



## ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself
  - If you have a solid work history, use an “Elevator Pitch” summarizing your experience, credentials, and accomplishments, as they relate to the job to which you’re applying.
  - If you are new in your career, use a skill statement pertinent to one of the main skills mentioned in the job posting. Example: “I understand you are looking for someone with excellent leadership skills, so let me begin by telling you about my leadership experience.....”
2. What do you know about our company?
  - Mention information about their company, their mission statement, or their latest product that you discovered via your research before the interview and, ideally, why you are aligned with who they are and what they do.
3. What have you done that improved the bottom line?
  - Give an example of an experience using a skill statement.
4. What is it about this job that interests you the most?
  - Hopefully you can come up with an answer based on the posting or the company, relating how you can contribute to the company. Focus on the use of a skill that is foundational to the contribution, then provide them a skill statement demonstrating how you have successfully employed the skill and how you see yourself implementing it in the new position.
5. What are your major strengths?
  - Know your strengths (more than one), then match your strengths to what the company needs. Or:
  - Provide a skill statement of a time you successfully used a strength or provide one that demonstrates multiple pertinent strengths.
6. What is a weakness of yours?
  - In one or two brief sentences, give a weakness, but one that you have addressed so that you are able to turn it into a positive; next, give an example of how you have employed the positive skill you learned.
7. What are your salary requirements? What were you making at your last job?
  - During the early stages of interviewing, do your best to avoid mentioning a specific amount, until you have been made an offer.
  - Examples: “If my skills match your needs, I’m sure we can negotiate a fair salary.”  
“I would like to make sure I understand all the aspects of the job before we discuss a salary.”  
“What I was making on my last job was based on \_\_\_ years of experience. I would like to get an idea of what this job entails and base a salary figure on the skills I will bring to this position. Can you please tell me the range you have in mind?”  
“Is this an offer?”
8. Why did you leave your last job?
  - Stay as neutral as possible. Examples: “When the company was acquired by X Corporation, many of us were laid off” or “it’s time for me to grow professionally beyond what my current department can offer.”
9. What is the biggest risk that you have taken?
  - Use a skill statement that shows a benefit to the company from the risk you took.
10. What was a recent, significant mistake that you made?
  - Be brief on the mistake and spend a sentence or two telling what you learned and how you’ve successfully applied that knowledge. Be sure it is something that ultimately can be seen as a positive!



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Human Resources

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

11. Describe a situation in which you had a difficult problem and how you solved it.
  - Provide a relevant example using a skill statement.
12. How creative of a problem-solver are you?
  - Give an example using a skill statement.
13. This is a high-pressure job. Are you up to it?
  - Say “yes” and mention a skill statement to illustrate a time you handled pressure well.
14. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
  - Keep your answer general or centered on skill-building. For example: “I want to learn this job as quickly as I can to be productive and assume any additional responsibilities as they come along” or “I intend on continuing to upgrade my skills and grow professionally.”
15. You have been out of work for a long time, haven’t you?
  - Don’t be apologetic. For example: “I believe it is important that I get a position that uses my skills and experience in a way that will benefit the company, as well as offer job satisfaction. In a tight job market, that takes a little longer.” Also, mention if you took classes, upgraded your skills, or provided consulting work during your period of unemployment.
16. Why haven’t you found a new position by now? (See above answer)
17. What challenges or developments do you see for this industry?
  - Hopefully your research prior to the interview will help you answer this question.
18. You have too much experience for this job. Why do you want it?
  - Tell them why you want it. For example: “I’ve been a comptroller for many years and now I want to concentrate on what I really enjoy, which is cost accounting. I believe all my experience will be an advantage at your company.”
19. What is it about your last job that bothers you the most?
  - Give a fact that is as neutral as possible or can be also read as a positive. “I guess what bothered me the most was an absence of opportunity to use my public speaking skills.”
20. What motivates you?
  - Think of an example that relates to the qualifications for the job. For example: “Meaningful work which involves the opportunity to lead a dynamic team motivates me.”
21. What are your most important accomplishments to date?
  - Think of what stands out to you in your career, as it relates to the job to which you are applying.
22. Describe instances when you provided leadership.
  - Provide an example using a skill statement.
23. Give me an example of when you had to break a rule to reach a goal.
  - Use an example that doesn’t go directly against management and that provided great results for the company, the customer, or your team.



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24. Give an example of how you solved a work problem.
  - Focus on the job you are applying to by providing an example that demonstrates skills that are applicable to the job.
  
25. What qualities do you have that would benefit our company?
  - Focus your answer on the qualifications for the potential job. For example: “In addition to \_\_\_\_ (name skills mentioned in the job description which you have), I’m also a reliable team player (then give an example via a skill statement).”
  
26. Tell me about a goal you did not meet. Why?
  - Discuss a time when you had to prioritize competing goals and focus on the accomplishment or mention the “lesson learned,” and describe how you were able to successfully apply the lesson learned at a later time.
  
27. Name five adjectives to describe yourself.
  - Use a skills assessment or worksheet to select five of your top skills as they relate to the job.
  
28. Name an action you performed that went above and beyond the call of duty.
  - Give an example using a skill statement.
  
29. Tell me what you liked/disliked about your past bosses.
  - Avoid critical remarks, especially criticisms that are personal. Try to think of something that you were able to handle due to mature insight, such as a difference in work styles or approaches. For example: “Although my boss could be more “last minute” and pressure-prompted around deadlines, I made sure I let her know well in advance of upcoming meetings, as well as sent her emails, to keep her informed of projects and to minimize any stress.”
  
30. As you leave this interview, what is the one last question you want me to ask you?
  - Be upbeat. For example: “When can you start?” or “What will it take to get you on board?”
  
31. Describe how you would solve a personal problem with another employee.
  - Your answer should emphasize communication skills. For example: “I would think about the cause of the problem and our differences in perspectives, as well as what I need and why, then set up a time to meet with the employee. I would explain what was on my mind and solicit their thoughts, then begin a discussion from there, asking also for their ideas regarding solutions.” Better yet, provide a skill statement that demonstrates when you worked through a communication issue.
  
32. Name a situation in which you failed and how did you go about correcting it?
  - In your example focus only very briefly on what went wrong, then turn their attention to the correction, what you learned, and how you have been able to apply the “lesson learned.”
  
33. What makes you unique?
  - Think of a personal quality, relevant to the job, and name a time when you successfully employed that quality.
  
34. How do you handle frustration on the job?
  - Give an answer that demonstrates your ability to be self-aware and responsible. For example: “First, I take the time to notice that I feel frustrated and what triggered it. Sometimes, when I am able, I take a walk to give myself time to process the feeling. I’ll usually think it through and, when needed, try to get another point of view from a neutral party outside of work before I move to problem-solving.”



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35. Why do you want to change careers at your age?
- Stay positive in your answer and don't get defensive. An example: "I find as I grow and change, my needs grow and change too. I keep looking for opportunities to enrich my working life. I'm confident this opportunity is the next step in that direction. I also know that a happy employee is a productive employee and I plan to bring my energy for this career to your department."
36. How much are you worth?
- Mention qualities and skills you have that match what the employer wants, then you may ask, "What are these skills and experience worth to this company?"
37. Why did you change careers?
- See answer to # 35.
38. If I were to talk to your employer today, what would s/he say about you?
- Focus on the qualities and skills that match the potential job. For example: "She'd say that I am very focused on meeting the needs of my clients" or "She'd say that I'm a responsible employee who takes initiative and am motivated by my values."
39. How are you different from the other candidates?
- See answer # 25.
40. What was the latest book you read?
- Choose an inspirational or motivational book, if you have read one. Ideally the book would be connected to the job topic, but if not, pick something neutral and avoid any controversial topics. If you are not a reader, mention an interesting podcast or TED talk instead.
41. Would you work if you were independently wealthy?
- Mention that you would still choose to use your skills in some capacity. For example: "Wish I truly had to make that decision! My joy is using the skills and experience I have to make a contribution, so I would continue to work part-time or volunteer."
42. How sensitive are you to criticism?
- Show an openness to communicate. For example: "I understand we can always learn more and do better. If the criticism helps to improve my productivity and is offered in a proactive way, I welcome it."
43. What is the most difficult challenge you have faced in your life?
- You may choose to give a relevant personal answer here, but try to come up with a professional one that fits and focus not on the difficulty, but on what you have learned as a result. You can also stick to a more general statement to avoid going into too much detail. For example: "Seeking balance among my various responsibilities and knowing that doing so is a process of continual readjustment."
44. What are you doing now to improve yourself?
- Show an interest in on-going education, training or self-improvement, especially related to the job.