

Sample Interview Questions

General Work Experience/Background

- What were the most important responsibilities in your most recent position?
- Tell me about a typical day in your job at _____.
- What special skills did you utilize in your position at _____?
- What achievements were you most proud of in your most recent position?
- How did you feel about your workload at _____?
- Why have you changed jobs so frequently?
- What have you learned in the jobs you have held?
- Why are you interviewing with us? What do you know about Clemson University (for internal candidates, this department)?
- Why do you want to leave your current position?
- What are you looking for in a job/position?
- What would your references say about you? What would your current boss say about you and your work performance?
- What do you consider your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
- What did you like most/least about your last job (or your job at _____)?
- What other information should I know about you that would be helpful to me in making my decision? Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about yourself?

The Job/Position

- How do you feel about the position?
- What interests you most/least about the position?
- What can you offer to this position that someone else cannot? What special characteristics about you should I consider?
- What questions do you have about the job or the department?
- What qualities do you possess that would help you to be successful in this job?

Education (Also for applicants coming directly out of school)

- How did you select your major in college?
- What jobs did you hold in college? What was your biggest challenge in these positions?
- What has been your least and most valuable work experience?
- What extracurricular activities did you participate in? What did you learn from these activities?
- How did you stay organized in school? How did you prioritize in school?
- What subjects did you excel in at school? Why?
- What courses have you taken that are directly transferable to the job?
- What kinds of skills have you acquired as a result of your education?

Career Goals

- Where do you want to be five years from now in terms of your career?
- What are your career goals?
- What kind of work interests you most?
- What are you looking for in this (your next) job?
- How do you measure success on the job?

- How do you keep up with changes in your field?
- What keeps you challenged?
- In what areas would you like to develop?

SPECIFIC SKILLS

Accuracy/Attention to Detail

- Give me an example of a time when you found errors in your work. What caused the errors? How did you correct your mistakes?
- Have you ever had to proofread or check detailed information? How well did you do?
- Tell me about how you make your work as accurate as possible.
- How do you manage details so that they don't fall through the cracks?
- Have you had to handle a lot of details in your previous positions?

Analytical Skills

- Tell me about a time when you've had to use your analytical skills to solve a problem.

Being Managed

- How do you take direction?
- What kind of supervisor do you like? How do you like to be supervised?
- Give me an example of something that you and your boss have disagreed about. How did you handle the situation? Have you ever disagreed with a decision that your boss has made? What did you do?
- How could your boss have done a better job?
- Which one of your bosses managed you the best? Why?
- Describe the best boss you have ever had.
- Tell me about a time when you were reluctant to talk with your supervisor about something.
- When do you need help from your supervisor? Give me a recent example.
- What are the characteristics of an effective manager?
- What was the management style of the last person you worked for? How did you like this style?
- What kind of direction do you like to receive from your supervisor?
- What kind of manager do you find most difficult to work for?

Change Management

- Tell me about a change that you have had to manage within your organization.
- Describe a time when you have had to respond quickly to something within a changing environment.
- Have you ever had to introduce a change into your department that was met with resistance? How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever worked hard on something and then had your priorities change mid-stream? How did it make you feel? What did you do?
- How have you had to adapt your work style to fit the needs of others?
- Tell me about a difficult adjustment that you have had to make in a job/position.
- How often has your work been interrupted by unforeseen circumstances? What do you do when this happens?

Communication Skills (Oral)

- Tell me about a time when you didn't communicate things as clearly as you should have. What would you do differently now?
- What is the worst communication problem you've ever experienced? Please explain.
- Give me an example of a time when your communication skills saved a situation for you.
- Describe a time when you've had to communicate difficult information to someone. Were you successful at it? Why or why not?
- How did you and your boss communicate?
- How would you describe your communication style?
- When do you have trouble communicating with people?
- How do you manage meetings?
- What does an "open door communication policy" mean to you?
- How do you ensure that you communicate clearly and effectively?

Communication Skills (Written)

- What kind of writing did you have to do in your previous jobs?
- How do you go about writing a lengthy or involved document?
- Tell me about the most difficult piece that you have ever had to write.
- What information do you think is important to document?

Cooperation/Teamwork Skills

- Give me an example of a time when working with others produced something more successful than if you had completed it on your own.
- We all have parts of our jobs that we don't especially enjoy doing. Tell me about a situation when you were asked to perform one of those tasks.
- Have you ever needed to gain cooperation from individuals who weren't in your department? Were you successful at getting their help? Why or why not?
- Tell me about a difficult group of people that you have had to work with. How did you resolve the situation?
- Tell about the most recent success that your team has had. How did you help them to achieve success?
- Give me an example of a time when you pulled your team together under difficult circumstances.
- Have you ever had a team effort that wasn't successful? How do you think you might have contributed to its failure? How might you handle it differently now?
- Have you ever had to lead a team on a project? How did you lead the team?
- What do you consider to be the advantages of working on a team? The disadvantages?
- Think of a specific time when you emerged as a leader of a group.
- Describe a time when you had to work on a project with people outside of your immediate work group. How were you successful in gaining their cooperation?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team? Please explain.

Creativity

- What is the most creative idea you have ever come up with?
- Tell me about a time when you approached an issue creatively.

- I'm going to present you with a problem. Tell me what creative approaches you might use to solve it.

Self Development

- What have you done to be more effective in your position? What are you currently doing to improve your overall performance?
- How do you stay current in your field?
- In what areas do you think you need to develop? What do you consider to be your weaknesses? During past performance appraisals, what have been cited as your developmental areas?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What motivates you?
- What are your major strengths?
- When compared to others in your field, where do you excel?
- What would your former coworkers say about you and your performance? If I asked them to provide constructive feedback and tell me two or three areas where you could improve, what do you think they would say?
- As you look at your qualifications for this position, what do you see as some of your development needs?
- What do you need to accomplish to feel successful?
- How do you know that you are doing a good job?

Supervisory Skills

- Tell me about a time when you had to discipline an employee. Explain the situation and describe what you did.
- Describe how you make your feelings known to a group or an individual when you disagree with their view?
- What types of work situations frustrate you and why?
- Describe the most challenging employee discipline situation you've had to handle.
- Walk me through the steps you use when dealing with a difficult employee.
- How do you give your staff feedback? How often do you give your staff feedback?
- How did you communicate with your employees?
- What was the turnover rate in your department over the last__years?
- Have you ever had to terminate an employee? Walk me through the situation and how you handled it.
- How many people have you hired? What steps do you take to make sure you hire effective employees?
- Tell me about typical issues that your staff brings to you. How do you handle these issues?
- Have you ever had to communicate information to your staff that you didn't agree with? How did you handle the situation?
- Did you have responsibility for a budget in your department? How did you make budgetary decisions?
- Were you involved in long-range, organizational planning? How so?
- How many people reported to you? What were their titles and responsibilities?
- What type of employees do you work best with?
- What are some of the day-to-day problems you have faced when supervising others?

- How do you train your employees?
- How do you recognize positive results of your employees?
- What would others say is your style of managing?
- What do you like most and least about managing others?
- How often do you meet with your employees? How do you track your employees' projects?

Staff Development

- Tell me about your most recent employee development success story.
- How important do you consider staff development?
- What are some ways that you've developed your staff?
- Do you concentrate on developing your employees' weaknesses or strengths?
- Have you ever tried unsuccessfully to improve the performance of an employee? Why do you think it was unsuccessful?
- What are you doing to prepare a back-up for yourself?
- Do you focus on developing poor performers or outstanding performers?
- How would you handle an employee who has been performing his/her job successfully for 15 years and doesn't want to develop?
- Have you ever had to develop an employee when you had no budget to do so? What did you do?

Teamwork Skills (See Cooperation)

Telephone Skills

- What percentage of time do you spend on the phone?
- How do you handle difficult people over the phone? Tell me about a challenging situation that you have had to handle over the phone.

Time Management

- Tell me about a time when your time management skills really paid off for you.
- How do you manage your time?
- Tell me about an especially busy time on your job at _____. Explain how you made it through that time.
- How often are you presented with unexpected projects or priorities in your current job? How do you handle them?
- Walk me through an unusually crazy day for you? How did you manage everything?
- How do you handle interruptions at work?
- We've all had times when we couldn't complete everything on time. When has this happened to you, and how did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline. How did you handle it?
- What systems, processes, procedures, etc. have you set up in your department to make things run more efficiently?
- What causes the most stress for you on the job? How do you manage this stress?
- Give me an example of a time when you felt excessive demands were placed on you. How did you handle the situation?
- How do you start a typical day?

- How do you manage paperwork?
- What kind of deadlines have you had to work under? How did you manage these deadlines?

Customer Service Skills

- Tell me about a challenging customer service situation and how you handled it.
- What does customer service mean to you?
- Who are your customers (internal and external)?
- Give me an example of a time when you made an extra effort to service a customer.
- Tell me about the nicest compliment you've ever received from a customer.
- How many interactions with customers did you have in your position at ___?
- How do you ensure that your customers are satisfied?
- How do you decide the best way/method to sell something to a customer?
- What does good customer service mean to you?

Decision Making Skills

- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make on the job?
- What kinds of decisions have you had to make in your previous positions?
- Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision? Walk me through how you handled it.
- What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you to make?
- Describe a time when you had to make a decision under severe time constraints.
- Walk me through how you go about making an important decision.
- Have you ever had to make an important decision when your boss was away? What were the circumstances?
- Have you ever had to bend a rule to accomplish something? Please explain.
- Give me an example of a time when you weren't comfortable making a decision. What did you do?
- How much decision making power do you give to your employees?

Delegation

- What are some examples of tasks, etc. that you consider inappropriate to delegate?
- What kinds of things do you delegate?
- What are some projects, tasks, etc. you would like to delegate but cannot?
- Do you think you delegate responsibilities as effectively as you should?
- Walk me through the process you use to delegate work to your employees.
- Who is in charge of your area when you are gone?
- Have you ever delegated something that you wish you hadn't?

Handling Deadlines

- Give me an example of a time when you had to work on a project under an immediate deadline. How did you handle it? Were you successful at meeting the deadline? Why or why not?
- How do you handle working under pressure and immediate deadlines? Please explain.

Initiative

- What have you done in your position that demonstrates initiative?

- Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile.
- Is it ever necessary to go above and beyond the call of duty to get your job done? Give me an example.
- Have you ever suggested an idea that saved the company money?
- What are some examples of situations where you improved something in your department?
- If there was a decision to be made and no procedure existed for it, what would you do?

Interpersonal Skills

- Tell me about a time when you worked on a project that required you to interact with different levels within the company.
- Have you had any interpersonal challenges? How did you handle them?
- Did you work alone much in your previous job?
- In working with new people, how do you get to know their work styles?
- What are your interpersonal strengths?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- How do you interact differently with different people?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a situation where you wish you had acted differently with someone at work.
- Have you ever had to deal with someone who is very sensitive or easily offended? What did you do?
- Has your boss ever given you feedback about a concern that you weren't aware of?

Management Skills

- Describe the management/supervisory responsibilities in your most recent position.
- How would you describe your management style?
- How do you lead by example in your management style?
- How do you motivate your employees?

Negotiation Skills

- Tell me about a successful negotiation that you've had.
- Walk me through the steps you use for successful negotiation.
- Have you ever had an unsuccessful negotiation? Why wasn't it successful? What would you do differently next time?
- How did you learn to negotiate?
- If I was negotiating with you for _____, walk me through how you would handle the negotiation.
- Tell me about a time when you have had to compromise significantly during a negotiation.

Planning/Organizing

- How do you organize your day? How did you organize yourself in your position at ____?
- What kinds of tools do you use to stay organized?
- Do you believe more in planning, or in "diving in head first" and starting to work immediately? Why? Give me an example of when this strategy has worked for you.
- How far ahead do you plan? How had planning ahead benefited you in the past?

- Describe a time when you had carefully laid plans and things changed at the last minute. How did you react?
- Which would you say you are better at doing? Planning or implementing?
- Give me an example of a situation when you had to follow through on work being done by others. How did you do it?
- What experience do you have with scheduling and coordinating?
- It's almost the end of your day and your boss gives you a project that is due first thing in the morning. What would you do?

Prioritization

- How do you prioritize your work?
- Give me an example of a time when you had had multiple priorities, and explain how you handled them.
- You have several projects that are all "high priority." How do you manage them all?

Presentation Skills

- What experience do you have giving presentations? What kinds of presentations have you delivered (i.e. on what topics did you present)? Did you present to large or small groups? What was the level and size of your audience?
- Tell me about a stressful time that you had delivering a presentation. How did you handle it?
- How do you typically prepare to deliver a presentation?
- Have you ever had a time where you weren't successful in delivering a presentation? Why wasn't it successful? What would you do differently now?
- Give me an example of a time when you've had to give a presentation to a group on very short notice. How did you prepare? How well was it received?

Problem Solving

- Describe a time when you felt you were resourceful in solving a problem.
- What do you do when you're having trouble solving a problem?
- How do you stay aware of problems in your work area?
- Describe a complex issue that you've had to resolve and tell me the steps you took to handle it.
- What sources of information do you use to solve difficult problems?
- What are the biggest problems you have faced in the last 6 months? What did you do to overcome them?

Risk Taking

- Do you consider yourself a risk taker? Why or why not?
- What risks have you taken in your last few jobs, and what was the result of those risks?
- Tell me about a risk that turned out successfully. Tell me about a risk that turned out unsuccessfully. What would you do differently?