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# Preparing for an Interview

## BASIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your education and how it relates to the position for which you are applying.
- Why did you choose this field of study? What were your favorite courses?
- What do you consider your greatest strength? What is your greatest weakness? Give examples.
- Describe your ideal job.
- What is it that excites you, motivates you, or drives you?
- How do you balance your class work, extracurricular activities, and the rest of your life?
- Tell me about the work you have done in class, summer jobs, or extracurricular activities and how they have prepared you for this position.
- What was the greatest challenge you ever faced, and how did you approach it?
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- Describe your work ethic and personality.
- Give me an example of when you had to adapt to change.
- How have your communication skills helped you to be successful?
- What do you feel are your strongest communication skills?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Why do you want to work for our company/organization?
- How would a co-worker or supervisor describe you?
- What are your career goals in 10 years?
- What interesting book/movie have you read/seen lately?
- Why should I hire you?

## WHAT IS A BEHAVIORAL QUESTION?

Behavioral questions focus on past experiences and require specific examples from these experiences when answering questions. Do not answer these questions hypothetically.

### How to answer behavioral questions:

1. Give the complete story of an event first. (Include key points and results.)
2. Give specific examples about what you did, said, felt, and thought.
3. Separate your actions from the actions of others.
4. Use "I" examples more than "we" examples.
5. Ask for clarification if you are unsure of the question.
6. Watch and listen for interviewer cues.
7. Do not make vague proclamations of your skills.
8. Answer negatively phrased questions (Tell me about a failure.) as you would a question about your weaknesses. Show that you have acknowledged the weakness and over-come it.

## SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

- Give an example of when your ability to manage your time and priorities proved to be an asset.
- Give an example of when you were responsible for an error or mistake.
- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem which challenged fairness or ethical issues.
- Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult person; what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you faced a stressful situation and your coping skills were tested. How did you handle it?
- Describe a time when you faced adversity with time. What was the outcome with the school/work project?
- How do you prioritize when working on multiple projects?
- Give an example of when your listening skills proved to be an asset.



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## Preparing for an Interview pg.2

- Describe a situation in which you were working as part of a team. How did you contribute to that specific situation?
- Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it (besides graduating college).
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Give an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.

The **STAR** method is useful when responding to interview questions. It is an excellent way to organize your thoughts. Here are the four steps:

**Situation:** Describe the situation in which the event took place.

**Task:** Describe the task you were asked to complete.

**Action:** Explain what action you took to complete the task or solve the problem.

**Result:** Explain the result of your actions and focus on how your actions resulted in a success.

### ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

These are questions interviewers ask that are not related to the job. In general, illegal questions consist of asking about one's race, gender, religion, marital status, age, disabilities, ethnic background, or country of origin. Many times, interviewers ask illegal questions because they are unaware of the state and federal laws that prohibit them. You must decide how to respond to illegal questions. You may prefer to answer the question or to answer it in a way that relates to the job. For example, if an employer asks you if you are engaged because they see a ring on your finger, you may want to tell them yes and try to change the subject without elaborating about your plans.

### PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

Have 3 to 5 questions written down in your portfolio to ask the potential employer at the end of the interview. When the interviewer asks if you have any questions for them, you can open your portfolio and show that you are prepared!

### QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

- How will I be trained or introduced to the job?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this role?
- What would a typical day at work look like for me?
- What do people seem to like most about working here?
- Do you encourage participation in community/volunteer activities?
- How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- Is your company environmentally conscious? How?
- Do you provide professional development opportunities?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- What kind of training should I expect?
- What can you tell me about the individual to whom I would report?
- What do you see ahead for your company in the next five years?
- What do you consider to be your company's most important assets?
- What would you consider the most important aspects of this job?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

**DO NOT** ask about salary or benefits in the first interview.



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