

# Interviews: Selling Yourself to Employers

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Once you know yourself, know the job market, know what employers want, have organized your job search, have sent resumes and cover letters, and have completed numerous job applications, it's time to prepare for those interviews!

The key purpose of an interview is to **sell yourself** to a prospective employer. Great interviews don't just happen. They require preparation much like doing homework for a class but the reward is not just a grade on a transcript – it's a job! Your "homework" is to develop answers to common interview questions so that you can more easily answer them in actual interviews. We've provided a list of questions as well as suggestions to help you answer them. Your answers should be honest regardless of the suggestion provided here. The actual interview questions may be asked in a slightly different manner but this list should help you answer many questions in less than two minutes regardless of the specific wording. Keep in mind that all questions are essentially designed to help interviewers determine if you are **able to do the job**, if you will **fit in with the company**, and if you will be a **dependable and motivated** employee.

Like resumes and cover letters, your interview responses need to be tailored for a specific job interview. Be sure to determine the types of skills and characteristics that the particular employer needs so that you can tailor your responses to the specific job. On the day of the interview, remember to dress appropriately, arrive early, take any items needed (resumes, pens, etc.), and smile.



- 1. Tell me about yourself.** Focus on your skills, experience, accomplishments, education, and work ethics – not family or personal matters. Count your qualifications off on your fingers as you describe them.
- 2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?** Name strengths that most closely match the job requirements and provide examples. Name a weakness that you have already overcome and explain that you have successfully overcome it. For example, you were lacking computer skills and enrolled in computer courses to develop some skills. You are now proficient in the most common software programs on the market. It is best to choose a weakness that has no bearing on the particular job for which you are interviewing.
- 3. How would a coworker, supervisor, best friend, or someone else describe you?** Emphasize characteristics that match the job.
- 4. Why aren't you working (or applying for a job) in your field?** There are few jobs in your field. You realized your interests were in other areas. You discovered that you had excellent skills in a different field.
- 5. What was your favorite job? Explain your answer.** If your favorite job was different than the one for which you are interviewing, then explain how this job is a better match for you at this point in time.
- 6. Tell me about your best and worst supervisors.** Be positive in both cases. The best supervisors often encourage employees to grow professionally and also give them credit for their work. When discussing your worst supervisor, focus on ways that he or she limited your opportunities to learn and grow.

**7. Why did you leave your last job?** If you have been laid off, simply explain this. If you were fired, say so and briefly explain that you learned from the experience. Be very careful not to say anything negative about the former employer. If you have just graduated or are reentering the job market for some reason, provide a brief explanation that will assure the employer that you will be a dependable employee.

**8. Why are you still unemployed?** If you have turned down offers that just did not seem to be the right jobs for you, say so. If you are looking for a specific type of job and there have been few openings, say so. If you are changing careers and the job search is more difficult because of the change, say so. Be positive and be careful not to appear desperate.

**9. Why are you interested in this job?** Talk about the aspects of the job that you find most interesting, challenging, or rewarding.

**10. What do you know about our company?** This question will make it clear whether you have done your homework and researched the company. The internet, Chamber of Commerce, Department of Labor, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, and people in your network are good sources of information about companies.

**11. Explain why you have had so many short term jobs.** You had limited opportunities to grow, companies down-sized, experienced a personal problem that is now resolved, made poor decisions, or wanted to explore the world of work before making a decision about long term employment.

**12. Have you been convicted of a crime that has a bearing on this position?** If so, explain briefly, admit your mistake, explain any changes that you have made, restate your qualifications and interest in this position, and ask for the opportunity to prove that you are a dependable employee.

**13. Give an example of a problem you experienced and how you handled it.** Tell a brief story of a problem related to work, school, or a hobby. Identify the problem, options for resolving it, obstacles that you faced, and your decision. Support the reason for your decision.

**14. Do you prefer to work independently or with a team?** Ideally, you are happy to do both, depending upon what is necessary to complete the work.

**15. What salary do you expect?** Hopefully you have done your homework to determine the salary range for the job. You can find such information from the job announcement, [www.salaryexpert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com), Wiregrass Georgia Technical College, Department of Labor, or from people in your network. You may try asking the employer what he or she thinks is reasonable based upon your skills.

**16. What motivates you to do a good job?** Responsibilities, recognition, and opportunities to advance are good answers to what motivates you. Money is not a good answer for this question.

**17. Explain the gaps between these jobs.** Explain legitimate reasons for gaps (such as being a full time student or being laid off), describe your job search efforts, and/or describe volunteer work experiences.

### **Questions to Ask the Employer**

Here are some questions that will show your interest, intelligence, and inquisitiveness that will leave a positive impression:

- ◆ How did this job become available?
- ◆ Would you describe a typical work day?
- ◆ What are the goals for the department?
- ◆ Could I have a tour?
- ◆ How would I know how my performance is progressing?
- ◆ What can I say to convince you to hire me?
- ◆ When will you be making a decision? May I check back with you on (date)?

Note that questions about salary and benefits are not included. These are better to ask when offered a job or in a second interview.