because I have a 30-60-90-day plan that I put together based on my understanding of the role. The first thing I'll do is to meet with my boss to get a clear understanding of her expectations and the challenges that are most important to address. Then I will meet with members of the team, and other coworkers to understand how the position fits in with the larger organization and how my work impacts other people. I think it's important to understand this if I truly want to make a contribution quickly here. Finally, I will focus on mastering the day-to-day work. I'll review everything I learn in training and I'll apply it to my work immediately. My goal is to become proficient as quickly as possible so I can begin helping the team."

“What would you do if you made an important business decision and a coworker challenged it?”

Before hiring you, many interviewers will want to see how you communicate and how you handle it when somebody disagrees with you. They’re looking for you to be **calm and reasonable** and not take things personally. So leave your ego behind for this one.

Example Answer:

“I would try to have a logical discussion about it. Even if it’s my job to make that decision, I would ask what their concern is and try to understand their perspective. I would explain my reasoning and find out if they misunderstood what I wanted to do, or why they don’t believe it’s a good option. In the end, it’s about doing what’s best for the company. However, if I still feel my decision is the correct one after discussing it, I will stand behind it. If I feel that a decision is extremely important and I’m not sure how to proceed, I’ll speak with my manager to hear another perspective.”

“What would you do if management made a decision you didn't agree with?”

It’s a good idea to show that you’re patient and not impulsive here, but that you feel comfortable voicing your concern if necessary. So for your answer, I recommend you explain that you’d take time to digest the information, and then you’d voice your concern respectfully if you felt it that you needed to do so.

Example Answer:

"First I would digest and reflect on the decision. I'd take a moment to think and analyze the situation, and determine why I disagree with the decision and what my real concern is. If I decide I have a valid issue to bring up that's important to the company, I would voice my concern respectfully and explain why I am worried about this decision. Or I might ask a question to better understand why the decision was made."

"What do you do when you make a mistake at work?"

If you want to impress them, you need to show you're accountable and honest. So that's the first part of your answer. Never imply that you'd try to hide anything. To make your answer even better, you can describe how you'd work on coming up with a few possible solutions to bring to your manager. **Companies love to hire people who take initiative and suggest solutions**, rather than just discussing problems.

Example Answer:

"I like to be upfront and handle situations head-on. If I make a mistake, I try to figure out what happened and what the impact will be. Might we lose a customer from this? Is there a potential loss in revenue? Did I do something that might have delayed a project? Whatever it is, I gather the facts so that I can inform my manager and the people who need to know. I'll also try to come up with possible solutions and recommendations for the best way to fix this. If possible, I like to go to my manager with solutions we can implement right away. Once I spend a few minutes getting organized, I will go talk to my manager or the people who need to know about the situation and tell them exactly what happened. In the long term I'll also think about why the mistake was made and how to prevent it from happening again."

"Assume that you come to work here. One year from now you go home on Friday afternoon thinking that accepting this job was the best thing you ever did. What happened during the year for you to feel that way?"

This question isn't as common as many of the others, but some of the best companies do ask it. Take a look at the sample answers below and you'll get an idea of how to address questions like this while showing the company that you're **driven and focused** on your career.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"That's a great question. I think for me to feel that way, this company would become a place I feel comfortable staying long term and growing my career with. One year from now, I'd like to look back and see that I have learned the fundamentals of financial accounting and found a place that supports me and provides ways for me to keep growing and advancing. I'd want to feel like an important part of the group you've built here, and that I've found a role I can play in the long term success of the company."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"I spent a lot of time on your website before applying and one of the most exciting things about your company is the culture. At the same time, I know you're growing very fast and hiring a lot of new managers. I'd want to look back a year from now and see that I've come in and earned the trust of my new team, helped the group grow, and contributed to the company culture that the current managers have worked hard to build. I know you have some of the best employee retention rates in the industry and I'd want to add to

that. So one year from now I'd be thrilled if my group had grown in size, if I had helped us keep our best people, and had given them learning opportunities and new projects that they are excited about in the future. I think that's a key part of my job as a manager and I wanted to interview here in particular because your organization really seems to get that."

"How would you deal with an angry or irate customer?"

If you work in customer service or any job that's "customer-facing" this question is likely to be asked. Use an answer like the example below to show the interviewer that you're **calm under pressure**, and that you **make sure the customer feels understood** and taken care of.

Example Answer:

"I am a firm believer that the customer comes first. I've learned to not take the things that customers say personally, which really helps when it comes to diffusing the situation. I always try to understand the complaint and repeat it back to them so they know I understand. Then I do the best I can to solve the issue immediately and let them know what solution I've found for them. If they are still upset I would get help from a manager. Sometimes they just want to talk to a manager to know that their complaints are being heard. However, I am almost always able to handle the situation without outside help."

"How would you fire someone?"

If you have hired and fired people in the past and feel that you handled it the right way, describe what you'd do and why. If not, you can use the answer below.

Example Answer:

"I would ask them if we can speak in private, either at the beginning or end of the day to avoid making a scene. At the meeting, I would sit down with them and I would tell them that unfortunately their employment is being terminated, and this simply is not the right fit for us. If appropriate, I'd explain the specific reason or issue. If they had been warned in the past, I'd explain that this has become a repeat problem and unfortunately we've decided that this relationship isn't working anymore. If it's a performance-related issue, I would tell them that they were not meeting the goals we had set for the role, and we think they would be a better fit in a different role with a different company. I would then give them instructions on how to collect their final paycheck, wish them the best of luck, and give them instructions on how to complete their final day."

"If you have had five million dollars, what kind of work would you do and why?"

This question is tricky. You don't need to lie and say you'd stay in this same job, but it's a good idea to show some similarities between what you'd love to do and what you currently do. You don't want the hiring manager thinking this job is the last thing on earth you want to be doing. See the example...

Example Answer:

"One of the reasons I became a journalist is I love writing and reporting on important stories. I would take a break from my job, and I would use my free time to travel and work on a couple of personal writing projects that I've wanted to do for quite a while. I've also had an idea for a documentary I'd love to create about unemployment among recent graduates, so I'd

spend some of the money on professional camera equipment and a crew, and try to set up a number of interviews and begin working on the film.”

“How many tennis balls can you fit into a limousine?”

Questions like this are known as brain-teaser interview questions. If you’re an engineer, scientist, statistician, etc, there’s a chance you’ll hear something like this. There are plenty of variations, but here’s the important thing to know in your answer...

It’s not about getting it 100% right. The most important thing is showing your thought process. The interviewer wants to see how you break down problems into smaller pieces. So the worst thing you can do is get frustrated and say “I don’t know”.

To answer, slowly work your way through it and explain what you’re thinking each step of the way. How big do you think each tennis ball is? How tall is the car cabin on average? Go slowly and try to come up with an answer that you feel is reasonably close, given the information you have. You’ll have to make some assumptions that probably aren’t perfect. That’s fine. Don’t give up, and don’t panic. Just try to get close.

Coming up next: In the next section, I’m going to cover 52 different behavioral interview questions and answers, plus the exact four-step method you can use to answer any behavioral question you face.

52 Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral interview questions are questions that ask you to name a specific situation you were in, or a specific experience you had. They start with phrases like:

- “Tell me about a time you _____”
- “Give me an example of a situation where you had to _____”

They can be intimidating, but fortunately there’s an easy method to answer *any* behavioral question...

Up next, I’ll show you the simplest and easiest method for giving great answers and then we’ll look at 52 different examples.

Chapter Contents:

[Part 1: How to Answer Behavioral Questions](#)

[Part 2: Questions about Teamwork](#)

[Part 3: Questions about Motivation and Values](#)

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How to Answer Behavioral Interview Questions with the STAR Method

"S.T.A.R." is a way to remember the four key pieces to a successful behavioral interview answer. Here is each piece explained:

Situation - Describe the situation you were in and the challenge involved.

Task - What was your objective or goal? What was the result you need to achieve, or the problem you needed to solve?

Action - What specific action steps did you choose for your goal and why?

Result - What was the outcome? How did your solution play out and what did you learn from the experience that you've continued to use?

(Situation and Task can often be combined in one sentence or less.

Example: "I was dealing with a past-due project that we needed to deliver by the end of the day, and my supervisor was out of the office")

Here's a full example now...

Let's say they ask you: "Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize everything?"

Example of an answer using the STAR method (each piece is color coded):

"While attending college, I also worked at a large law firm. I was responsible for 10-20 different administrative tasks each morning that had to get done. I was successful because I kept a very detailed to-do list and tracked each task in Excel. This allowed me to handle the most important tasks first without ever missing anything. By doing this I was able to stay on schedule and our team knew they could rely on me without having to double check my work."

Now... How can you make your answer better? There's one way... "tailoring" it to the company.

Let's look at the same example, with some "tailored" content added on at the end to show them exactly how you could help them right away. (The new content is in bold black letters).

*"While attending college, I also worked at a large law firm. I was responsible for 10-20 different administrative tasks each morning that had to get done. I was successful because I kept a very detailed to-do list and tracked each task in Excel. This allowed me to handle the most important tasks first without ever missing anything. By doing this I was able to stay on schedule and our team knew they could rely on me without having to double check my work. **One of the first things I saw on your job description was a note about how you're looking for someone who is self sufficient and won't need their work checked, so I thought this piece of experience would help me immediately in this role.**"*

Try to always use past examples that are as relevant to the job as possible, and then show them how that knowledge will help you in their role. Use your past experience to prove to them you'd be able to handle the job and succeed.

Now that you know the STAR method, let's look at some common behavioral questions and examples of answers that will impress the interviewer.

Teamwork:

“Talk about a time you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours”

This question is designed to test your **ability to compromise** for the better of the team or organization. There's a really good chance you're going to come across a person whose personality clashes with yours in your career. You should maintain that sometimes it was difficult, but that you cooperated and found a winning strategy that allowed you to use each person's positive attributes to complete the task successfully. The ability to work on a team is crucial for any company or organization, and they want to see that you can do it regardless of who your teammates are.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"In my final semester at university, we had a group project. Two people in my group were both very loud and aggressive, and I tend to be more reserved. I realized within the first week that if I wanted my input to be heard and if I wanted to make an impact on this final project for the class, I was going to have to change my approach. I became more vocal in group discussions and there were a couple of instances where I asked the other two to slow down, because I felt we were making the wrong choice. It worked, and they started listening to my input and discussing their ideas before acting. The project ended up being a good balance between all three of our ideas, and we received an A."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"In my previous job I was asked to train three new software developers we had hired out of college to help build our iOS app. I could tell immediately

that they were very why and quiet. I got the sense they weren't going to ask questions if they didn't understand something, so I adapted my training and asked more questions to make sure they were following along. I think they appreciated this and slowly became more comfortable asking questions of their own. The project ended up being a big success and we launched the app on time."

"Describe a time when you didn't agree with others. What did you do?"

This question is tricky but here's what I recommend: Explain to the interviewer that you have a particular philosophy whenever you disagree with someone. That philosophy should be to first work to understand the other party's viewpoint and why they think that (If this is not your normal style, try to think back to situations where you did use this method.) Once you are able to do that, you can focus on compromising or providing additional viewpoints, knowing much more information regarding why the issue is important to the other person.

Example Answer:

"In my last job as a recruiter we had a quarterly strategy meeting and everyone else on the team wanted to focus on a certain type of client, whereas I thought we'd be better off with the opposite strategy. The first thing I do in any disagreement is try to understand the other party's viewpoint. So I asked a few questions to better understand why everyone else disagreed with me. I shared my viewpoint as well. We were able to reach a compromise that incorporated a couple of my ideas into their strategy, and the discussion helped me see a couple of good reasons why their strategy was a good idea. I think it ended up giving us the best possible solution in the end."

“Tell me about a conflict you've faced at work and how you dealt with it”

This is very similar to the question above. The interviewer is looking to see evidence that you are able to **stay calm and professional** even when an argument or dispute does occur. It will happen eventually if you work long enough, and they want to know you'll handle it the right way. So what's the right way? Staying relaxed, communicating to find out everyone else's viewpoint, and not making it personal or overreacting.

Example Answer:

"In my previous job as an administrative assistant, I performed tasks for two different managers. I found myself in a situation where both managers were demanding a lot of my time and resources and I was forced to say 'no' to some of their tasks or else I'd fall severely behind on the higher-priority tasks. At first, one of my managers was visibly upset. I quickly realized that I hadn't done a good enough job of explaining the situation. I quickly asked to meet one-on-one, and told the manager why I didn't have as much time available as he thought. He immediately understood and I was able to avoid a bigger conflict. It turned out that neither manager realized how busy I was. They ended up speaking with each other and coming up with a plan that would lighten my workload so that I could continue to perform the most important tasks for both of them."

“Give me an example of how you have worked on teams. What role did you play?”

Most jobs involve teamwork and communication. The interviewer wants to know how you'll fit into the current group. Give them a sense of how you like to fit into a team, but make sure to also show that you're able to **adapt and**

work well with all types of people. The goal is to show them that no matter what the current team looks like, you'll make it a priority to fit in.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"I like team projects a lot. As a business major, most of my classes involved team projects and they often had a big impact on our final grade. I played different roles depending on the group I was in but I tend to lead whenever possible. I'm great at presenting my thoughts in front of an audience, so if the project involved giving a presentation at the end, I'd often step up and lead the effort. If somebody on the team also wanted to lead, I was happy to share the responsibilities. I still feel one of my greatest strengths is presenting information and communicating to a variety of different audiences and that's one of the big reasons I wanted to apply for this business intelligence coordinator role in your company."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"Working as a billing analyst requires a lot of teamwork, so it's something that I consider a strength. In my last job I was frequently required to interact with many different groups in the company, like Finance, Accounting, Sales, Customer Service and more. I've also worked on projects with a five other colleagues in my own group. In those cases, I play the role of a specialist because I'm the only person on our team who is familiar with government contracts. So I provide expert insight into that area, and they handle the other areas. My understanding is you need that same skillset in your group right now, is that right, and can you talk about how I'd interact with the rest of the group here?"

"Describe a time you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you overcome it?"

Despite your best efforts to get along with everyone, you'll come across people who you just don't work well with. It could be a past boss or somebody else. For your answer, talk about the situation and problem, and then talk about how you changed your strategy and overcame the situation. The key here is to show **adaptability and problem-solving**.

Example Answer:

"In my last job as a packaging engineer, we had two different shift supervisors and I worked for both of them, depending on when I was scheduled. I always try to build great rapport with my manager because I know it makes a big difference in your success in a job. I got along great with the one supervisor, but struggled to bond with the second one. I'd frequently ask how I'm doing and he said my work was fine, but he wouldn't give me much more information than that, and I could tell he didn't particularly like me. I asked a few coworkers for advice and they said that he's the type of person who will respect you if you take initiative and don't ask for help. So from then on I focused on solving problems on the manufacturing floor and looking for ways to improve our packaging processes. I identified a few cost-saving changes we could make and less than a year later, this same manager that I had struggled to bond with was actually recommended me for a promotion."

“Tell me about a time you wish you’d handled a situation differently with a colleague”

Try to think back to a time when you had a dispute, and how you could have communicated more effectively in order to avoid the issue. Own up to it, don’t make excuses, but make sure the employer realizes that you learned from the negative experience and **used it to improve** your communication and teamwork.

Example Answer:

“In my very first job, I had a colleague tell me to do something that wasn’t what my manager had said to do. I went and told the manager and asked for help. My manager went and discussed it with the colleague and clarified everything, but I think this harmed my relationship with that colleague, and he was somebody I was going to be working closely with. I’ve faced similar situations more recently and almost always resolve it by communicating directly with the colleague who is giving advice and explaining what I’ve been told to do. Once they know, they can give me advice based around what my manager has told me, so it’s a win-win.”

“Tell me about a time you needed to get information from someone who wasn’t very cooperative. What did you do?”

Even if you don’t manage anyone directly it’s important to show you can lead a project or manage a task. When they ask this question, they’re looking for proof that you can **overcome problems and be persistent** while staying professional.

Example Answer:

"I was managing a project in my last position and it involved getting a few reports from the billing department. Unfortunately the person I usually communicate with was on vacation, so I sent an email to the head of her team. She responded saying that nobody was available to complete the task and I'd have to wait until the following week. Instead of replying back, or escalating the situation, I walked to her office and calmly asked if we could speak. She said okay. I had a feeling that if I explained why I needed this information, she'd change her response. I told her how this report is used and which different departments are counting on it. My instinct was right. She had misunderstood the purpose of the report and thought I was asking for something unusual or unnecessary. She told me that she'd do it herself after lunch. The problem was solved and I didn't end up having to get any managers from my group involved."

"Tell me about a time you exercised leadership"

Try to pick something as recent as possible, and as **relevant to the job** as possible. So if you have related work experience, use that. If the job requires directly managing other people, share a story that involves direct management if you can.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"In the HR internship I just completed, I led the overhaul of our training manuals and training procedures for new hires in the sales department. It was a complicated project because I needed to get input and approval from multiple sales managers and HR managers. I wasn't a direct leader of anyone as an intern, but I used my communication skills to take ownership of the project and successfully complete it before my internship finished. The company was excited about it and is currently using what I created."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"In my prior role as an account manager, I became aware of an issue where a couple of our team members were not coming to meetings prepared, and were costing the entire team a lot of time. It wasn't my job to lead or manage the meeting, but I felt it was negatively impacting the rest of us. I knew other account managers felt the same, so I decided to take initiative and speak to our department head about the issue. She was immediately concerned and gave me the task of leading the meetings and setting a clearer meeting agenda with specific pieces that each person was responsible for. I went ahead with the project and it turned out to be a big success. Over the next two months we went from meeting for two hours per week to one hour per week, while becoming more productive."

"Tell me a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it?"

This question touches on a problem that is very common in group work. Even if you've never held a job in your life there's a good chance you saw this as a part of your schoolwork- somebody not doing their share of the work. Either way, your answer should highlight your ability to handle a tough situation and get the necessary people involved in a resolution. Try not to seem too confrontational, but don't come across as too passive either.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"During a group project in college, my team had one member who was doing significantly less work than anyone else. The project was to compare and analyze four companies in a specific industry, and we were each responsible

for one company so his work was vital. We first discussed the situation and asked for the bare minimum of what we needed from him. He did even less than that. We decided as a group to tell the professor what was going on, just so she would be informed. Then we split up the non-contributor's work and completed it as a team. The papers came out very well, but were understandably weak when presenting information on the fourth company that we didn't expect to have to cover. The professor understood, and we received the grades we deserved."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"In my last job, my manager met with me and the other social media manager and asked us to come up with a couple of new strategies that will help our sales and marketing efforts. We left the meeting and my colleague told me to go ahead and come up with the strategies myself, and then he would revise them and give his input after. I didn't feel comfortable with this since we were both supposed to be working side by side, so I went back and asked my manager to clarify what she had envisioned for the project. She explained that she was hoping we'd sit down together and brainstorm some ideas and work as a team. So I went back to my colleague and told him that I think we need to sit down together and agree on a plan from the beginning. From that point forward, the project went smoothly and we both did our share of the work at each stage."

"Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise"

Your answer here should show that you're willing to give up some of your needs to put the organization first. Try to use an example involving a team member, a boss, or a client who you compromised with for the good of the

company. This is a very important trait to show. If you can show that you made the best of the situation and turned it into a positive, that's ideal (like the example #1 below). Or if you manage people and you're interviewing for a manager position, talk about how you facilitated a compromise on your team and helped other people reach a compromise (example #2).

Example Answer for Non-Managers:

"I was recently in a situation where a project was promised to me, as well as one of my colleagues. It happened because of a miscommunication. Unfortunately, the project was something that only required one person's attention, and we both had been looking forward to it because it's a very significant project with a lot of visibility in the company. I spoke with my manager and she told me that she had made a mistake and unfortunately I wasn't going to be the one working on the project. I was honest with her and told her that I had been looking forward to this extra responsibility. She understood, and we spoke in detail about a few other ways I could make a bigger impact in the group and get noticed by upper management. We implemented the changes the following week and it led to me getting a raise later that year. So it turned out to be a great compromise that still allowed me to advance in the company and learn new skills even though I didn't get the project."

Example Answer for Managers:

"As a sales manager I've come across a number of situations where more than one sales associate had been pursuing a new client, or where two people had both been talking to a client when we won their business. It's not ideal, but it happens in our company. When this occurs on my team, I'm responsible for deciding how the commission will be paid out between the two sales reps. I try to do this as fairly as possible, and create a compromise

that is going to keep everyone happy. I talk to both sales reps to fully understand the situation, and I tell them in advance how it's likely to play out to avoid surprises when they see their paychecks. We're updating our tracking software so this will no longer be an issue soon, but it's an area I've had to facilitate a number of compromises in and it's been a good learning experience."

Motivation and values:

“Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?”

Everyone gets stressed here and there, but the interviewer wants to make sure that you can handle the workload that’s put on you. You should explain a time when you had a lot of responsibility, and how you used **time management** skills to stay on track.

Example Answer:

“Earlier this year two of the four business analysts in my group quit, so I was left with a very heavy workload. It was also our busiest time of year and I knew the work needed to be done. I ended up staying late every night for a month to get the work done. I also asked my manager for help and he was very understanding. He did what he could, and told me he appreciated me staying late until he could find replacements for the two people who had left.”

“Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?”

Try to **select an example that matches the work environment of the job you’re interviewing for**. So if you’ll be closely watched in this job, show them that it doesn’t bother you. If you’ll have a lot of freedom, show them you thrive in that environment. Once you’ve decided which angle to take, give specific details about the experience and how you took advantage of the situation to make yourself more productive. If you’re not sure what

type of environment this job is, try to give a brief example of both scenarios to show you're flexible.

Example Answer:

"My most recent job was a very relaxed work environment that required me to be self-sufficient and set my own goals and tasks each week. I checked in with my manager twice per month, but other than that I was trusted to get my work done independently. I handled it by communicating and learning as much as possible from the rest of my team, and by preparing thoroughly for each meeting with my manager. If we're only going to meet twice per month, I realized I need to be very well prepared to make the most of it. So throughout each two week period, I'd write down any questions I had, and would bring my notes into the meetings with my boss, so we didn't waste any time."

"Give me an example of a time you were able to be creative with your work. What was exciting or difficult about it?"

If the interviewer is asking this, it's almost certain they want to hire somebody who is creative and able to come up with ideas on their own. Or that it's something the company values highly. It's okay if this isn't your strongest area, but try to show them it's something you're capable of.

Example Answer:

"In my last position I was trying to convince a new client to join us and leave their current payroll software provider. They were hesitant to leave because of the way our billing structure is set up. We would be the cheaper option but they said it would be a huge hassle for their accounting department to

adjust to the way we billed. I spoke with them in detail to understand the situation, and then went and talked to my manager to see what we could do. He told me what was possible, and what wasn't. I spent a day going through the different possibilities and came up with a new billing structure that my manager and the client would both be okay with. We had never done this before, but I found out it was possible in our systems and my manager was more than happy to sign off on it to bring in a large client like this. I feel it was important to be creative here and not let the deal fall apart over a minor detail like billing terms."

"Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty in order to complete the job"

If you work with customers, that's a great example to give here. Exceeding customer expectations and going beyond what your job requires will get most hiring managers very excited. Otherwise, you can talk about working extra hours, filling in for a colleague who was having trouble, volunteering for extra responsibilities, etc.

Example Answer:

"In my current job, my manager gave me a project to complete for a client, and the requirements I was given were not very difficult. I knew that the minimum requirements were not going to get the job done optimally or impress this client though, and I saw a few opportunities to over-deliver and go beyond what they expected. I had to work weekends, but I was able to deliver a great result that the client was thrilled with. This led to an extra \$120,000 in additional projects from them throughout the rest of the year."

(Reminder: Every chance you get to show the interviewer how you made or saved money for your company, do it. I know not everyone works in an area that's directly tied to how your company makes money, but still look for opportunities to relate your work to the company's profitability.)

"Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision that was made at work"

When answering this question, you need to seem **logical** and **calm/composed**. Don't show any anger or resentment toward management or the decision-maker. Talk about how you gathered your thoughts, prepared a logical argument, and made your case to your manager or colleagues. Or how you came to accept the decision and move on because you realized that was the best action to take.

Example Answer:

"I once disagreed with my supervisor over how to best help a customer. Rather than question her authority in front of the whole team, I talked to her off of the floor. I was open and honest about the problems I had with the way she wanted to do things. It turned out to be a simple misunderstanding that we quickly resolved. She wasn't aware of a previous conversation I had with the customer and his history with the company. That disagreement showed me the importance of communicating with my coworkers to make sure that something small doesn't become a bigger problem than it needs to be."

“Describe a time when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What happened and what did you do about it?”

You might be tempted to say it never happens, and you always succeed. But don't do it. Nobody goes through life performing well at everything. Be honest and talk about a time you didn't do your best and **what you learned from it and what you do differently now**. It's always great to show improvement.

Example for Entry Level Candidates:

"In one of my first biochemistry projects, I greatly underestimated how much lab time I'd need to collect enough data to complete the report. I knew the subject matter, but I couldn't get everything done based on how the lab schedule was set up. I had done a poor job of planning ahead and recognizing how much effort the project would require, and it led to a relatively poor grade on the project. It was a frustrating experience because I knew I was capable of turning in a great result. I learned a lot from it though, and I plan ahead much better with current projects. I usually break projects down into smaller pieces with shorter timelines so that I can recognize which pieces I'll need to get started with soonest."

Example for Experienced Candidates:

"I recently had a shift with one of my fellow nurses and she had asked for my help with a patient. I told her I'd be right there, but then I became occupied with the patient I was currently with and could not leave. I knew when I agreed to help the other nurse that I didn't have time, and it was likely I wouldn't be able to make it. Looking back, I was disappointed in

myself for not communicating better and letting my coworker know that I wasn't available. If I had been upfront, she could have found other help instead of waiting for me. I definitely learned a lot from that experience and have used it to become a much better communicator. I think it's important to be clear and set realistic expectations, rather than trying to give coworkers the answers they want to hear."

Interacting with clients and customers:

“Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on a client. How did you approach things?”

With this question and answer, make sure you show them you’re willing to do whatever it takes to help the company if you’re hired. Chances are they **put the client first** if they’re asking this, so you need to show that you do the same if you want them to feel comfortable offering you the job.

Example Answer:

“I had been working as an account manager for two years in my previous company when the person who managed our largest account resigned. The account was given to me. The client had a lot of special requests that I needed to learn about. I spent time reviewing the previous notes in the account, and I scheduled a call to get acquainted with our contact in the company to introduce myself. I was attentive and set expectations for what I would deliver, and was able to keep the client very happy. They actually gave us 20% more business later that year.”

“Give me an example where you did not meet a client’s expectations. What happened and how did you attempt to fix the situation?”

Think of a misunderstanding or a time you or your team failed to deliver what the client expected. Explain what happened, how you corrected it, and what you learned from the situation that you still use today.

Example Answer:

"We had a brand new web design client and I was asked to handle their first project, along with another junior designer. I took the lead, but wasn't on the initial conference call due to a conflict in my schedule. So I relied on the junior designer to talk with their website manager and gather the specifications for the project. My colleague misunderstood a few of their requests, and didn't ask enough questions so it resulted in us having to schedule another call and do a few revisions on our initial work. The project turned out great in the end and the client was happy, but it cost us valuable time. I learned that if I am responsible for a project, I need to be communicating with the client first-hand to understand their needs and then delegating tasks after."

"Tell me about a time you went beyond your typical duties to make a customer happy"

This question is another opportunity to show them that you do whatever it takes to help out. This is invaluable and will get you hired, even if somebody else has more experience. To answer, pick a difficult situation where you exceeded the requirements of the job, got creative, or went out of your way to over-deliver. Talk about a scenario where you kept a customer happy and potentially avoided a bad situation (the customer being disappointed, the work being delivered late, etc.)

Example Answer:

"During college I worked as a customer service associate at a local food market. There was a night where I had already punched out, but I stayed behind to help a colleague solve a problem. A customer was angry about the length of time he had waited for his pizza. Rather than leaving, I came back

out and apologized to the customer and told him that his pizza would be ready in a few minutes and that the associate he had been speaking with is new on the job. After I explained, the customer calmed down and became much more understanding. We gave him his pizza a few minutes later, and he left happy. The new associate thanked me after. She was the only person in her department because it was late at night, and I knew if I hadn't stayed back she wouldn't have known how to handle it. I saw the customer return later in the week too, so we retained his business."

"Tell me about a time a customer was pleased with your service"

There are a few important things you should cover in your answer. First, demonstrate your skill and your ability to do high quality work in your field. Then show that you have excellent communication and are dedicated to customer service. If you can end your story by saying the experience led to more business for the company, that's ideal (but don't worry if you can't).

Example Answer:

"I worked with a difficult customer to resolve a few issues they were having with their internet service. I stayed patient and took the time to fully understand the issue, and then came back to them promptly with a solution. They had spoken to a few other customer service representatives in the past who didn't take the time to address the whole issue, so the problem kept occurring. After the issue was fixed, the company went out of the way to tell my manager how satisfied they were with the service I gave them. Later that year they signed a contract to expand our service into three more of their office locations for a total of \$70,000 in revenue for our company."

"Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?"

The employer is looking for how you calm a customer while staying within the guidelines of a company's policies. If you are applying to a service industry job, like a server or retail worker, the flexibility to do whatever it takes to appease an unsatisfied customer is usually larger than if you are working in a corporate environment. Either way, the customer should come first, so they want to hear that you retained their business and did everything possible to make sure they were satisfied.

Example Answer:

"My last job was in a call center for a large e-commerce company, and a customer called in yelling about an email he had sent us. He said that he had emailed us three days ago and we hadn't responded, in regard to an item that arrived broken. I apologized and told him I understood his frustration. He was still very loud and upset but I asked him if he could please hold for two minutes while I look into the issue. I looked in our records and saw that the email had been overlooked by another associate. I put in the request for a replacement to be sent out immediately. I got back on the phone and reassured him that his replacement was on the way. I explained when he could expect to receive it. He seemed satisfied once I was able to tell him when the new item will arrive. Staying calm and showing him I understood why he was frustrated was what kept the call under control and kept him from getting more hostile."

“When you’re working with a large number of customers, it’s tricky to deliver excellent service to all of them. How do you go about prioritizing your customers’ needs?”

There isn’t one correct way to prioritize. It depends a lot on your industry and whether you interact face-to-face with customers, whether you’re working in an office and talking to customers on the phone, etc. Your goal in your answer should be to explain how you try to remain fair and use your best judgment to keep all customers satisfied. Try to show them you’ve been in tricky situations in the past and know how to handle it. **You don’t want them to worry that you’ll panic** whenever this happens.

Example Answer:

“I try to be fair and treat our customers equally. Of course, if there’s a large client that is crucial to our business I am going to make sure they’re well taken care of, but I want every customer to feel like they’re important to us. One thing that I think I do very well is maintain great communication. I’m not always able to handle every customer request the instant it comes in, but I respond and give a timeframe for how soon I can handle it. I show that I understand their concern and that I’m working on taking action to resolve it. This goes a long way to keeping customers happy. One more thing I do in my response is invite them to follow up if they have any further concerns or need an update. That way they feel comfortable checking in, and aren’t left waiting anxiously without an answer.”

Adapting and problem solving:

“Describe a time when you saw a problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it”

Having somebody who gets things accomplished without being told to do so is every supervisor's dream. So for this answer, think of a time when you took the initiative and **saved the company a lot of money or hassle** by spotting a problem and coming up with a solution. The closer you can relate it to the job you're interviewing for, the better.

Example Answer:

"I always try to speak up when I see a problem or an opportunity to improve something. I was recently managing a data analysis project involving our marketing data, and noticed an error in how the data was being recorded by a couple of people on that team. If it wasn't corrected, it could skew the results of everything I was doing, and I don't think anyone else in the company realized what was happening. I spoke with my manager, and brought specific details and examples of what was going on in a printed document. My manager was able to take this into a senior level meeting and get the problem resolved with the marketing groups that were collecting the info. I was then able to finish the project knowing my data was accurate."

“We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of how you have done this”

This is a variation of the question above. It's another opportunity to show that you're detail oriented and proactive about solving problems before

you're asked to (or before they become big issues). **Show your future manager that you'll be their second set of eyes and ears, spotting problems so they don't have to.** How? Give an example where your attention to detail allowed you to recognize something that other people had missed. Then share how you fixed it. Try to end the story by explaining what type of future issues were avoided because of your actions.

Example Answer:

"I was doing routine maintenance on the production floor and spotted a small crack on a piece of bottling machinery. It wasn't my job to check that equipment, but I knew something didn't look right. I told my manager immediately and he came down to the production floor to take a look with me. He agreed, and worked with his boss to get the issue repaired by an expert welder. He later told me that although the crack wasn't affecting product quality, their analysis showed that it would have eventually grown into a larger crack, and this repair had saved the company an eventual \$500,000 in replacement costs if the problem had gone unnoticed."

"Describe a challenge you've faced and how you dealt with it."

This common behavioral question is designed to see whether you're **battle-tested** and whether you **have a plan** for when things get tough. Companies want to hire people who are resilient and have survived some tough challenges in the past. They don't want to worry that you'll quit or get discouraged if the job is slightly harder than you thought.

Example Answer:

"In my last job, one of our biggest clients had a software failure over the weekend. I couldn't get to my office so I had them send me a report via email and was able to diagnose the most critical issue and send a temporary fix from home. It kept their business running and avoided a disaster, and I created a permanent fix on Monday morning. I also documented the issue so that our team would be aware of it and it wouldn't happen again. I think my key to overcoming the situation was staying calm, prioritizing the most important task first and communicating clearly with the client every step of the way."

"Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some changes you had no control over. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?"

The company wants to make sure that if their organization undergoes change, you're willing to follow them and adapt. If possible, share an example of a serious and important change that required a big adjustment on your part. Then talk about how you succeeded. **Turn this question into a positive** by highlighting your skills and your ability to learn new things, and back it up with proof and specific results.

Example Answer:

"When I joined my last company we were targeting individual consumers and our business was growing fast. Competitors quickly popped up and took away our market share though and we ended up pivoting into the business-to-business market. This was a huge adjustment in terms of my work as a marketing coordinator. I had never worked with a business-to-business product but I quickly adapted the skills I already had and used them to help

us gain a foothold in this new market. The transition ended up being a big success and the company has doubled in size since then."

"Tell me about the first job you ever had. What did you do to learn the ropes?"

They're asking this to see what they can expect if they hire you. How will you get up to speed and learn the job? How will you approach the learning process? Try to sound **organized** and show them you have a method for learning. Also try to sound **enthusiastic** when you describe how you jump into a new job. If you want to get hired, you need to sound like you'll give a very serious effort to learning this position. Talk about studying at home, getting acquainted with your colleagues as quickly as possible, and developing a good relationship with your manager. You can add anything else you'd like too. The example below will give you a good framework to copy...

Example Answer:

"My first job was a bookkeeping assistant for a law firm. The first thing I did after a week of training was go home, review, and learn everything I could about the industry. I studied the phrases I had heard around the office, the different roles and job titles people in the organization had, and more. I quickly figure out what each person does in the organization which helped me become better prepared for what they'd need me to do around the office. I also spent time talking with my boss and asked a lot of questions to understand what he expected of me. That way I was confident that the work I was doing was helping the company as much as possible, even in the first month."

“Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?”

This can be a personal failure or professional failure. Pick something that really happened. The important thing is to show that you bounced back and handled the situation in spite of the failure. **Take responsibility** and show that you recognize what went wrong and learned from it.

Example Answer:

"I did not do a good job in my first role as a supervisor. I've become very comfortable as a manager since that job five years ago, but in the transition I did not do a good job of earning the respect of my coworkers. I had been promoted from individual contributor to supervisor, and was still friends with a lot of the team. While there's nothing wrong with having a good working relationship with your team, it's important to also make it clear that you expect them to do what you say as a supervisor. I didn't do a good job of that, and had trouble keeping the team organized and focused. I ended up asking my boss for help and he gave me some advice that helped me turn the situation around. That's the only time I made that mistake and I've used it to grow as a leader in my more recent positions."

“Describe a difficult problem you faced at work and what you did to overcome it”

Since this is such a broad question, try to pick a story that's closely related to the job you're interviewing for. **You want the problem to be similar to something you might come up against in this job.** It's not always possible, but that's where you should start thinking about your answer.

Example Answer:

"In my last job, I noticed a pattern of late deliveries over a two month period. I met with the staff involved in the delivery department and discovered that the problem seemed to be with the stock not coming through on time. I investigated and found that requests for new inventory were not being processed fast enough, causing a backlog in the orders department. I spoke with my manager and suggested a couple of possible solutions, along with bringing the problem to his attention. Since this issue involved so many different departments I knew I'd need his help in solving it. We worked together to come up with a fast solution and then presented it to the other groups. The problem was fixed and we decreased the average delivery time by a full day."

"Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without all the information"

The interviewer wants to hear that you're comfortable making decisions and trusting your gut. You need to show that you're **decisive**. Give an example of a time when you had to choose a course of action without all the facts. Show that you did your best to weigh the different options based on the information available and make an **informed** choice (not a guess!). Also, be sure to explain *why* you didn't have all of the information available. The last thing you want to do is seem impulsive or careless.

Example Answer:

"I recently had a patient come into the hospital and we weren't able to obtain his medical history. He was having an emergency and needed medication and I realized I didn't have time to wait for all of the information to come in. I prioritized his safety and chose a treatment with the lowest chance of side effects or allergic reaction, while still ensuring it would resolve the primary issue he was admitted into the hospital for."

“Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision”

This is a variation of the question above. There are many examples that will work for both questions though. To answer this question, explain why there was a time constraint and talk about how you **prioritized** and made the most of the time available. This usually involves using your limited time to weigh the most important factors for that decision. That way you can give yourself the best chance at making the right choice, even if you weren't able to look at every single detail that you would have liked to.

Example Answer #1:

"This happens often as an IT support technician, but one recent example was when we had a core backbone switch die. It died at the worst possible time for our business and I needed to get it back up and running quickly. I analyzed the logs and system status, and using my previous experience to make some quick decisions that fixed the problem and got the equipment back up within minutes. I could have over-analyzed and delayed the fix but I knew time was the most important factor here, so I implemented a solution that I knew would be fastest."

Example Answer #2:

"I had to make a decision recently between two router configurations for our office. Time was very limited, and I needed to have all of the equipment back up and running in a couple of minutes. I chose the configuration that I had the most knowledge about because I knew that I could troubleshoot it more effectively if there was a problem. My decision was the right one, and the transition went very smoothly. None of our departments experienced interruptions or issues."

“Tell me about a time you made a mistake at work, what happened?”

We all make mistakes. Anyone who interviews you for a job knows this. Not everyone knows how to take responsibility and own up to it though. That's where you need to stand out. Be honest about what happened. Nobody wants to work with someone who's always pointing the finger. **You're going to impress the interviewer more by sounding humble** than by trying to convince them a situation wasn't your fault. Also, remember to explain what you learned from the mistake. It's ideal if you can turn the mistake into a positive by showing how you used it to get better at your job.

Example Answer:

“Early in my career, I missed a deadline that ended up costing us a really big client. There were a lot of factors that contributed to this, but ultimately, I was the one who dropped the ball. From that experience, I went back and thought really hard about what I could've controlled and what I would've changed. It turns out that I was not nearly as organized as I thought I was. I sat down with my boss, asked for suggestions on how to improve my organizational skills, and a few months later I was able to land an even bigger client for the department.”

“Tell me about a time you were under a lot of stress at work and how you dealt with it”

Talk about something that stressed you out more than normal at work, and how you successfully got through it. Hint: When you name something that stressed you, **try not to pick something essential to your everyday job**. If you're applying for a job where you'll be making 100 sales phone calls a day, it's not a good idea to say that picking up the phone stresses

you out. You could say that presenting to internal groups is stressful though, and talk about a large presentation you gave and how you prepared for it.

Example Answer:

"Last year I was asked to give a talk in front of three different engineering groups in my company. The experience ended up being great, but I was very stressed the week leading up to the presentation. I asked a couple of colleagues for advice, since I knew they had given similar presentations in the past. I also asked my friend and mentor, who works at a different company but in a similar role. They all gave me great advice about how to prepare ahead of time and how to calm my nerves while presenting. It ended up being a big success and I volunteered for a few more talks after that."

"Describe a crisis you faced at work. What was your role? How did you resolve it? What were the results?"

Here's what they're wondering when they ask this: Are you the type of person who will stay committed when things get tough, or do you fall apart and quit when facing stress? **They want to see how resilient you are**, so make sure you give a great story where you gave extra effort and helped the company in a critical time.

Example Answer:

"A couple of months ago we updated our internal software and it caused a lot of unforeseen issues. Anyone who had been using our systems for more than two years was locked out of some of the key components of our software. It was a Friday afternoon, but many of our clients are large

manufacturing sites that operate on weekends. I communicated with multiple clients and found out everything I could about the issue, and then informed our internal staff so they could fix it. They came up with a solution and we were able to ensure that our clients' systems were working properly before we left for the weekend. Although it was obvious our clients were bothered and worried by the interruption, they also appreciated our quick response and our willingness to do whatever it took to get them back online. I think we did the best we could in the situation and I learned a lot from it."

"Describe a time when you were asked to do something you weren't trained to do. How did you adapt?"

The last thing any hiring manager wants is someone who will refuse to do a task because "that's not a part of my job description." So first, show that you were willing to step in without hesitation. That's as important as anything here. Next, you can give details about how you learned the new task or what you did to succeed.

Example Answer:

"In my last job I had been working as a frontend software engineer for four years, and my job didn't involve interacting with our customers at all. One of our product managers quit, and my boss was out of the office. He called me and told me he needed me to get on the phone with a customer and answer a couple of questions about our software. I understood our systems well at this point but I was extremely nervous since I had never spoken with a customer or client. I told my manager I would gladly do it, but I'd appreciate any advice he could offer. He gave me some advice and I went home that night and studied our history with that client so that I'd be prepared to discuss their particular needs the next day. After the call, the client was very

satisfied with my answers. They added a couple of more services to their package with us shortly after that call."

"Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to solve a problem"

This can be answered by giving an example from work or school. Try to choose whatever is most recent (so if you have a previous job, use that). Your goal is to convince them that you're a natural problem solver and someone who can quickly come up with a solution rather than waiting around to be told what to do. They're looking for **initiative and creativity**.

Example Answer:

"I was working in my first management consultant position and one of our clients asked for a report that wasn't something we typically did. They had just switched to us from another firm, and I knew if we wanted to keep them happy as a client we'd need to give them this report. I quickly did some research into what our top competitors were providing in this area, and then developed a report that included all of the essentials, plus a few extra areas to go above and beyond what the client had been receiving in the past. It was a big hit and the client was thrilled."

"Tell me about a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. How did you handle that situation?"

This is similar to the previous question. Show that you can think on your feet and that you're comfortable taking initiative instead of waiting around hoping help will come.

Example Answer:

"As a paralegal, I worked closely with families of the deceased. One family became particularly upset when the brothers and sisters were disputing over their loved ones' possessions. I was new to the job at this time, and I knew my manager would arrive at the office in 20 minutes. However, I was concerned that the argument would escalate in that time, so I knew I had to handle the situation. I explained what needed to happen and what the law says in these cases, and assured them that I would help handle this in a way that was fair. The situation became much calmer after that and we were able to resume the conversation and be productive. By the time my manager got to the office, we had settled everything and they were preparing to leave."

"Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem"

Take your time with this answer and show how you weighed multiple options, looked at all of the information available, and chose the right solution. That's what they want to see... somebody who is calm and makes **decisions based on the facts**. Then talk about the great result your decision brought about. How did it help the company?

Example Answer:

"I had a client come into the bank where I worked and request a \$5,000 personal loan to pay off some bills. During the customary review process, I determined that what was really needed was a \$25,000 debt-consolidation loan. Rather than giving the customer a quick-fix to the problem, I explained the situation in detail, showed the customer why this option would be

beneficial, and logically solved the problem in a way that was in the best interest of both the bank and the client.”

“Sometimes it’s easy to get in over your head. Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment”

Part of being good at your job is **knowing when to ask for help** and not being afraid to do so. If you’re truly ‘in over your head’ and you don’t tell anyone, the problem is just going to become worse over time. And one of the ways some people run into trouble in their work is refusing to ask for help until it’s too late. You want to show the interviewer that **you did everything possible** to handle the situation on your own, but that you did not hesitate to get outside help the moment you realized it was necessary.

Example Answer:

“I was working as a training coordinator and we had hired nine new people that month. We had never hired more than four at a time in the past, and despite my best efforts I quickly realized that I was going to fall behind. I didn’t want to provide a lower quality training experience for these new employees, so I expressed my concern to my manager and asked if there was anyone who could assist me temporarily. He spoke with the manager that these new employees would reporting to after their training, and got that manager to agree to help me with a portion of the training sessions. This completely solved the problem and we kept the training on schedule.”

Time management:

“Tell me about a time you had to juggle multiple high-priority tasks. How did you handle it?”

Try to be as detailed as possible here. Talk about the different tasks you had to juggle, why you prioritized them the way you did, and how this helped you achieve great results for the company. Show that you're logical and **have a method for managing your tasks and your time**, and that you're able to make good decisions about what to handle first.

Example Answer:

"I make a list. I work out what order to do things by thinking about which tasks are urgent and how important each task is. For example in my current job I often have five or six projects for different clients. I never want to miss a deadline so I consider each project's due date and time requirement. But I also look at the overall importance of the project. If something is extremely critical for a client, I will give it extra room and extra attention. I won't take the risk of going until the last day allowed. If I'm not sure what's urgent and what isn't, or how important different tasks are, I find out. If I'm given a new task I add it to the list and decide when to do it, so I adapt the order in which I do things as necessary."

“Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?”

Try to think of a project that lasted at least one month. Talk about how you came up with a strategy, and how you adjusted that strategy as needed.

Actively checking and monitoring progress is important. Companies want someone who can think of their feet, so show them that you made adjustments as needed.

Example For Entry Level Candidates:

"In one of my senior level business classes we had a project that lasted the entire semester. It was an individual project where we had to analyze a number of financial reports for a public company of our choice, going back five years. A lot of my classmates waited to start, but I knew the project was going to be difficult so I started planning right away. I selected a company and outlined my approach, breaking it down month by month. I set milestones and divided the work into small pieces, and started the bulk of the work two weeks later. After about three weeks of work, I realized that the research phase wouldn't take as long as I had thought, so I changed my goal in that area and completed it early. This gave me an extra week to work on writing the actual report which was a huge help and allowed the project to be very successful."

Example Answer For Experienced Candidates:

"In my most recent position, I managed a three month web design project for a large hotel chain. They were looking to promote an annual event they were hosting, and needed a separate website and signup form for the event. We worked with them to create all of the branding materials for the event and then build the website around the message they wanted to promote. I communicated frequently with our different internal teams, as well as the client, to make sure we stayed on schedule and delivered what they needed. The client changed the requirements midway through the project, but I was able to adjust our strategy and still deliver the work on time. I stayed organized and managed these changes by keeping careful timelines and

setting detailed milestones, so I could look and see exactly where each phase of the project stood. This helped me recognize delays and problems before they became a major concern."

"Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?"

The interviewer wants to see a couple of things here. First, they want to see that you're getting the most important things done and prioritizing correctly, even if you can't do everything. Second, they want to see that you're staying calm and not getting discouraged or giving up when overwhelmed. Are you okay in the situation or do you panic? Show them you stay calm.

Example Answer:

"Last year I was in the middle of building an application and had a tight deadline to meet. At the same time I was training a new employee. I broke up each day into blocks to help myself tackle everything in an organized and timely manner. In the morning I had a meeting with the new employee and mentored them while talking about what they'd work on that day. That freed up my afternoon to focus on building the app. I broke this into stages from conception to implementation, and I set a new goal each evening so I'd know what I needed to accomplish the next day. I was able to get the new employee up to speed in a matter of two weeks, and from that point, they were able to help me complete the application. We finished the product and delivered it to the client one week ahead of schedule and they were very satisfied."

"Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it"

You can pick a professional or personal goal here. If you've accomplished a professional goal that relates to the job you're interviewing for, try to use that. Walk them through each step of how you planned your actions and turned your goal into reality. It's best to mention a goal that was **challenging** and required you to **overcome obstacles**. This might include learning a new skill, getting a new certification, learning a language, or accomplishing something big in your career.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"As a senior in high school, my goal was to attend college and play college golf. But I was nowhere near the player I needed to be to make the team. So during that summer, I worked on my golf game daily, to the point where I won three out of five of the tournaments I entered. I spent every hour I had during the day to make myself a better all-around player to be able to pursue this goal. I eventually walked on my freshmen year and was selected for the team without much suspense. The coach immediately saw that I had developed a strong skill set and would help the team succeed."

Example For Experienced Candidates:

"As a manager, I'm asked to set a series of measurable goals each year for myself and my team. This past year we had two major goals to achieve: We decided to improve the results of our team's customer satisfaction surveys by 15%, and increase our average order value by \$10 for orders taken over the phone. To accomplish this goal I organized a series of trainings for our team and brought in multiple experts to talk about the psychology of selling

over the phone, selling scripts and techniques, and how to deliver excellent customer service and handle objections and concerns. So far we're on pace to exceed both of these goals this year, and the team is extremely motivated to do so because I set up some special incentives and paid time off over the holidays if we achieve the goal."

"Tell me about a time when a project ran over schedule. How did you handle it?"

This question is part **time management**, part **problem solving**, and part **communication**. The employer is wondering if you resolved the issue and fixed the delay in the project, but also how you communicated with the rest of the organization and/or customers when you found out there was a problem. Telling them about a time you ran over deadline without affecting the bottom line is the best example to use here.

Example Answer:

"I was recently put in charge of a manufacturing project for a new customer. They wanted a trial batch of 500 units for a new product. We told them we could complete this in three weeks, however in the middle of the third week we had a serious equipment failure and had to delay the rest of the batch. We had 300 units completed at this point. My manager wanted to tell the customer we were going to be one week late. However, I had been the one speaking with the customer and I knew that their priority was to get some units to inspect as quickly as possible. I took a bit of a risk and suggested that they would likely be satisfied with 300 units if we explained the situation. My manager agreed, so we told them the situation. Our client said that 300 units would be better than waiting a week, so we sent the shipment that weekend. In the end, they were pleased with the units we sent, and ended up ordering multiple batches from us over the next six months."

"Give me an example of a time you managed numerous responsibilities. How did you handle that?"

With this question it's best to give an example of a situation where you had a high amount of work, and then explain in detail how you managed and prioritized those tasks **systematically**. Show them you had a **method and strategy**. Then tell the outcome and show them the result of your work.

Example Answer:

"In my current job, I have to handle multiple responsibilities in developing new projects, maintaining existing ones, and maintaining good client relations. I allocate a certain amount of time for each area daily, and I plan for the next day before I leave the office each night. Coming in to work with a specific plan is helpful, and then I can make adjustments as things develop throughout the day. This allows me to make sure the important deadlines are always met, and also helps me know how each project is progressing in case a client asks for an update. I've learned to enjoy working in a fast-paced environment like this and I consider it one of my greatest strengths after spending a year in this position."

Communication skills:

“Describe a time where you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way”

The employer is looking at your ability to put forth your own ideas if they are the best solution, and back them up with logical arguments. While many interview questions will test your communication skills, this question in particular is gauging **how convincing you are on a team** and whether you are comfortable leading and speaking up.

Example Answer:

“Recently my company asked for bids on a phone system for our new office location. Two companies came in very close with their bids, and most of my department wanted to go with a vendor that we have used in the past. After I looked over the proposals, it was clear that this was the wrong decision in terms of cost and quality. So, I talked individually with each member of our staff and succeeded in changing their minds so that we ended up getting the best product that would save us money and improve our results.”

“Give me an example of a time when you had to explain something fairly complex to a frustrated client or coworker. How did you make sure they understood you?”

Your answer should show them that you stay patient under pressure, and explain complicated issues clearly and simply. You can say you try to relate the issue to something more common or something the other person is more familiar with. That’s a common technique for explaining complex topics.

Example Answer #1:

"As an IT support technician, I often have to explain complicated issues to non-technical staff throughout our organization. We recently had an email issue where a couple of teams were unable to check email from their phone. They were upset, and wanted an immediate solution before the weekend. However I knew this could not be fixed until the following week, despite my best efforts. I briefly explained why and related it to topics they'd understand so they could grasp the full issue. Then I focused my effort on proposing some alternatives and temporary solutions while we work on a permanent fix. They appreciated the detailed explanation and were able to use what I proposed until we fixed the system the following Tuesday."

Example Answer #2:

"We recently had a client who had purchased our software without realizing some of the limitations. For example they thought it would process payments, which is not something we do. They called in upset, but I stayed calm and explained the difference in what we provide and what our competitors provide. I explained that they could use their current payment processor and integrate with our software, and showed them the benefit of this setup. They told me they would take this information and go speak with their Head of IT to decide whether they could stay with us. In the end, they let us keep their business, and thanked me for taking the time to walk them through how everything worked."

"Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it was a hit"

It doesn't matter if you'll be giving presentations in your job or not. Any hiring manager would rather have somebody who can communicate and

present their ideas. Even if you're sitting in a one-on-one meeting with your boss, it makes their job a lot easier if you **communicate clearly and stay organized**. So that's what you should try to show here.

Example For Entry Level Candidates:

"One of my senior level marine biology classes required us to give a presentation in order to graduate. The presentation involved three months of research data, and would last 30 minutes. The project was a big success because I prepared ahead of time, made great notes the night before, and created a number of visual tools to help get my idea across to the rest of the class. The 30 minute timeframe was something that worried me, but I came up with the idea of presenting for 20 minutes and then opening up the discussion for a question and answer session. This was a big hit and I was able to answer a number of questions from my professor and other students, and the presentation ended up going for closer to 40 minutes in the end. I received an A on the project and feel very confident that I'll be able to use what I learned to deliver engaging presentations in my career. It's a skill I'm looking forward to developing further."

Example For Experienced Candidates:

"I recently gave a sales presentation in front of 12 doctors, for our company's new arthritis medication. It was the first time I had pitched this new drug, and 10 out of 12 doctors agreed to prescribe the medication to their patients based on the talk I gave. I think it was a hit because I addressed their concerns up front, I gave them the opportunity to ask questions, and I took the time to learn as much about the product as possible before coming in, so I came across as being knowledgeable and trustworthy."

“Describe a time when you had to use your written communication to get an important point across”

Generally on big projects, the work is distributed among many people on a team and it becomes difficult to keep a track of each piece. So written communication (mainly email) becomes essential. Try to show them that you've used email and written communication to share important information and contribute to important projects without letting it become an obstacle.

Example Answer:

"I recently participated in a project that involved teams from three different office locations. Because we weren't able to meet face-to-face, the project quickly became disorganized and we risked falling behind schedule. I emailed my manager to express my concern, and in that email I proposed a new way of organizing the project to fix the situation. I also highlighted some of the risks I saw, and what I feared would happen if we did not change anything. My manager thanked me for the detailed email write-up, and asked me to go ahead and implement the change I suggested the following week, so I scheduled a conference call with the entire project group and explained the new strategy we'd be using, and why."

“Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when they may not have personally liked you (or vice versa)”

Chances are you're going to have people on your team that you like a lot and some that you don't. The interviewer wants to see that you can work

well and get great results with either group of people. So your answer should show that you **put effort into working well with others no matter what**. Make it clear that whether somebody else personally likes you or not, you're willing to do what it takes to be productive and help the company.

Example Answer for Entry Level Candidates:

"During my time in my school's theater department, I had one director who I just didn't get along with. However, because of my track record, she would assign me as stage director and/or assistant director. I was usually involved in the day-to-day operations of the play and the details of how the play would be performed. I handled my responsibilities the best I could and then showed them to her for approval. If she did not like the way a scene worked, I gave her my opinion as to why it should be that way. If we still could not compromise, I would follow her directions. Understanding that people don't usually have malicious intentions is key, and understanding that you will never be able to convince some people that your way is right is the best way to avoid conflict and still get the job done."

Example Answer for Experienced Candidates:

"In my last job I was assigned a mentor when I joined the company. He had recently been passed up for a promotion and I quickly found out he was very upset and resentful, and was looking to leave the company. I don't think management realized how upset he was. He did not make an effort to help me or connect with me, but I knew that learning the role was crucial to my success. I continued to ask him questions and gather as much knowledge about the role as I could. I also asked my manager if I could observe some other members of the team on phone calls they were making, and she agreed. So I used this as an additional way to learn the job. My mentor

ended up leaving the company one month later, but I had succeeded in learning the job and I hadn't let this stop me from being productive."

"In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or team member? What steps did you take? How did you prepare yourself?"

Take this answer step-by-step. First, talk about the problem with the employee. What needed to be discussed? Then talk about what actions you took. You ideally want to show that you treated them fairly, that you talked to them in private to avoid embarrassing them, etc. You want to show that you laid out steps they could take to resolve issue or gave them a clear action plan. Then show that you followed up and stayed involved in the process of helping them recover.

Example Answer:

"Last year I had to issue a warning to a new marketing associate we had hired. His attitude was great but he wasn't hitting his numbers or goals. I prepared by taking a look at his numbers and coming up with a few suggestions of how he could improve. I wanted to be sure to give actionable advice, not just criticism. Then I asked him to come to my office so that we could talk. I started the conversation by complimenting him and mentioning that I know he's been working hard, and I appreciate his work ethic and attitude. Then I explained that I needed to issue a warning based on his numbers. I finished by telling him how I was willing to work with him one-on-one to help him get his numbers up. I offered a couple of immediate suggestions he could use, and suggested that we follow up later in the week. The discussion went well and he went on to become an above-average performer in the group after a couple of months following my advice."

“Tell me about a time you thought you communicated clearly but were misunderstood. What happened and how did you handle the situation?”

Talk about the message you were trying to communicate and what went wrong. Take responsibility and don't blame the other person. Were they in a different department and you used language they weren't familiar with? Did you assume they knew something they didn't? Did you send something via email that you should have communicated face-to-face? After you've taken responsibility, talk about how you resolved the situation.

Example Answer:

"I have a colleague who works from home most of the time. I needed to share an important update with him, but because he wasn't in the office I sent it via email. He ended up misunderstanding my message and it led to some wasted time and confusion on his end. I realized after the fact that this was the type of message that needed to be communicated over the phone. If I had picked up the phone to call him, he could have responded with his concern and I would have been able to quickly explain the situation. The issue would have been resolved much faster, so I learned my lesson and I have a much better sense of which discussions require a phone call, and which discussions can take place over email."

Coming up next: You've reached the end of the interview questions and answers and you're 2/3 of the way through this guide. In the next chapter I'm going to share 11 proven interview strategies you can use immediately to get more job offers.

SECTION THREE:

TIPS, STRATEGIES AND FOLLOW
UP STEPS

11 Strategies For Interview Success:

This section contains the best interview strategies I've learned and recommended as a recruiter. These tips will help you convince any company that you're the right person to hire... even if somebody else has more experience than you. They'll also help you stay calm and composed even if you face extremely tough questions you weren't expecting.

1. How to Instantly Boost Your Confidence

It's hard to walk into an interview feeling 100% confident, right? If you agree with that statement, you are *not* alone. To kick things off, I'm going to share a few tips that should boost your confidence in your next interview:

- They liked something about your background and your resume or they would NOT have invited you to interview. Period. So you have something in your favor before the interview even begins.
- The hiring manager wants you to be the right fit. They are sitting there hoping you'll say the right things so that they can offer you the job, end their search, and free their time to focus on other business. That's the only reason on earth they would have this job open and be conducting interviews.
- Any good interviewer will ask some questions you don't know. Otherwise how will they know your limits? That's a part of their job. So, when you get a question that you're not sure of, it doesn't mean the interview is going badly. Stay positive and give the best answer you can. More strategies coming up soon for that!

2. The Winning Mentality

I'm going to share with you the mentality that I've used when going on a first interview. It has worked wonders for me.

Picture yourself on a first date with somebody. If they spent 20 minutes and then said they want to get married, you would think they're crazy, right? How could they possibly know?

Interviews are the same. Not every job is going to be the right fit for you, and acting like you know you want every job right away will make you seem less attractive in the interview, not more.

Let's look at a few interview questions that often pop up early:

- *"Why do you think you'd be a good fit for this position?"*
- *"Why did you apply for this job?"*
- *"Why do you want this job?"*

When I face a question like this early in the interview, I explain my reason confidently but I stop short of acting like I know I want the job. Instead, I say I'm eager to find out more about the job to see *if* it's a good fit.

Here's an example...

Interviewer: *"Why did you want to interview for this position?"*

You: *"Well, I reviewed the job description last night before coming in and it seems like my core skills... recruiting, business development, and relationship building... are what you put first in terms of your needs. Not only that but I genuinely enjoy these areas and this is a direction I want to continue in my career. So, that's why I applied for the job. I thought it made sense to have a conversation and learn more about what your needs are."*

The last sentence is the important piece. Companies find it refreshing and attractive when you walk in with this approach on a first interview. All of a sudden your objective is the same as theirs: To figure out if this is a good match. Now they trust you more.

Here are a few other examples of phrases I'd use at the end of some of my answers:

"... so I was excited to come in and learn more about this position and see if it's a good fit."

"...so I was looking forward to having an interview and finding out more about the opportunity and exactly what's involved."

This is how the best candidates conduct their job search because they have multiple options. You are labeling yourself as a top performer if you do this. It's a powerful psychological technique to quickly impress any employer.

3. Creating a Dialogue

So, we just talked about the best mentality to have. Since you and the company are now both trying to find out if this position is a good fit, the interview can become more of a conversation instead of an interrogation.

If you do this right, the hiring manager will start to respect you more and see you as a potential colleague that they could work with.

One of my favorite techniques is to end my answers with a question. Not every answer, but maybe 25-30%.

You might have noticed this at the end of many of the sample answers in the previous section.

Here's another sample conversation that will help you see how it works...

Interviewer: *"Why do you think you'd be a good fit in this job?"*

You: *"Well, my biggest strength is in financial reporting, and from my previous phone interview with Susan, it seemed like that's an area you need help with right now. Is that right? And if so, can you tell me a little more about the specific challenges?"*

Interviewer: *"Yes, that's correct. Our biggest expert just retired, we've had more work than ever this year, and we really have two problems at this point. We don't have enough people to do the work, and we also have an inefficient process that needs to be fixed."*

You: *"Very interesting! My last company actually had a pretty inefficient reporting process when I joined three years ago and one of the things I enjoyed most was working to improve it. Have you done anything to find out where the process is slowing down, or where there's the most room for improvement?"*

Get the idea? This creates a natural dialogue where you can share your knowledge and start to be seen as an expert in your area.

Plus you're learning specific things about the company's problems. You can tailor your answers in the future and relate them back to the company's biggest pain points.

4. How to Make Any Experience Sound Impressive

One of the best ways to sell yourself is when you describe your most recent work (or education if you're a recent graduate) to the interviewer.

Here's the general question you're likely to see: *"Can you tell me about your recent work?"*

In the interview, you want to sound like you're essential to your team and an important member of your group. Speak like your last boss trusted you and you were their go-to person for whatever it is you did. It's about the language you use and *how* you tell your story.

Here's what I mean...

The interviewer doesn't know what your previous work looked like day-to-day. They didn't sit there with you. They rely on your story to judge. So if they judge it negatively, whose fault is that?

Here are two examples of the same job, described very differently. Which one sounds better?

Option A:

"I spend most of my day making sales calls, leaving voicemails, sending emails and so forth. I try to schedule product demos and convert sales. I track my goals and productivity on a spreadsheet, and I meet with my boss once a week to talk about my performance."

Option B:

"I run a sales desk in one of our top groups. I'm responsible for finding new prospects, delivering a demo and closing the deal. We operate each desk very independently so I only check in with my boss once a week. Other than that I'm responsible for making all decisions and exceeding my goals each month."

Both of those answers contain the same facts, but the second one is more impressive. The first example is a list of what you do. It's not strategic; you're just sharing everything in a list. The second example uses language designed to elevate your experience.

You need to do the same thing if you want the best jobs. Be strategic and choose what to show and what not to show. You're in control of that, not the interviewer.

If you recently graduated and don't have work experience, you can do the same thing with your education.

If you're struggling with this, pretend you're out to dinner with an old friend and they ask what you've been doing lately. You want to impress them. What would you say? What would you avoid saying?

5. How to Get Hired Even If You're Not The Perfect Fit: The "No, But..." Technique.

Almost nobody is a perfect match for a job. You have some pieces they like, which is why they chose to interview you. But some pieces are missing.

The difference between interview success and failure is how you address those missing pieces when you're asked about them. Here's what most people do when they're asked about something they don't know, and then I'll give you the best method (Option D):

Option A: Say "No" and stop.

Interviewer: *"Do you have experience with X?"*

You: *"No, I don't have experience with X"* (awkward silence)

Option B: Lie and say “Yes”.

Interviewer: *“Do you have experience with X?”*

You: *“Yes I do, I actually have a ton of experience with X. I worked with X in my last job and was very good at it.”*

This is a bad idea for a number of reasons. First, good interviewers are trained to read candidates and understand if what they say is genuine. The moment you come off as untrustworthy, you’ll earn yourself a one-way ticket to rejection. Second, even if you fool the interviewer into believing your story and end up getting hired, you’ll soon be exposed, and possibly fired for overstating your skills.

Option C: Brush it off or get defensive.

Interviewer: *“Do you have experience with X?”*

You: *“No but I’m pretty sure I could do the job without that anyway. I don’t see why it’s required for this position. And I’m a really fast learner so I could learn anyway”*

You’re never going to convince a company that their job requirements are wrong. It’s frustrating but true. You need to convince them that your experience is right.

Also, the “I’m a fast learner” response is over used and will not impress a hiring manager.

That leaves us with one final option...

Option D (recommended): Say “No, But...”

I'll explain the "No, But..." technique.

If you have used the "I'm a fast learner" answer in the past, don't feel bad. You had the right idea... convince the company that the missing piece of experience won't hurt your performance.

We just need a stronger way to do it.

Think of yourself as a lawyer. The job interview is a court of law and you need *evidence*. Show them that you have experience with something closely related. Or show them that you've overcome a similar challenge in the past. If you want them to believe you're a fast learner, you need relevant examples and PROOF.

Interviewer: *"Our entire company uses Mac computers. Do you have experience with this?"*

You: **"No, but** *I'm very computer-savvy and I've learned to use quite a few programs in my current job by reviewing manuals and studying on my own time. I also train my coworkers on some of the software we use here, after learning it from scratch. I've heard great things about working with Mac so I'd be interested in quickly getting up to speed on this."*

Here's the basic formula:

1. Say "No" and admit that you don't have exactly what they asked for
2. Say "But" and then make a comparison to something in your background that's similar, or something that will help you overcome the missing experience
3. Express an interest in learning the skill they mentioned, so they don't have any concern about whether you're okay with learning a new subject.

Here's another example:

Interviewer: *"Have you ever built a piece of software from the ground up?"*

You: **"No but** *when I joined my last company we were less than two months into the year-long project, so I got involved in the development process very early. I'd actually love to start a project from the very beginning now that I've succeeded in the rest of the process. I'd be excited to learn that last piece."*

One more real-life example...

I had spent two years as a Recruiter in the pharmaceutical industry to begin my career, and I was interviewing to become a Recruiter in software technology (I ended up getting the job).

The question they asked me: *"Have you worked in software technology before? It's a complicated field to learn from scratch"*

My answer: **"No, but** *I had never worked in pharmaceuticals or any scientific area when I took my current job either, and I've learned to understand highly technical jobs and talk with scientists, doctors and other experts. It's actually become one of my strengths that sets me apart; a lot of scientists I talk to actually ask if I have a scientific background and they're surprised that I don't."*

That was a slightly different answer, but the three steps are essentially the same:

1. I'm being up-front and saying that I don't have the exact experience
2. Instead of getting defensive, I'm finding something similar that I have done and providing as much powerful evidence as I can

3. And finally I'm telling them that I'm motivated to learn the new topic, so they won't be worried about my interest level.

Get specific with your evidence whenever you can. Get that extra layer of depth in your story for more powerful proof. In my example above, it's the bit about how scientists actually asked me if I'm one of them.

6. What To Do If You Don't Know an Answer

Along with being asked about your experience in certain areas, you might be asked specific technical questions:

- *"How would you solve this equation?"*
- *"What is the proper response in this situation?"*
- *"How would you record this transaction?"*
- *"Which of these two choices is the correct business decision and why?"*

If you're not sure, pause for a second and relax. If you panic and try to make up the answer or blurt something out quickly, it's not going to help you.

Here's what you should keep in mind: A lot of situational and technical questions are designed to test your thought process, not just a bunch of memorized facts. So if you're not sure of something, say so.

It's not always a bad thing to say: *"Hmm, I'm not sure. Let me think for a second."*

Then try to think out loud a bit and work your way through it.

Many years ago and I had a job interview for a position related to accounting. I have a degree in finance, which is about as close to accounting as you can get in terms of the courses you take.

The interviewer asked me a question of how to record a simple transaction. Something you'd learn your second year in university. Honestly, maybe your first year. I couldn't remember though. It had been too long.

Instead of panicking, I paused and said: *"Let me think about that for a second. I want to make sure I'm giving you a good answer."*

And I started thinking out loud and working my way through it over the next few minutes while the interviewer waited patiently and listened. I explained what I was thinking. *"Well this can't be right because _____."*

In the end I don't think I got it right, even after five minutes.

But the interviewer saw my approach. He saw how I break down challenges into smaller pieces and think about things.

He invited me for a second interview to meet the team face-to-face. Even after failing a basic accounting question that he definitely expected everyone to know.

So keep that in mind and stay calm if you're not sure of something.

On the other hand, if a question is completely straight-forward and you don't have any idea, don't force it. I used the method above because I had a general idea of what the answer should look like.

If not, it's okay to occasionally say something like this:

- *"I'm sorry, I am drawing a complete blank right now"*
- *"I don't know"*

No hiring manager is going to knock you for saying you don't know. It takes courage to admit you don't have an answer, and it's far better than trying to fool them and failing.

7. Long Answers vs. Short Answers

Make sure you're addressing what they've asked and not getting sidetracked. You might have a great answer or great experience to share but if you bury it with irrelevant facts, the interviewer could miss it.

So if you deliver a great answer, stop. Don't carry on. I know it's tempting to try to add more and more but if you've made your best point, stop there.

And try to get to that best point relatively quickly for most questions.

One thing you can do is try to listen to how a question is phrased, and decide if the interviewer wants a long or short answer.

Example of a question that requires a short answer:

"How many years have you worked with ____?"

Don't respond to this by saying: *"four years, but I also did some very similar work in the past with ____ and I've also spent eight years with a slightly different skill, plus I'm a very fast learner and..."*

If they don't ask for a story, don't give them a story. If you follow this advice you'll build much better rapport with the interviewer and they'll really appreciate it.

Examples of questions that require long answers:

- *"Tell me about a time you ____"*

- *"Describe your experience with ____"*
- *"What interested you about our company?"*

8. Ask For Feedback As You Go

Even with the advice above, you're still likely to have a moment or two where you're not sure if you should keep talking or stop. That's fine, it happens to everyone.

If in doubt, just pause mid-answer and ask the interviewer:

- *"Does that answer your question?"*
- *"Should I go on?"*
- *"Did you want more detail?"*

Not every question you get from the interviewer will be crystal clear or phrased perfectly, so that's why I recommend this.

You can use this to confirm that you're on the right track and boost your confidence as you deliver your answers.

Note: I'm not suggesting you do this with every answer. Use it as needed, four or five times per interview is fine. The interviewer will get annoyed if you do this every single time though.

9. Character and Enthusiasm Can Get You Hired

Companies hire based on factors like these quite often:

- Accountability
- Energy
- Internal motivation and work ethic
- Potential to advance and grow

It's not always the case. Sometimes a company just needs the best damn Software Engineer they can find and don't even care if he takes showers.

But depending on a company's situation- how fast they're growing, what their priorities are, and who they already have on their team, the points above could absolutely decide the final hiring decision!

You don't know which situation is which, so put yourself in position to be hired based on effort and character whenever possible.

This isn't just judged in a first interview either. It's judged on an ongoing basis by everyone you meet, up until the minute you've signed a job offer.

So remember that while your interviewers are figuring out if you've got the right experience, they're also deciding whether you'll be a good cultural fit, whether you're a hard worker, and whether you're honest and accountable.

10. Build Rapport But Don't Let Your Guard Down

You want to build a connection and be friendly with each interviewer, but do not let your guard down. Don't forget that they are deciding whether to hire you, even if the conversation is very friendly.

To build a good connection, try to match the interviewer's personality and energy level. Notice whether they're stiff and serious, or laid back and relaxed.

Notice if they are loud or quiet too. Don't shout and jump up and down if the person interviewing you is soft-spoken.

I am not telling you to be fake or pretend you're a clone of the other person. But you should slightly adjust how you act to match them. Think of it as meeting them somewhere in the middle.

Also, make sure you're sitting upright with good posture, not leaning back and forth, not tapping your hands or anything like that. This will distract them from the conversation.

One more tip... To be more memorable, if the interviewer asks you a question about your life, try to learn something about them too. For example if they ask where you went to school, or whether you played any sports, ask them the same.

You might find a common connection and end up in a ten minute conversation about a topic you're both passionate about. Do you think that'll help them remember you and increase the odds you get hired? Absolutely.

11. Why You Should Always Act Like You Want the Job

Your goal in any interview should be to **sell yourself** and get invited back to continue the process. That's it.

If you try to decide whether you're interested midway you are going to be distracted, your energy level will drop, and you might cost yourself the job. I've seen a lot of people lose jobs this way (jobs they ended up deciding they want!)

So impress everyone in the interview and get invited back. Nothing else. Once you're home you'll have as much time as you want to decide if you're interested.

I'd much rather you get offers for jobs you're not interested in taking, than lose out on even one job offer that you wanted because you were distracted.

Coming up next: I'm going to share a few specific tips for phone interviews and then in-person interviews. Use the next two chapters as a quick review before each specific type of interview.

Tips for Phone Interviews

- 1.** Find a quiet place to talk before the interview. If for some reason you cannot (for example if you're on a busy street outside), apologize to the interviewer when you pick up, and ask if they'd like to continue or reschedule. They'll usually continue but it's a nice gesture to ask.
- 2.** Print out your resume and the job description. Set them side by side before your interview. Circle areas you want to talk about or ask about. They can't see you on the phone call, so take advantage and use notes.
- 3.** Stand up. It will help you sound more energetic and confident. If you are someone who struggles to sound energetic, try smiling on the phone too. It sounds weird but makes a difference. It's a trick I learned working in sales (I'm a big introvert).
- 4.** Talk with more energy than usual. They can't see your facial expressions or hand gestures, so if you want to show them you're excited and interested, you'll need to use your tone of voice. Don't go overboard but do try to increase your energy level if you're normally quiet or if you normally rely on gestures.

Coming up next: The next section contains my best tips for in-person interviews. There are a few key differences when you're meeting someone face-to-face so I'll cover what you need to know to get hired.

Tips for In-Person Interviews

- 1.** Before you leave the house, get a few printed copies of your resume to bring along. Sometimes the interviewer won't have your resume printed out. Even if it's not needed, you'll look prepared which is good.
- 2.** Make sure not to arrive late. It can cost you the job. Don't arrive too early either. Showing up more than 10 minutes early will cause the interviewer to feel rushed. If you're earlier than this, wait around the corner or wait in your car.
- 3.** Treat everyone you meet as if they're important (especially the receptionist). You can't always guess who has influence in the company, and if you make a mistake it's often too late once you find out. I've seen receptionists who have as much influence as a manager in the company.
- 4.** Look the interviewer in the eye when they come out to meet you. Try to have a firm, confident handshake. Not soft but not too strong.
- 5.** Get business cards from each person you meet. This will make following up much easier because you'll have everyone's names and contact info.
- 6.** Expect repeat questions. One of the best places to study for your in-person interview is the topics you were previously asked about on the phone interview (if you had one). Because those questions reveal what areas are important to the employer. If you struggled with a question on your first interview, practice it before going in again, rather than assuming you're in

the clear now. They might ask more questions about the same topic you struggled with. Especially if this interview is with a different person.

7. Come with at least three questions prepared, or more if you expect to meet with multiple people. Saying that the last person answered all of your questions isn't going to get you a free-pass with most interviewers. Opinion based questions are great because you can ask multiple people the same question. Here are some examples:

- "What's the most rewarding part of working in this company in your opinion?"
- "What do your best employees say about working here?"
- "How long have you been with the company? Why did you decide to come here?"
- "What are some of the most exciting changes or current projects that are going on right now?"

Coming up next: I'm going to share the 20 best questions you can ask during and after your interview. The four questions above are also great to use, but the next section will give you even more ideas. Also in the next section you'll learn a few questions you should *never* ask, and why.

20 Best Questions To Ask In Your Interview

The top job seekers have many opportunities and are looking for the *right* fit, not just any job. So you immediately label yourself as a high-value candidate if you ask great questions. I'm going to give you 20 ready-to-use questions so you can do this.

But before you ask any question, you should be sure that the info *can't* be found on the company's website or job description.

20 great questions you can ask in an interview:

- 1) "I was on your website and I found ____ interesting, can you tell me more about ____?"
- 2) "What are some of the biggest changes or new initiatives that the group is focusing on right now?"
- 3) "If I were to step into this role tomorrow, what would be my first priority?"
- 4) "Can you give me an example of how I would collaborate with my manager or supervisor?"
- 5) "If I'm hired for this position, what would you recommend I do in the first 60 days to be as successful here as possible?"
- 6) "What made you decide to come to this company, and what do you enjoy most about the job?"
- 7) "How will you judge my success? What will need to happen in the first six months for me to know I have met your expectations?"

- 8) "Looking at the other people who have been in this role, what are one or two things that set the very top performers apart from the good or average performers?"
- 9) "What improvements or changes do you hope a new candidate will bring to this position?"
- 10) "How has the company changed since you've joined?"
- 11) "What are the company's strengths and weaknesses compared to its competitors?"
- 12) "Can you describe the company's overall management style and the type of person that usually does well here?"
- 13) "Would you say that management is open to ideas and suggestions?"
- 14) "How often will my team get together and meet as a group, and how much teamwork does the job involve?"
- 15) "What other teams would I interact most with?"
- 16) "What positions have people gone on to take in this company after being in this role?"
- 17) "How do you ensure that each team member is doing quality work?"
- 18) "What do you feel is the biggest challenge to working here?"
- 19) "Can you talk a little bit about how this team's work fits into the bigger picture of what the company is doing as a whole?"
- 20) "What's something you love about working here? And something you think could be improved?"

Note that questions 6, 10, 13, 18, and 20 are opinion-based questions that you can ask to multiple people (so you'll never run out of questions!)

Other than this, ask questions about the topics you really care about. What do you need to know about the job to make your decision?

You can ask questions about the interview process itself too. Examples:

- 21) "What are the next steps in the interview process?"
- 22) "Who should I be in touch with as things move forward?"
- 23) "How long do you expect it to take to make your decision?"

Topics NOT to ask about:

- 1) Salary
- 2) Benefits
- 3) Vacation
- 4) Health Insurance
- 5) Dress Code
- 6) Anything else that isn't related to the actual work

Yes, these topics are important. But asking too early will scare the company off. You don't want them to think you're focused more on money and benefits than how you can come in and help the company succeed.

If you insist on trying to find out the working hours, here's a trick. Instead of asking about how many hours you're expected to work, say this: *"What are the typical hours of operation?"* Also, make sure this is your last question. Don't ever ask it early on.

Next, if you absolutely must ask upfront about salary (not recommended unless you're very comfortable and experienced in interviews), you can use this script: *"I have a quick question. I'm mostly focused on finding the job that's the best fit for my career, but I wanted to make sure this position is in the right range for salary as well, just so I don't waste anyone's time. I'm currently earning \$XX,XXX. Can you give me a sense of how that fits into this position?"*

That's the only way I'd recommend asking about salary before they bring it up. And it's really only appropriate on a first interview or phone interview. If you're already past that, do not ask. Wait for them to bring it up.

Warning: there's one more question you should *never* ask:

"Based on what we've discussed today, is there any reason you wouldn't consider me for this position?"

Why this is a bad way to end the interview:

- They just finished talking to you and need time to think. Would they ask you right away if you want this job or not? They shouldn't.
- Asking this brings the negatives to their attention. You're encouraging them to rack their brain for any possible reason to not hire you.
- Even if there's a reason, they're never going to tell you. Why? Fear of lawsuits. Companies don't tell you why you weren't hired. They just say they chose somebody who they felt was a better fit.
- It ends the interview awkwardly.

If you insist on doing something like this, here's a MUCH better question:

"What can I help to clarify that would make hiring me an easy decision?"

However I recommend ending by simply thanking them for their time, telling them you're looking forward to hearing feedback, and saying, "don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns."

That's what I recommend to clients.

Coming up next: Continue on to the next chapter for a list of 31 Job Interview Do's and Don'ts to help you review and feel confident before your interview.

31 Interview Do's And Don'ts:

Do's:

- DO walk in 10 minutes early. Do not go in earlier than this or the interviewer will feel rushed.
- DO be clean and well-groomed. Dress a little nicer than you think you need to. If it's an office job, wear a suit.
- DO bring a pen and a notepad. You'll look more prepared and you'll be ready to jot down follow up questions if you think of anything while the interviewer is speaking.
- DO bring two clean copies of your resume. Yes, they already have copies, do it anyway.
- DO be extremely nice to the receptionist. You never know how much influence they have in the company.
- DO make sure you have a firm handshake when you meet the interviewer. And look them in the eye; don't look down or to the side.
- DO practice your answers at home. Nothing comes out perfect the first time.
- DO remember to make the interview about them, not you. How will you help the company make money or be more successful?
- DO make sure you ask at least one question to each person you meet.
- DO practice having good posture and eye contact, this is important.
- DO expect to talk about 75% of the time.
- DO show interest and excitement. If you hear something interesting, say so.

- DO try to build rapport with the interviewer and learn a bit about them, but follow their lead and don't go off-topic if they don't.
- DO give specific data, numbers and details in your answers whenever appropriate.
- DO ask each person you meet with for a business card so you can follow up.
- DO send "Thank You" emails the day after your interview (more on this next!)
- DO ask about next steps and expected wait time after each interview so you know what to expect.
- DO make sure to always sound interested and focus on selling yourself. After the conversation, you can sit down and think about whether it's a job you want. Doing both at once will distract you.

Don'ts:

- DON'T bring up salary unless the interviewer does first.
- DON'T ask questions that are answered in the job description or company website.
- DON'T wear anything distracting like big earrings.
- DON'T badmouth your former employers, supervisors or coworkers
- DON'T assume that just because the interviewer is being casual with you that you can let your guard down and treat them as a friend. It's their job to build rapport with you. That's not an excuse to let your guard down.
- DON'T swear, even if the interviewer does.
- DON'T talk too much about your personal life unless they ask you.
- DON'T write too many notes. It's okay to jot down a few notes or questions during the interview but 90% of your time should be spent making eye contact and looking up.

- DON'T panic if you get stuck or give a bad answer. Ask them if you can have a second to collect your thoughts, and then pause to think about what you'd like to say. No hiring manager will fault you for this.
- DON'T tap your hands or fiddle nervously.
- DON'T ramble on or tell irrelevant stories. Be specific and to the point.
- DON'T tell a story if the hiring manager asks for one specific piece of information, like "how many years have you worked with ____?"
- DON'T show up late. It is very likely to cost you the job.

Coming up next: We've covered a lot but still haven't discussed a pretty important topic: How to send "thank you" emails and how to follow up after your interview. The next chapter will cover all of this for you.

Interview Follow Up Blueprint

Here's an exact timeline with templates you can use to follow up and get feedback after your interview. This will boost your odds of getting the job offer... without worrying that you are bothering or hassling the company.

If you missed it earlier, I recommended getting a business card from each person you meet in an interview. It makes following up much easier.

Here are the exact steps to follow after your interview:

The day after your interview, send "thank you" emails to everyone you met. I recommend sending them just after lunchtime. Here's a template:

"Hi _____ (name),

Thank you for taking the time to interview me yesterday. I enjoyed our conversation about _____ (specific topic you discussed), and the _____ (job title) position sounds like an exciting opportunity. I'm looking forward to hearing about the next steps, and don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns."

If you email more than one person in the company, change the message a little bit for each person.

Next, here's a template you can send if you haven't heard specific feedback within the timeframe they told you. Try to give them one extra day though, so if they said you'd hear from them in two days, wait three days. If they didn't tell you a timeframe, wait five business days after the interview. Then

send this to the primary person you've been in contact with (usually the person who scheduled your interview):

"Hi _____ (name),

I hope you're doing well. I wanted to send a quick note to see if you have any updates regarding the _____ (job title) position. I was excited about what I learned in the interview and I'm eager to hear about next steps. Any information you can share would be great. Thanks!"

If you send this and don't hear a response, don't panic. Remember that most hiring managers have a lot of priorities to juggle. Sometimes running their team and business takes priority over providing interview feedback to you or their HR staff.

So if you send the emails above and don't hear back, wait *at least* four more days. After that, you can reply again and send this:

"Hi _____ (name),

I'm following up on my previous email to see if a decision had been made regarding the _____ (job title) position. Any update you can share would be greatly appreciated. Please let me know when you get a chance. Thanks!"

If you still haven't heard back after this, you can try one last thing: Send an email to somebody else in the company. If you've been emailing with HR, try the hiring manager instead. Here's a template:

"Hi _____ (name),

I had emailed _____ (name) twice over the past two weeks but did not hear back. I wanted to send a note to see if you have any information or feedback regarding the _____ (job title) position that I interviewed for on _____ (date).

I'm still excited about the opportunity. Can you let me know who I should be in touch with moving forward? Thanks for your time."

Coming up next: Most companies ask for references when they're close to making an offer. But there are a few mistakes that can still cost you the job. I'll show you how to handle it.

Guide To Giving References

You'd be surprised how many people use a reference without asking the person whether they'll say anything positive. I've heard references get on the phone and say, "I would never recommend her or hire her again."

When you ask someone if you can use them as a reference, follow up by asking if they're comfortable giving a positive reference and speaking highly of your work. Is it a little awkward? Maybe. But it's better than losing out on a job that you're so close to getting.

The other important thing to know: You want to choose people who worked closely with you. You don't want your reference to get on the phone and say, "I don't know why she listed me as a reference. We worked in different departments and I don't know what her job involved."

It's okay to give one reference that hasn't worked directly with you. This might be a mentor or someone who can speak about your character and work ethic. But the rest of your references will help you a lot more if they know the work that you do.

So here's what you can ask your references after they say "yes":

"Great, thank you so much. Before we do this, I just want to make sure... Do you feel familiar enough with my work to be able to answer questions from the company? And are you comfortable giving a positive reference and speaking highly of my work?"

Final Note

Congratulations on putting in the effort and completing this guide! You'd be amazed how many people invest in something like this and don't finish. So well done!

I really appreciate each and every person that takes my advice and uses it to advance their career. I'm grateful you took the time to read this.

If you follow these steps and practice, you will succeed in getting hired. The right fit is out there, and it only takes one great job offer to make your job search a huge success. Don't forget that.

If you have a question or comment about anything I've mentioned, you can send me an email here: biron@careersidekick.com

Best Regards,

Biron Clark

P.S. When you use these strategies and tips to land a new job, send me an email and let me know! I'd love to hear about it.

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