

Typical Interview Questions

Prospective employers are trying to find out more about you, how you think, and what you learned from your experiences. Think, "What is the employer really asking?"

- Sometimes there is an underlying reason for a question: "Will you fit in with their team?" or "Can you do the job?"
- Make sure you address their concern in your answer and give specific supporting examples as often as possible.

THE FOLLOWING ARE AMONG THE MOST OFTEN ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

General Questions:

Tell me about yourself. (Not a life story. Relate to the job qualifications, limit answer to about two minutes)

Tell me something about yourself not on your resume.

What do you know about our company? Why do you want to work for us? (Highlight your company knowledge. Show that you want the job for more than the paycheck.)

Why did you choose this major/career? (It's a critical question because they want to know if a career path you are considering fits their needs)

What are your greatest strengths? Weaknesses? (Be prepared to provide three of each. What did or do you do to correct the weakness? Include that in your answer.)

How would your last supervisor describe you? Who was your best boss? Why?

What motivates you? What are your top three priorities? (Be sure your answer includes why.)

Why did you choose Penn State? Why Behrend? (Focus on positive features that helped your skills develop)

Are your grades an accurate reflection of your abilities? Why or why not? (Explain, but don't blame others)

What courses did you like the most/least? Why? How do your classes relate to this position? (Focus on the positives, find some good in the class you liked least.)

What have you contributed at previous jobs that made you a valuable asset? What's your top accomplishment?

Tell me about your supervisory/leadership experience.

What's the most challenging situation you have faced? (Include any lessons you learned from the experience.)

What is the most difficult decision you've made and why?

If hired, what immediate contribution could you make?

What websites and magazine do you read? How do you stay up to date on industry trends?

Are you willing to relocate? Do you have a geographic preference? (Don't interview with distant companies unless you're willing to move if required for the job)

What volunteer work have you done? What did you learn?

Why should we hire you? What knowledge, skills, abilities, or accomplishments make you stand out?

How many nickels would it take to reach the top of the Empire State building? How many light bulbs are there in American houses? (They want to hear your reasoning process.)

Where do you see yourself next year? In five years?

Behavioral Questions:

These are used to determine whether a candidate has a specific quality or skill the employer is looking for. Use the STAR method to organize your response.

Tell me about a time when you ...

- Worked effectively under pressure.
- Incorporated diversity into your interactions.
- Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
- Were creative in solving a problem.
- Were unable to complete a project on time.
- Anticipated potential problems and developed a solution.
- Were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Persuaded team members to do things your way.
- Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
- Were disappointed in your performance.
- Had a tough customer to win over and how you did it.

Situational Questions:

Hypothetical scenarios where a candidate is asked what he or she would do in a given situation.

What would you do if...

- You were asked to assist in a project outside of your normal work unit
- You are angry about an unfair decision.

Questions for the Interviewer:

Always have questions for the interviewer. Make sure these questions cannot be answered through company research. Have them written down in case you need to look at them, but try to ask at least one without referring to your notes.

Please describe your organization's management philosophy and your work environment.

How will I be evaluated in this position? What is your expectation for new hires in their first three to six months? What are the typical promotions/career paths?

If hired, what are some typical projects I might work on in the first three months? Six months?

What opportunities for professional development exist?

How will my performance be evaluated and how often?

What does your company do for orientation/training? (Assuming it wasn't explained on their website.)

What makes your organization better than the competition?

Questions about benefits and starting salary ranges come near the end of the hiring process. Always check the website for this information, and never ask something that is answered on the website.

Always End With:

What are the next steps in the hiring process, and is there an estimated decision date? May I call or email you? Ask for the interviewers' business cards.