

# **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS BASED ON NINE BASIC COMPETENCY AREAS**

## **I. EXPERIENCE AND JOB SKILLS**

Purpose: To determine knowledge, skills, and abilities for the specific position being filled.

- Sample:
- What are your strengths for this position?
  - Everyone has weaknesses; where do you think you could stand some improvements?
  - What do you consider as the most significant work accomplishment of your career?
  - Describe a typical work day for yourself.

## **II. INTELLIGENCE**

Purpose: To ascertain whether the applicant has the type of intelligence called for in the job.

- Sample:
- How would you go about solving this problem?  
(Describe a short hypothetical problem in the work place.)
  - Describe a position which you have held that required you to analyze the facts and prepare a final product, e.g. briefing package, written report, speech, etc.

## **III. MATURITY AND JUDGEMENT**

Purpose: To determine an individual's maturity level and ability to render seasoned judgments.

- Sample:
- What personal goals have you set for yourself?
  - What is the most important decision you have made recently?
  - If you were to start a career over, what would you do differently?
  - If you were given several important tasks to accomplish, how would you go about prioritizing them?

#### **IV. RESPONSIBILITY**

Purpose: To determine an applicant's willingness to accept responsibility and be accountable for his or her actions.

- Sample:
- Describe a failure in your life and why you think it happened.
  - Describe a project or assignment which you were required to complete from start to finish.
  - How do you react to criticism?

#### **V. RELATIONSHIPS**

Purpose: To determine how well the applicant gets along with and supports others.

- Sample:
- How do you like working for your current supervisor?
  - Tell me about the co-worker you like working with the best. The least.
  - Tell me about a recent confrontational work situation and how you handled it.

#### **VI. RESOURCEFULNESS**

Purpose: To establish an applicant's ability to tackle different kinds of challenges.

- Sample:
- What are the most difficult problems you think you have faced recently and how have you solved them?

#### **VII. WORK ATTITUDE**

Purpose: To determine whether an applicant views his or her job as drudgery or as a challenge.

- Sample:
- What do you like best and least about your current position?
  - What do you view as the characteristics of a person best suited for this position?

## **VIII. ENERGY LEVEL**

Purpose: To determine how much energy an applicant would bring to the job.

Sample: - What type of recreational activities do you enjoy?

Hint for applicants: Emphasize action-oriented activities such as aerobics, jogging, or tennis.

Avoid emphasis on passive activities such as t.v., sewing, reading.

## **IX. LEADERSHIP**

Purpose: To determine an applicant's leadership style and its compatibility with the organization.

Sample: - How do you handle crisis situations?  
- What types of personnel problems have you encountered with your subordinates?  
- What has been the turnover rate in your own work unit?  
- Describe your current supervisor's management techniques and evaluate them.

## **OTHER MISCELLANEOUS**

- What do you do when you have trouble solving a problem?  
(To determine the applicant's dependence or independence on others.)
- What are your reasons for applying for this position?  
(To determine what motivates the applicant, e.g. prestige, money, career growth, personal challenge.)
- What's the most monotonous job you ever held?  
(To determine how well the applicant can handle the routine and monotony inherent to a certain degree in all jobs.)
- How do you react under pressure?  
(To determine how well the applicant works under pressure, i.e. thrives upon it, rises above it, keels under it.)
- If I were to contact your current supervisor, what would he or she tell me about you?  
(To elicit free flowing thought.)

Some of this material has been excerpted from an article by Maxine H. Atwater, entitled, The Job Interview: Looking Behind the Questions, published in the January 1986 edition of Federal Career Insights.

## **TIPS FOR BEING INTERVIEWED BY OTHERS**

### **DO**

- Talk about ways you can produce for the organization.
- Communicate your strengths, skills, abilities, knowledge, and personal characteristics.
- Give clear, concise, and direct answers to questions.
- Be cheerful.
- Be straightforward.
- Be assertive.
- Be confident and self-assured.
- Give verbal answers, even if the answer is a simple yes or no.
- Be participative; be interested; ask relevant questions.
- Dress appropriately; be well-groomed.
- Collect your thoughts before answering; speak slowly, clearly, and articulately.
- Respond directly to the interviewer; use direct eye contact.
- Be prompt.

### **DON'T**

- Don't talk about personal goals, preferences, salary.
- Don't be modest, meek, or mild.
- Don't prattle or give unnecessary details.
- Don't appear to be unhappy or moody.
- Don't be evasive as if you were hiding something.
- Don't be arrogant, aggressive, or know-it-all.
- Don't criticize or belittle yourself.
- Don't nod your head affirmatively or negatively.
- Don't be passive or indifferent.
- Don't be sloppy or ill-groomed.
- Don't rush your answers; don't mumble.
- Don't respond to the wall, floor, or ceiling.
- Don't arrive late. Late arrivals may be posh for social occasions, but not for an interview.

## **TIPS FOR CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW WITH OTHERS**

### **DO**

- Be prompt and dress appropriately; you are representing your organization.
- Allow adequate time (usually 1 hour) for the interview, including questions from the interviewees.
- Talk about the organization, its mission, programs, and achievements.
- Talk about the job, its duties, its responsibilities.
- Talk about the individual's qualifications, abilities, experience, education, training, and interests.
- Talk about career possibilities and opportunities for growth, development, and advancement.
- Be prepared; ask relevant questions; post the same or similar questions to each candidate.
- Be systematic and objective in your interview evaluations.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Be open-minded.
- Be friendly, but businesslike.
- Be professional.

### **DON'T**

- Don't appear disorganized and sloppy.
- Don't act rushed or impatient; don't prolong the interview.
- Don't talk about your own career success.
- Don't inquire about marital status; number of actual or planned dependents; child care arrangements; spouse's occupation, salary, or availability for transfer; social, religious, political, or moral values.
- Don't talk about the qualifications of other applicants.
- Don't place undue emphasis on conditions of employment, e.g. travel, work hours, job demands, etc. in order to discourage an applicant or solicit a declination.
- Don't be inconsistent in your line of questioning.
- Don't rely entirely on intuition.
- Avoid questions which require only a yes or a no answer.
- Don't prejudge; the person you think may be the best might not be when all the facts are weighed.
- Don't be condescending, collegial, or patronizing.
- Don't be funny; save the jokes for a more appropriate occasion.

## **MOST CITED REASONS FOR NONSELECTION**

- Expects too much too soon.
- Too aggressive or too know-it-all.
- Sloppy personal appearance.
- Inarticulate; poor grammar, vocabulary, diction, voice.
- Lack of career direction and planning.
- Lack of enthusiasm or interest; passive and indifferent.
- Lack of confidence; nervous, ill at ease.
- Verbally attacks past employers; may not be supportive of organization.
- Indecisive.
- Unhappy, discontented individual.
- Disorganized, illegible, or incomplete resume.
- Lack of knowledge needed for the position.
- Cynical or sarcastic. "Just looking" attitude.
- Overemphasis on how he or she knows.
- Irritating mannerisms, expression.
- Gum chewing or smoking.
- Lack of direct eye contact.

## RESUME WORD LIST

### ACTION VERBS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Acted	Checked	Designed	Filed	Implemented	Maintained
Adapted	Classified	Detected	Financed	Improved	Managed
Addressed	Coached	Directed	Fixed	Improvised	Manipulated
Administered	Collected	Documented	Followed	Increased	Mediated
Advised	Communicated	Drove	Formulated	Indexed	Memorized
Allocated	Compared	Dug	Founded	Initiated	Mentored
Analyzed	Completed	Edited	Gathered	Inspected	Met
Approved	Computed	Eliminated	Gave	Interpreted	Modeled
Arranged	Conceived	Empathized	Generated	Investigated	Observed
Ascertained	Coordinated	Enforced	Got	Judged	Obtained
Assisted	Copied	Established	Governed	Kept	Offered
Attained	Counseled	Estimated	Guided	Learned	Operated
Audited	Created	Evaluated	Handled	Lectured	Ordered
Brought	Dealt	Examined	Headed	Led	
Budgeted	Decided	Expanded	Helped	Lifted	
Built	Defined	Experimented	Identified	Listened	
Calculated	Delegated	Extracted	Illustrated	Logged	
Chartered	Delivered	Facilitated	Imagined	Made	

### SKILL VERBS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Achieve	Elicit	Increase	Perceive	Record	Supervise
Act	Eliminate	Influence	Perform	Recruit	Supply
Administer	Empathize	Interview	Persevere	Reduce	Take Instruction
Analyze	Enforce	Invent	Persuade	Refer	Talk
Assemble	Establish	Judge	Photograph	Remember	Teach/Train
Build	Estimate	Keep	Pilot	Repair	Tell
Calculate	Evaluate	Lead	Plan	Research	Troubleshoot
Communicate	Examine	Learn	Problem Solve	Schedule	Tutor
Compose	Expand	Lecture	Produce	Select	Type
Consult	Experiment	Listen	Promote	Sell	Umpire
Control	Explain	Maintain	Publicize	Sense	Understand
Coordinate	Express	Make	Purchase	Separate	Unify
Copy	Extract	Manage	Question	Serve	Upgrade
Count	Figure	Manipulate	Raise	Service	Use
Create	File	Motivate	Read	Set	Utilize
Debate	Finance	Negotiate	Realize	Sew	Verbalize
Define	Imagine	Observe	Reason	Shape	Weigh
Deliver	Implement	Organize	Receive	Speak	Work
Draw	Improve	Originate	Recommend	Study	Write
Edit	Improvise	Paint	Reconcile	Summarize	

### ADAPTIVE SKILL WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL TRAITS

Active	Dependable	Enterprising	Instrumental	Participate	Self-reliant
Adaptable	Determined	Experienced	Logical	Personable	Sense of Humor
Adept	Diplomatic	Fair	Loyal	Pleasant	Sensitive
Broad-minded	Disciplined	Firm	Mature	Positive	Sincere
Competent	Discreet	Forceful	Methodical	Productive	Successful
Conscientious	Efficient	Honest	Objective	Reliable	Tactful
Creative	Energetic	Innovative	Outgoing	Resourceful	Versatile