

ANSWERS TO COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Your ability to quickly and confidently answer tough interview questions is a key factor in the overall impression you will make on potential employers. To ensure you are as prepared as possible, look through the questions and advice below so you can formulate your own brief, yet informative answers. If you are nervous about remembering your answers during the interview, you should write your answers down and practice speaking them aloud.

“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.”

This question calls for a short, organized statement of your education, professional achievements and professional goals. Then, you can briefly describe your qualifications for the job and the contributions you could make to the organization.

“WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE?” OR “WHAT ABOUT OUR COMPANY INTERESTS YOU?”

Few questions are more important than these, so it is important to answer them clearly and with enthusiasm. To show the interviewer your interest in the company, share what you have learned about the job, the company and the industry through your own research. You should also talk about how your professional skills will match up to the position and your personal career ambitions. Do not mention the position's salary or any benefits. That could leave the interviewer wondering if you really care about the job.

“WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB?”

The interviewer may want to know if you had any problems at your last job. If you did not have any problems, simply give a reason, such as: you relocated away from job; the company went out of business; you were laid off; it was a temporary or contract position; there was no possibility of advancement; you want a job better suited to your skills.

If you did have problems, be honest. Show that you can accept responsibility and learn from your mistakes. You should explain any problems you had (or still have) with an employer, but make sure you don't describe that employer in negative terms. Demonstrate that it was a learning experience that will not affect your future work.

“WHAT ARE YOUR STRONGEST SKILLS?”

If you have sufficiently researched the organization, you should be able to imagine what skills and experience the company values. List them, and then give examples where you have demonstrated these skills in past jobs. Some great skills that apply to all jobs include: communication and writing skills, being detail oriented, being a self-starter, etc.

“WHAT IS YOUR MAJOR WEAKNESS?”

Be positive and turn a weakness into a strength for this answer. For example, you might say, “I am a perfectionist and often worry too much over my work. Sometimes I work late to make sure the job is done well.”

“DO YOU PREFER TO WORK BY YOURSELF OR WITH OTHERS?”

The ideal answer is one centered around flexibility. However, be honest. Give examples describing how you have worked well in both situations.

“WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS?” OR “WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?”

The answer to this question can tell the interviewer whether your plans and the company’s goals are compatible. Let him/her know that you are ambitious enough to plan ahead. Talk about your desire to learn more and improve your performance, and be as specific as possible about how you will meet the goals you have set for yourself.

“WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?” AND “DO YOU PLAY ANY SPORTS?”

When this question is asked, the interviewer is looking for evidence of your job skills outside of your professional experience. For example, hobbies such as chess or bridge demonstrate analytical skills. Reading, music, and painting are creative hobbies. Individual sports show determination and stamina, while group sport activities may indicate you are comfortable working as part of a team.

An interviewer might also ask this question if he/she is simply curious as to whether you have a life outside of work. Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier and more productive.

“WHAT SALARY ARE YOU EXPECTING?”

You probably don’t want to answer this question directly. Instead, deflect the question back to the interviewer by saying something like: “I don’t know. What are you planning to pay the best candidate?” Let the employer make the first offer.

If you don’t know what the current salary range is for the positions you are applying to, you should find out so you are prepared to negotiate when the time comes. You can find salary surveys at the library or on the Internet, and check the classifieds to see what comparable jobs in your area are paying. This information can help you negotiate compensation once the employer makes an offer.

“WHAT HAVE I FORGOTTEN TO ASK?”

Use your answer to this question to summarize your unique characteristics and attributes and how they may be used to benefit the organization. Convince the interviewer that you understand the job requirements and that you can succeed.

For more information or advice regarding common interview questions, please contact Prism Group today.