

## TIPS TO ANSWERING TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How well did you answer these questions? Using a rating scale 1–5: (1 poor to 5 excellent) give yourself a 1-5 score based on your written answer from “Typical Interview Questions” worksheet. At the end total your score and decide if you should be hired or not for the job.

- “Tell me about yourself.” or “What can I do for you?”** Expect this question. Usually it takes applicants off-guard, the real question is: *Tell me about yourself as it relates to this job.* **Did You:**
  - Indicate that you are happy to talk about yourself?
  - Mention things that are comfortable for you to talk about (skills, abilities, personal qualities, work experience, etc.)?
  - Ask employer if there is any particular place he or she would like you to begin?
- “Why do you want to work here?”** **Did You:**
  - Express an interest and motivation to work for the employer who is interviewing?
  - Make the employer feel that you have “chosen” them?
  - Use your company research to express facts about the company?
- “Where do you see yourself in five years?”** Asked to assure that your goals are not in conflict with the job. Employers want a return on their investment for training. They want to know if the applicant has the intention of staying with the company. **Did You:**
  - Keep your answers job related rather than related to your personal life?
  - Try to mention career interests that are related to the specific job?
  - Ask the employer about advancement opportunities?
- “Why should I hire you? How are you qualified for the job?”** Toot your own horn - this is the time to sell your talents. Don't use this time to compare yourself to other candidates - stress only your own strengths. **Did You:**
  - State how the company will benefit if you are hired?
  - State how you shown or proven to meet these qualifications, (Add personal qualities besides skills and abilities)?
  - Show enthusiasm and excitement for the position and opportunity?
- “What are your strengths?”** This question is asked to see if the applicant can assess and communicate areas of special abilities. **Did You:**
  - Use the things you mention in your resume?
  - State those which would be most valued in the job for which you are applying?
  - Give examples of your strengths and why you think they are important?
- “What are your weaknesses?”** This question gives you the opportunity to say something good about yourself indirectly. You need to turn a weakness into a strength. “A weakness of mine is that I have a hard time delegating responsibility, I tend to do things myself to make sure they are going to be done right.” **Did You:**
  - Describe how you are trying to correct these weaknesses. (i.e., I am learning to assess the strengths of others so I can be more comfortable in delegating responsibility.)?

- Remember not to bring up weaknesses that could cause the employer to question your performance on the job? If you did, rethink your answer.
  - Answer in a friendly and pleasant manner and show how you are aware of your weaknesses and how you are improving?
7. **“How do you spend your spare time?”** Sometimes this is asked to make the applicant feel more comfortable. Don't mention pastimes that could carry negative connotations or unpleasant strategies. (watching soap operas, partying, hanging out, etc.) **Did You:**
- Describe activities in an interesting and positive manner?
  - Limit your answer and not give too many details?
  - Relate your spare time activities to the position?
8. **“Why did you leave your last job?”** Employers believe that an attitude towards the last employer is an indication of what your attitude will be on the new job. Don't “bad mouth” your past employer. Employers sympathize with other employers. They will wonder what you will say about them when you leave. Remember that your past employer may be called for a reference check. **Did You:**
- State believable and constructive reasons for leaving?
  - State things that the old job can't offer that the new one would?
  - Talk positively about your last employer?
9. **“Do you have any questions for me?”** An applicant who asks questions and shows interest in the company appears to be a good conscientious potential employee. **Did You:**
- Ask questions that seek information that is really useful?
    - What kind of training might I expect at the beginning if hired?
    - Is there anything I can do to get a head start to be better prepared for the job?
    - What hours would I be working if hired?
    - What is your concept of the “ideal employee”?
  - Ask about the next steps in the hiring process?
10. **“What do you know about our company?”** The employer is making sure you have researched the company. This is your opportunity to make your company research pay off (this is the time to shine). **Did You:**
- Make sure the information you researched is correct?
  - Mention the company's values and mission and do you know and understand the products and services.
    - If you have not researched the company, your best response would be, “Actually I know very little about your company and I wondered if you would answer some questions?” Have some questions prepared.
11. **“How soon could you start?”** This is a logical question asked for both information and attitude. Be prepared for this question - know the answer. If you are currently employed, express your need to be fair to your present employer. The interviewer will respect your honesty. The general rule of thumb for giving notice is the length of the pay period, (2 weeks notice if you are paid every two weeks). If you are currently not working some great answers are, “Today”, “Anytime”, or “Immediately”. **Did You:**
- Give a realistic start date that you can actually do?
  - Remember to not give personal reasons for delaying your start date?

12. **“What did you like most about your last job?”** The employer wants to find what values could transfer to the new job. **Did You:**
- Name something positive about the job in general and something specific that you liked about your last job?
13. **“Why should I hire you over a person with more experience than you?”** This is a tough question but you have to sell yourself. **Did You:**
- Talk about your personal qualities like fast learner, willingness to work and good communication skills.
  - Talk about unpaid experience like volunteer work, responsibilities as a club member, etc.
14. **“What kind of starting salary would you be expecting?”** This a question you should try not to be too specific and let the employer tell you the going rate. **Did You:**
- Do your research and know what the salary range would be?
  - Tell the employer that you are open to a reasonable salary and that it is not the main reason you are interested in the job?
15. **“Is there anything else I should know about you?”** This is an opportunity for you to restate your interest in the job. **Did You:**
- Emphasis your skills and talents that you bring to the position?
  - Frame your answer to focus on your strengths and not your weaknesses? If your background warrants an explanation this is the time to state it but frame it in a way that will not harm your chances of getting the job. Such as: “I am a very good worker and am excited about this position. In the past I have had some difficulties but I am ready now to work to the best of my abilities.”

### **Remember**

If at the end of an interview you are offered a job, it is an offer that you can consider and refuse if it is not what you want.