

How To Answer the Top **10** Most Common Interview Questions



Top Ten Interview Questions and How to Answer Them

Congratulations! You've made it to the interview stage. Now it's time to get down to business. Your interviewer will ask you a number of questions, and will almost always ask you the common interview questions that we are about to cover.

Get ready to tackle some basic interview questions – which seem harmless, but are always difficult if you're not prepared – and some behavioral interview questions.

Interviewers use behavioral questions to understand your past behavior - because your behavior in the past is the best way to know how you will act in the future. Behavioral questions are best answered by using the **STAR Method**, which we will review here as well.

Let's start with the basics. Traditional interview questions are the type of questions your interviewer will ask to get an understanding of who you are. The purpose of these questions is to learn about your work style and personality. Keeping this in mind, think of these types of questions as opportunities to shine, and to show that you would be a good fit for the position and company.

1. Why should we hire you?

The “Why should we hire you?” question can take many forms. You may hear it as: “What can you do for this company?” or “What can you offer that someone else can't?”

The answer might seem obvious to you — you're the best person for the job! But your interviewer doesn't know this ... yet.

The truth is that this question is a golden opportunity to sell yourself. First, tell them you are the best person for the job. Then, explain why by using your research on the company and the job position.

Research the company and re-read the job description. Pay attention to what is listed in the Skills and Responsibilities sections to find what the company is looking for in this role. Use examples from your work experience that match to prove that you're a perfect fit!

Example answer:

While attending nursing school, I was a customer service rep at a call center. Because of this, I have excellent customer service skills. Combined with my practical nursing experience, this makes me the best person to join your team as the Patient Coordinator.

2. Why do you want to work here?

“Why do you want to work here?” seems like an easy question. But don't let this one fool you. Your answer is an opportunity to show how the company's needs match your career goals.

This question is best answered with company research. Ask yourself: What do you find compelling about the company? How does the role match your interests?

Then, provide three reasons to explain how this role meets your interests, skills, and goals.

Example answer:

After 10 years working as a Field Sales Rep, I'm ready to lead a sales team from the main office. You need someone with a great sales track record, and who is comfortable in the field. I have both of these traits.

3. Where do you see yourself in five years?

“Where do you see yourself in five years?” is one of those questions that can cause interview anxiety. Relax! This question is just another way of asking: What are your goals and do they align with our company?

The best way to answer this question is to do it in two parts. In the first part, describe what you hope to get out of the job. In the second part, describe your career goals for the future.

Example answer:

I've been a medical technician in the urgent care setting for three years, and I am looking forward to a role where I can be part of a permanent team. In the next few years, I plan to obtain my LVN license where I can use my med tech skills in a nursing role.

4. What is your greatest weakness?

If you absolutely dread the “What is your greatest weakness?” question, you are not alone! This question is designed to make you uncomfortable. Knowing how to answer it is essential to acing your interview.

One great way to answer this question is to not take it too literally. Instead, describe a skill that you have improved upon on in the past.

Another way is to choose a skill that needs improvement and describe how you are already working on it. Be sure to choose a skill that would not be a large part of the job you want.

Example answer:

As an office manager, I don't have to do this often, but delivering company presentations is not my strongest suit. I've found that practicing for an hour out loud in front of a mirror really helps, and I've been improving over time.

5. Why are you leaving your current job?

“Why are you leaving your current job?” is a tricky one. No matter the reason why you have left or are leaving your job, it's important to be positive with your answer. This is not a time to be negative about your previous (or current) employer!

The best way to answer this question is in two parts. First, discuss the skills you learned from your last job. Second, explain how and why you are ready to use these skills in a new role.

This question might be scary if you were fired from your last job. While you don't have to mention that you were fired, you may want to give a brief, objective overview of the situation, followed by what you learned from it.

Example answer:

I've been a nanny for two different families for the past five years. I've enjoyed both jobs, plus I've learned a lot during that time. But I'm ready to branch out from the family setting, which is why I am looking at daycare opportunities.

Now let's tackle some behavioral questions. Behavioral questions are best answered using the STAR Method. To review, **STAR** method stands for:

ST: Situation or Task

A: Action

R: Result

Each letter corresponds with a part of your response, and together, the parts form the kind of structured answer interviewers want to hear. You can use this method to answer any type of behavioral question that comes your way.

6. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with conflict at work.

Interviewers often ask this question or one similar to it, like Describe a time when you didn't agree with someone at work. They ask this to understand your problem-solving skills and how you respond to friction on the job.

Make sure your answer describes how you solved a problem and how you acted professionally.

Example answer:

ST: As a call center agent for a major airline, I dealt with angry customers on a day-to-day basis.

A: When I received one of these calls, I would stay calm and follow company guidelines, listening to the customer and taking notes. Once I had a better idea about how to move forward, I'd apologize and give them a few options.

R: Staying calm, making them feel heard, and presenting them with solutions meant that I was able to solve customer problems 90% of the time.

7. Describe a time when you were under a lot of pressure.

This is a question that you may also hear as “Tell me about a time when you were under a lot of stress.” Interviewers ask this to better understand your coping skills and strategies, and also to find out if you can perform under stress or pressure. Make sure your answer shows that you’re able to make plans to reduce stress, that you can stay calm and focused, and that you deliver when it counts.

Example answer:

ST: In my last job I was an administrative assistant at a company that had too few conference rooms and too many meetings. I needed to find a way to make sure everyone had an open room for their meeting in two day’s time.

A: I did an audit of the meeting calendar to see if there were any weekly meetings booked that were no longer needed or that had less than two people.

R: I was able to free up 40% more meeting space by taking meetings off the calendar that no longer existed and by moving meetings that included less than two people to the public meeting space.

8. Describe a time when you failed.

This tricky question may also be phrased as “Tell me about a time you made a mistake at work.” Interviewers ask it to find out how you learn from your errors and how you handle setbacks.

Make sure your answer shows that you’re not afraid to take responsibility for your failures, and also that when you don’t succeed, you learn why and apply those lessons in the future.

Example answer:

ST: When I was the store manager at a local supermarket, I sent a few employees home on a slow afternoon. But an hour or two later, the store was swamped with customers, and we didn’t have enough staff to handle everyone. As a result, there were a lot of unhappy customers.

A: This incident prompted me to investigate a technology solution that could help predict how many people I'd need per shift. I researched a few and pitched the best to higher management, and the system has since been implemented.

R: We've been able to set shift schedules so that we're not overspending on labor or have too few staff. Thanks to that move, I saved the company over \$30,000 on labor costs.

9. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond at work.

This question may also be put to you as "Explain how you went out of your way to..." Interviewers ask it to learn if you're the kind of person who has a positive work ethic and who doesn't mind putting in extra work at times to get the job done.

Make sure your answer demonstrates how you made a genuine positive impact and how you took initiative without being told what to do.

Example answer:

ST: As a customer service representative for a popular eCommerce website, I received a call from a customer who wanted to surprise his wife with Christmas present, but had waited too long to make the purchase and couldn't afford the expedited shipping to have the gift arrive before the holiday.

A: I checked his account, and saw that he was a loyal customer, I quickly got approval from my manager to comp the shipping and make his Christmas.

R: The customer shared his story on a few popular review sites, and it ended up going viral on social media, winning the company a lot of great positive media attention during an important time.

10. Give me an example of a situation when you showed initiative.

This interview question may also crop up as “Tell me about a time when you took the lead without being asked.” Interviewers pose this question to find out if you’re capable of thinking independently and coming up with creative solutions.

Make sure your answer demonstrates your ability to come up with your own ideas and execute without help from your boss.

Example answer:

ST: As an office manager, I was in charge of providing our weekly free lunch to employees. When I took this role, I noticed a number of employees going out to eat every week despite the free lunch.

A: In order to reduce food waste and to make sure the staff was happy, I initiated a survey to gauge staff satisfaction with the catering company and to better understand what people would want for lunch

R: I realized that the staff was not happy with the catering company, and based on survey results, I was able to find a caterer that was a better fit. This led to less food waste and a happier staff!