

Questions to Expect in a Job Interview

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It may have been some time since your last job interview. You'd be surprised how much you can forget of your own story! A day or two before the interview, have a practice session with someone. It doesn't matter who (although if the person knows how interviewers respond to questions, so much the better). The important thing is for you to have the experience of telling your story.

Zip through the easy parts of your background. Spend some time, however, on those time periods or jobs that are difficult for you to discuss. Did you get downsized several times? Did you play around for a year or two before starting your career? Are you over 40 and concerned you'll look too old to a young interviewer? Have you been fired? Often? Be sure you know how to discuss, calmly and reasonably, your "hot" spots. You want the interviewer to simply hear your good answer and then move on. You don't want the interviewer poking and probing!

Here are the kinds of questions you can expect:

1. Tell me about your work experience, starting with your first job.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. What are your career goals?
4. What's the toughest problem you've had on the job; how did you handle it?
5. What do you consider to be your chief accomplishments and failures?
6. Have you ever been fired? Why?
7. What would your boss say about you as an employee, plusses and minuses?
8. Tell me about your education, and about you as a student.
9. What were your best/worst subjects, your grades?
10. Were you involved in school activities?
11. What contribution do you think you could make here?
12. Tell me about your experience with [job-related equipment, for example]?
13. How will you manage [travel, need for transportation, frequent overtime]?
14. Looking back on your career, what would you do differently if you could?
15. What do you prefer most/least in a job/boss/work environment/company?
16. Why should we hire you?
17. What salary are you expecting?

Some companies like to do "behavioral" interviews, i.e., what were your behaviors when a particular event occurred. Think beforehand about your answers. They can be hard to drag out of your brain during the interview!

The interviewer begins the question with, "Tell me about a time when you ..." and the following are the typical questions that follow:

1. Worked effectively under pressure.
2. Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
3. Were creative in solving a problem.

4. Had to deal with an irate customer.
5. Surmounted a major obstacle.
6. Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
7. Lost (or won) an important contract.
8. Had to fire a friend.
9. Missed an obvious solution to a problem.
10. Persuaded team members to do things your way.
11. Anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
12. Were forced to make an unpopular decision.
13. Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.
14. Were disappointed in your behavior.
15. Were unable to complete a project on time.
16. Had to make an important decision with limited facts.
17. Had to adapt to a difficult situation.
18. Delegated a project effectively.
19. Set your sights too high (or too low).
20. Got bogged down in the details of a project.
21. Made a bad decision.

The Job Doctor wishes you a successful interview where you breeze through even the toughest questions!