

*Your guide to...*

# ACING THE INTERVIEW

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*Job interviews can be intimidating!* But the good news is, you have all the leverage. Believe me, hiring managers and recruiters want to find the perfect candidate just as much as you want to BE that perfect candidate. You've done the hard part - actually getting invited in to interview. So, how do you make a great impression once you're in the door? Be prepared. Check out the top 12 interview questions that you should practice for and the 3 that you should plan to ask your interviewer. You want to identify a list of stories that you want to share and then tie them into the questions that are asked.

## *"Tell me about yourself."*

Even though we know this question is coming, it can still be so intimidating! Prepare ahead of time and have an elevator pitch ready. Most candidates make the mistake of rambling about where they're from, where they went to school, etc. In order to stand out, have a concise statement of your professional experience with a defining moment that led you to this interview and why you're interested in that particular role.

## *"If I asked one of your honest friends to tell me one good and bad thing about yourself, what would they say?"*

Another way for interviewers to ask, what are your biggest strengths and weaknesses, the key here is to be honest. Highlight what you're great at and be straightforward about where you can improve. If you're not sure about what to say, ask your close friends, family or take a strengths finder quiz like this one! In talking about your weaknesses, always incorporate how you plan to improve.



**3** *"Name a current issue in the news that will affect business at our company."*

This question is determining if you've done your research and can think critically. If you are unclear about the company's role in the corporate world or how they fit into a larger economy, this can be a very dangerous question. But if you're prepared, it gives you a great opportunity to differentiate yourself, so find a way to bring this topic up in conversation, even if you are not asked outright.

**4** *"Can you tell me about a time when you were in a team as a member, not a leader?"*

Everyone goes into job interviews with notes prepared to share about how they've led a team, driven results, and generally been a rockstar. However, in most cases, the person interviewing you would eventually be your manager so they not only want to know about your leadership skills, but also how you perform as part of a team. Be prepared with a story about how you contributed to the success of a team when you weren't necessarily the main decision-maker.

**5** *"What is the most interesting business idea you've ever heard about?"*

I love this question because it catches people off guard! This is a great opportunity for you to share your passions, knowledge and business savvy. Regardless of the specific business idea that you cite, don't pass up this chance to demonstrate your interest in a specific field and thirst for learning. Hiring managers will be impressed that you're plugged into the business community and constantly looking for opportunity.



**6** *“What is one characteristic you have that would prevent us from hiring you?”*

People hire people, not robots. It's unrealistic to think that you are going to be the PERFECT candidate and check every single box that they have. With that being said, a short and sweet answer is best in this case. Use this question to address any holes in your resume or lack of experience and then back it up with a reason that that shouldn't sway their opinion of you.

**7** *“Tell me about a time that you failed and weren't able to fix it.”*

Again, hiring managers know that you are going to present yourself as well as possible during the interview, yet once you are hired there are bound to be times when things go wrong. And that's perfectly normal! What they want to know is how you handle things when those situations arise. Tell a story about a time that you fell down on the job or didn't get something done and it resulted in a tough situation. Then, make sure that you close with the lessons learned from the experience and how you prevented a similar occurrence in the future!

**8** *“Is there anything about this job which makes you nervous?”*

The best strategy is to be clear and concise here. One sentence will suffice. If you're concerned about a particular aspect of the company, ask about it! If you feel confident and comfortable, make a small joke about an aspect of the company that is clearly not a reason to be nervous. The key here is to answer the question and move on.



**9** *"Tell me about the most exciting project that you've worked on."*

This question tells the interviewer a few things. First, can you communicate the project to them in clear, simple terms. Second, how did you work in a team to achieve the goal? Finally, were the challenges you describe particularly difficult? This gives them an idea of your expertise. The biggest mistake that candidates make with this question is not being enthusiastic or specific. If you're not motivated by the most exciting project you've worked on, chances are you won't be particularly motivated for future projects.

**10** *"What are your salary requirements—both short-term and long-term?"*

People hate talking about money. But this question will set the tone for future negotiation, so make sure that you come prepared. Start out by being honest and say "I did not have a particular number in mind, but would think a range of X and Y would be fair in the short term." Then, mention that you'd expect appropriate increases based on performance and results.

We've all been taught to arrive at the interview with a few questions to ask, but to really differentiate yourself, you want to stay away from the following:

"Tell me more about your business?" (You should already know!)

"How many vacation days would I get?" (Irrelevant at this point and makes you seem like you're the type to do the minimum amount of work.)

"What would a typical day look like?" (BORING)



Instead, ask these questions to solidify yourself as the top candidate and gain insight into the organization as a whole.

 *"What can I help to clarify that would make hiring me an easy decision?"*

I had a manager once who literally would not leave the interview until I asked him for the job. Literally, "Do I have the job?" While this question isn't quite as direct (or terrifying!), it opens the door for your interviewer to ask any clarifying questions and gives you the opportunity to address any concerns before you leave. It's also reinforces your interest in the role and is an impressive way to close the interview.

 *"How did you get your start?"*

Often, the person interviewing you would eventually be your boss. So, it's great to hear their background and how they achieved the success that they've seen. Not only will this give you a roadmap if you aspire to be in their role at some point, but it will probably cause them to compare you to a younger version of themselves - building an automatic sense of camaraderie and rapport.

 *"How will the work I'll be doing contribute to the organization's mission?"*

Demonstrating this type of global perspective will help you stand out from your competition and reinforce the fact that you've done your research and are looking to make an impact on a larger scale. It also allows your interviewer to re-iterate the job responsibilities and functions so that you can ensure that it's a good fit for your skill set and interests.



The last piece of advice seems cheesy, but is so true - BE YOURSELF. Job interviews are a two way street. You're evaluating your potential organization as strictly as they are evaluating you, so there is no need to be anxious in the first place. But, practicing these questions and highlighting the stories from your resume will go a long way towards calming those nerves. As always, I'm **here to help** as well.

*Cheering for you!*

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PS. If you have questions, you know where to find me!



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