

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS– TEACHER’S MASTER**

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU**

#### **Tell Me a Little about Yourself.**

- The interviewers want to know if you are well adjusted, work well with others, have outside interests that add to your appeal as a candidate for a job.
- It is best to narrow this question down if you can. You can respond with a question asking what part of your background would be most relevant. This response allows interviewers to help you focus on those areas that are most important to the employer. It also helps prevent a rambling response where you try to cover everything.
- Whatever the interviewer responds, emphasize your positive work attitudes such as honesty, determination, dependability, problem solving abilities, and teamwork. Use examples of work or outside activities that show these favorable traits.
- Statements such as “I work well under pressure” or “I enjoy working as part of a team” are much more effective when you give examples from work experience or hobbies.
- You can give examples such as: “In my last job I met all my deadlines even when it occasionally meant putting in some extra hours.” or “I am rarely sick. I keep in shape by playing softball and coaching my daughter’s youth soccer team.”
- You can use this question to explain how your personality matches the requirements of the job. For example, “I am social, artistic, and enterprising. I like to serve others, to design projects and come up with new ways to accomplish tasks, and to be persuasive. I am good at selling things I believe in.”
- This question also gives you a chance to show your ability to organize and discuss your work experience, achievements, and plans. You will be able to convey your energy level, confidence, and communication skills.
- Be prepared to give a 30- to 60-second summary of those job-related activities you are proud of and comfortable talking about. Give examples of skills, details of achievements, or work experience.
- To avoid rambling, practice what you want to say and time yourself. Speak at a comfortable pace. If you are rushing your words, you are trying to say too much. Remembering to breathe deeply will help you remain calm and speak at a slow to normal rate.

#### **What Are Your Strengths?**

- Present your best skills, traits, and qualities. Specifically, identify work-related abilities, worker traits, and skills needed or related to the job. Give an honest and organized answer that shows a realistic assessment of your own capabilities.
- We all have strengths. It is important to know your own strengths and feel free to talk about them. If you don’t know your strengths, take a skills assessment instrument, and talk to a career professional, teacher, or friend who will help you see your strengths. You may be able to ask previous employers for their assessment of your strengths.

## **What Are Your Weaknesses?**

- Although it seems negative, this question offers you a chance to say something positive. The interviewers are looking for your ability to admit you are not perfect and are willing to grow and change in areas where improvement is needed. Also, interviewers are hoping your weak areas will not affect your behavior or performance on the job.
- Bring up a weakness that can also be seen as a strength in the work area you want to enter. For example, being bored with repetitive tasks could be seen as a strength on a job in which duties are constantly changing. You can mention an area where you know you want to strengthen your skills and have a plan to do so.
- Be sure to mention what you have learned, or what you are doing to correct the weakness you mention. Avoid bringing up any serious weakness that could result in questions about your ability to do the job.
- You may choose to talk about a negative that is not related to this job. For example, “I am not fond of statistical analysis work; other people are much better than I at this type of work. I am glad your company has such a great research department that handles statistical work for staff.”
- If the job entails statistical analysis and you like to do that but not engage in sales and marketing, you can admit that as a weakness.
- You can also discuss a negative the interviewers already know, such as lack of experience. Be sure to emphasize why this is a positive, however. For example, “I don’t have much paid experience in this field, but I have related volunteer work during all of the five years I spent earning my degree. My leadership in college organizations further provided me skills that will benefit your company.”

## **What Are Your Goals?**

- When you have short- and long-term goals, employers see you as motivated and interested in life and developing. These employers are looking for commitment and interest in the work. They want to know whether you will be comfortable with the job. Goals can be as simple as going to school or as complex as yearly plans for the next four years.
- Know two or three goals beforehand, and be ready to tell the interviewers how these goals relate to the job. Indicate how your goals will help the employer. Be sure that the goals relate to the job for which you are interviewing.

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS JOB**

### **Why Do You Want to Work Here?**

- Interviewers want to know that you have exercised judgment and choice in selecting their company. Be prepared by researching the company, knowing exactly why you want to work there, and organizing your statements. These efforts assure the interviewers that they will benefit from hiring you. Interviewers may sense a better employment match when your responses indicate that the job fits in with your goals or training.
- Compliment the company’s best attributes and link them with your own. You can say “I take pride in my work and am looking for a quality-oriented company such as yours. Your company has a reputation for producing the best widgets and that is why I would like to be a member of your team.”

## **Why Should You Be the One Hired for This Job?**

Take this chance to clarify your work skills and abilities. Then, give examples of your value as an employee. Point out specific reasons why you are the best person for the job. It may be beneficial to focus on details of work experience mentioned in your resume or on the employer's job application. Be genuine and honest giving an organized answer for this job-worker match.

Your research on the employer may provide insight into the company's needs and goals that may help you answer this question. Be brief, but give examples of your work, reports, writing, letters of recommendation, or other concrete evidence of your worth.

Go back over the interviewers' description of the job, and state four or five skills that qualify you to fill this position. Your communication skills and organization may also be seen as proof of your skills. Sell yourself!

## **Why Do You Want to Change Jobs Now?**

Remember not to criticize your current employer. Instead, explain how you have mastered the tasks and responsibilities of your present job, and that you want new challenges to grow professionally. Point out that you feel the job in question offers these challenges.

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT WORK HISTORY**

### **Tell Me about Your Most Recent Job.**

This open-ended question provides an opportunity to elaborate on the positive aspects of your previous or current employer. Take the opportunity to emphasize the transferability of skills between jobs.

The interviewers want to learn about several areas by asking this question and allowing you to volunteer information.

It may help you to consider these individual questions:

- What did I do?
- Which duties are related to the job for which I'm applying?
- What were my supervisory responsibilities?
- What equipment or machines did I operate?
- How long was I there?
- Why did I leave?

### **What Were Your Responsibilities at Your Most Recent Job?**

The interviewers want to understand your need for supervision and motivation.

If previous job duties were different from the job for which you are applying, focus on transferable attitudes and aptitudes to show creativity, responsibility, and dedication. You may want to include responsibilities you have had at related volunteer work.

### **What Was the Best Part of Your Most Recent Job?**

Understanding what duties, responsibilities, or activities you like can help predict your success on the job. Interviewers look for positive comments and people who can manage change. Communicate your qualities as a problem solver, action taker, and team player in your answer. You can provide that information by describing responsibilities or accomplishments.

Be sure the information is positive. Name specific parts of the job you liked and explain why.

## **Describe Your Education.**

This information is often found in your job application. Now, however, you can focus on details about your training and achievements. The interviewers are looking for indicators of motivation and follow-through as much as specific educational accomplishments. This question allows you to volunteer information on dependability, determination, and willingness to complete projects, whether or not they are directly related to education.

Not all of your education may be relevant. Discuss only education that is related to the job. Be organized and volunteer specific information. Explain classroom education, special projects related to this job, and education through work experience.

## **QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK**

Remember, you are evaluating the firm as the interviewers evaluate you. This question allows you to learn more about the firm and get answers to concerns you have.

By asking questions about the firm, you indicate to the interviewers you are looking for the right place of employment. You are also taking an active role in the job interview that will impress them.

Have three or four questions ready. Here are some examples:

- How will my performance be evaluated?
- When will you be making your decision to fill this job?
- Is this a new position? If so, why was it created?
- Was the person successful? Why or why not?
- What are the chances for growth in this job and in this company?
- What is the most difficult part of the job?
- What skills are considered the most useful for success in the job I am applying for?
- Where does this position fit into the company's organizational plan?
- Who would I report to? What will my first assignment be?
- Why did the previous person in this position leave?
- Why did you (the interviewers) join the company? What do you (the interviewers) like best about the company?

## **TROUBLESOME QUESTIONS**

Having a strategy for handling troublesome questions about being fired, health problems, work gaps, or your age is important. Review the ideas here and practice your answers with a friend.

Here are four basic strategies for answering troublesome questions:

1. When asked, acknowledge the problem briefly and in terms that put you in as positive a light as possible.
2. When possible, put your difficulties in the past; contrast then and now; show that you've overcome problems, learned from mistakes, and grown from them.
3. Don't over explain. Be brief, and end on a positive note that will lead the interviewers into a subject in which you have more strength.
4. Mainly, disarm the interviewers' fears about what may happen if they hire you. Don't wave any red flags at them that suggest you are going to be a problem. Assure the interviewers that you are going to be an asset, not a problem.

## **Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?**

Changing or leaving a job doesn't need to be seen as negative. Tell why your leaving was positive. Be positive when describing previous work, employers, supervisors, or coworkers. The interviewers may be interested in the pattern of previous jobs as well as indicators of how you will do on this job.

Positive reasons for leaving a job include learning enough to move on, peaking out at current level, or being ready to move up. Show the logic for the move and tell your motivation for working. When describing any medical reason, personal problem, personality conflict, layoff, firing, or lack of work, explain the circumstances or show why it will not happen again.

## **You Have Not Worked Before or Not Worked in Several Years. Explain Why?**

Remember that activities outside the labor force have value in the eyes of employers. This can include such as caring for your home and family, helping on a family farm, attending school, and volunteering. All of these require and develop many related and transferable skills.

Use concrete examples, detailed explanations, and facts from volunteer experiences, life experiences, and other activities with transferable skills. Explain what you have learned or accomplished and how this experience can help the employer. Organize your answer to show the qualifications you have for the job.

## **Did You Drop out of School? If so, Why?**

A positive response is important. Indicate other avenues of education completed: GED, night school, or alternative school. If you have not completed your GED or adult high school diploma, begin to do so and tell the interviewers you are working on it. Explain the circumstances and end on a positive note. Be sure to take responsibility for the situation and explain the action you took to overcome this situation. Tell your interviewers what you learned of value from your experience.

## **Are You Older than 18?**

This question indicates the interviewers are probably concerned you are too young for the job. They may fear putting a great deal of training effort and time into a young person only to have that person get a better job or quit. They may also have fears of attendance problems or other negative ideas about young workers.

You can remove negative assumptions by reassuring the interviewers that you are responsible and mature. Stress the many advantages of being young, energetic, and in excellent health. You can mention advantages such as you will not miss work because of sickness and you learn quickly. Also, mention you are willing to do many different jobs, which is not always true for other applicants, and you are interested in learning from the ground up.

## **Questions about Convictions or Arrests**

Asking questions about convictions raises civil rights issues. Questions about convictions should only be about specified convictions related to your ability to do the duties of the job you are interviewing for. You do not have to give information about any arrest for which you were not convicted.

Experts suggest you be honest and follow the strategies for answering troublesome questions. You will need to prove to the interviewers beyond any doubt that you have learned from your mistakes and are ready to do the work better than anyone else.

## **INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS**

You may be asked an inappropriate or illegal question. Some employers ask these questions because they don't know the law. Others may ask these questions to see how you react under stress. Regardless of the reason, use tact in your answer. You may:

1. Answer the question and ignore the fact that it is not appropriate.

— or —

2. Answer the question with a statement such as "I think that is not relevant to the job requirements."

— or —

3. Answer the question with a question. For example, "Does being married have a direct relationship to the duties of this job?"

Answer number three is probably best. It may cost you the job to say number two and it is less open ended than the third answer.

Number three may help the interviewers realize the inappropriateness of the question or to give you an explanation of how the question that appears inappropriate really does pertain to the job. While this is not likely, it is possible and you have left that door open by asking the question.

Before interviewing, you may want to get advice on how to answer inappropriate questions from your Bureau of Labor and Industries. The web site is:

[http:// www.boli.or.us](http://www.boli.or.us)

Another source of advice is an office of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The EEOC web site is:

<http://www.eeoc.gov>

### **Questions about Family**

Employers should not ask questions about your family. The only legitimate question about your family is whether you can meet specified work schedules or have activities, commitments, or responsibilities that may prevent you from meeting work attendance requirements.

Follow the strategies for answering inappropriate questions. Prove to the interviewers that you will be able to meet work schedules and requirements. You may need to volunteer information or restate your interest in the work and its schedule or requirements.

### **Questions about Disabilities**

Employers can ask about your ability to perform a job, but they cannot ask whether you have a disability. Nor can they give you tests that screen out people who have disabilities. Employers cannot discriminate in hiring or promotion against a person who has a disability when the person is otherwise qualified for the job. Oregon law requires the employer to provide reasonable accommodations for people who are disabled. The accommodations may include modifying job duties, equipment, or the work site.

Explain your disability or health problems so that the interviewers conclude it will not affect your job performance. Your explanation can let the interviewers know the limitations of your disability. It can also help them determine the best job placement for you and the employer. When possible, explain how you performed well on a similar job despite your disability, or how the disability was successfully accommodated on a previous job. If there is an accommodation you need, such as a parking place near the door, the employer will probably be able to provide it.