

The Interview

Interview questions can be tricky to handle, especially if the job-seeker is not properly prepared to answer potentially thought-provoking questions.

Here is a rundown of 7 basic interview questions that are often asked during a job interview and how to handle each one.

Tell me a little about yourself?

Designed as a bit of an icebreaker, this question is often the opening inquiry. Respond by covering four aspects of your background-early years, education, work history and recent career experience.

Be extra careful that you don't run off at the mouth. Sell yourself, be honest, and be brief. Keep your answer to a minute or two at most.

What are five adjectives that describe you?

The purpose of this question, first, is to see how well the candidate knows themselves. Second, the candidate, before the interview, should develop a list of 10 to 12 qualities, and then identify the six that relate most to the role for which they are interviewing. If they bring in an adjective that has no bearing on the role, the employer will wonder why they are bringing it up.

What is your greatest weakness?

This is a very difficult question for many job seekers. Think of this as identifying areas where you need more training or guidance. A suggested answer is, "I would say my greatest weakness has been lack of proper planning in the past. I would over-commit myself with too many variant tasks, then not be able to fully accomplish each as I would like. However, since I've come to recognize that weakness, I've taken steps to correct it."

What can you do for us?

Here you have every right to toot your own horn and be a bit egotistical. Talk about your record of getting things done, and mention specifics from your resume or list of career accomplishments. Say that your skills and interests, combined with this history of getting results, make you valuable. Mention your ability to set priorities, identify problems and use your experience and energy to solve them.

Succinctly providing the potential employer with honest and straightforward answers is key.

Tell me about a decision you made in the last year?

Your response to this question helps the interviewer look at how you make decisions. Do you use a logical and understandable approach that reflects clear goal orientation, or is your decision making more random and capricious? What is the topic choice for your decision and what will it reveal about you values?

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years?

By saying, “Although it’s certainly difficult to predict things far in the future, I know what direction I want to develop toward. Within 5 years, I want to become the very best(fill in the blank) your company has. I would like to become the expert that others rely on, and, in doing so, I fell I will be fully prepared to take on any greater responsibilities that might be presented in the long term,” creates an open-ended discussion for advancement at the company.

Do you have any questions?

Try to create a course of action. This might be your one opportunity to find out where you stand within the overall hiring process by the employer. Ask them when they are looking to bring someone in for the position? You’ll know if the employer intends to make phone calls and when, and then you know the time frame to follow up with them.

*—Lisa Radke and Rob Kallick
As seen in the Miami Herald*