

Free Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

We've pulled together a list of common behavioral-interview questions.

One of the keys to success in interviewing is practice, so we encourage you to take the time to work out answers to these questions using one of the suggested methods, such as the STAR approach. Be sure not to memorize answers; the key to interviewing success is simply being prepared for the questions and having a mental outline to follow in responding to each question. For more tips, read our article, Behavioral Interviewing Strategies.

Looking for some sample excellent answers to behavioral interview questions? Then go to our Job Interview Questions Database, where we have traditional, behavioral, and mixed interview questions for both experienced job-seekers and college students and recent grads.

Here is one list of sample behavioral-based interview questions:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

General Interview Questions

(When interviewing someone fresh from college, questions will be tailored toward the courses taken and their major instead of previous jobs held)

1. **Briefly describe your past work experience and tell us about the kinds of responsibilities you had.** (they are expecting this question and it serves to warm them up and give us a bit of background).
 2. **Why do/did you want to leave your current/last job?** (looking for reasons that show a desire to do better or for someone just out of college it gives us an idea of career goals).
 3. **What do/did you like best about your current/last job?** (gives us an idea of what types of job duties they like).
 4. **What has been the most interesting job or project you have had in your working career so far?** (more interested in the reasons than the answer, may give us some idea of what the person wants from a job).
 5. **What are some of the more difficult problems that you have encountered during your working career?** (gives us an idea of what types of situations they have had to deal with).
 6. **If you were going to pass on a piece of advice based on your experience, to a new person in your current position, what would you tell them?** (shows us what types of information they consider important to know in the old job).
 7. **If you could have made an improvement in your last job, what would it have been?** (looking for creativity not bitterness and bad mouthing).
 8. **How do you think your co-workers in your past job would describe you?** (gives us an idea of how they want to be perceived).
 9. **Describe to us the best person you have ever worked for. What were they like?** (gives us an idea of what type of supervisor they work well with).
 10. **What types of people annoy you the most?** (frequently the traits the person mentions do not apply to the candidates themselves).
 11. **If you could tailor make a position for yourself, what would you include?** (gives us an idea of what makes a job enjoyable to them).
 12. **In this tailor made job, are there things that you would want to exclude from it?** (looking for those things this person does not like to do or have in a job).
 13. **Do you have other skills or experiences that you would like to use on a job that you think are valuable?** (can they be available to do other things?)
 14. **If you were going to pick an area you would like more training in, what would it be?** (better than asking 'what are your weak areas').
- AT THIS POINT EXPLAIN THE JOB THAT IS BEING OFFERED**
15. **How does this position fit in with what you want from a job?** (gives us an idea if this is a job they will stay at).
 16. **Do you have questions for us?**
 17. **Do you have a salary range you are trying to reach or maintain?**
 18. **Is there anything you would like us to know about you that we have not covered in the interview?** (this question leaves the applicant with the feeling that they have been given every opportunity to sell themselves).
 19. **If you were offered the job, when could you start?**
 20. **Is it OK to contact your current employer as a reference?**

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

1. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives; when and why did you establish these goals; and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself in the next 5-10 years?
3. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
4. What do you *really* want to do in life?
5. What are your long-range career objectives?
6. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
7. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
8. What do you expect to be earning in five years?
9. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
10. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
11. How would you describe yourself?
12. Tell me about yourself.
13. How do you think a friend or professor who knows you well would describe you?
14. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
15. How has your college experience prepared you for your career?
16. Why should I hire you?
17. What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful in your career?
18. How do you determine or evaluate success?
19. What do you think it takes to be successful in a company such as ours?
20. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
21. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
22. Describe the relationship that exists between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her?
23. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
24. Describe your most rewarding college experiences.
25. If you were hiring a graduate for this position, what qualities would you look for?
26. Why did you select the UW-Madison to attend?
27. What led you to choose your field or major study?
28. What college subjects did you like best? Why?
29. What college subjects did you like least? Why?
30. If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
31. What changes would you make in your college or university? Why?
32. What is the difference between teaching and coaching?
33. What is the biggest mistake you ever made? What did you learn?
34. What two or three things are most important to you in a job?
35. What is your criteria for evaluating the company you want to work for?
36. Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
37. What are your feelings about relocation?
38. What do you know about our company?
39. Do you know anyone that already works here?
40. Are you willing to travel and spend six months as a trainee?

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Strongest interviewers ask open, situational questions

Here is a blueprint for conducting a successful interview

When I lead half-day interviewing classes for job seekers, I often end by saying that they now have received more training in interviewing than many of the people who will be trying to hire them.

This is not a story I made up to boost the confidence of job seekers. In truth, interviewing is just one of many tasks managers perform every day without training or supervision. Human resource professionals are an exception to that rule, although not every company has an HR department.

If you are one of those managers with hiring authority but no blueprint for the interview, these strategies may help:

1. Decide what you want to know about your candidate. These questions generally fall into one of three categories: skills or knowledge, character or personality, and experience.

2. Rank your hiring criteria. What do you absolutely need in this position, with no exceptions? What could you be flexible about? For example, if you are hiring a customer service person, a certain demeanor may be more important than related experience. You can always provide extra training, but it's nearly impossible to cheer up a crabby person.



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3. Compare your two lists to create your questions. Why not just use the list you came up with in Step 1? Those are your "raw" questions, and they need to be refined. You might want to know, for example, if this person will be able to handle stress. But you can't just ask, "Can you handle stress?" Who's going to answer "no" to that? And, who knows if your definition of stress is the same as the candidate's?

In general, you'll get better information if you ask open-ended questions because they require a more extensive answer than "yes" or "no." Compare these two questions:

A. "Are you an organized person?" (The answer is almost certain to be "yes" — you didn't get much information, did you?)

B. "Tell me how you set priorities." (The answer this time could surprise you.)

Another style of question to use is situational. This is espe-

cially important for helping you see elements of a person's character.

Here's a question used by a friend of mine who hires frequently: "Give me an example of a situation where you did something that was criticized. How did you react to that?" A question I have used in interviews is, "Tell me about a mistake you made in your last job and what you did to correct it."

One of the most difficult things for an interviewer to judge is a candidate's motivation for taking the job. Another tough area to evaluate is "fit." Will this person mesh well with others on the team?

To get at these answers, you can ask some of the standards, such as, "Why do you want this job?" and "What do others say about you?" Surprisingly, there are still job candidates who have not practiced the answers to these old standbys and who will respond without guile.

To up the ante, however, try some of these more interesting queries:

"Is there something missing in your current job that you want in your next job?" "What type of people do you find it difficult to work with? Have you successfully worked with this type of person?" "What makes you mad at work?"

"What results could we expect to see from you in the first 90 days of your employment?"

In addition to the questions you might ask a candidate for any job, you will need to ask specifically about the skills needed for the position at hand.

Can this person operate a cash register? Which software packages can he or she use? This is a good time to ask for work samples or to administer a test to measure the candidate's skill level.

The interview is only part of the hiring process. You started the ball rolling by writing some kind of job description, perhaps placing an ad.

After your initial interviews, you may decide on second interviews. Or you may have other staff members meet with the candidate. Reference checking is still ahead of you as well.

Without question, hiring is one of the most complex and important tasks on any manager's plate. It is no wonder job seekers spend so much time preparing for the interview. Now it's your turn.

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