

Handling interview Questions

It's impossible to know the exact questions you will be asked, but there are some common questions that you should be prepared for.

You'll feel a lot more confident going into an interview if you have considered the questions that may be asked and how you will answer them, so that you successfully communicate the relevant information about yourself.

About you

Practise a short presentation that links your skills and experience to the opportunity, what got you to this point, and why you are interested in the position. Try to articulate what you can offer and why you are a good candidate. Practise this out loud so that you sound confident and calm when describing yourself and your core skills and goals.

About the job

Study the job description, or research what the position usually involves. Be ready to provide examples for each of the competencies required, and be prepared to answer honestly but optimistically if you do not have some skills that they require. Employers would rather have someone who is honest about their abilities and is keen to learn, than someone who claims to be able to do everything, but can't follow through.

About the employer

Know about the people you will meet with and research what the organisation does. Make use of their corporate website to learn as much as you can so that you don't ask questions in the interview that you could easily find answers to online. Record any questions you have that aren't answered during your research and add these to your own list of questions to ask.

About the industry or sector

Research major trends in the industry. Know about any technological advances or political changes that may affect how work is currently done at the organisation. Formulate opinions and questions to demonstrate your interest in the sector. Follow companies and professional bodies on social media.

Out of the box questions

Interviewers may want to test your ability to think laterally and problem-solve. These questions are designed to catch you off guard and there are no correct answers; to test your creativity, consider these:

- If you were the ruler of the world for a day, what three rules would you make?
- How would you work out how many soccer balls fit in a VW Golf?
- If you had a ticket to anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

Questions to ask the interviewer

Towards the end of the interview, you are normally given a chance to ask questions of your own. Take along a list of questions, but don't ask any that were answered in the interview. Some examples include:

- Something you noticed on their website that interested you but wasn't covered in the interview (e.g. a product/project, international offices/opportunities, team structure)
- What training or induction process is run for new recruits?
- How big is the team you would join?
- What is the work environment like?
- How often and how are performance appraisals done?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process? (This is important to ask so that you know when to follow up and what to expect.)

Questions to avoid asking

- Asking about the salary in the first interview
- Personal and irrelevant questions
- Anything that is explained on their website
- Anything covered in the interview.

STAR technique for answering questions

Interviewers commonly use 'behavioural' questions so that they can get a sense of how you handle different situations. Some examples are:

- Describe a time when you faced conflict in a professional setting and how you resolved it
- Tell us about an experience where you have had to take the lead in a team

You can refer to things you have done in work/study/extra-curricula/personal contexts.

When answering, use the acronym **STAR** to structure your answer:

Situation – where, when, and with whom

Task – the task or project that you were working on

Action – the actions you performed in response to or to complete the task

Result – the outcome you achieved, what you learned, what you would do differently

Typical Interview Questions

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why did you apply for this position/to this organisation?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Prepare these in advance and have specific examples of how your strengths have contributed positively in a professional setting. Be ready to describe what you learned from your weakness and, importantly, how you overcame it.
- What do you like doing in your spare time?
- Questions about handling situations. Use the STAR interviewing technique (covered above) to answer these.
- Why do you think you would be a good fit for this position?
- What do you think you can offer us that is different to other applicants?
- How do you manage multiple deadlines or pressure to complete competing tasks?